

## Book Reviews

The book tells how Bourke was converted from the commonplace opinion that the “only good Indian was a dead Indian” (p. 59) to a more rounded view and finally to an intimate fellow-feeling with (in particular) the Chiricahuas and the Western Apaches. His admiration was initially roused by the Indians’ skill and courage in resisting his own forces in battle, and then heightened by comparison between the best of the Indians and the worst of their white neighbours—demagogues, journalists, and middlemen who stood to profit from a policy of enforced impoverishment for the Indians. A turning-point for Bourke was the US government’s breaking of the Fort Laramie agreement (1875) when prospectors discovered gold on land which it had conceded to the Lakotas, one of several acts of official treachery which embarrassed Bourke’s code of honour. Disgusted by the brutal means used towards dubious ends, Bourke, while still an army officer, became an ethnologist, aiming to record details of the vanishing aboriginal way of life, to ease the path of the Indians towards a worthwhile way of living in compatibility with the Anglos, and to develop the intellectual sophistication of ethnology itself.

Bourke’s personal path led him through some extraordinary experiences, which are here described in his own words: the Sun Dance of the Oglalas, the Snake Dance of the Hopis, and the Urine Dance of the Zunis. Given his familiarity with so many Indians, it is only to be expected that his observations on Indian clinical medicine rank as primary evidence, for instance his records of puerperal fever among the Cheyennes (p. 63) and of Apache midwifery (p. 198). Medicine was one of the subjects on which he encouraged his Apache friends to discourse in his attempt to retrieve tribal lore from oblivion (p. 182), from which one infers that, although clinical medical subjects form only a small and scattered part of the book under review, there is more such material still embedded in the manuscript of the diary. If so, this book is an essential introduction to it.

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JANE B. DONEGAN, *“Hydropathic Highway to Health”: women and water-cure in antebellum America*, New York, Westport, Conn., and London, Greenwood Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. xx, 299, illus., \$35.00.

Hydropony, the alternative healing sect also called water-cure, thrived in America from the early 1840s to the end of the 1850s. During this brief period, its practitioners founded establishments for treating affluent patients and sought legitimacy by setting up professional organizations, publishing journals, and creating medical schools. Never large, the sect was, however, exceptionally rich ideologically, bound as it was by its social philosophy and recruits to such contemporary reform movements as antislavery, feminism, temperance, dress reform, vegetarianism, and perfectionism. Hydropony offered Americans not only a cure for disease by the creative external and internal use of water but also a plan of natural living designed to counterbalance the evils of civilization and bring about physiological and moral salvation. This book is less than the full exploration hydropony deserves, as Professor Donegan recognizes. But its limits also account for part of its strength. By restricting her focus to New York State—the earliest and most vital stronghold of hydropony in America—the author can present her study in more thorough detail than a broader scope would allow. An by concentrating on the signal appeal of hydropony to women, she draws a diffuse topic into the analytical mainstream of American cultural history.

Hydropony’s special relationship to women, Donegan explains, was rooted in its two-pronged crusade to free people from the domination of orthodox doctors and their heroic therapies and from unnatural, artificial ways of living that produced disease and chronic invalidism. To women as patients, it held out the promises of mild treatment and a considerable measure of control over their own bodies. In particular, pregnancy, parturition, and post-partum recovery all were managed in self-conscious accordance with nature, with medical attention focused on diet, hygiene, and the use of water. At a time when orthodox doctors were

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gaining control over midwifery in part by reinterpreting pregnancy to be a disease, hydropathists sought to restore an older definition of childbirth as a natural process over which women themselves had substantial control. Water-cure doctors were committed to the prevalent reformist belief in the perfectability of humanity, but maintained that sound health was a prerequisite to social redemption. Man needed to overcome the physical (not just moral) degeneration to which middle-class Americans had fallen prey before a healthier social order could ensue. And accordingly, woman—burdened further by pregnancy and protean “female complaints”—was doubly bound to guard and improve her own health, for female invalidism was seen as a leading obstacle to expanding women’s sphere and attaining women’s rights. More than this, if, as hydropathists believed, sound health was necessarily the first step toward the broader regeneration of American society, then women as the guardians of family health were key targets for hydropathic proselytism. Hydropathists were also singularly supportive of women as health lecturers and physicians, and set up medical schools for students of both genders that granted among the earliest MD degrees received by women in America.

Donegan’s elaboration of these themes is so detailed that, perhaps inevitably, the reader might willingly have seen some of the space now devoted to multiple examples given over instead to probing new issues. There is virtually nothing on the course of hydropathy in Europe after its initial transplantation to America, yet comparison could have greatly clarified what was—and was not—peculiarly American about the place of women in the story told here. Also, the author stays close to the surface in analysing the hydropathic rhetoric she quotes so fully. Railings against “science” as an oppressor of humanity in general and women in particular were commonplace in water-cure pronouncements, yet precisely what science meant to hydropathists or its standing in the romantic cult of nature of which hydropathy was one expression is unexamined. Nor does the author deconstruct and assess the tacit identification of science with masculinity and nature with femininity that pervaded hydropathic writings. Here perhaps, the work of the present-day gender theorists who have explored feminist alternatives to a putatively masculine natural science could have productively informed the analysis. Still, the fact that the reader wants more simply underscores the richness of the topic Donegan has taken on. This volume stands as an important contribution to the burgeoning historical literature on the gender politics of health and on alternative medical cultures.

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DIANE R. KARP, *Ars medica. Art, medicine, and the human condition* (Catalogue of an exhibition in the Philadelphia Museum of Art), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, 4to, pp. xiv, 231, illus., [no price stated].

The present work is the catalogue of an exhibition of items in the collection of drawings, prints, and photographs of medical subjects which has been built up at the Philadelphia Museum of Art under the title *Ars medica*. This title is not to be recommended to other institutions, since the Latin phrase cannot bear the meaning “medical fine art”, but it rolls well off the tongue and has become established at Philadelphia. The collection was started with the support of Smith Kline & French in 1948 and was first exhibited in 1952. Since then it has travelled to museums in both the USA and Europe.

The collection is not an iconographic collection (a subject-collection that happens to contain works of art) but a fine art collection which is organized around a theme. Hence it does not include undistinguished portraits of distinguished physicians, nor, in theory, does it include technically naïve works, though in practice they do appear when nothing of their kind is available at a more sophisticated level (as in the woodcuts warning of plague, nos. 106–107). Rather, as befits a museum of art, the focus of the collection is on the response of artists: their experiences, ideas, feelings, and visions, and the extraordinary variety of styles and techniques in which these have been expressed on paper.