

wide regional variation. Long distance migration, the common experience of years spent in London, the complex and deep social and cultural networks that characterized the English urban landscape, all worked to tie the regions of England into a single system. These links were just as important in relation to the system of poor relief, as to middle-class sociability or industrial organization. To ignore them, as King does, effectively pre-determines the outcome of the analysis.

This volume contains a wealth of useful material, and will be widely welcomed by scholars of social welfare and poverty. And while one might occasionally cavil at King's approach and analysis, one cannot but admire the hard work and dedication that informs every chapter.

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Jerry L Gaw, *"A time to heal": the diffusion of Listerism in Victorian Britain*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 89, pt 1, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1999, pp. xii, 173, illus., \$25.00 (0-87169-891-9).

The heroic tradition of medical biography was a distinctive genre, born of the Victorian era and of the efforts of an ambitious, competitive profession to establish a secure social and financial foothold in a notoriously snobbish landed society. Just as the Victorians made medical heroes, so, in a process beginning with Lytton Strachey's critique of Florence Nightingale (who may in this context be counted a medical heroine), twentieth-century historians have unmade them. In the past decade, historians of medicine have attempted to see Joseph Lister's contribution to surgery afresh, to place it in the context of contemporary medical theory

and practice, and to unravel the mythology built up by the Victorian profession around the man who became the first medical peer. Work by Lindsay Granshaw and Christopher Lawrence, and later by Thomas Pennington, among others, has given us a fuller and more complex understanding of the nature of Lister's contribution to modern scientific medicine and its impact on the practice of the British surgical community. Inevitably, one supposes, there must be a reactionary backlash in the shape of attempts to re-establish a refurbished Lister on his pedestal. Here it is—a beginning, at least—although not a very strong one.

"A time to heal" is a serious-minded attempt to re-establish Lister's credentials as the man who "revolutionized medicine" in the nineteenth century. Jerry Gaw is prepared to admit that Lister himself was in some respects flawed, but not that he was culpably so. The allegation that Lister "intentionally acted oblivious" to innovations related to but previous to his own "is untenable because there is no evidence for it in the archives". Would one expect there to be? Nor is there much evidence that Gaw has consulted any "archives": most of this book is based on secondary printed sources and his own reading of the *Lancet*. There is no attempt to engage directly with Lawrence or other revisionist historians, or to enter the social and professional world of nineteenth-century surgical practitioners. For the most part, Gaw takes the nineteenth-century readings at face value in a straightforward interpretation of the past, with a strong tendency to see things in black and white. There is little that is fresh here, and students of Victorian surgery and surgeons will probably by-pass this book, to find subtler and more modern approaches to the subject elsewhere.

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