

known facts of her background; the press constructed her dramatically, as a danger to society; history has tried to separate the symbolism and the human tragedy. Each of these constructions helped to shape the collective memory of Typhoid Mary, each contributed to the distortion of Mary Mallon's life as she herself experienced it.

In retrieving and re-analysing these different stories, Leavitt aims both to reconstruct a story "rich with past memory", and to present a context and an illumination of current public health problems. She has succeeded in both: this is an admirable micro-history, lucidly written, carefully crafted, sensitive to Mallon's personal situation, and illuminating on the wider issues. On the downside, the reader may become so immersed in the minute history of early twentieth-century New York as to be left wondering if it was the only place in America; Leavitt's attempt to paint in the wider impact of the Mallon case on American public health practice becomes rather submerged in the micro-history. The inevitable repetition of factual elements which follows on Leavitt's separate treatment of the different aspects of the case and its context, does become faintly irritating, however much one may sympathize with the necessity for such a device. In all, though, this is an not just an interesting exercise in historical writing and in the linkage of past and present, but a readable, enjoyable, story.

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Tony Gould, *A summer plague: polio and its survivors*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1995, pp. xvi, 366, illus., £19.95 (hardback 0-300-06292-3); £12.95 (paperback (1997) 0-300-07276-7).

Books on polio have proliferated in the past several years, reflecting in part a growing concern with "post-polio syndrome"—the reappearance of symptoms among people who had believed that they had conquered their polio paralysis some decades earlier. English

journalist Tony Gould's idiosyncratic history is inspired by an awareness that the history of polio did not end with the Salk and Sabin vaccines, and by the publicized activism of the disabled. In his preface, Gould acknowledges that, through writing this book, he discovered that he had both "overvalued" his own experience with polio "in the sense of regarding my experience of polio as somehow unique" and undervalued it "by not allowing that it had made any substantial difference to my way of life and thinking" (p. xvi).

A summer plague is a story full of colourful people and moments. It is a breezy, engaging social history of epidemic polio in the United States and—more briefly—in Britain. In the first two-thirds of the book Gould retells the familiar elements of polio in twentieth-century America: the 1916 epidemic, Franklin Roosevelt's experience, his role in founding the polio rehabilitation centre Warm Springs in Georgia, the controversial efforts by nurse Elizabeth Kenny to alter medical thinking about polio therapy, the March of Dimes campaigns by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, the Foundation's support of polio research, and the subsequent development and testing of the polio vaccines developed by Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin. Gould's first seven chapters, although interspersed with the recollections of polio survivors, draw heavily on (without engaging with) the work of historians Saul Benison, Allan Brandt, Hugh Gallagher, John Paul, Jane Smith, and Geoffrey Ward, among others. Because at its peak in the 1940s and 1950s polio attracted numerous science writers including Paul de Kruif, Richard Carter, Victor Cohn, and Aaron Klein, Gould has been able to use their work extensively as well. But these science writers had particular reasons for trying to define the "true story" of polio, and Gould has used them rather uncritically.

Gould's sharp eye and passion for his subject, however, allow him to raise issues historians of polio have too often neglected. He points to the racism within American polio care, and notes that Warm Springs remained a segregated facility as long as it was funded by

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the National Foundation and that only in the 1960s, when it began to accept federal funding, was it forced to admit African-American patients and care-givers. In his analysis of the British Polio Fellowship, founded in 1939, which he defines as “an organization of the disabled run by the disabled themselves” (p. 165), Gould points out the frequent tensions between the disabled and the able-bodied care-givers and teachers who believed they could better speak for their charges. Gould also underscores the crucial role of professional salespeople and advertising executives in organizing and directing the National Foundation, a role that did not vanish after the fiasco of the 1935 vaccine trials.

Disappointingly, he does not discuss the work of the Foundation’s propaganda department and its wide-ranging production of posters, pamphlets, magazines and movie previews, which played a powerful role in shaping the image of disease and disability in American popular culture.

What is new and important about this book is largely presented in the provocative final chapters. Here Gould offers moving tales by women and men, informed by the self-conscious awareness among many polio “survivors” (to use Gould’s term) that their experiences—both medical and social—were at once unique and part of a larger shared ordeal. These stories from adults remembering a disabled childhood and youth in the 1930s to the 1960s are gripping and disturbing. Gould’s informants—over a dozen tell a full story—talk about sex, personal identity, family relations, and medical care and abuse, often in a calm matter-of-fact tone that Gould intends to be shocking. There are some well-known people—like pop singer Ian Dury and polio rehabilitation specialist Lauro Halstead—but most are unknown outside polio circles. Many of the speakers are angry about medical and therapeutic policies that their families and care-takers tried to teach them, which emphasized mainstreaming and denied difference. These sections offer a powerful contribution to the social history of disability.

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Linda E Merians (ed.), *The secret malady: venereal disease in eighteenth-century Britain and France*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1996, pp. viii, 269, illus., \$39.95 (hardback 0-8131-1989-8), \$19.95 (paperback 0-8131-0888-8).

Where the base work of general reference for a topic is as manifestly deficient as Claude Quétel’s painfully under-researched *History of syphilis* (1986) is for the history of venereal disease, there is always cause to celebrate new studies which offer securer historical grounding and open up fresh avenues for investigation. The 1990s have been good for syphilis, then, in that we now have not only *The great pox* (1997), authored by Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, but also *The secret malady*, Linda E Merians’ useful and interesting comparative collection of essays on one of the more neglected periods in the disease’s history, the eighteenth century.

The work brings together some fifteen scholars who range from historians of medicine to literary historians and critics, each of whom offers a valuable shaft of illumination on the disease’s historical and cultural impact. The Anglo-French focus is a strength too (though England does tend to hog the limelight). Part One, ‘Historical and medical contexts of venereal disease’ provides overviews of the disease and sex industry in eighteenth-century France (Susan P Conner, Kathryn Norberg); analysis of sectors of the English medical marketplace for venereal cures (Roy Porter, Philip K Wilson, Marie McAllister); discussion of the impact of the disease on “innocent” victims, notably infected wives (Mary Margaret Stewart) and children (Barbara J Dunlap); and a study of the London Lock Hospital and Lock Asylum for Women (Linda E Merians).

Part Two of the volume is devoted to ‘Representations of venereal disease’. A number of the studies, starting with Betty Rizzo’s ‘Decorums’, highlight the somewhat ambiguous status of the disease in cultural production after the Restoration. It was more