

Society for the Social History of Medicine



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Roy Porter 1946 – 2002



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Roy Porter, 1946-2002

Roy Porter, who died suddenly on 3 March 2002 at the age of fifty-five, was one of the earliest and best-known practitioners of what came to be known as the social history of medicine. Over the many years he spent at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine in London, he became legendary for his industriousness – he spent at least fourteen hours at his desk seven days a week – and for the cheerful, inspiring leadership he provided to students, postdoctoral fellows and visiting scholars. (Not to mention the lunches he bought them periodically.)



Above all, however, he transformed historical writing and the intellectual life of Britain with a flow of scholarly books that the book-buying public – not just scholars – wanted to read. Although always claiming that he found writing a painful task, he seemed to revel in that pain: averaging about two books per year, he was undoubtedly the most productive medical historian of our time. But passionate as he was in his pursuit of the history of medicine, narrow specialisation was anathema to him. Nothing gave him more joy than to finish a book on the history of gout and turn without a pause to the history of the British Enlightenment. Or, for that matter, to take up the history of the Bethlem Hospital as soon as he had completed a vast social history of London.

At the time of his death, he was ostensibly retired but nobody could have believed it

from his output. During the previous year, he had published a brief history of madness; delivered the manuscript of a short history of medicine to its publisher; almost completed a book on how modern man came to disbelieve in the soul; and was in the research stages of a comprehensive two-volume social and cultural history of Britain. As always, he also reviewed a dizzying range of books for literary magazines, scholarly journals and the Sunday papers; lectured regularly in locales ranging from Peru to Mauritius; and was a frequent presence on the radio. And as if all that weren't enough, he was also taking yoga lessons, cultivating his allotment and threatening to learn Portuguese and play the trumpet.

Although no slouch at writing for academics and although always ready to help out professional colleagues with spectacular generosity, erudition and wit, Porter, a true believer in Enlightenment ideals of free debate and the free interchange of ideas, felt no embarrassment in addressing audiences outside the academic world. The man simply could not accept the boundaries between different sub-fields of history or between the scholarly and popular domains that so many professional scholars observe so fastidiously. Scorning jargon, earnestness and pomposity, he communicated the excitement of history, the joy of ideas and the sheer exhilaration of thought to those very people whom social historians purport to rescue from the enormous condescension of posterity but with whom they are usually unwilling (or unable) to communicate. Transfixed as a boy by the intellectual vistas revealed to him by his English teacher, Porter strove all his life to bring that same electrifying experience, not only to his fellow academics, but to people everywhere, regardless of their background, education, or status.

Chandak Sengoopta
Centre for the History of
Science, Technology and Medicine
University of Manchester

Ethics and Ethnics: the implementation of western medicine, 1800 to the present

**University of Aberdeen
19th –20th October, 2001**

Despite coming soon after the tragic events of September 11, the conference organisers (Oonagh Walsh and the staff of the Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen) were still able to welcome delegates from North America, Ireland and various British institutions to this provocatively-titled event. Despite a lower than expected turnout, the event demonstrated that enthusiasm and interest contribute much to a successful conference. The two-day gathering concentrated on the implementation of western medicine over a period of two centuries. However, given the nature of the papers, a number of supplementary themes emerged during the conference, including the production of medical knowledge, the representation of colonial subjects, and the role of film sources in historical research.

Saturday's session got off to a flying start with a presentation by Lesley Diack of the University of Aberdeen. Her talk, entitled 'The ethics of a nuclear reserve: corned beef, typhoid and government policy in the 1960s', provided the conference with a local theme, whilst discussing the health effects of contaminated provisions. This study addressed the particular fate of corned beef that was stockpiled locally after 1945 for use in the event of nuclear war, especially of those tins deemed past their shelf-life. The paper considered the government's dilemma in weighing up the relative risk of typhoid when faced with nuclear war, and described subsequent efforts to eliminate the hazard by offering old stocks as food aid to Pakistan.

A paper by Hugh Pennington elaborated on the ethical dimensions of BSE and *E. coli* poisoning, and calculated the financial costs

of such health outbreaks to the economy. As with Diack's paper, Pennington's linked outbreaks of illness to production methods at the level of the firm, and it was agreed that work on business archives where possible would add an important dimension to these accounts of food contamination. Larry Geary's paper on medical practice among the pre-famine Irish poor was a further exploration of medical ethics within the immediate geography of Ireland and Britain. It discussed the expectations and provision of medical services from the perspectives of both the practitioner and the patient. The remainder of conference papers examined medical provisions in a colonial context.

The presentation of several health propaganda films early in the conference (discussing subjects as varied as malaria eradication projects, anti-tuberculosis vaccination and the prevention of sleeping sickness) both primed participants for the remaining papers and demonstrated the potential uses of these fascinating historical records. The films were selected and introduced by Michael Clark of the Wellcome Trust. Not surprisingly, most films were judged unethical by today's standards, though only limited attempts were made to analyse, for example, the narrative structure of this material. The lively discussions that followed each screening clearly suggested further work on these sources would be both productive and worthwhile.

A later viewing of a film from 1946 on DDT and malaria control proved a well-chosen introduction to Patricia Barton's presentation, entitled 'Mass treatment of malaria in British India, 1900-1939'. This, amongst other things, asked how colonial rulers could encourage a governed population to take anti-malarial drugs when its own troops would not even contemplate their use. In this particular situation the conundrum was neatly solved with the outbreak of war. A similar experiment in

disease control was discussed by John Manton. This time, the setting was Ogoja Province, Nigeria between 1940 and 1947. Manton described, in considerable detail, the ways in which the nebulous intentions and plans of colonial and missionary actors were focussed by the arrival of a leprologist and a staff of medical missionary sisters from Ireland, whose work gave rise to a programme combining a hybrid of religious community and public health experiment.

A final colonial experiment was described by Karen Eng of Georgetown University, whose work concentrated on the role of medicine in German efforts to create a rival to Hong Kong at Liautschou in China before 1914. The paper was particularly good at discussing the health threats of the region and its people as perceived by the German occupiers, who were attempting to construct a jewel in their small colonial empire. This was followed by Samuel Connally's lively summary of the better-known campaign for the mass-treatment of syphilis in Tuskegee, Alabama.

While preceding papers clearly emphasised contemporary beliefs in the superiority of western medicine, the conference's final paper, by Bristol's Margaret Jones, demonstrated a very different interplay between western and indigenous medicine. Her work on Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) presented an interesting example of knowledge production. Orthodox medicine there, rather than becoming progressively more western throughout the twentieth

century, comprised an interesting mix of both Ayurvedic medicine and western practices. Finally, the conference concluded with the Annual General Meeting of the Society for the Social History of Medicine, and discussion of the topics covered over the two days continued during a very enjoyable dinner at the Linklater Rooms of King's College.

Whilst this conference showcased much stimulating work, it also clearly emphasised the influence of the present on the study of the past, to a greater degree than any other in recent memory. Most presentations elicited a reaction from the audience confirming that past attempts to implement western medicine were indeed often unethical. Consequently, the particular relationships considered throughout the conference also tended to be those discussed by ethicists today: these included those involving ruler and subject, doctor and patient, amongst others, whilst more lateral affiliations, such as those between practitioners, or between government and business, were rarely considered. Nevertheless, this important conference offered a variety of new work, and revealed promising new directions in what is clearly a fertile area for further research.

Jonathan Reinarz
Centre for Medical History
University of Birmingham

SSH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Postgraduate workshop Themes in twentieth-century psychiatry

**Exeter, UK
June 2002**

We would like to announce a one day workshop organized by postgraduate students for other postgraduates and sponsored by the SSHM.

This is a new venture that aims to share findings, develop information networks and foster a research culture amongst postgraduate students interested in the social history of medicine. The first event dealing with themes in twentieth-century psychiatry will be held at the University of Exeter in June (date to be confirmed).

Postgraduate students are encouraged to submit an abstract of up to 250 words if they

would like to present a paper. New researchers who would simply like to come along are also welcome. We are especially keen to involve part-time and mature students as well as drawing on existing strong regional connections. There are a small number of bursaries available to student members of the Society for the Social History of Medicine.

For more details please contact:

Dr Pamela Dale
Centre for Medical History
Amory Building, University of Exeter
Exeter EX4 4RJ, UK
Email: Pamela.L.Dale@exeter.ac.uk

Conference Birthing and Bureaucracy: the history of childbirth and midwifery

**Sheffield, UK
11th-12th October, 2002**

The School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Sheffield, in collaboration with the Society for the Social History of Medicine, the UK Centre for the History of Nursing, and the Manchester Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, are hosting an international conference marking the centenary of the passage of the first Midwives' Act in the UK, in 2002. This Act was a significant milestone in the history of midwifery, marking a fundamental change in the relationship between birth and bureaucracy.



The development of modern birthing practices and of the modern profession of midwifery has been associated with significant changes in authoritative knowledge in relation to birth, and with changes in the relationship between birth attendants and childbearing women.

The conference will bring together researchers and practitioners from a range of disciplines.

Papers address the formalisation and rationalisation of childbirth knowledge, explore the gendering of knowledge and birthing practices, and deal with professionalisation and bureaucratisation.

Session themes include:

- Birth and midwifery in the early modern period
- Controversy and compromise: birth and midwifery in the nineteenth century
- Birth and bureaucracy
- 'Doing the work': birth attendants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
- Birth and place
- Representations and narrative constructions of birth

The Society for the Social History of Medicine is sponsoring five bursaries to enable post-graduate students to attend. Students wishing to apply for one of these should request further information from the conference organiser:

Jane Durell
Women's Informed Childbearing and Health Research Group (WICH)
School of Nursing and Midwifery
University of Sheffield
Bartolome House, Winter Street
Sheffield S3 7ND, UK
E-mail: j.durell@sheffield.ac.uk

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/wich>

SSH Research Symposium

The Normal and the Abnormal: Historical and cultural perspectives on norms and deviations

Manchester, UK
10th-11th July, 2002

The abstracts for this symposium are now available on-line at the following web address:

<http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wer/abnormalabstracts.htm>

For further details, please contact the organisers, Dr Chandak Sengoopta (c.sengoopta@man.ac.uk) or Dr Waltraud Ernst (wer@soton.ac.uk).

World Wide Web

Medicine and Madison Avenue

Duke University's Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library is pleased to announce the availability of "Medicine and Madison Avenue" (MMA).

MMA is an online database of over 600 health-related advertisements printed in newspapers and magazines between 1911 and 1958, as well as 35 selected historical documents relating to the creation and influence of health-related advertisements. As a new addition to our image resources, Instructor's and Student's Guides are also included, and provide ideas for use of the database in the classroom. This project is a collaboration of the National Humanities Center, the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising, and Marketing History, Duke's Digital Scriptorium, and the State University of New York at Stony Brook. MMA was generously funded by the Ahmanson Foundation.

The purpose of the project is to illustrate the variety and evolution of marketing images from the 1910s through the 1950s of health-related advertisements. The collection

represents a wide range of products such as cough and cold remedies, laxatives and indigestion aids, and vitamins and tonics, among others. The images are drawn from the collections of the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising, and Marketing History, with the bulk of the ads originating in the J. Walter Thompson Company's Competitive Advertising File.



An important component of Medicine and Madison Avenue is the inclusion of "Suggestions for Classroom Use." This section contains the Instructor's and Student's Guide, and is written by Nancy Tomes, Professor of History, State University of New York at Stony Brook. The Instructor's Guide aims to help course instructors design effective assignments based on the documents included in MMA. The Student's Guides contain case studies and classroom exercises for use with this database. The MMA database is designed for use in secondary schools, colleges and universities, and medical, nursing, dental and public health schools. It provides material relevant to a wide range of courses, including American history, history of health and healing, American studies, sociology, women's studies, and communications. The database may be used not only to stimulate discussions of advertising and health, but also to build critical thinking skills in general.

You can visit the Medicine and Madison Avenue web site at:

<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/mma>

Jacqueline Reid
Duke University

The SSHM Series with Routledge continues to thrive. Almost twenty volumes have been published, and the most recent and forthcoming titles are listed below. Monographs as well as edited collections of essays are now included and the editors welcome proposals. Guidelines on

submission are available on the SSHM web page (<http://www.sshm.org>). Members of the Society are reminded that they enjoy a 30 per cent price reduction on volumes published in the Series. Details of this concession are also on the web page.

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Recently published and forthcoming volumes

2001

R. Davidson and L.A. Hall (eds.), *Sex, Sin and Suffering: venereal disease and European society since 1870* (2001), ISBN: 0-415-23444-1: This volume brings together a series of studies on the social history of venereal disease in modern Europe and its former colonies. It explores, from a comparative perspective, the responses of legal, medical and political authorities to the 'Great Scourge', in particular, how such responses reflected and shaped social attitudes towards sexuality and social relationships of class, gender, generation and race.

A. Bashford and C. Hooker (eds.), *Contagion* (2001), ISBN: 0-415-24671-7: 'Contagion' explores cultural responses to infectious diseases and their biomedical management over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also investigates the use of 'contagion' as a concept in postmodern reconceptualisations of embodied subjectivity.

2002

W. Ernst (ed.), *Plural Medicine, Tradition and Modernity* (February 2002), ISBN: 0-415-23122-1: Research into 'colonial' or 'imperial' medicine has made considerable progress in recent years, whilst the study of what is usually referred to as 'indigenous' or 'folk' medicine in colonized societies has received much less attention. This book redresses the balance by bringing together current critical research into medical pluralism during the last two centuries. It includes a rich selection of historical, anthropological and sociological case studies that cover many different parts of the globe, ranging from New Zealand to Africa, China, South Asia, Europe and the USA.

J. Stanton (ed.), *Innovations in Health and Medicine: Diffusion and Resistance in the Twentieth Century* (March 2002), ISBN: 0-415-24385-8: This volume brings together cutting edge research by historians from Britain, Germany, France, the US, Japan and New Zealand. Innovative in its approach to innovation, it focuses on diffusion and resistance, and organization as well as technology.

H. Phillips and D. Killingray (eds.), *The Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918: new perspectives* (August 2002), ISBN: 0-415-23445-X: The chapters in this book have been structured around five main themes to explore the medical and societal ramifications of this disease: the virology of the pandemic, medical responses, official responses, the demographic impact and the long-term effects of the pandemic are all explored in detail.

S. Sturdy (ed.), *Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1600-2000* (August 2002), ISBN: 0-415-27906-2: An international team of scholars uses the techniques of medical history to analyse the changing boundaries and constitution of the public sphere from early modernity to the present day.

SSH AMENDMENTS TO THE SSHM CONSTITUTION

At the Annual General Meeting of the Society held in Aberdeen on 20th October 2001 a minor change to the Constitution was approved.

The Constitution of the Society was last amended at the Exeter AGM in July 1999. Since that time a number of minor changes to membership of the Executive Committee have occurred, for which a change to the Constitution is required.

The role of Series Editor has been split, such that the Society now has a Publications Editor (edited volumes) and a Publications Editor (monograph).

The Journal now has two editors, and it has been found helpful for both to attend meetings of the Executive Committee.

As a consequence, the following changes to the wording of the Constitution were proposed and approved.

Previous:

5. The Executive Committee

(ii) It shall consist of a) the President ex officio, b) the officers, c) *an Editor* of the Journal ex officio, d) *the Series Editor* ex officio, and e) nine further members of the Society.

Approved:

5. The Executive Committee

(ii) It shall consist of a) the President ex officio, b) the officers, c) *the Editors* of the Journal ex officio, d) *the Publications Editor (edited volumes) and the Publications Editor (monographs)* ex officio, and e) nine further members of the Society.

The full constitution of the Society is available on its web-site, at:

<http://www.sshm.org/constit.htm>

Stuart Anderson
Chair

OFFICIAL NOTICE: ELECTION TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Nominations are invited to fill the four vacancies on the Executive Committee of the Society for the Social History of Medicine, which will arise following the 2002 Annual General Meeting.

The Executive Committee consists of sixteen members, twelve of whom are elected. Four members stand for election each year, serving a three year term of office. The joint editors of the Society's journal, *Social History of Medicine*, the edited series editor, and the monographs editor are ex-officio members of the Executive Committee.

The members of the committee who are retiring in 2002 are Oonagh Walsh, David Cantor, Jonathan Reinarz and Kelly Loughlin. All are eligible for re-election.

Candidates must be members of the Society of at least one year's standing. Proposers and seconders must be members of the Society.

Members of the Society may nominate themselves or another member. The nomination form (overleaf) should be completed, signed by the proposer, the seconder and by the nominee.

Please visit the SSHM Website at <http://www.sshm.org>

Disclaimer

Any views expressed in this Gazette are those of the Editor or the named contributor; they are not necessarily those of the Executive Committee or general membership. While every care is taken to provide accurate and helpful information in the Gazette, the Society for the Social History of Medicine, the Chair of its Executive Committee and the Editor of the Gazette accept no responsibility for omissions or errors or their subsequent effects. Readers are encouraged to check all essential information appropriate to specific circumstances.

The completed form should be returned to the Society's Honorary Secretary:

Dr Lesley Diack,
Room G08,
Crombie Annexe,
University of Aberdeen,
Meston Walk,
ABERDEEN AB24 3FX.

The closing date for nominations is **Friday 31 May 2002**.

In the event of there being more nominations than there are vacancies an election will be held. Candidates will be asked to write a brief, 100 word statement in support of their nomination. These will be published in the August 2002 number of *The Gazette*, together with a voting form.

The closing date for the submission of completed voting forms will be **Wednesday 25 September 2002**.

The results of the election will be announced at the 2002 Annual General Meeting of the Society, to be held in London on **Friday 27 September 2002**.



SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE

ELECTION TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2002

NOMINATION FORM

Name of candidate:

Proposed by:.....
(Member of the Society for the Social History of Medicine)

Seconded by:.....
(Member of the Society for the Social History of Medicine)

I accept nomination for election to the Executive Committee:

.....
(Member of the Society for the Social History of Medicine)

SSH PRIZE ESSAY COMPETITION 2002

The Society for the Social History of Medicine invites submissions for its two 2002 prize essay competitions -- the 2002 essay competition and the 2002 student essay competition. Please turn over this page for an entry form.

1. Prizes:

Two prizes will be awarded: one for the best original, unpublished essay in the social history of medicine in each competition. The winner of the 2002 essay competition will be awarded a prize of £300.00. The winner of the 2002 student essay competition will also be awarded £300.00. The winning entries of both competitions may also be published in the journal, *Social History of Medicine*, subject to the usual editorial procedures, including double blind refereeing.

2. Eligible Candidates:

2002 Essay Competition: post-doctoral scholars and faculty who acquired their Ph.D. (or equivalent qualification) after 31 December 1996.

2002 Student Essay Competition: students, undergraduate or postgraduate, part-time or full-time.

- * No candidate may enter both competitions in one year.
- * All candidates must join the Society for the Social History of Medicine (membership form is available on the SSHM website, <http://www.sshm.org>. Alternatively, please contact the membership secretary).
- * Candidates who are uncertain as to whether they are eligible to enter the competition should contact the Membership Secretary before preparing their entry.

3. Essays must be:

- * Unpublished
- * Written in English
- * 5000-8000 words in length (including footnotes).
- * In conformity with the bibliographic conventions of *Social History of Medicine*, available at <http://www.sshm.org>.

NOTE: The same essay cannot be submitted more than once, and entries from previous years will not be accepted

4. Assessment Panel:

The panel will consist of the Chair of the Society for the Social History of Medicine, the Society's Representative on the Editorial Board, and the Editors of *Social History of Medicine*, with the assistance of other members of the editorial board.

5. To enter:

Please complete the form overleaf and send it with 4 copies of the essay to Dr. Lesley Diack, School of History and Art, University of Aberdeen, Room G08, Crombie Annexe, Meston Walk, Aberdeen AB24 3FX, UK. The deadline for entries is 31 December 2002; a decision will be made by 31 March 2003, and the announcement of the prize winners will be made at the AGM of the Society.

Notes:

- * The Editors of *Social History of Medicine* reserve the right to consider any of the entries for publication, subject to normal refereeing procedures.
- * Members of the Executive Committee of the SSHM or the Editorial Board of *Social History of Medicine* may not enter either competition, even if otherwise eligible.
- * The prizes will not be awarded if the Assessment Panel considers that none of the essays reaches an acceptable standard.

Membership secretary: David Cantor, Building 31, Room 2B09 MSC 2092, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD 20892-2092, USA. Email: competition@sshm.org.



SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF MEDICINE

2002 PRIZE ESSAY COMPETITIONS

ENTRY FORM

I have read the rules for the Sshm's 2002 Prize Essay Competitions. I agree to abide by these rules.

I am entering: [Please tick one box]

- the 2002 essay competition
- the 2002 student essay competition.

I declare that I am eligible to enter this competition according to the terms of rule 2.

Signature.....

Full Name.....

Date.....

Address.....
.....
.....

Email.....