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Assuredly, Hermione de Almeida dots the i's and crosses the t's more indefatigably than any previous scholar; but in doing so, she runs the risk of descending into self-parodic pedantry. Keats has only to mention an ailment or a herb to provoke learned disquisitions upon nosological or pharmaceutical beliefs found in writings with which Keats may have been familiar. Thus, on p. 77, the observation that in *The eve of St Agnes*, Porphyro "listened to [Madeline's] breathing" is the cue for a protracted discussion of respiration theory ("The close connection between life and respiration has been noticed by ordinary observers since antiquity . . ."). All too often it is obscure what purpose such amassing of contexts or influences is meant to serve. One *could* argue, for instance, that Keats's vision would have been inconceivable in any but in a medically trained author (a view hypothetically sustainable in the case of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, a generation later). But Hermione de Almeida does not define her contentions with any precision: indeed this book is conspicuous for its lack of a fully argued conclusion. And so many questions go unanswered: how much of Keats's outlook, one wonders, is attributable to his involvement, not with medicine *per se*, but with Burton's *Anatomy of melancholy*?

What is here undertaken very copiously, however, is a delineation of the turn of the century background of "Romantic medicine" that pays paramount attention to *Naturphilosophie* and the new vitalistic metaphysics becoming powerful after John Hunter. Yet the aptness of this framework for explaining the case of Keats remains doubtful. Rather as might be predicted, much of the textual analysis of the interlinkage between Romantic medicine and literary expression concentrates not directly on Keats, but on Schiller and Humboldt, Coleridge and Green. And with regard to the depiction of Romantic medicine itself, it is a pity that Hermione de Almeida obviously completed the book too early to make use of *Romanticism and the sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), edited by Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine; but her failure to draw upon Russell C. Maulitz's *Morbid appearances: the anatomy of pathology in the early nineteenth century* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) is rather mystifying.

Finally, it needs to be said that this book does not meet the standards of accuracy one expects of the Oxford University Press. Peculiar lapses of language occur ("vertex" and "vortex" seem to be confused, for instance), and misprints are numerous, especially in the bibliography, where downright howlers appear. For example, the co-author with Daniel M. Fox of *Photographing medicine: images and power in Britain and America since 1840* (1988) is twice given as a mysterious "Gilbert T. Gall" rather than, as it should be, Christopher Lawrence; and Owsei Temkin's "The concept of infection" is said to have appeared in G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter's *The ferment of knowledge*—would that it had! This seems to be a volume that will be used more for its fund of information than for its interpretation.

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MARIE BOAS HALL, *Promoting experimental learning: experiment and the Royal Society 1660—1727*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. xiv, 207, £35.00, \$59.95 (0–521–40503–3).

Although in general the history of medical and scientific institutions is a rather neglected topic, the Royal Society has attracted a great number of historians since the seventeenth century. The Society's prominent role in English science, the prestige of its Fellows, as well as the wealth of source-material available to historians—chiefly the information contained in Thomas Birch's *History* (1756–7)—are some of the main reasons for the unparalleled flow of publications on its early history.

This book focuses on the experimental activity of the Society from the time of its foundation until the death of its most prestigious President, Sir Isaac Newton, in 1727. In the preliminary meeting of 28 November 1660 the founders stated that their design lay in "founding a Colledge for the promoting of Physico-Mathematicall Experimentall Learning". Exactly what they meant by "Experimentall Learning" is, however, a matter of some obscurity, and has aroused controversy. The activities of the Society were not confined to physics, chemistry, and medicine; they also included topics—such as meteorology, archaeology, numismatics and

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“Biblical geology”—which could hardly be the object of experimental investigation. Yet Marie Boas Hall takes into consideration only the actual performance of real experiments and explicitly declines to take into account “the presentation of random empirical facts, fancies or thoughts” (p. 5).

She begins with a discussion of the original aims of the founders, and, subsequently, of the several schemes for reforming the Society—some of them aimed at arresting the decline in the number of experiments conducted at meetings. Chapters 3, 5 and 7 deal with the performance of experiments as recorded in the minutes of the meetings. These show that the experimental activities were somewhat unsystematic and very much depended on the abilities and interests of the Curator. It is significant that the highest number of experiments was performed during Hooke’s Curatorship. Physiology played a prominent part in the early years, and Richard Lower’s experiments (chiefly in the field of blood transfusion) were particularly successful.

After a long period of decline, these experimental activities began to revive with Newton’s election as President (1703) and Francis Hauksbee’s appointment as Curator (1704). Optics and physical science dominated the scene during the first two decades of the eighteenth century. However, after a promising start in the 1660s, the general trend (with a few exceptions) was a shift away from the actual performance of experiments to reporting on and discussing those performed elsewhere. This phenomenon raises some crucial questions relating to the role of experimentation in formulating scientific theories and, in general, to the fundamental credibility of the accounts given by natural philosophers. Despite the richness of recent discussions—both philosophical and sociological—of the status of experiments and of those who carried them out, the author makes no attempt to enlarge on her arguably simplistic statement that the decline of experimental activity was the result of “a greater sophistication on the part of Fellows”, who “could understand the experiment described so well that they did not see the need to view it directly” (pp. 22–3).

Chapters 4, 6, and 8 are devoted to the communication between the Society and other English and continental savants. Again, the reader is given the impression that the communication, as well as the actual performance, of experiments was an essentially unsystematic activity, depending largely on the active role and prestige of the Secretary and of the President. The golden age of the international interaction of the Society more or less finished with the death, in 1677, of Henry Oldenburg. It was Newton’s international reputation that gave new vigour to the network of communication which Oldenburg had begun. The *Philosophical Transactions*—which Oldenburg conceived and started editing in 1665—were the main instrument of diffusion and communication: they were read all over the Continent, and excerpts from them were translated and reprinted in German, French and Italian periodicals.

In the last chapter, concerned with “the view of the world”, Boas Hall states that the intellectual world generally agreed with the Fellows that empiricism was at the core of the Society’s activities. But she shows scant interest in the discussions on the Royal Society which occurred in the 1660s and 70s. For instance, Henry Stubbe’s criticisms are not taken into account because, she argues, they were simply personal attacks on Joseph Glanvill and did not involve the Society as a whole. On the other hand, the nature and role of Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society* (1667) and Glanvill’s works in defence of the Society’s aims also receive a rather sketchy account.

Despite these problems, this book contains a great deal of fresh material on the history of the Royal Society for which historians of modern science and medicine can be grateful.

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JEAN CÉARD, MARIE-MADELEINE FONTAINE, and JEAN-CLAUDE MARGOLIN (eds), *Le corps à la renaissance. Actes du XXX^e Colloque de Tours 1987*, Paris, Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990, 8vo, pp. 502, illus. (paperback).

This handsome volume is the permanent record of a particularly wide-ranging and challenging conference held in 1987 at the Centre d’Etudes supérieures de la Renaissance at Tours. Its theme was nothing less than the hermeneutics of the body in the European