

Book Reviews

in the body and in the soul or passions, and emphasizes the ceaseless interplay of the physical and the psychological. The *maladie d'amour* is to be remedied by philosophy, by diversion, by diet and regimen, and even through violent medicines (hellebore and the like): sexual intercourse is not an effective cure.

In introductory dissertations occasionally teetering on the brink of oversubtlety—they would certainly have proved easier to use had information been conveyed more directly—Beecher and Ciavolella emphasize that medicine hardly constitutes the principal context wherein Ferrand's construal of love melancholy is set. They rightly draw attention to occult traditions (sympathy, astrology) and to the neo-Platonic strands brought into focus by Ficino. Not least, they demonstrate the skill with which Ferrand played upon a double register—the high serious and the vulgarly titillating—in a manner which would have borne interesting comparison with the work of Nicolas Venette a couple of generations later. In the light of recent studies of changing notions of sexuality by Thomas Laqueur and others, the welcome appearance of this fine edition whets the appetite for a full investigation of the subsequent history of the medical discourse on the erotic.

Roy Porter, Wellcome Institute

PHYLLIS HEMBRY, *The English spa 1560–1815: a social history*, London, Athlone Press, 1990, 8vo, pp. xiv, 401, £35.00.

The need for a new general history of English spas has long been remarked, and Phyllis Hembry's survey has many of the virtues required to fill that gap. Based upon energetic research into local urban and family archives, *The English spa* offers a richly-textured discussion of the different social ambiances of the various centres, North and South, large and small, hot- and cold-water, and its account of pre-1700 developments is particularly fresh. Ms Hembry shows conclusively the dominant role of the monarchy and court in lending lustre to the promotion of native spas in the Elizabethan age (at a time when Spa itself could be condemned as a sinkhole of treacherous Catholic plotters). The burgeoning spa life of the Stuart age—especially at Tunbridge, Epsom, and a handful of other resorts around London which had their brief moments of glory—was, by contrast, essentially designed to serve aristocratic cliques. By the Georgian era, in further contrast, the more speculative commercial development of the spa town—and this volume is laden with intriguing insights into the heavy capital investment in spa-buildings, hotels, shops, parades and the like occurring for the first time under the Hanoverians—necessarily had to make its appeal to the less exclusive sector of the moneyed gentry and professional middle classes.

Ever aware of such shifts in patronage, Ms Hembry has a good eye for the cultural requisites of a flourishing spa centre, above all, the need for a successful social regulation. If, in the mid-twentieth century, it was the job of Butlin's to instruct the masses of the British working-class, unused to holidays, how to enjoy themselves decently in unfamiliar company, that, *mutatis mutandis*, was precisely the task facing Georgian Bath, one which was triumphantly resolved by its *arbiter elegantiarum*, Richard (Beau) Nash, the first of the redcoats.

Ms Hembry is at her best—informative and sure-footed—when dealing with the urban and social development of the spa-town. Medical historians, however, will find her account of its therapeutic practices and importance perfunctory and familiar. Ms Hembry tends to see spas, at least from Restoration times, as essentially holiday rather than healing centres. This may be so, but such a judgement perhaps begs too many interesting questions. Overall, in fact, Ms Hembry's strength lies in presenting materials rather than in posing questions. She offers, for instance, a fascinating account of the late eighteenth-century expansion of Cheltenham, without squarely asking why, geographically close to a Bath that was in process of over-expanding, the Gloucestershire resort was able to triumph so spectacularly. Finally, it is a pity she has chosen to terminate her account at 1815. The rise of the water-place is a relatively easy story to tell. Understanding the crisis and transformation of the spa resort in the nineteenth century is a challenge that still awaits its historian.

Roy Porter, Wellcome Institute