

## Book Reviews

end, the reader who desires the smaller, cheaper, and less-authoritative text, would be well-advised to buy this book. The rest of us can only lament the hundreds of important texts that still remain unavailable.

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PHILIP M. TEIGEN (editor), *Books, manuscripts, and the history of medicine. Essays on the 50th anniversary of the Osler Library*, New York, Science History Publications, 1982, 8vo, pp. [viii], 112, \$14.95.

On 29 May 1929, The Osler Library was dedicated and accepted by the Principal, Sir Arthur Currie, on behalf of McGill University. It was fitting that fifty years later a group of Oslerolators should assemble at McGill for a celebration at which five bibliographers, librarians, and historians, Charles Roland, Richard Durling, Estelle Brodman, Thomas Tanselle, and Eric Freeman, "examined the ways the history of medicine, librarianship and bibliography still occupy common ground" – and too often, as Eric Freeman suggested, fail to do so.

Naturally much is said about the Osler–Cushing–Fulton–Keynes axis directed towards bio-bibliography. No less tribute is paid to McKerrow, Pollard, and Greg, and those whose equal concern was with the printer and the physical aspects of the book itself. Their successors are engaged in descriptive and analytical bibliography on their journey to the chips and the computers – a little less humanism, a little more mathematics – which must simplify the accessibility of knowledge committed to the written word. But how long will the paper on which the word is written or printed survive?

The meeting was a happy one under the wise and courteous chairmanship of Lloyd Stevenson, who contributes the introduction. But it did end with some gloomy predictions for those whose bibliomania is near-neighbour to their bibliographia. Were these the obsequies for that adored object, the book as we know it? And there are worse anxieties; tapes, no less than paper, are not forever.

For me, who had seen the empty shelves of the Bibliotheca Osleriana three years before the books arrived, this book, the memorial of a memorable occasion, is a delight and I hope that it will give the vicarious pleasure of the celebration to many, many people.

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J. R. K. ROBSON (editor), *Food, ecology and culture. Readings in the anthropology of dietary practices*, New York, Gordon & Breach Science Publishers, 1981, 8vo, pp. ix, 143, illus., \$30.25.

There is little doubt that there are significant differences between the diets of hunter-gatherer peoples, past and present, and more "advanced" agricultural communities. It could be that later Palaeolithic societies were more versatile and experimental in their range and preparation of foods, but fundamentally diets must have been high in fibre with a seasonally fluctuating combination of fruits, carbohydrate plant foods, plus nut or animal proteins and fats. During the past two decades, interest in food has gone beyond "traditional" nutrition studies, and has drawn in a range of workers in the human sciences, including archaeology, sociology, and even psychology. Although the bibliography on this subject is becoming vast, there is in fact remarkably little in book form to recommend to those interested in the whole breadth of studies. This present collection of fourteen separate papers extends again the variety of recent publications, and as there is no great overlap with other current books, it can be seen as complementing the others.

In the introduction, Robson points out that we really know very little about food use beyond advanced societies, and yet if we are fully to understand the possible links between nutrition, human adaptability, and patterns of disease (especially such major categories as cancer, or cardiovascular and neurovascular diseases) then the whole spectrum of human food use must be

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scanned. The volume under review is a selection of papers from the journal *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, and sets out to demonstrate the impressive variety of food and food habits still to be seen once one leaves shop and supermarket societies. Although labelled studies in anthropology, it would be very wrong to think of them as therefore of restricted interest, and the data presented and problems raised have significance for all concerned with human nutrition. In Robson and Yen's study, for instance, on the Philippine Tasaday diet, there is an interesting discrepancy between food collected and brought in for consumption and what is required in energy and protein terms. Random snacking may account for some of this, but one might well question whether they are highly adapted to low levels of nutrient intake, and this is supported by the next study on the Tiruray, another Philippine group. In Townsend's study of demographic parameters in relation to subsistence in New Guinea, we see that adequate feeding of children can dictate policies of infanticide and other child spacing strategies. The Sandawe of Tanzania provide some contrast, as Newman reveals, being generally well fed – but with a fail-safe strategy of keeping in mind alternative “famine” foods. In the case of the Maori study, the problem which particularly caught my eye was the fact that these people were not in the past obese, as is commonly the case in other Polynesians, and one can well ask what the adaptive significance of obesity might be in some peoples?

Moving on to the study of the Bapedi (Transvaal), it is demonstrated that they display poor growth and have overt protein-calorie malnutrition. The lucky individual is the infant, as breast milk composition remains normal, and it is questioned whether there is some natural selection in favour of powerfully lactating females. Links between food and folk medicine are discussed in relation to a west Malaysian group. While during various illnesses rice remains the important staple food, many other foods are viewed as detrimental. McKay points out that the balance of food components can be significantly modified as a result, but that attention to health problems must take into account the complexities of indigenous beliefs. There are further useful papers concerned with limitations and taboos on food intake, that by Wilson being specifically on Malay childbirth taboos and lowered intake of essential nutrients. Others usefully consider avoidance at puberty, menstruation, and through pregnancy and lactation.

Finally, there are two contributions by Frederick Simoons. In the first he restates and updates his and other studies on the history and pattern of dairying and milk use by various populations in the Old World, and why it failed to spread fully, although milkable animals were available. He rightly suggests that a series of inter-related determinants must be involved. His second, and the book's final, paper is about sacred cows, a significant nutritional problem in Hindu India, and a religious belief which perhaps symbolically represents some of the earlier views on food use in different cultures!

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