

To which conclusions does reading this anthology lead? First, that things are less simple, more varied and even more ambivalent than historical authors during the second wave of the Feminist Movement and its aftermath advocated. If one listens carefully, the woman's voice is more clearly audible, and independent agency is revealed, also in cases of unwanted childlessness and even in court cases on violation and paternity claims. Second, in the awareness that their topic goes to the heart of the physical matter in cases of involuntary penetration, menstruation and giving birth, the authors keep a careful distance from the predominant cultural constructivism. Third, the opinion of an American male author darts through the pages, although he is not that often explicitly mentioned: he is, of course, Thomas Laqueur. *Femmes en fleurs* furnishes several convincing emasculations of the Two-Sex Model, even though most articles in this book seem to have been written before the publication of Katherine Park's corrective *Secrets of Women*.

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**Laura J. McGough,** *Gender, Sexuality and Syphilis in Early Modern Venice: The Disease that Came to Stay*, Early Modern History: Society and Culture (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. x + 202, £50.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-230-25292-9.

Laura J. McGough's study of the 'French Disease' in early modern Venice is a much-welcomed addition to both the history of women and gender, as well as the history of medicine. It is also an example of comparative history at its best, for McGough not only offers valuable insights about the Venetian past but also about present-day Africa, where she resides. Mining several rich archival collections in Venice, McGough offers us a variety of contemporary perspectives on

syphilis, ranging from public health officials and Holy Inquisitors to physicians and popular healers, and from the custodians of women's asylums to the afflicted themselves. The author finds that over the course of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, perceptions of the 'French Disease', whose symptoms ranged from syphilis to gonorrhoea and elude post-modern categorisation, changed. First introduced in virulent form by the French armies invading late fifteenth-century Italy, its familiarity, by the sixteenth century, reduced its stature to something characterised by contemporaries as endemic, familiar, and curable. McGough carefully outlines the social, cultural, and institutional processes that helped transform these perceptions. The onset of this sexually transmitted disease was initially attributed to the liaisons of soldiers and prostitutes. But the lagoon also attracted many unmarried migrants, and eventually syphilis became endemic, infecting every neighbourhood and social class in Venice, clergy and lay people alike.

Venice's response to the disease, McGough astutely shows, was gendered. A badge of honour for men, the 'French Disease' was a source of stigma and shame for women. Venetian authorities strove to contain afflicted females in various asylums, while men were given more attentive medical treatment. The women's asylums, in part a product of the Counter Reformation wave of charitable causes, were destined to be venues of lifetime institutionalisation, a kind of punishment for licentiousness. However, perceptions of the purpose of women's asylums changed over the two centuries under study as well: once a place to confine women of beauty, authorities realised, by the eighteenth century, that the real source of peril was the poverty that forced the indigent to become sex workers. Thus, unlike the Convertite, which housed a mix of former concubines, as well as the pretty daughters of merchants and artisans in danger of losing their virginity, the eighteenth-century Pentiti offered their wards vocational training and then reintegrated them into Venetian society. McGough treats us to insightful cases

about the travails of these women. As the Convertite did not retrain sex workers, women hesitated to join them, for they required severing relationships with men they loved, and there was no replacement of earning potential.

McGough's book is also about the treatment of disease. Guaiacum, known as Holy Wood in Italy, was ground into sawdust and soaked in water, then boiled and reduced. The foam was then dried and used as a medicine. However, while the disease was considered curable, university-trained physicians viewed it as a moral failing and attached great stigma to it, a deterrent to patients needing treatment. Moreover, they blamed their patients if treatment failed, or suspected witchcraft if natural remedies proved ineffective. Popular healers were more accessible, and self-treatment was even more attractive because it assured anonymity.

The most unique aspect of McGough's work involves her comparisons of early modern Venice with Africa in the twenty-first century. People in both settings were guided by religious authorities as well as practitioners of witchcraft. Guilt-ridden, they sought to hide their afflictions because of the stigma, allowing the disease to thrive. Furthermore, stigma got in the way of mapping out a course of planned prevention. For Africa there is still time to overcome such obstacles, and McGough's fascinating study of sexual contagion and treatment in Venice is an instructive means of understanding how societal attitudes can shape the course of disease.

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**Paul A. Elliott,** *Enlightenment, Modernity and Science: Geographies of Scientific Culture and Improvement in Georgian England* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. xii + 363, £54.50, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-84885-366-9.

There has been quite a lot of research on the scientific culture of the English provinces in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and the time may be right for a summing-up. In the last couple of decades, the pioneering work of Roy Porter, Margaret Jacob, and Larry Stewart has inspired several local studies. A fair amount has now been learned about institutions in such commercial centres as Manchester and Birmingham, about the work of itinerant lecturers in towns like Bath and Norwich, about the scientific contents of periodicals and newspapers, and about the trade in scientific instruments. Paul A. Elliott's book goes some way toward the goal of organising all of this information, though it falls short of a comprehensive synthesis.

Each of Elliott's chapters is focused on a different site of scientific activity in the period, including the home, the school, the garden, the county town, and the Masonic lodge. He acknowledges what has been written on the historical geography of Enlightenment science by Charles Withers, David Livingstone, Vladimir Janković, and Miles Ogborn. He also alludes to the 'spatial turn' in the sociology of scientific knowledge, but without engaging substantially with theoretical issues. Instead, he covers fairly concrete practices, like domestic architecture, the layout of gardens, and urban planning. The focus on a series of locations is a good device to organise his summaries of historians' work and to integrate the results of his own archival studies. He provides ample references to the scholarly literature and to selected primary sources, which will add to the book's value.

Elliott succeeds in showing how his chosen sites were connected to wider networks through which printed materials, instruments, and specimens were circulated. Discussing the household as a place of scientific activity, he mentions books that taught botany, meteorology, and chemistry to women and children. He shows how natural history collections in private houses evolved into public museums in Lichfield and Darlington. He tells of itinerant lecturers who brought their shows into middle-class homes, and of