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Citer ce compte rendu

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This, containing nearly a score of mostly unrelated chapters, spanning two centuries and six or seven diverse topics (health of native peoples and the poor, mental illness, epidemic disease, professional development and medical practice, women in medicine, sexual attitudes, and public health), needs some connecting threads to help readers tie it all together and come away with a sense of the whole.

It would have been helpful, for example, if Shortt had identified some of the central themes in Canadian medical history, suggested by the other contributors. A discussion of this sort might have explored such themes as the conservatism of the nineteenth-century Canadian profession (in contrast to the more pronounced egalitarianism of the American), the impact of Anglo-French cultural tensions on Canadian medicine, the effect on medical progress of Canada’s long period of subordination to England, and the influence (after 1867) of Canadian federalist politics, which encouraged medical buck-passing between local, provincial, and national governments.

It would also have been useful to have had an introductory note at the start of each article or, better, group of articles both to summarize upcoming essays and to put them in overall perspective. While not necessarily a model, Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Number’s Sickness and Health in America provides this sort of running commentary. For undergraduate students (and I am thinking, here, of the diligent ones, who will read the book through), such editorial guidance is almost essential.

As for the eighteen other essays making up the collection, editor Shortt classifies them as “a mixture of social and medical history” (p.ix), by which is meant a blend of articles looking either outward, at the profession’s ties to the larger society, or inward toward professional development and medical practice. Some pieces, of course, face in both directions, and there is a fairly nice balance between the two approaches.

The only subject which is badly short-changed is medical research (to some, “internal history”), the sole representative being Charles Roland’s “Early Years of Antiseptic Surgery in Canada.” I was surprised to find nothing on the work of neurosurgeon Wilder Penfield. Perhaps there is nothing in the periodical literature, but a representative chapter might have been selected from his 1977 autobiography, No Man Alone: A Surgeon’s Story.

Inevitably, the selections offered are uneven in quality. Among the less effective articles is Relief Mackay’s “Poor Relief in Nova Scotia,” which began by examining the institutions — a workhouse, an orphanage, and a hospital — established in eighteenth-century Halifax to care for a flood of dependent immigrants but then moved off on a somewhat unrelated inquiry into the general health conditions behind those institutions. After a look at smallpox the story seemed to run out of steam. Hilda Neatby, now deceased, was a first-rate historian, but her article on “The Medical Profession in the Northwest Territories” was a rather tiresome account of the internal governance of territorial physicians and tended to saccharin prose. There was no discussion of broader questions, such as the challenge of sectarians or the quality of medical practice. Roland’s piece on anti-septic surgery, while an interesting account
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Stability, the Result of Political, Institutional, and
Experience Roughly Parallelled the American According to
Censuring Boards, and Professional Societies Were Concerned,
Doctors Were as Troubled as Those of the U.S. Profession,
(page 123). Although the Public Relations of Canadian
Plain or to Deal with Cholera When It Came to Canada"
Further Undermined Public Confidence in Itself and
With Little Public Respect," the Medical Profession, He Noted,
"Further Undermined Public Confidence in Itself [And
Gave a Fillip to the Irregulars] by Its Failure Either to Ex-
plain or to Deal with Cholera When It Came to Canada"
(page 123). Although the Public Relations of Canadian
Doctors Were as Troubled as Those of the U.S. Profession,
Joseph Kett Shows Us in "American and Canadian Medical
Institutions, 1800-1870" That, Where Medical Schools, Li-
censing Boards, and Professional Societies Were Concerned,
The Medical Histories of the Two Countries Were Quite
Different. Compared to the Chaotic Competition and Disarray
To the South, Canadian Institutions Displayed Permanence
And Stability, the Result of Political, Institutional, and
Psychological Factors Unique to Canada.

In the Case of Women Doctors, However, the Canadian
Experience Roughly Parallelled the American According to
Veronica Strong-Boag's "Canadian Women Doctors: Feminism
Constrained." Throughout Her Article There Also Ran a Note of Disappointment That Canada's Female Physi-
cians, While Supporting Women's Suffrage and Giving
Some Encouragement to Birth Control, Largely Mirrored
the Conservative Male Approach to Radical Social Change.
But Strong-Boag's Piece Was Not Strident, and Her Dis-
\[...\]
nomic hard times, “indigent” Canadian doctors were willing to accept almost any scheme that would put money in their pockets. The only reason Canada did not get national health insurance in that era was because government, not doctors, choked on its cost. Then, in the late 1940s Canadian doctors, apparently now more affluent (the authors failed to make this clear) discovered all the objections long “known” to American doctors, and health insurance was knocked dead for another generation.

If one is an American and as typically and inexusably uninformed as I was about Canadian history, this lengthy collection is a good antidote to ignorance, at least for several important areas of Canadian history. American (and Canadian) scholars interested in the history of medicine, health, and the learned professions will find Medicine in Canadian Society particularly valuable for its cross-national perspective. Teachers in those fields also have available a very readable supplemental text. The McGill-Queens University Press is to be congratulated for bringing out a useful and timely book.

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With these handsome volumes, the opening trilogy of an important new series, Studies in History, Planning and the Environment, is brought to completion. The volumes also share a common origin in the papers presented at the first International Conference on the History of Urban and Regional Planning, which was held in London in 1977. Now, however, they have the benefit of editorial direction, as they have been selected, arranged, rewritten and, in the case of Kain’s book, supplemented by invited contributions “to deepen the historical dimension and to widen the international perspective.”

Excluding the editors’ introductory essays, a total of twenty-four original papers has been assembled. Most were written by planners, geographers or historians (including specialists in the history of art and architecture), but it also strikes me as particularly fitting that several of the contributors to the conservation volume defy easy pigeon-holing. Similarly, although most of the contributors are either British or American, there are enough from other countries (Germany, Austria, Poland, Greece, Japan and Canada) to give the books a truly international flavour. This is enhanced by the fact that some of the British and American authors have ventured beyond the English-speaking realm to which most of us are confined. As a result, these two collections cover a range of planning experience well beyond that which is normally available in the English-language literature. This, it seems to me, is their most important contribution.

The major respect in which the books betray their conference origin is in the variation in scope and intensity among the individual essays. This, of course, is unavoidable, no matter how firmly editorial control is exercised, but it inevitably raises awkward questions about the appropriate level of writing and the intended audience. In this instance, only a reader of the most catholic taste is likely to want to read each volume, cover to cover, although every essay has something of value for even the most knowledgeable scholars of planning history. But while most of the essays are likely to appeal to their own, fairly specialized readerships, there are several which seem more suited to a much larger audience. I mean this in two senses, which is another way of highlighting the difficulty the editors faced in trying to impose a sense of unity on their respective collections. On the one hand, there are those essays which ought to be known to people who would not normally think of looking into the planning history literature. The best example is by A.D. King: “Exporting Planning: The Colonial and Neo-Colonial Experience,” an article which says as much about the whole process of cultural diffusion, and the transmission of metropolitan ideologies into colonial contexts, as it does about the history of planning. I found it fascinating, not least because the Canadian planning movement has depended so heavily on the same process. Then, on the other hand, and altogether different in tone and purpose, there are a number of survey articles which could well become standard entries in the reading lists for beginning courses in the development of planning thought. W. Houghton-Evans’ “Schemata in British New Town Planning” is a case in point from Cherry’s volume; the “schemata” are physical design concepts, and lead to a quick review of design principles from Aristotle and the Hippodamian grid to today’s variants of the “orthogonal grid.” (Am I alone in regarding this as a tautology?) A parallel example can be found in Andrew W. Gilg’s, “Planning for Conservation: A Struggle For Survival and Political Respectability”; the suggestive title to the contrary, this is a brief overview of the development of the nature conservation movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Of their kinds, these are all excellent essays; it is the mix that sits uncomfortably. To shift from Houghton-Evans, for example, to Watanabe’s detailed description of the development of a dormitory suburb of Tokyo in the 1920s, or from Gilg to Zarebska’s equally detailed description of the plan for the reconstruction of the Polish