

way some of our best museums are seeking to regenerate their collections, through more experimental approaches to interpretation, interdisciplinary collaboration, the involvement of external “curators”, and thematic projects and exhibitions, has resonance with the work of early modern curators. They are linked by their aspiration to make new discoveries by subjecting their collections to a more speculative and subjective ideas-led approach.

Arnold’s regret at the decline of the seventeenth-century collector’s engagement with the curious and wonderful underlies his fundamentally optimistic thesis that museums can reinvigorate their capacity to help us comprehend our natural and man-made world. His call is to redress the balance from what he sees as the current obsession for museums to ensure they are above all sources of information and education, where objects are easily obscured by images, technology and interactivity that often convey a worthy, but oppressive, overload of messages. Instead, he sets out an argument for objects as the direct focus for inspiring and provoking audiences and for museums as places where we can find pleasure and excitement, and create ideas, knowledge and understanding.

This bold and exhilarating study combines polemic relevant to the modern museum practitioner with historical insight that makes an important contribution to the study of early modern museums. It draws on wide-ranging scholarship, museological, historical and from the history of ideas, as well as expert knowledge of a museum curator. It challenges what are still fundamental values amongst a significant number of contemporary curators today; it is hard, for example, to see that many of the academic specialists working in certain national institutions would be prepared to abandon the rigorous and empirical approach that underpins their endeavours. Yet Arnold makes a refreshing and disarming plea for the regeneration of the idea of a “cabinet of curiosity” that he rightly appreciates remains central to the cultural and intellectual fascination of museums.

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John L Burton (ed.), *‘Six hundred miseries’: the seventeenth century womb: book 15 of ‘The practice of physick’ by Lazare Rivière*, trans. Nicholas Culpeper (London 1678), London, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, 2005, pp. xvi, 216, illus., £24.95 (hardback 1-904752-13-6).

Before 1700 the popular demand for English-language publications on midwifery and related matters was met by translations and extracts from continental works, since almost nothing came from English writers at this time. Nicholas Culpeper (d. 1664), arguably one of the most influential and popular writers of the late 1640s and the 1650s, translated a number of texts from the best contemporary authorities. After his death, the London booksellers capitalized on Culpeper’s reputation and printed dozens of authorized and unauthorized posthumous editions of the *English physician* (1652) and *English physician enlarged* (1653). His name was also included in the titles of various translations of continental texts, including the works of the French physician, Lazare Rivière (d. 1655). It is the English translation of Book 15 of Rivière’s *Practice of physic* (Of the Diseases of Women) that John L Burton has edited and annotated in *‘Six hundred miseries’: the seventeenth century womb*.

I read Burton’s *‘Six hundred miseries’* with pleasure and welcome the fact that Rivière’s fascinating and largely inaccessible work has been made available to both the general and the medical reader. The modern edition of the translation of Rivière provides a valuable insight into the medical thinking and practice of obstetric and gynaecological medicine of the seventeenth century. It will also capture the interest of those who want to explore the range of therapeutic medicines on offer to women, both for “life-threatening” disorders and for afflictions of daily life which were just plain inconvenient. Green sickness (chlorosis), menstrual irregularities, Mother-Fits (hysteria), inflammations of the womb, cancer, infertility, abortion and miscarriage, in addition to complications during childbirth are some of the many female conditions discussed in the text. John Burton has

penetrated the original “medieval ‘medispeak’ ” (p. xi) and has made the seventeenth-century medical terminology more accessible to modern readers. Unfamiliar medical and pharmaceutical terms are explained, and Burton also provides a useful glossary of the herbs, animal products and mineral substances cited in the text. The original sub-headings in each chapter have also been retained for ease of reference (i.e. Causes, Diagnosis/Signs, Prognosis and Treatment).

Although Burton has retained enough of the original text to convey the flavour of Rivière’s *Practice of physic* his ruthless editing and removal of repetition means that some important elements of the original text are missing. For example, in Chapter X (Of a Cancer of the Womb) he does not include the author’s discussion about the different forms of cancer that might occur. Furthermore, Burton is selective regarding the number of therapies that he lists. For example, while citing the use of frogs and river crabs in the treatment of cancer, he does not record the many other remedies recommended.

For those unfamiliar with the period, Burton provides a short Bibliography and Introduction to seventeenth-century medical practice.

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Katharina Ernst, *Krankheit und Heiligung. Die medikale Kultur württembergischer Pietisten im 18. Jahrhundert*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für geschichtliche Landeskunde in Baden-Württemberg, 154, Stuttgart, W Kohlhammer, 2003, pp. XXVI, 258, €22.50, SFr 38.00 (hardback 3-17-018103-3)

Eighteenth-century German Pietism has not been short of historians. But while its theological foundations have been carefully explored, we still know woefully little about the everyday life of its members, and virtually nothing of their attitudes towards illness. Katharina Ernst’s book (a revised version of her PhD thesis) is therefore a welcome contribution to the understanding of sickness within the framing of Pietism itself.

She focuses on some of the leading figures behind Württemberg’s Pietism, such as Albrecht Bengel, and his various pupils. She also sifts the correspondence and diaries of less prominent Pietists for reference to illness. With such information Ernst sets out to test the daily realities of illness against the theological ideals cherished in widely circulated normative Pietist publications on the subject by Philipp Jakob Spener, Samuel Urlsperger, and Magnus Friedrich Roos.

Ernst introduces the reader to current historiographical debates, followed by a thoughtful analysis of the methodological problems involved in the use of autobiographical sources. As only to be expected, she also discusses in detail the secondary literature on German pietism. While the density of information in her three prefatory chapters is often overwhelming, there are rewards in her source materials, which allow us to penetrate perceptions of, and reactions to, illness, cure, and moral evaluations of sickness, survival and death. In each of these chapters she relentlessly pursues these issues in relation to each of her chosen Pietists. While this method is occasionally tedious and repetitive, it nevertheless demonstrates how flexible Pietists dealt with the injunctions laid down in their Biblical interpretation.

The book’s central claim is that the suffering physical body was vital to Württemberg’s Pietists’ faith. This is a bold statement that places Ernst in opposition to most of the secondary literature, which has generally argued for a neglect, even a complete rejection, of all physicality in Pietist culture. Ernst convincingly shows that while the interpretation of the Bible and other devotional literature was important to Pietists’ spiritual education, it was the insight gained from human physical suffering that was believed to provide the ultimate salutary experiences on their thorny road to spiritual perfection. Württemberg’s Pietists cherished their suffering bodies as laboratories of God’s will whose workings were to be passively accepted. Although this ascetic attitude did not prevent them from seeking medical advice, therapeutic “success” was of minor importance.