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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.

John Harley Warner
Yale University

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.

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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.

William Schupbach
Wellcome Institute

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