

turns to alternative sources in order to examine money's social dimensions as it was exchanged, accumulated, and reflected upon by a range of actors. The author offers chapters on topics including tropes and metaphors of money, anxieties about money in the diaries of businessmen and the writings of a workhouse operator, vagrancy laws, and Atlantic passage and wife sale. In each case, she shows how people worked out their social and moral relations through monetary exchange and discourse. Each chapter is illuminating, but it remains unclear to me why particular cases were chosen over others or whether the chapters add up to more than the sum of their parts. In addition to a lucid introductory chapter on monetary theory and history, the book offers an especially insightful discussion of cash rewards for the apprehension of vagrants, showing how poor people's individual and categorical worth was measured by money. Throughout, Valenze nicely sustains attention to gender and the contradictory ways that money both limited and afforded opportunities for women.

During this early modern period, Valenze contends, money became a measure of self and of others; moreover, the instability of money's social and moral meanings facilitated a distinctive willingness on the part of diverse actors to attach monetary value to human beings. Despite some analytical vagueness in her treatment of money variously as a measure, a price, a commodity, a symbol, and a more encompassing value, Valenze convincingly illustrates the expansive ways that her subjects figured the ontological relationship between people and marketable objects. Valenze calls for moving beyond money's "economic" dimensions to its "social life," referencing Karl Polanyi and anthropological research on "primitive" money. While this attention to the "embeddedness" of money effectively moves beyond market- or state-centric analyses, it leaves unanswered the question of what constitutes the analytical and historical categories of the "economic" and the "social" in the first place.

This book will appeal primarily to historians, though the author's interdisciplinary approach to the social life of money extends its potential reach to a broader readership interested in social theories of exchange and value.

———Jessica R. Cattelino, University of Chicago

Lester K. Little, ed., *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541–750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 380 pp.

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With the rise of HIV and other "emerging diseases" having global reach over the past twenty years, interest in historic plague has flourished. The Justinianic plague in and around the Roman empire from A.D. 541 to 750, however, has received far less attention than the Black Death of 1348 and its recurrent

strikes in Europe to the eighteenth century. This difference results in part from the comparative paucity of sources for the former and its greater linguistic demands, which require a knowledge of ancient Middle Eastern as well as Western languages. Because of these demands, Lester Little argues persuasively that a multiple-authored work by authorities in different parts of Europe is now needed before a single-authored synthesis can be adequately written.

From Ireland to Anatolia, these essays concentrate predominantly on two questions: what were the demographic consequences of the plague, and what was the disease? On the first, the various authors have departed from the position of Jean Durliat (1989) that the literary sources grossly exaggerated the plague's toll and enduring demographic effects on European and Middle Eastern populations. In the shortest essay in this volume, and one of the best crafted, Hugh Kennedy synthesizes recent archaeological findings, arguing that after 541 public building ceased "almost completely"; the total number of inscriptions also declined sharply, and the plague brought "to an abrupt end" rural and urban expansion in Syria (pp. 92–95). This might be construed as a sign of generalized population decline.

For the second question these scholars show far fewer doubts than historians and scientists have shown for the Black Death since Graeme Twigg's pioneering study of 1984. Only Michael McCormick casts even the slightest doubt on the identity of the disease that spread from Egypt to Ireland and circulated through the Mediterranean in less than five years. Unquestionably, it had to have been the same rodent subtropical disease, *Yersinia pestis*, that slowly crept through the Yunnan peninsula, taking more than fifty years to reach Hong Kong in 1894, and by steamship reached ports around the world, killing, however, only in the hundreds, not the expected millions, in temperate zones. Except for one essay, these authors base their conclusions on symptoms alone, taken mainly from six literary sources. These describe not only buboes in the three principal lymph nodes, as would be normal for *Yersinia pestis*, but also buboes forming in other parts of the body and pustules that almost wholly covered the afflicted. One essay does consider the epidemiology evidence, but not from large numbers of quantitative sources, which are hard to come by from before the Black Death and the early modern period. It asserts that the distribution of the Justinianic plague (as well as that of the Black Death) was "patchy," and thus resembled the behavior of *Yersinia pestis* simply because some towns and regions appear to have been spared during particular plague waves (258). For the plague of 1348, such an assertion flies in the face of the work of epidemiologists George Christakos and his équipe (2005), who show that the Black Death spread over space and in time at one order of magnitude greater than any known wave of *Yersinia pestis*. As for the Justinianic plague, the assertion is based on scraps of anecdotal evidence, and worse, the absence of evidence. Given the absence of any connection of Justinianic

plague to rats or other rodents, this essay asks us to believe that this “failure” in observation redounds simply to people before the nineteenth century being incapable of seeing millions of rats that must have strewn their streets, and of drawing connections between them and the disease (270). Yet in subtropical zones such as India and China, where *Yersinia pestis* struck before Yersin cultured the agent, natives had no difficulty seeing rats drop from their rafters, realizing that the plague season had begun, and that it was time to abandon their huts.

More positively, this collection will stimulate new research on the plagues from 541 to 750, not only on questions of the disease and demography, but also on the plagues’ social and cultural consequences, a matter of interest to everyone concerned with pandemics.

———Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., University of Glasgow

Dudley Andrew and Steven Ungar, *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005.

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This history by two scholars of literature and film is a series of essays on the patterns and “tones” of French culture in the late 1920s and the 1930s. The Popular Front (1935–1938) comes in only as background, and its cultural programs (the subject of Pascal Ory’s 991-page *La Belle Illusion*) are not discussed here. Breaking with what the authors call “standard history” or “the straight story,” this study zigzags back and forth across the years between the wars (and even later), pausing to examine selected movies, cinematic themes, canonic novels, literary careers, and the diverse political stances taken by cultural leaders. The authors’ model for this anti-narrative history is Alain Resnais’s film of 1974, *Stavisky. . .*, which they analyze at length, praising its multi-perspectival, ambiguous evocation of a period. Accordingly, they focus on episodes and fragments from different cultural strata, uncovering unexpected coincidences and similarities that constitute the “harmonics” of the past (as Sergei Eisenstein and Resnais put it). Their method also owes much to some Surrealists’ ideas, counterbalanced by a Structuralist interest in cultural regularities. Still another model invoked throughout is the non-linear format of a newspaper, with parallel columns juxtaposing unrelated stories on a given day.

Part I, titled “Streetwork,” begins by telling how distinguished publishing houses, writers, and the press made new efforts to reach a mass public with photo-filled dailies and tabloids such as *Détective*. Illustrious writers on the Left threw themselves into organizing an antifascist movement in the wake of the February 6 (1934) riots. Intellectuals across the political spectrum