

independent Iberian translations (together with the 1988 edition of the Italian original text) now constitute an important and welcome cluster of texts for anybody interested in the vernacularisation of scientific knowledge, the history of medical books, the emergence of medical terminology in sixteenth-century Iberia, and the complex impact of translations on a core text.

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**Teresa Huguet-Termes, Jon Arrizabalaga and Harold J. Cook** (eds), *Health and Medicine in Hapsburg Spain: Agents, Practices, Representations, Medical History Supplement No. 29* (London: The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL, 2009), pp. vi + 158, £35.00/€40.00/\$60.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-85484-128-8.

Anyone wishing to take the pulse (so to speak) of the history of early modern Spanish medicine would do well to start with this slim but valuable book. Its half-dozen essays provide a well-rounded sample of recent work in a field that, as Harold Cook stresses in his introduction, still remains largely unnoticed in the English-reading world.

María Luz López Terrada opens the collection by reviewing the efforts of various institutions to police the health sector in sixteenth-century Valencia. She highlights the lively diversity of this marketplace, and suggests that competition and confusion among different authorities – city and viceregal governments, guilds, and the *Protomedicato*, or special royal tribunal – wound up encouraging medical pluralism. That one of the physicians whom King Philip II (1556–98) named *Protomédico* proved to be a committed Paracelsian leads appropriately to the next chapter, Mar Rey Bueno's overview of alchemical activities in Philip's court. She

argues that, while the King showed little interest in the occult (unlike his relative Rudolf II), he was certainly willing to employ such chemists for their skills in distilling waters and devising other remedies. From this markedly therapeutic (and Lullian) alchemy one moves on to witches, or rather, the *saludadores* or folk healers, whose many attributes included the ability to detect witches, along with other innate skills, such as the power to cure rabies with their saliva. María Tausiet has unearthed numerous intriguing references to these ambiguous figures, who, not surprisingly, were often accused of practising the same sort of black magic they claimed to offer protection against.

Teresa Huguet-Termes then focuses on efforts to reorganise the medical sector of Madrid following its designation as capital of the Hispanic empire in 1561. While the runaway growth of the city's population predictably frustrated these reforms, she joins a larger historiographic consensus in finding little to distinguish Counter-Reformation initiatives in public healthcare from those which prevailed in the Protestant north. Mónica Bolufer also keeps the broader European picture in mind while tracing the changing representations of women within a series of texts which ranged from Juan Huarte de San Juan's best selling *The Examination of Wits* of 1575, to the enlightened cleric Benito Feijoo's essay 'The Defence of Women', published in 1726. She discerns a few important shifts amid underlying continuity in views of women within learned culture, and suggests that Iberian discourse on sexual difference evolved closely in tandem with medical writing outside the peninsula. Jon Arrizabalaga closes the volume with a portrait of Rodrigo de Castro (c.1546–1627), a Portuguese physician of Jewish background who re-converted to the faith of his ancestors after moving to Hamburg. There he achieved prominence for two publications, a handbook on female diseases and a weighty guide to medical ethics. Arrizabalaga places particular emphasis on the latter, which he sees as marking an important step forward in the self-

consciousness of the higher ranks of the healing profession, while it defended Jewish (as well as Islamic and Scholastic) contributions to the long-term development of medical knowledge.

The reader of these essays will come away with a strong sense, not only of the dynamism that characterises the small but energetic community of historians of medicine and science in Spain, but also of how, thanks to their efforts, many old clichés are now biting the dust. One certainly bids them well. At the same time, the sympathetic observer may wish that they had taken a few more risks in their analysis, which is heavily outweighed by description. Sacrificing any of the rich empirical detail that is so often found in early modern Spanish documentation would obviously be a mistake. But leavening that detail with a sharper and more sustained analytical effort would help attract greater attention to a sphere of historical research that – as this volume clearly demonstrates – deserves to be much better known.

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**Rebecca Laroche,** *Medical Authority and Englishwomen's Herbal Texts, 1550–1650, Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. xii + 196, £55.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-7546-6678-3.

Our understanding of the complexities of lay engagement with healthcare and medicine in early modern England has been illuminated in recent years by the investigations of literary scholars in a field formerly the preserve of medical and social historians. The author of the present work brings the techniques of textual analysis and take-no-prisoners style of academic literary studies to bear on her chosen theme with somewhat predictable results. There is a rich seam of fruitful insights buried

in this study but readers of weaker constitution may be forgiven for giving up before encountering it.

The central aim of the work is to analyse surviving evidence of female ownership and use of printed vernacular herbals in England in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to shed light on the place of such products in women's lives and their relationship with established (male) medical authority. The date range in the title is slightly misleading as these are the approximate outer dates of the herbal publications themselves – from William Turner's *A New Herball* (1551) to John Parkinson's *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640) – rather than the covering dates of the author's body of evidence: she helpfully lists the twenty-four individual pieces of evidence of female ownership and use dating from c.1597 to 1689 in an appendix. Principal among these are the well-known memorials of Margaret Hoby, Grace Mildmay and Elizabeth Isham. Laroche's discussion of these three women's interaction with the printed herbals in their possession, and that of the other less well-documented female inscribers of printed herbals in her survey, is subtle and suggestive, but in the absence of much supporting evidence there is little she can offer by way of general conclusion, apart from the obvious fact that these interactions were varied, depending as they did on a range of differing personal, social and geographic circumstances. One cannot avoid feeling that closer engagement with the much larger body of evidence provided by female-authored and inscribed manuscript recipe books of the period would have served the author well here, whilst admitting that this would necessarily have diluted Laroche's forensic focus.

The last chapter of the book is a discussion of the textual and other influences in the construction of Isabella Whitney's *A Sweet Nosgay, or Pleasant Posy* (1573), a socioeconomic satire on contemporary London using herbal texts as source material. Laroche's treatment is again sensitive and, in the view of this reviewer, persuasive in locating the seminal influences in