GOUBERT Jean-Pierre, *Malades et médecins à Saint-Malo à la veille de la Révolution*
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Jean-Pierre Goubert’s, *Malades et médecins en Bretagne, 1770-90*, published in 1974 was an important contribution to the renewal of the history of medicine at that time, and in particular the move to develop a social history of medicine which took account of the views of patients as much as of practitioners. His new book, *Malades et médecins à Saint-Malo à la veille de la Révolution* covers in commendable detail one Breton city and its hinterland. It not only observes the same chronological framework as the earlier work but also very largely its conceptual and methodological premisses. The religious *mentalités* of the inhabitants are contrasted with the *la médecine savante*, only slowly emerging from a Galeno-Hippocratic straitjacket. A more clinical approach was combined with state service—notably over epidemics and public health—marshalled by the newly-established Société royale de Médecine. The concept of ‘medicalisation’ provided the lodestar for the earlier work and even though it has been much criticised in the interim, is here deployed unqualified. The model seems a little problematic not least because Saint-Malo was so very different from the remainder of the province, and, as Goubert shows, could boast, proportionately, extremely large numbers of trained medical practitioners. Some of the most interesting facets of the Saint-Malo scene—notably the import of colonial commodities often used in medicines, and the role of ship surgeons in
the area—are fascinating, but leave us wanting more. Despite these reservations—plus the absence of footnotes or endnotes (despite a lengthy list of sources)—there is no doubt that this is a very rich and fascinating addition to our understanding of the medical landscape at this particular moment in the city’s history.

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