

disease epidemics and control programmes, and more generally of the medical aspects of the post-1945 reinvention of Congo as a ‘model colony’ will be of interest to the historians and epidemiologists working on the emergence of HIV in Central Africa: her study is cautious and subtle (contrary to much of the work on ‘HIV origins’), but does provide fascinating evidence of potential sexual and iatrogenic pathways of transmission in that region of Congo.

The second reason is methodological and theoretical. Nancy Hunt could well have limited her work to a commentary on the ‘biopolitics’ (in Foucauldian terms) of late-colonial Belgian Congo and to a historical critique of medical paternalism and public health hubris in a ‘zone of abandonment’. But she proposes something very different. First, she shows that the utopian impulse to reform, seduce and model Congolese subjectivities through medico-social intervention was not only a fragile and contradictory fantasy, but also went hand in hand with the development of a fearful, almost paranoid, security apparatus, which directly used (and inspired) the practices of identification, control and surveillance inherent to public health – the biopolitical state was also a ‘nervous state’. Secondly, and this is a stunning achievement of this book, she deciphers through a creative reading of missionary archives and local songs, the *vernacular* side of the story, that is, not only the cultural ‘responses’ to biomedicine, but also the experience of living, moving, working, suffering and smiling in a medicalised landscape, where ‘gonorrhoea was an everyday word’ (p. 234) and where marks of past atrocities (severed limbs and barren bodies, to begin with) were ever present. She examines, for example (Ch. 4), the development in the Equateur of the *Likili* movement, a form of ‘therapeutic insurgency’ (a concept which captures the constitutive continuum of therapy, religion, witchcraft, political imagination and violence), which sought to restore fertility and to ‘sweep out’ Belgians, including the doctors. In a superbly constructed narrative, alternating the description of *Likili* and the gloomy story of Dr Schwerts’ sterility studies, she demonstrates what medical history can gain by radically expanding its perspective to ‘matters therapeutic writ large’ (p. 7), including both ‘the positive *and* the negative registers of vernacular therapeutics’ (p. 9) and both the caring *and* the harmful dimension of public health. Inspired by the rich corpus of anthropo-historical studies of ‘healing and harming’ in Africa, this approach suggests something fundamental about *medical history* itself: that it should not be taken as a sub-discipline, but rather as a heuristic device – indeed one of the most promising way to examine the intersected histories of bodies, technologies, environments, politics and imaginations.

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Christian Krötzel, Katariina Mustakallio and Jenni Kuuliala (eds.), *Infirmity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Social and Cultural Approaches to Health, Weakness and Care* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. xii, 311, £75, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-4724-3834-8.

This volume is a fascinating collection of essays on the theme of infirmity, understood very broadly to mean perceived weakness, in both Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Many of the essays originated as papers given at one of the regular series of conferences at the University of Tampere in Finland known as Passages from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. I was lucky enough to be able to attend this particular conference on *infirmity* in 2012 and looked forward eagerly to this volume.

The book does not disappoint. It has some of the most interesting essays I have read for a long time on a wide range of topics from Roman baths to illness in medieval 'life writing' (early forms of autobiography). The volume is structured thematically rather than chronologically into three broad topics: Defining Infirmity and Disability; Societal and Cultural Infirmity; Infirmity, Healing and Community.

The first theme includes essays on Roman ageing and disability (Harlow and Laurence); short-statured persons in Ancient Greece (Dasen); illness in late medieval life writings (Frohne); physical impairment in the canonisation processes of late medieval saints (Kuuliala); and the vocabulary of psychological distress in Roman culture (Puliga). The second theme includes two very different approaches to the sufferings of Christ and how they were experienced in medieval cultures through the concept of stigmata (Tamminen on the sufferings of crusaders; Klaniczay on saints' bodily sufferings); ideas of poison and disease in anti-heretical writings (Välmäki); and concepts of the Roman body politic in the writings of Livy (Mustakallio and Pyy). The last theme includes essays on medicinal drugs (Hautala); Roman 'alternative' medicines such as bathing (Griffith); Roman household washing basins (Berg); recipes for medieval sexual incapacity (Niiranen); a Middle Dutch miracle collection (Van Mulder); and the roles of healing saints (Krötzl).

There are altogether eight essays on the late Middle Ages, six essays on Antiquity, and just one that covers both periods, as discussed below. It is a pity that there is nothing on the early medieval period, and that there are not more cross-chronological studies. Medievalists like me often look to the early modern period for comparative debates; this volume makes it clear that there is plenty going on in the Ancient world to which we should pay attention, particularly concerning concepts of the body politic and hygiene. It is to be hoped that future authors in this excellent series of conference proceedings coming out of Tampere could be encouraged to be more explicitly comparative, perhaps drawing on discussions at the conference itself. Alternatively, the editors could make more comparisons in their introduction, which ends rather abruptly. It could have gone further in defining infirmity while also considering issues such as retrospective diagnosis, which is done in several essays without much discussion. Otherwise, apart from a very few typing errors and some editorial inconsistencies, such as varying ways of laying out translated and/or original language quotations, this is a well-written volume.

There are some especially strong essays on miracle healing, medicinal drugs and domestic bathing utensils such as basins. The two pieces by Kuuliala and Van Mulder are very good examples of how canonisation processes and miracle collections respectively are still yielding fascinating insights into human experience of illness and injury. Kuuliala takes a thematic approach, looking at the relationship between physical impairment and noble status in a number of late medieval cults (mainly Charles of Blois, Nicholas of Toletino, Thomas of Cantilupe, Dauphine of Puimichel, Pope Urban V, King Louis IX of France). The essay includes a short but very important discussion of battle injuries as represented in miracle narratives. Van Mulder, in contrast, focuses on one much less well-known Middle Dutch miracle collection, that of Our Lady of Amersfoort in the second half of the fifteenth century, paying especial attention to norms of social behaviour. He argues that miracle stories acted as a kind of 'social glue' bringing together different aspects of the social body.

The study by Berg of water basins in Roman households, based on analysis of archaeological finds, including many from Pompeii, and images on sarcophagi and in wall paintings, was riveting. Many of the images show basins at the bedside in contexts relating to birth, illness and death. The imagery is strikingly similar to late medieval scenes such

as those on *deschi da parto* (Italian trays given as birth gifts), or in frescoes of the birth of the Virgin Mary or of John the Baptist. One wonders whether late medieval artists knew of similar ancient Roman scenes, like those included by Berg in nicely presented black and white images. Or is it possible that medieval basins just continued to play crucial yet often overlooked roles in the human life cycle? This essay is a particularly good example of how further cross-chronological comparisons could have been even more illuminating.

The last essay of particular note in a rich collection is that of Hautala on the changing nature of medicinal drugs such as mithridatium between Ancient Greece and the sixteenth century. The interdisciplinary approach (the author is both an anthropologist and a classicist) argues that drugs and all ingredients contained within them are highly unstable substances with complex cultural histories and competing forms of expertise and authority over their use. Drugs are just as much cultural artefacts as texts.

All in all, this is a really interesting interdisciplinary volume. It will provide historians and archaeologists with interests in health and disability with much to think about for some time to come. Hopefully it will open up new avenues of *comparative* research across traditional chronological boundaries.

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José María Borrás Llop (ed.), *El trabajo infantil en España (1700–1950)* (Barcelona: Publicacions i Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2014), pp. 511, €25, paperback, ISBN: 978-84-475-3797-6; ISBN: 978-84-9888-550-7.

Peter Kirby, *Child Workers and Industrial Health in Britain, 1780–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 224, £17.99, paperback, ISBN: 978-18-438-3884-5.

If readers are interested in knowing how hard it is to preach in the desert, they can ask José María Borrás Llop. Like many other Spanish historians who have dealt with the issue of child labour, he had to resign himself to seeing his field of study relegated by a social history establishment much more interested in ‘heroic’ tales of the labour movement. The readers could not put the same question to Peter Kirby and that is what gives us the point of comparison between their work and cause to reflect in this review.

Borrás Llop makes it clear from the beginning that ‘social and economic history in Spain has experienced an intense renewal in recent decades, but until the publication of this book, the attention paid by historians to child labour was very limited’ (p. 11). The fact is that without work such as this presented by Borrás Llop, it is impossible for research like Kirby’s to be carried out in Spain. This is not a minor issue. As Kirby explains, he chose ‘the subject of child occupational health’ because the theme ‘has attracted little serious analysis’. However, the bibliography about child labour in England ‘[has] produced a growing number of monographical studies exploring the complex problem of child labour during the Industrial Revolution [and has] offered increasingly detailed investigations of child health and welfare in early urban and industrial society’ (p. 1).

The work of Borrás Llop coincides exactly with this last kind of investigation. The volume he has edited features a total of twelve studies by distinct authors about different aspects of the history of child labour in Spain, covering a large period of more than two and a half centuries, but showing a clear disproportion in their treatment. Only the first three chapters deal with child labour in pre-industrial times in Spain, that is between