

Book Reviews

IRIS H. W. ENGSTRAND, *Spanish scientists in the New World. The eighteenth-century expeditions*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. xiv, 220, illus., £17.50.

Changes of policy, the Napoleonic conflict, and the collapse of the Spanish Empire meant that the massive amount of documentation and other materials arising from the Spanish expeditions to the New World during the eighteenth century was widely dispersed and that it remained largely unpublished until our own century. Undeserved obscurity has therefore been the lot until recently of many of these extraordinarily wide-ranging expeditions.

The present account, meticulous in its scholarship, and impressive in its graphic understanding of the place of detail within the whole, does much to rectify two previous omissions. It recounts the story of the Royal Scientific Expedition to New Spain (1785–1800), and of the Malaspina Expedition (1784–94) to South America, Mexico, Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and California. An account of the latter has hardly yet appeared in print.

Concentration on these two interconnected expeditions has enabled the author to include a remarkable amount of material, including reports on the medicinal value of the flora, descriptive material on the fauna, on ethnography, geography, cartography, and, of course, much on botany, a prime concern of expeditions of this period. Contacts and co-operation between contemporary Spanish expeditions are made clear for the first time; and many historians will be grateful for an account of the hitherto little-known Mopox expedition in Cuba.

Much human detail emerges, not least the embittered relationships between some expeditionaries. Or, more largely, the heroic adventures of Theodor Haënke which surpass those of Munchhausen, in joining the Malaspina Expedition in Chile in 1790 after missing his ship in Cadiz. Not less interesting are the accounts of expeditionary ideals upheld by the second Viceroy Revillagigedo in New Spain, of ideals given passage by a cumbersome if ultimately efficacious imperial bureaucracy, and of the same ideals thwarted and even crushed by the narrow vision and exiguous purse of Carlos IV.

It is fortunate indeed that the balance of justice to these largely ill-treated and unsung scientists, illustrators, geographers, cartographers, and ethnographers, should have been redressed so ably in a production which it is impossible to fault. The writing is detailed, graphic, sympathetic, well referenced, but not without irony; the illustrations and maps are well chosen for variety and excellence (those in colour demonstrate the high quality of scientific illustration at this period), the appendices expand appropriately on the main text (particularly the invaluable list of books for the use of the Expedition in New Spain); and the bibliography of manuscript sources demonstrates the wide dispersal of the relevant documents and illustrations and the energy and devotion which has gone into their research. The index is excellent. In brief, both author and publishers are to be congratulated on an excellent product. Not only good scholarship, but a marvellous read.

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JOHN THORNE CRISSEY and LAWRENCE CHARLES PARISH, *The dermatology and syphilology of the nineteenth century*, New York, Praeger, 1981, 8vo, pp. viii, 439, illus., [no price stated].

Dermatology should be the easiest of all medical specialities: its lesions are there for all to see. In practice, however, most doctors find it easier to come to a diagnosis of the most obscure disease from a battery of biochemical and radiographical tests than to say what has caused the rash on a patient's skin. ("An allergy" is the usual guess.) Not surprisingly, the history of dermatology has also remained a rather esoteric pursuit, the almost exclusive domain of the dermatologists themselves.

The authors of the present work do not upset precedent, since they are both practising dermatologists. But they do manage to make the history of their mysterious craft accessible, even fun, for the unenlightened. Their survey of personalities and ideas from Robert Willan (1757–1812) to Karl Herxheimer (1861–1944) is filled with good stories, splendidly told. Behind the racy style, however, lies a solid core of fact and interpretations, thoroughly researched and

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adequately documented. Crissey and Parish see the two dermatological paradigms as English and French: the observational school of Willan and Thomas Bateman, content to describe on the basis of morphological appearance and clinical history, and the more ambitious but more speculative approach of Jean Louis Alibert (1768–1837), who sought to establish a “natural” classification based on aetiology. Later chapters deal with work on fungal diseases of the skin, microscopy and the rise of bacteriology, cutaneous manifestations of systemic diseases, and the development of dermatology in the United States. Syphilis is dealt with separately, with interesting discussions of Philippe Ricord and Alfred Fournier, and the final syphilis chapter takes the story through the serological discoveries of the early twentieth century. Throughout, the authors deal fully with French, German, and Austrian dermatologists.

Biographical and cultural vignettes abound, but the volume actually sticks fairly closely to its biographical approach. Wider, professional issues such as specialization or specialized hospitals receive scant attention. There are also a fair number of (mostly minor) mistakes: Philippe Pinel is confused with his nephew, Matthew Baillie and J. P. Desault are consistently mis-spelled, and physicians and surgeons (in the British sense) are inadequately distinguished. On balance, however, the volume’s virtues win and the history of dermatology has now been opened to a wider audience.

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PATRICIA O'BRIEN, *The promise of punishment. Prisons in nineteenth-century France*, Princeton, N.J., and Guildford, Surrey, Princeton University Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. xiii, 330, illus., £21.20.

Using Michel Foucault’s 1975 work, *Surveiller et punir: la naissance des prisons*, as her initial inspiration, Dr O’Brien’s book has enlarged our knowledge of prisons and systems of punishment in nineteenth-century France. Her work begins with the rise of the penitentiary system and sketches the reformist values in medicine, law, and philanthropy which shaped it. However, in contrast to similar accounts that end their histories in the 1840s when the penitentiary is said to have triumphed as a “total institution”, she extends her investigation as far as 1885. Consequently, she discusses the modifications that the prison underwent in the latter part of the century, and more importantly, examines the later correctional innovations designed to complement the penitentiary’s role. These new penal strategies, she explains, operated around the two poles of re-education and elimination, and were developed to contend with the growing tide of recidivism. Conditional liberation was instituted to limit the amount of time well-behaved offenders spent in prison, and hence to minimize the institution’s contaminating effects, while at the same time a network of patronage and surveillance was devised to help convicts “readjust” to free society on their release. Second, rigorous measures were passed in 1885 to relegate the multiple offender (including vagabonds and mendicants) to New Caledonia and Guyana, thus ridding metropolitan France of incorrigibles while simultaneously providing a conscripted work force for the most arduous tasks of colonization. O’Brien argues compellingly that such programmes do not signify the failure of the prison, as has been previously asserted, or any incipient move towards humanitarian de-institutionalization. Rather, they indicate the massive extension of corrective procedures into areas a long way outside prison walls.

The discussion of the development of the corrective system as a whole is, however, secondary to the major goal of the work, which is to uncover as far as possible the daily lives of individuals inside the prisons. For example, she discusses the varying rationales of treatment and punishment for the three categories of offenders – men, women and children – who by mid-century had been separated into different institutions (Chapters 2 and 4). Her examination of work (Chapter 5) gives insight into the role of the small-scale entrepreneur in the penal system and raises important issues about prison workers as wage labourers and the place of labour as a rehabilitative strategy. By looking at the recruitment of prison guards (Chapter 6), O’Brien demonstrates their often deviant and sadistic practices, implying that perhaps the criminals themselves were less criminal than were their masters. Throughout the volume, she shows how difficult it was to