

and surgeons, and presents a social reality which goes beyond the world of health care.

The final section of the book and the appendix deal with the mutual assistance societies in Barcelona at the end of the eighteenth century. The demographic changes in the city, mainly among the working class, improved living standards and led to the development of institutions and associations which, in different ways, combined religious customs, subsidies and medical assistance in illness and death.

The archival material used in the book to explicate the development of the health care professions and the organization of medical assistance, draws us closer to a rich reality which, although somewhat similar to that of other areas, also reveals idiosyncrasies which are crucial to an understanding of eighteenth-century Catalan medical practice.

**Pilar León Sanz,**  
Universidad de Navarra

**David E Shuttleton,** *Smallpox and the literary imagination 1660–1820*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. xiii, 265, illus., £48.00, \$85.00 (hardback 978-0-521-87209-6).

Uniting their forces, it seems, by sheer dint of scholarly writing, literary historians of the last generation have rewritten the cultural profile of numerous diseases: cancer, consumption, gout, heart disease, obesity and others. David Shuttleton, a literary historian interested in the interface of literature and medicine, has rounded out this record with his fine study of smallpox's profile in the eighteenth century, its most transformative epoch before inoculation and vaccination turned around its fortunes after 1800. Shuttleton revises smallpox's harsh realities, social effects, and especially its verbalizations and mentalizations by onlookers, close and distant.

Smallpox's narrower medical history is, of course, far from certain. Identified in the ancient world, first described by the Arab

physician Rhazes, and distinguished from measles by Fracastoro, its progress from the Middle Ages to 1600 still conceals mysteries. What can safely be affirmed is that by 1700 it was killing many thousands each year: the scourge from which the eighteenth century could never be free. Jenner's vaccinations at the end of the century, building on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's earlier inoculations, were the Enlightenment's best hope for prevention. But the resistance to inoculation was immense. It was only when empire and imperialism in the Indian subcontinent made plain that smallpox would become a menace as dire as cholera, that the benefits of vaccination were securely applied.

"Medical history" is a smaller field than "medical profile", which extends to a malady's public understanding: here think of mental illness and AIDS. Shuttleton appropriately begins with this larger, bewildering profile in mind and augments our sense of smallpox's cultural casualties. A scourge that disfigures its victims through visible sores, scars, and red spots erupting hot pus will be moralized despite attempts to neutralize the condition.

Yet if disease clusters possess inherent symbolic resonances, as cultural historians have been demonstrating for three decades that they do, smallpox's salient sign was disfigurement: disfigurement more than death. This perception did not sit easily with a Georgian civilization steeped in the lure of widely disseminated cults of beauty—aesthetic, physical, moral and sublime—and beauty's opposites in the realms of the ugly and grotesque. Historians have interpreted much Enlightenment culture through this specific opposition. Yet read the pathetic accounts of those dying of smallpox and the horror of disfigurement terrorizes them far more than death does.

If obesity in our time has become the site of fiercely contested debates trading on our obsession with symmetrically trim bodies—so slim that they are often anorexic—smallpox before 1800 took a similar toll on the faces and figures of women and men, rich and poor.

Shuttleton's accounts are often riveting, demonstrating the part played by imagination in the framing of this condition, especially the literary imagination that conceptualizes malady by first verbalizing it.

This is not another pedestrian representation of a disease cluster: Shuttleton also embeds perplexing philosophical dimensions of "representing malady"—its degree of stigma—and takes sides in the ongoing debate about the need for demystification. Students of medical history know how assiduously Susan Sontag campaigned in the 1980s to demystify disease, which (in her view) should be a scientific category rather than moral sign or cultural stigma. Her aim was noble and eloquently argued, but history from time immemorial—continuing into the present—weighs against her position. People have always given meaning to disease; infected individuals cannot refrain from attaching morally loaded significance to their maladies that exceed the limits of the pathological signs and literal physical symptoms. For centuries smallpox was living proof of the moral tendency rather than its exception, just as psychological depression is today.

**George Rousseau,**  
University of Oxford

**Lucy E Frank** (ed.), *Representations of death in nineteenth-century US writing and culture*, Warwick Studies in the Humanities, Aldershot and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2007, pp. xii, 234, illus., £50, \$89.95 (hardback 978-0-7546-5528-2).

Like many scholarly works on death in the nineteenth century, Lucy Frank foregrounds the introduction to this diverse and engaging collection of essays with reference to Phillippe Ariès's pioneering text *The hour of our death* (1981). As Frank notes, Ariès's attempt to write the history of death in western culture from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century

necessitated a degree of generalization even though he acknowledged historical and national differences. Thus, while Ariès cast American attitudes towards death as an extreme example of western morbidity, he failed to engage with the multiple cleavages within, and complexities of, US society. This volume seeks to redress Ariès's omission by extrapolating and understanding marginal and contested cultures of death in nineteenth-century America.

The volume is divided into three parts. Part One examines the relationship between political agency and discourses of death, mourning and remembrance. Most of the essays emphasize the distance between an African-American politics of mourning that sought to remember the losses and deathly effects of slavery and a notion of a "national" culture of loss, a difference exemplified in Dana Luciano's chapter on responses to the death of President Lincoln. Similarly, discussion of racial differences in modes of mourning is underscored by analysis of the flimsy value attached to African-American mortality by white writers and attempts to challenge perceptions of black mortality by commentators such as W E B Du Bois and Charles Chesnut. Despite the emphasis on difference in this section, an examination of the legendary speech by Native American Chief Seattle argues for recognition of liminal texts of loss that serve as a middle ground between diverse cultures of mourning and sensibility. Part Two focuses exclusively on poetical works and is concerned primarily with gender and loss. Two engaging chapters on child mortality offer critical reflections on the assumed feminization and mawkishness of mourning in the nineteenth century and the difficulties of negotiating Evangelical models of bereavement. Part Three considers the social rituals and popular discourses surrounding death, such as the use of mourning wear to perform grief, and the appeal of the supernatural to an audience saturated with death in the Civil War.

The literary and cultural emphasis of the essays will appeal to inter-disciplinary