

## Book Reviews

essay, editor Paul Slack masterfully draws parallels between and points out differences in these constructions. Among the variables that determined them are the degree to which the disease was perceived as a new disease or a familiar one; the violence of the disease; the extent to which it confined its ravages to the powerless (Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, for example, points out that the authorities' interest in the plague in India at the beginning of this century waned as it became clear the poor were its chief victims); and the presence of other, intercurrent diseases or social disturbances.

In case of the native Hawaiians—the focus of Alfred Crosby's contribution—new and extraordinary pestilence such as the epidemic waves that rolled over them in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seem to have also produced a “cultural shock”. The shock took the form of an anomie that could both produce and combine with alcoholism, infanticide, and venereal disease to prevent populations from rebounding. By contrast, however, Megan Vaughan's chapter on epidemic syphilis in East and Central Africa shows a reaction at the other end of the spectrum. In the face of this, not immediately life-threatening, disease, it became, early in this century, a prestigious ailment to acquire. European physicians provided their “construction” of the epidemic and strove mightily to alter African sexual behaviour with the result that at least one of these doctors expressed relief that “at length an awakening of a sense of shame has begun to appear [with the contraction of the illness]” (p. 276).

Essays by Brian Pullan (on plague in early modern Italy), John Pickstone (on Great Britain from 1780–1850), and Richard Evans (on cholera in nineteenth-century Europe) all focus to some extent on public health and, thus, on the development of the idea (a monumental gift of Europe to the rest of the world) of governmental campaigns to eradicate epidemic disease. Yet, as Evans shows, this idea, although born in the Italian city states of the fourteenth century, wavered under cholera's onslaught during the nineteenth century.

The chapters, then, manage a rather nice “fit”, save perhaps for Peregrine Horden's charming, but a bit esoteric, excursion into the world of ‘Disease, dragons and saints in the Dark Ages’ in search of disease symbolism, with dragons the embodiment of disease (p. 71). The work is well indexed, and represents both a fine introduction to, and documentation of the history of *Epidemics and ideas*.

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EKKEHARD HLAWITSCHKA, *“wazzer der tugent, trank der jugent”*. *Text- und Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Salbeitraktat*, Würzburger medizinhistorische Forschungen, 49, Pattensen, Hanover, Horst Wellm Verlag, 1990, pp. ix, 425, illus., DM 75.00 (3–921456–89–4).

JÜRGEN MARTIN, *Die ‘Ulmer Wundarzney’*. *Einleitung, Text, Glossar zu einem Denkmal deutscher Fachprosa des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Würzburger medizinhistorische Forschungen, 52, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1991, pp. 273, illus., DM 65.00 (3–88479–800–6).

R. VOLLMUTH, *Die sanitätsdienstliche Versorgung in den Landsknechtsheeren des ausgehenden Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. Probleme und Lösungsansätze*, Würzburger medizinhistorische Forschungen, 51, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 1991, pp. 313, illus., DM 65.00 (3–88479–800–6).

These three dissertations show the strengths and weaknesses of the approach of the Würzburg school. Hlawitschka traces a short piece on a distillation of salvia through a variety of manuscripts and printed books. He identifies three main groups, as well as several versions that cannot be easily linked to any of these. There is a lavish appendix of texts, including some related distillation recipes. His introduction discusses the language of these groups, and the potential value of such short texts for the understanding of medieval medicine. Such short tracts, once in a relatively fixed written form, circulated, particularly in south Germany, as part of the standard learning of healers of all types.

By contrast Martin provides simply an edition, with a very full glossary, of a surgery that can on internal evidence be associated with the south German city of Ulm around 1480. There is a brief introduction, relating it to similar practical manuals in the vernacular, notably the ‘Passau surgery’

and the work of Peter of Ulm (fl. 1423). How such surgical texts might have been used is dealt with in part by Vollmuth. His study of medicine among the *Landsknecht*, the mercenary German infantry who fought in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, concentrates mainly on the latter period. What medical assistance was available seems at first to have been minimal (the artillery also acted as wound attendants), although by the 1560s regular provision for some medical attention was made for all the troops, not just the officers. Vollmuth compares the evidence of surgical manuals and archival documents with nine books of regulations or advice to future commanders. Of these the most important are the anonymous *Kriegsordnung* of c. 1527, and Leonhart Fronsperger's *Von kayserlichem Kriegsrechten Malefiz und Schuldhaendlen Ordnung und Regiment*, printed at Frankfurt am Main in 1566. Those, like the reviewer, unfamiliar with the German armies of this period will welcome the long chapter on their organization and development, but they may also feel that a comparison with the medical services being developed at the same time in France, Spain, or England would also have helped to define more closely the significance of Vollmuth's theme.

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FAYE MARIE GETZ (ed.), *Healing and society in medieval England. A Middle English translation of the pharmaceutical writings of Gilbertus Anglicus*, Wisconsin Publications in the History of Science and Medicine No. 8, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1991, pp. lxxiii, 378, £29.95 (0-299-12930-6).

To Faye Getz goes the credit for having identified and studied a hitherto unknown Middle English adaptation of Gilbertus Anglicus's *Compendium medicine* which has been recorded, so far, in fifteen manuscripts, all written within a fifty-year period in the fifteenth century. It is not a translation of the whole of the vast *Compendium*, a fact which will not be clear to those unfamiliar with the latter, but, rather, a fairly systematic selection of therapeutic measures drawn from the Latin source. It remains a substantial work, albeit of very limited novelty, and Faye Getz, as an experienced medical historian, is able to provide a rich introduction with excellent bibliographical references. When it comes to the presentation of her text (the version found in Wellcome MS 537), however, Getz does herself less than justice. The edition teems with errors and, whilst many of them are of a very minor kind, their frequency and accumulation lead to frustration at the thought of their being perpetuated by innocent users of the book.

The very first word of the edited text contains a transcription error, of the sort which is found on almost every subsequent page (in the first sixty pages I noted as many errors and sampling elsewhere confirmed the incidence). The critical apparatus is inconsistent in what it records (except, apparently, for its silence concerning the scribe's clearing of dittographies). The commentary is just as worrying: its first quotation from an important witness, London B.L. MS Add. 30338, inauspiciously contains three transcription errors and thereafter scarcely a quotation from this MS is made with complete accuracy. The quotations from the Latin Gilbertus are no less alarming: the first invents a noun "caloritas" for "caliditas", misunderstands "causis" for "calidis" (*ca.*) and perpetrates the form "gravitur". The next quotation fails to recognize abbreviations and presents us with "feni" for "feniculi" and "petrosi" for "petrosilini". Further quotations print "melanolicos cibos" for "multos cibos" (29/13), "postulabitur" for "prestolabitur" (29/13), "noctiva" for "nociva" (112/19), "aggravatius" for "aggravativus" (123/18), "quam" for "quoniam" (190/18), "humoris" for "humorum" (190/18), and, more entertainingly, "transversus aut tranquillus somnus non est" for "tamen verus aut tranquillus somnus non est" (216/14). Neglect of the meaning of the Latin goes so far as to allow the print's "calor" to stand in a description of jaundice (225/1) where it is perfectly obvious that the sense requires "color". The attentive reader will thus find much to disconcert or confuse him. On the positive side, the glossary is very good, though in the case of unfamiliar compound medicines like "arregon" it would have been useful to provide references to such standard pharmaceutical texts as the *Antidotarium Nicolai* where a full account of the ingredients can be found. Appended to the edition is a useful list of plants by genus.

Despite its inaccuracies, the volume contains a great deal of useful material which will help to promote the study of medieval medicine, though it is perhaps ironic that by the end of the book the