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Nazi past, and government assistance was often inadequate as a result. Similar uneasiness is still evident in Russia towards veterans of the war in Afghanistan (1979–89), as Ethel Dunn reminds us. Dunn shows that the shift to a market economy led to the virtual collapse of state assistance for all disabled veterans in Russia: retrenchment has left the welfare system unable to pay for benefits established during the Soviet era.

The remaining three essays deal with various aspects of the experience of war disability. James Marten focuses on the prevalence of alcohol abuse in the National Homes established for veterans of the US Civil War. He shows that the lack of a traditional masculine role and the experience of living in pain and discomfort led many veterans to alcoholism: a problem that was treated humanely by those who managed the homes. In her essay, Deborah Cohen asks the important question of why German veterans of the Great War turned against the state, despite a generous system of state assistance, whereas British veterans, who received much less from their government, did not. She concludes that German veterans were alienated by the resentment of the public towards their privileges, whereas British veterans, who were forced to rely far more on voluntary aid, were more effectively integrated into society. The final essay, by Mary Tremblay, considers the experiences of Canadian veterans of the Second World War who suffered spinal cord injuries. She shows that Canada was one of the first countries to develop an effective programme for the rehabilitation of veterans suffering from such injuries: the result of more active forms of therapy pioneered immediately before and during the war, and the establishment of organizations run by and for those suffering from spinal cord injuries.

The wide thematic and chronological range of this collection, and the thorough introductory essay, make it invaluable to anyone with an interest in the history of

war and medicine, the history of social policy, or of disability in general. The individual essays are mostly of high quality and some very high indeed. It is a great shame that such a valuable work has been marred by the lack of an index, the absence of which is becoming regrettably common in collections of essays.

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A M G Rutten, *Dutch transatlantic medicine trade in the eighteenth century under the cover of the West Indies Company*, Rotterdam, Erasmus Publishing, 2000, pp. 168, illus., Hfl. 59.50 (paperback 90-5235-148-1).

This study is the result of enormous labour. Rutten has searched the records of the Dutch New West India Company (founded in 1674 after the first had failed financially), trying to find information about medicines that were sent from Amsterdam to the settlements along the coast of Africa, South America and the Caribbean, and the drugs sent back in turn as commodities. Although many local plants and minerals could be used medicinally, Dutch employees of the WIC and settlers preferred being dosed with drugs brought from their home country. Few medical products of Africa and the New World came into wide use in the Old World apart from sugar, tobacco, cocoa, and sarsaparilla. As a result, Rutten has chased after the proverbial needles in haystacks, and found quite a few assorted bits of evidence. The result is a book rich with information, including lists and tables, although not a wholly satisfying historical interpretation. Partly this is because the information is sparse, partly because it is intractable. As a further problem, Rutten approaches the history from the documents

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alone, without delving deeply into the history of pharmacy. The study therefore offers many bits of information and anecdotes: the doctors charged with testing the freshness of cinnamon, for instance, disliked the job because it burned their tongues so badly, despite taking bread and butter between samples. He has also placed his knowledge in the context of the history of the world drug trade and evidence of voyages, such as the medicine chest taken with Columbus in 1493 on his second expedition to America, some Portuguese medicine chests, drugs taken on Dutch whaling voyages, and the medicines brought along with a US navy frigate on a trip to the Barbary Coast in 1801.

Rutten is clear that many of the medicinals had beneficial effects. But what is one to make of observations such as that 60 per cent of the drugs used by Columbus were no longer used by the early eighteenth century, while “273 products from the *Pharmacopoea Amstelodamensis nova* (1792) were adopted in the ‘Nederlandse Pharmacopee’ (Dutch Pharmacopoeia) 4th edition 1905 a century later” (p. 39). Such information is almost pointless without a framework that helps to explain it. Consequently, the book will be invaluable to historians of the WIC and historians of pharmacy, especially for the tables and notes. Other readers will find interesting fragments of stories. Many are the depressing flotsam of a corrupt slave-holding regime: descriptions of horrible mistreatment of Africans imported for labour, references to the extremely high mortality rates among the Europeans, and the private traffic in company goods (including medicines) designed to make poorly paid employees rich in WIC service. As a result of the absence of a clear interpretative framework, Rutten’s is not as helpful as Renate Wilson’s *Pious traders in medicine* (2000) on the ways in which the Halle missions supported their work by driving the sale of their remedies to others. Perhaps the comparison shows that had the

WIC been more imaginative it might have made more of its own medicine trade. Instead, it was content with riches from the trade in humans, sugar, and rum. Rutten is faithful to his sources, and so does not pretend to be the kind of alchemist who could turn such lead into gold. For those interested in the history of drugs, however, he has found some stones that sparkle.

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Sue Minter, *The apothecaries’ garden: a new history of the Chelsea Physic Garden*, Thrupp, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 2000, pp. xiii, 210, illus., £25.00 (hardback 0-7509-2449-7).

A garden of a mere four acres that already has three histories to its name—one in three editions and the first as early as 1820—must be rather special to have merited such long-continuing celebration. This is partly because it has had an unbroken existence for over three centuries now, partly because it has perkily defied the covetous attentions of developers in one of the most built-over and sought-after areas of inner London, and partly because for very many years it provided the only field instruction in botany that was professionally available in England, a role in which it was to be more lastingly influential than it can ever have expected.

The origin of this unlikely institution lies in the acrimonious breaking-away from the Grocers Company of the Society of Apothecaries in 1617. Assuming responsibility for training its apprentices, the Society speedily initiated a practice, already long in favour at certain Continental universities, of arranging a programme of summer “herbarizings” into the neighbouring countryside to see the local medicinal plants. At a period when