

Book Reviews

approach might have shown (following S. F. Cannon) just how indebted Lyell really was to Buckland's own actualistic style of reasoning.

Once Rupke's orientation towards Buckland and Oxford is taken into account, his study has a great deal to recommend it. He gives excellent accounts of early cave palaeontology, of discoveries of monstrous fossil reptiles, and of the introduction of the glacial theory. The entire book is based on extensive archival research and wide-ranging reading in the primary sources. Rupke offers a particularly sensitive discussion of the cultural connexions of élite academic geology, stressing the links between sacred chronology and geology. He shows how the scientific studies of Buckland and his circle were designed as responses to the demands of the traditional curriculum; in another chapter, popular reactions to their work receive an equally revealing treatment. Buckland himself appears with added stature. Although Rupke's analysis does not give a full picture of this formative period in English geology, it skilfully quarries a rich vein of materials that contribute towards that end. Anyone interested in the history of geology, the relations between science and religion, or the development of science in the universities, can look forward to reading this book.

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CLAUDINE HERZLICH and JANINE PIERRET, *Malades d'hier, malades d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Payot, 1984, 8vo, pp. 295, Fr. 99.00 (paperback).

It would be churlish not to welcome the appearance of this book, but it is also hard not to feel that it represents an opportunity dissipated. The authors have commendably set out to look at medical history from below, by asking what illness, disease, and medical intervention are like, not from the vantage point of medicine, but as they are experienced by sufferers. And they have sensibly decided that it is arbitrary to listen only to the voice of patients, but important rather to gauge the opinions and experiences of the laity at large, attempting to capture something like a set of "*mentalités*". Bravely, they have tried within the covers of one book to survey lay attitudes towards sickness both in past and present, looking back at least as far as the Middle Ages ("leprosy" and the Black Death loom large), and taking in evidence from other cultures as well as the French. And they have organized the book around a series of thematic questions designed to probe distinctions between attitudes past and present. Thus chapter 2, entitled 'De la phtisie à la tuberculose', opens with the early nineteenth-century myth of the Romantic consumptive and moves on to examine changing images of the condition, particularly between the world wars when it was ceasing to be such a scourge. And Chapter 10 ('De l'inactif au droit d'être malade') offers a historical survey of the prehistory of the "sick role": before the days of "medicalization", the Christian equivalent of the legitimating "sick role" was the idea of divine affliction and the holy beggar. *Au fait* with the concepts of modern medical sociology and familiar with the research of the *Annales* school, this book represents easily the most ambitious attempt till now to provide a broad interpretation of attitudes towards health and sickness down the ages.

Its value is, however, diminished by being overambitious. Too many topics (for example, the relation between moral values and perceptions of disease as punishment, or the idea of diseases of civilization) are dealt with in a handful of pages, in generalizations covering several centuries. The result can be extremely banal, with a lack of attention to the diversity of responses. The other problem is that the authors seem to treat historical evidence like picking flowers. Whenever they can find the choice bloom of a quotation or an anecdote that supports a conclusion they grab and use it, with little apparent regard for time or place, for whether it is fact or from fiction, for its original significance in context, or for counter-evidence. The problem of how source material may legitimately be made to speak the voice of the sick is never addressed. It is a problem made particularly serious when they attempt to relate past and present. For much of their material from the past is culled from literary sources; and most of their current evidence is from sociological questionnaires. The difficulties of using the two comparatively are immense but are never dealt with.

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