

Book Reviews

The new catalogue marks a definite stage in the development of the collection. In 1982, a new funding programme was introduced by the collection's original patron, now called SmithKline Beckman, and a new curator, Dr Diane Karp, was appointed to make acquisitions and prepare the exhibition here recorded. Of the works in the exhibition, no fewer than fifty-six (about one-third) were acquired under the new programme, and their quantity is more than matched by their quality. The collection now includes fine drawings by Abraham Bloemaert, Guercino, and Pierre-Alexander Wille (all acquired in 1984); rare prints by the Fontainebleau school (also 1984), Hans Burgkmair (1982), C. J. Visscher (1983), and Erich Heckel (1983); and eloquent photographs by Hugh Welch Diamond (1984), Diane Arbus (1984), and W. Eugene Smith (1981–84). All the works are reproduced in the catalogue. Also in the exhibition, but acquired too late to enter the catalogue, was the young (Sir) Thomas Lawrence's pastel of a mad girl, dated 1786, which came up for auction at Christie's, London, on 19 March 1985.

The catalogue is organized in four sections: anatomy; healers (physicians, surgeons, tooth-drawers etc.); disease, disability and madness; and the context of life, birth, and death. However, the works are so different from each other that they shine as individual items rather than as members of a group. Of particular interest to this reviewer are the tribute to the founders of serum-therapy for diphtheria by Charles Maurin, *c.* 1895, in the form of a drawing and a somewhat divergent etching; and the watercolour depicting his own expected death by the obscure and extremely ill Ligurian artist Giovanni David, *c.* 1780–90, whose numerous sufferings (arthritis, dropsy, fevers) were the subject of a controversial pamphlet published in Genoa in 1790. These works are a challenge to the historian's subtlety in interpreting historical documents, but the analyses of them in the catalogue are masterly.

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STUART WOOLF, *The poor in western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*, London and New York, Methuen, 1986, 8vo, pp. 240, £25.00.

Dr Woolf has collected together his essays on poverty written since 1976, and added an introductory essay of over forty pages on the general characteristics of poverty in pre-industrial Europe. The introduction, together with a select bibliography on poverty and charity in Western Europe, offers a clear and subtle overview of the many possible varieties of poverty, and the changing responses of society to the definition and alleviation of the problem of the poor. All the other essays deal with Italy, and in particular the Tuscany region and Florence itself. The second essay, on 'The poor, proto-industrialization and the working class', offers a rapid but illuminating summary of the Italian crisis from the sixteenth century until the 1880s. Otherwise, the focus is very much on the Napoleonic period, and close analysis of the documentation on poverty thrown up by the conjunction of revived bureaucracy and the intensified economic and social problems caused by the upheavals since the French Revolution. As with any such collection, there is considerable overlapping and repetition of themes and evidence, and readers might find the title misleading. Italy's unusual inheritance of fragmented, city-dominated government, and its prolonged economic decline, do not make it seem the most plausible candidate as an exemplar of problems of poverty in Western Europe.

For several reasons, however, the collection offers an ideal introduction to the broader Western European phenomenon of the poor. First, Dr Woolf is rigorous in his methodology, explaining thoroughly and with great clarity the issues involved in the interpretation of all kinds of evidence regarding poverty, both the conceptual problems and the bias and inadequacy of particular sources. Second, he is constantly offering fruitful comparisons between countries and with modern parallels, not just in the opening chapter but throughout his Italian material. Finally, despite the particular horrors of Italian rural poverty, incisively analysed in the second chapter, the main characteristics of the North Italian poverty, painstakingly brought to life in the later chapters, are the same as those found all over Europe both before and during the slow

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process of industrialization and urbanization. Woolf reveals the enduring roots of poverty in the disruptions of family life by age, death, and illness, coupled with underemployment and subsistence wages, particularly for women, children, and the aged. He also explores the continuity in official attitudes towards poverty, and in the various strategies which became fashionable across Europe to combat the problem. Above all he brings out the centrality of the family unit, both as a moral and an economic institution, in the strategies of the poor and their betters alike. The final two chapters, on the records of the Florentine Congregation of San Giovanni Battista, bring out particularly well the tragic *pas de deux* between the “family strategy of subsistence” and élite beliefs about “the centrality of the social role of the economically independent family unit” in a “world of structural poverty”.

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PIA BENNIKE, *Palaeopathology of Danish skeletons*, Copenhagen, Akademisk Forlag, 1985, 8vo, pp. 272, DKr. 195.00.

There is now a voluminous literature in the field of human palaeopathology, and for that matter, a healthily growing one on other earlier vertebrates. Even fossil hominid material is beginning to be considered more routinely for evidence of ill health, a reflection on the past narrower approach to our adaptive evolution. Much of the literature on Holocene material is concerned with disease evidence in specific archaeological site samples and is often associated with more general excavation reporting. There are also an encouraging number of studies on the antiquity of specific categories of disease, the arthropathies, oral pathology, and so forth. Two further developments, if they are indeed new trends, are also equally welcome. First, earlier disease evidence is being fitted within a broader-based “medical anthropology”, embracing social, ecological, and epidemiological factors. Second, there seems to be a growing interest in regional evaluations of disease evidence, and it is in this category that Pia Bennike has made a major contribution.

As a result of a long tradition of careful archaeological excavation and curation, a large collection of ancient skeletons is available in Denmark, mainly covering the past 7,000 years. While some of the pathology has been reported on in the past, Dr Bennike provides the first major review (for which she received a medical PhD), with special attention being given to the prehistoric material.

After introducing the archaeology of the material, the author provides a demographic framework within which to consider the disease evidence. No osteometric details are included in the review, with the exception of stature, which has been used in some studies as a variable which can reflect health status. Following this, a number of major disease categories are considered in sequence from trauma and trepanation, the arthropathies, oral pathology, and finally the “special” finds—less common, but indicating the presence of infections (including tuberculosis), neoplasms, and possible nutritionally-related changes (rickets, anaemia).

There is clearly plenty here to interest a range of specialists within medical history. The rickets evidence (neolithic) is by far the earliest known. But to me the most surprising information is in the form of a neolithic skull from Hulbjerg, with clear evidence of a hole drilled neatly through a molar. Dental calculus within the drill-hole showed clearly that this was produced ante-mortem!

A very useful reference work.

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J. H. GADDUM, *Vasodilator substances of the tissues*, with introduction by H. H. Dale, reprint of 1936 ed. with introductory notes on the 50th anniversary by F. C. MacIntosh, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. xviii, 276, £27.50.