

everything to assist defence lawyers plant the seed of reasonable doubt. Similarly, the authors suggest that psychiatry exercised a rather limited influence compared with assessments about the moral danger of particular offenders to society.

Sex Crimes in the Fifties includes chapters on the sex crimes of immigrants, and on homosexual offences — the latter breaks new ground in revealing how the intensification of policing, and the dubious methods used to gain arrests and convictions, actually placed police methods under greater scrutiny and attracted damaging criticism. More generally, we are enabled to see that in an era of supposedly rampant homophobia, the law's actual operation could disrupt the repression of a 'deviant' sexual minority. Featherstone and Kaladelfos have also discovered new material on the mysterious committee on homosexuality but, as with previous historians, its final report — if such ever existed — has eluded their forensic searches.

This exemplary study makes an important contribution to the history of policing, the criminal law, children, gender and sexuality. The authors provide a fresh insight into the social history of the 1950s, further contributing to that decade's growing reputation as a maker of modern Australia.

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Alana Piper (ed.), *Brisbane Diseased: Contagions, Cures and Controversies*, Brisbane: Boolarong Press, 2016, ISBN 9 7819 2523 6316, 349 pp., \$32.99.

For a quarter of a century, the Brisbane History Group has put together an annual collection of articles about Brisbane, focused around a particular theme. In 2015, that theme was Health, and these papers have now been brought together in the 25th such collection, *Brisbane Diseased: Contagions, Cures and Controversies*, edited by Alana Piper.

The chapters are arranged in a loosely chronological sequence, beginning with a summary by John Pearn of the ailments of the convict settlement, including scurvy and 'flagellatio', the term used in contemporary medical reports for the trauma to skin and muscle caused by flogging. Jennifer Harrison then looks at the infectious diseases brought by immigrants, and the health and quarantine regimes put in place to handle these ailments.

Later chapters deal with some of the epidemics that struck Brisbane: bubonic plague in 1900, influenza after World War I and recurrent episodes of polio. The last chapter, on efforts to relocate and modernise the city morgue, brings us — mercifully — into the modern era of adequate refrigeration.

Only one chapter, by Renata Buziak, specifically deals with Aboriginal medicine. Buziak is a Polish photographic artist, and her essay is on 'Art, Healing and Local Native Medicinal Plants of Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island)'.

Some of the most interesting chapters deal with individuals. One intriguing character, the subject of Bill Metcalf's paper, was Dr Thomas Pennington Lucas, who disagreed with the medical establishment when it identified an epidemic of

bubonic plague in 1900. Lucas is best known today for the Papaw Ointment that bears his name, and that is still made, to a secret formula, by his descendants.

Another intriguing entrepreneur was Sarah Jenyns, corset-maker. In her chapter, Rosemary Knight describes 'the medicalisation of corsetry' in the nineteenth century. At considerable expense, Mrs Jenyns sailed to England, where she acquired a patent for her specially designed corset, and had it accredited by the London Incorporated Institute of Health. Back in Brisbane she set up a business, aided by a contract to supply medical corsets to hospitals. In 1964, twelve years after her death, her family business employed 1100 people in seven factories in Brisbane, before selling out to Triumph International just as the bottom fell out of foundation garments.

In one of her chapters for this collection, Alana Piper tackles the vexed issue of 'quackery'. When medical knowledge was advancing rapidly, it was not always easy to distinguish between a charlatan and a scientist ahead of his time. She tells the story of one out-and-out quack, George Roberts, who claimed to be able to cure cancer with a secret formula. On the other hand, sometimes there were genuine breakthroughs. John Thearle tells how two Brisbane doctors, John Gibson and Jeffers Turner, identified a problem of lead poisoning among local children, and traced it to the painted wooden verandah rails and gates on which they played. Queensland enacted the first legislation outlawing lead in paint in 1922.

Early Brisbane was a small place, and the same people appear across several papers, as does Dr Lucas's papaw ointment. The Director General of Health, Sir Raphael Cilento, is only mentioned in passing, as is Ned Hanlon, the Labor Minister for Health and Home Affairs (and later Premier). It would have been good to show how health policy in the twentieth century developed through them.

Such a disparate group of chapters probably made it too difficult to manage, but it is a shame that the editor could not develop more general themes, although she does set her own chapters in a wider context. In particular, what made Brisbane's health issues distinctive? The environment was hot and humid, and in the early years tropical insects brought malaria, sandy-blight, dengue fever and typhus. Brisbane was not fully sewered until the 1970s. It had an unreliable water supply, and residents depended on (lead-painted) rainwater tanks. In the face of these difficulties, it is impressive that so much was achieved on this particular colonial frontier.

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Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?* Broome: Magabala Books, 2014, ISBN 9 7819 2214 2436, 174 pp., A\$35.

Some years ago, I visited a number of abandoned Aboriginal camps and noticed that most had a similar range of useful and edible plants. When I asked local Aboriginal peoples about my observations, they told me their ancestors had brought the plants there. I heard similar assertions about flora at the Bunya Mountains. I assumed