Stolberg's account takes direct issue with the themes of "popularization" and "public understanding" that have become so central to medical history. Yet the stated aim of Stolberg's piece—to understand the impact of medical advice literature on the lay readership, rather than simply taking for granted that "dominant medical discourse will automatically be accepted"—is surely a standard objective of modern medical history research.

A more promising approach to letters is suggested by Alfons Zarzoso's account of lay decisions over medical care and treatment in eighteenth-century Catalonia. That self-medication and advice from relatives and friends was commonplace during the period is well-known. Less extensively studied is the vocabulary of afflictions, and the accommodation of illness and disease within a specific socio-economic and political climate. In letters attributing disease to the localized impact of French Revolutionary disruption, rumour and fear became vocabularies for the transmission of disease theories.

The remaining essays focus more explicitly on the problems of competing truth-claims and the limits of medical authority. Yarrah Bar-On draws on the memoirs of Louise Bourgeois to explore the functioning of medical knowledge as a form of "gossip". Claims to (and the limits of) medical certainty is also addressed by Palmira Fontes da Costa and Constance Malpas. Logie Barrow's story of nineteenth-century English vaccination shows how debates over medical authority did not take place in a vacuum, being embedded in (or mediated by?) wider political and social debates. This was no less so in earlier times, as illustrated by Catrien Santing's article on the heart in Counter-Reformation Italy.

The remaining articles by Hera Cook and Toin Pieters on twentieth-century issues highlight the conflicts between individual desires for health-(or self-)improvement, and available medico-scientific resources. Each writer shows how the medical world responds with varying degrees of success to the needs and demands of the lay public. We are back to the theme of community participation in the world of the sick. In the modern age, however, that means taking account of, and using, a global media amidst the hum of rising public expectations about medical ability and advance.

The revision of concepts like "mediation" is doubtless important to the expansion of meaning in medical history. It draws attention to what Zarzoso calls "medical pluralism", and the historically-complex rituals of medical knowledge and practice. Yet the theoretical potential of "mediation" remains uncertain. Although the editors try to stabilize the term by focusing on the themes of transmission and reconciliation, its potential for generalization arguably disrupts influence and agency.

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Franck Collard and **Évelyne Samama** (eds), *Mires, physiciens, barbiers et charlatans. Les marges de la médecine de l'Antiquité au XVIe siècle*, Langres, Dominique Guéniot, 2004, pp. 178, €22.90 (paperback 2-87825-277-2).

The University of Reims has recently embarked upon a series of meetings to examine social aspects of medicine in the pre-modern period from Classical Antiquity down to the seventeenth century. Earlier volumes have looked at ideas on contagion, and on the actual practice of medicine, whether in surgery or in the treatment of poisons. The third meeting was devoted to the margins of medicine, to the relationship between those who called themselves (or were called) doctors and those who might be termed leeches, barbers, and even charlatans.

This is a wide theme, well suited to a comparison between different societies and medical cultures. So, for instance, there are papers on sixteenth-century Mexico (Bernard Grunberg) and fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Milan (Marilyn Nicoud), alongside very detailed examination of specific authors such as Cicero (Sophia Conte), Scribonius Largus, fl. AD 47

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(Joëlle Jouanna-Boucher), and the sixth-century Byzantine doctor, Alexander of Tralles (Alessia Guardasole). The editors contribute very different pieces. Franck Collard studies the career of Jean de Grandville, whose failure in 1391 to cure Amadeus VII of Savoy resulted in accusations of murder. Évelyne Samama, by contrast, looks at the difficulties of deciding whether a healer in Hippocratic times was competent or not. Her discussion overlapped with a paper by Véronique Boudon, on doctors and charlatans at Rome, which appeared instead in the *Revue des Etudes Grecques*, 2003, **116**: 109–31. Its absence is to be regretted, for not only does Galen, as Boudon shows, set the agenda for subsequent discussion of the distinction between medics and charlatans (a term that does not strictly appear at all in the period covered by these essays), but he provides many vignettes of medical activity at a variety of levels. Boudon's exposition of the variety of terms used by Galen to classify lesser practitioners is also more extensive and more subtle than Samama's.

There are many useful observations. Both Scribonius and Alexander record what might be termed magical or marginal recipes far more often against chronic conditions, such as epilepsy, than against acute. The fluctuating boundary between acceptability and non-acceptability is neatly exemplified by Guardasole's discussion of 'Natural remedies' (*Physika*). How a single unlucky case could end a flourishing career is nicely shown by Collard, although he could have said more about aristocratic uses of "irregular" practitioners, for there is considerable doubt as to whether Grandville had a university degree.

But there are also many opportunities missed. Only Nicoud really sets out the legal and institutional background of the healers she discusses, a task also attempted by Grunberg, although from a much thinner base. But even Nicoud, in what is the best paper, fails to set Milan into a wider context of Italian and other intellectual developments. This is a great pity, for the simplistic questions that are here raised can hardly be resolved on the basis of one city or one author. The editors' very brief introduction, which does little more than repeat the titles of the chapters, is a disappointment, for one might have expected bigger questions to be raised here—the validity of any distinction between higher and lower practitioners, the varieties of therapies on offer, the effects of guilds, universities, and even official examinations, and so on. The differences between Greece and Rome, on the one hand, and the later Middle Ages and Renaissance, on the other, would have been worth much more detailed exploration than they receive here. The absence of an index also prevents an easy comparison between topics discussed many pages apart.

Publications of conference papers are always difficult to judge. Here, although the individual papers are of a reasonable standard, they do not form (or are not formed into) a coherent whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This is a pity, for the choice of speakers offered an opportunity for an innovative cross-cultural comparison on a theme that is relevant even to medical practice today.

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Luis García-Ballester, *Galen and Galenism: theory and medical practice from Antiquity to the European Renaissance*, ed. Jon Arrizabalaga, Montserrat Cabré, Lluís Cifuentes, Fernando Salmón, Variorum Collected Studies series, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003, pp. xii, 332, £57.50 (hardback 0-86078-846-6).

This is the second volume of collected essays by Luis García-Ballester, the renowned Spanish scholar in the field of the history of medicine who died towards the end of 2000. In some ways, however, it looks backwards from the first (*Medicine in a multicultural society: Christian, Jewish and Muslim practitioners in the Spanish kingdoms, 1222–1610*, also published by Ashgate), opening as it does with four articles on the classical roots of the medieval medical world that was more particularly his domain.

It is the figure of Galen, the most influential of ancient medical thinkers and writers, who is the focus of this quartet. A new English version of a

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