

The short appendices, finally, provide extended illustrative quotations in support of the Chapters 1 and 3, respectively, and I note that the author had located these Latin sources independently of Doyle, whom she generously cites throughout Chapter 1. One flaw exists in the book for which I do not think the author is wholly at fault: internal cross references in the book are incomplete, never having been filled in during the page proofing stage, which strikes me as an unfortunate editorial omission as much as an authorial oversight, distracting the reader from the thoroughly researched and well worded argument.

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Howard Phillips, *In a Time of Plague: Memories of the 'Spanish' Flu Epidemic of 1918 in South Africa* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society for the Publication of Southern African Historical Documents, 2018), pp. xxvii + 193, ZAR660, hardback, ISBN: 9780994720719.

As the world is battling the Coronavirus (COVID-19), no book is as timely as Howard Phillips' *In a Time of Plague: Memories of the 'Spanish' Flu Epidemic of 1918 in South Africa*. The book is a stark reminder of the world's vulnerability to respiratory viruses. Between 1918 and 1919, South Africa, just like rest of the world, was at the mercy of one of the most deadly influenza pandemics caused by the H1N1 virus, commonly called 'Spanish' Flu. South Africa experienced two waves of the pandemic. The first wave, which was mild, arrived in the country through the port city of Durban in September 1918. The virus spread to the Witwatersrand and other towns in the interior through migrant labour routes (p. xi). It was the second wave of the virulent virus that was to shatter South African society and economy. In September 1918, two troopships – the *Jaroslav* and the *Veronej* – left Europe for South Africa. Transporting contingents of the South African Native Labour Corps, they passed through Freetown, which had become one of the hotspots for the mutant strain of the virus. Phillips notes that once the two troopships had passed through Freetown, 'cases began to appear amongst these men' (p. xii). When the troopships arrived in South Africa, the Cape Town authorities temporarily quarantined some of the troops. Because they did not show any symptoms, the soldiers were demobilised, and five trains transported the men into the interior of subcontinent, in the process spreading the virus. The virulent strain of the virus was also spread across South Africa by contacts and migrant labourers. The impact was devastating. Between September and October 1918, a period called 'Black October', an estimated 300 000–350 000 (60% of South African population) lost their lives (p. x). One can argue that it was a great equaliser as its effects were felt across race and class divides, and from urban areas to mining centres and rural areas. It had a massive impact on South Africa's society and economy. Besides those who succumbed to diseases, the 'Spanish' Flu led to a decline in birth rates, an increase in orphans and orphanages, destitution, emotional and psychological distress, religious awakenings and economic ruin. The state responded through public health measures, sanitary house reforms – which mainly targeted the white section of the population – and social distance efforts that saw the separation of races with the establishment of African townships located far from white suburbs.

In a Time of Plague adds a different and a welcome dimension to the literature of the pandemic. Published as part of the 'Spanish' Flu centenary, the book consists of transcripts of interviews Phillips conducted between 1978 and 1981 during his doctoral studies. Phillips also included selected letters sent to the British historian R. Collier from 1972 to 1973 and letters sent to Phillips in response to appeals to South Africans about the pandemic (p. xx). Phillips has assembled a treasure trove of 127 testimonies of women and men, of all races and from different parts of South Africa. The material gives us an interior view of the effect of the pandemic on many a South African. As Phillips notes, 'we hear anguish and confusion, acts of kindness, eerie silences in cities and fear of the plague' (p. vii).

In a Time of Plague is an invaluable rich collection of personal memories of the 'Black October' that capture the experiences of those who lived through the pandemic. Unlike previous works on the

pandemic, the collection of the primary documents assembled by Phillips ‘answer basic issues which contemporary documents did not address’ (p. xxii), exposing how ordinary folk coped during the pandemic. It also reveals personal perspectives from patients as well as rumours and tales about the disease. The uniqueness of the material assembled is that they are firsthand accounts of men and women who were directly affected by the pandemic. This is a valuable assemblage of historical sources – interviews and letters, which have not been available in the public domain.

Going through the letters and interviews, one can witness the graphic tales of the trauma, anguish and the struggle for life during the pandemic. The collection also exposes the intervention capacity of the state and the measures taken by local rural and urban councils and organisations such as churches. Accompanying the collection are twenty images that give the reader a visual idea of the impact of the ‘Spanish’ Flu and responses thereof. The images range from cemetery registers, funerals, orphaned children, acts of kindness such as providing relief and medical care and advertisements from pharmaceutical and insurance companies.

One must commend Howard Phillips for this collection. For those unfamiliar with the history of the pandemic, the preface accompanying the interviews and letters does an excellent job in exposing readers to a nuanced and succinct history of the pandemic in South Africa. Most importantly, Phillips has gifted historians and those interested in personal accounts of the pandemic, rich material that can be used in further writing, rewriting and reinterpreting the history of the pandemic in South Africa. In these uncertain times, *In a Time of Plague* gives us an idea of the nature of the catastrophe that exposed the fragility as well as the resilience of South Africans during the pandemic. This work by Howard Phillips is germane, considering the unprecedented times we are living in. The book is recommended not only to medical historians and Africanist scholars but also to all who are trying to make sense of the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – which has, as with past pandemics, shaken the world to its very foundations.

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Anne Pollock, *Synthesizing Hope: Matter, Knowledge and Place in South African Drug Discovery* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 2019), pp. 191, £18.33, paperback, ISBN: 978-0226629186.

A dominant narrative in global health studies is that while scientific knowledge production chiefly occurs in the global North, Africa is mainly a repository of clinical trials subjects and raw materials. What are we, then, to make of transnational scientific collaborations where the aim is to capacitate the development of in-country drug discovery research expertise and infrastructure to address locally prevalent diseases in the global South?

This is a question posed by Anne Pollock in relation to the example of iThemba pharmaceuticals in South Africa. iThemba (which means hope in isiZulu) was founded in 2009 to engage in drug discovery for HIV, TB and Malaria. While located in South Africa, the company was fundamentally transnational in nature: although its bench scientists and managers were based within South Africa, its Scientific Advisory Board was made up of scientists from the global North. Mitigating the ‘brain drain’ (p. 24) and the notion of finding ‘African solutions to African problems’ (p. 10) were important motivations behind the company’s founding.

It was, however, unsuccessful in its mission and closed down in 2015. Pollock argues that this brief chapter in contemporary pharmaceutical history matters because it shows the challenges inherent to creating and sustaining a small, innovation-orientated drug company, driven by nationalist goals in the global South. The choice of South Africa as a case study is significant because, by African standards, it has