

Book Reviews

(for example, in the reference to Colney Hatch). The index is cursory.

Efron's work is a notable achievement. We can be grateful to him for an illuminating and sympathetic reconstruction. He draws together an immense amount of material in an attractively written synthesis. I would like to see a second edition, which is twice the size, probing the discourse more fully, and set in a more systematically explored prosopographical, institutional and contextual framework.

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Philip D Curtin, *Migration and mortality in Africa and the Atlantic world, 1700–1900*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001, pp. 360, £59.50 (hardback 0-86078-833-4).

The idea of western man in an alien and pathological environment is a unifying factor of much of Philip Curtin's work. This collection of articles centres upon the effects of human migration and mortality in the Atlantic basin between 1700 and 1900, and provides a valuable opportunity to access easily a group of articles from one of the foremost contributors to the field.

The papers, written between 1950 and 1999, are divided into four main groups: the first two deal with themes within general political and economic Caribbean and African colonial history, the third with the role of disease and mortality, and the fourth with environmentalist themes. Parts three and four are of special interest to the medical historian because of their focus variously upon the role of disease theories in history; the exercise of colonial power in the periphery; the health of African troops; the impact of new treatments; perceptions

of tropical climates and the historical importance of migratory patterns.

Some of the articles (most famously, 'The white man's grave', *Journal of British Studies*, 1961, 1, and 'The end of the "white man's grave"', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1990, 21) have already achieved classic status, being frequently cited in medical historical writing, and to return to them reminds us of Curtin's painstaking analysis of the mortality statistics for West Africa between 1817 and 1914.

One of Curtin's strengths is the way he places policies and actions in their proper ideological contexts. Whether it is the reasons for the slave revolt in Saint-Domingue and the particular way this French colony's disparate social groups interpreted the Revolution's Declaration of the Rights of Man ('The Declaration of the Rights of Man in Saint-Domingue, 1788–1791', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 1950, 30), or an illustration of how medical explanations were deployed to justify an essentially racist, segregationist policy of city planning in Africa. ('Medical knowledge and urban planning in tropical Africa', *American Historical Review*, 1985, 90), it is useful to be reminded that things are rarely as they seem when colonial economies and sensibilities are at stake.

One small criticism, which does not challenge the intellectual content of the collection in any way, is a general grumble about the uncertain value of single-authored collections of previously published articles. On the positive side, they offer an easily accessible retrospective of an historian's empirical and ideological approaches, a unique opportunity to provide synthesis and to examine continuities and changes. On the negative side, there is the nagging concern that this is simply a means of getting an extra book out. In the case of this collection specifically, the quality of the articles' reproduction gives the impression of a rather low budget assemblage, unfortunately not reflected in the price. In many

anthologies of this type, new articles are added or the collection is typically given some freshness with the inclusion of a new introductory chapter by the author explaining the context, connections and interruptions within the articles' themes. But, apart from a short one-and-a-half page preface, there is nothing new in this volume. However, regardless of the book's production, the articles stand well on their own and speak for themselves as well-argued and thoroughly researched examples of good history reinforcing the length and productivity of Curtin's career.

Curtin is a formidable historian. The content of this collection is sound and incontestably interesting. Maybe predictably so, precisely because we have seen everything in the collection before, but this does not detract from the fact that this is a valuable resource. It is a treat to have things made so easily accessible for scholars in the field.

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Margaret Humphreys, *Malaria: poverty, race, and public health in the United States*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, pp. xi, 196, £28.50 (hardback 0-8018-6637-5).

In this relatively brief book, Margaret Humphreys has given us what should become the standard work on the history of malaria in the United States. Gracefully written, perceptive, and well-documented, it will make historians of medicine, public health, and the social history of the American South grateful for her efforts. Humphreys, a physician and historian who has also published a book on the history of yellow fever in the United States, is a reliable and careful guide to all phases of

the malaria story, from aetiology, to medical care (or lack thereof), to social context. A Southerner herself, she is sympathetic to the plight of a region that lagged behind the rest of the nation in medical care and, partly in consequence, in health, into the mid-twentieth century. She is, however, unsparing in her critique of the conventions of racism and in enumerating their results for African-Americans.

Humphreys begins with a careful review of malaria in the colonial era and works through the nineteenth century, all the while aware that historical reports do not reliably identify malaria as a distinct disease. Along the way there are pauses to consider the effect of slavery on the onset and endemicity of malaria, the roles of vivex and falciparum malaria, and the disappearance of malaria from the old Northwest. She agrees with the sixty-year-old thesis of Erwin Ackerknecht that the increasing accoutrements of "civilization" in the upper Mississippi and Ohio river valleys presented diminishing opportunities for mosquitoes to cohabit with and bite humans, such that the complex human-mosquito-plasmodium ecology could not flourish. Under similar circumstances, the occasional malaria epidemics of regions throughout the northern and western United States and Canada came to an apparent end by about 1900.

The book then turns to an examination of the persistence of malaria in the American South into the mid-twentieth century. The author asks "what was it about the South, its people, its topography, its political will" that made malaria such a persistent pestilence? (p. 48). Humphreys is particularly troubled by the historical reality that very quickly, in the first decade of the century, the cause of malaria and means of controlling it were identified and well-demonstrated. Why were these not seized on and implemented in the South?

Her answer is essentially the subtitle of the book: the longevity of malaria was a matter of race, continuing poverty, and the