

## Book Reviews

the National Foundation and that only in the 1960s, when it began to accept federal funding, was it forced to admit African-American patients and care-givers. In his analysis of the British Polio Fellowship, founded in 1939, which he defines as “an organization of the disabled run by the disabled themselves” (p. 165), Gould points out the frequent tensions between the disabled and the able-bodied care-givers and teachers who believed they could better speak for their charges. Gould also underscores the crucial role of professional salespeople and advertising executives in organizing and directing the National Foundation, a role that did not vanish after the fiasco of the 1935 vaccine trials.

Disappointingly, he does not discuss the work of the Foundation’s propaganda department and its wide-ranging production of posters, pamphlets, magazines and movie previews, which played a powerful role in shaping the image of disease and disability in American popular culture.

What is new and important about this book is largely presented in the provocative final chapters. Here Gould offers moving tales by women and men, informed by the self-conscious awareness among many polio “survivors” (to use Gould’s term) that their experiences—both medical and social—were at once unique and part of a larger shared ordeal. These stories from adults remembering a disabled childhood and youth in the 1930s to the 1960s are gripping and disturbing. Gould’s informants—over a dozen tell a full story—talk about sex, personal identity, family relations, and medical care and abuse, often in a calm matter-of-fact tone that Gould intends to be shocking. There are some well-known people—like pop singer Ian Dury and polio rehabilitation specialist Lauro Halstead—but most are unknown outside polio circles. Many of the speakers are angry about medical and therapeutic policies that their families and care-takers tried to teach them, which emphasized mainstreaming and denied difference. These sections offer a powerful contribution to the social history of disability.

**Naomi Rogers,**  
Yale University School of Medicine

**Linda E Merians** (ed.), *The secret malady: venereal disease in eighteenth-century Britain and France*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1996, pp. viii, 269, illus., \$39.95 (hardback 0-8131-1989-8), \$19.95 (paperback 0-8131-0888-8).

Where the base work of general reference for a topic is as manifestly deficient as Claude Quétel’s painfully under-researched *History of syphilis* (1986) is for the history of venereal disease, there is always cause to celebrate new studies which offer securer historical grounding and open up fresh avenues for investigation. The 1990s have been good for syphilis, then, in that we now have not only *The great pox* (1997), authored by Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, but also *The secret malady*, Linda E Merians’ useful and interesting comparative collection of essays on one of the more neglected periods in the disease’s history, the eighteenth century.

The work brings together some fifteen scholars who range from historians of medicine to literary historians and critics, each of whom offers a valuable shaft of illumination on the disease’s historical and cultural impact. The Anglo-French focus is a strength too (though England does tend to hog the limelight). Part One, ‘Historical and medical contexts of venereal disease’ provides overviews of the disease and sex industry in eighteenth-century France (Susan P Conner, Kathryn Norberg); analysis of sectors of the English medical marketplace for venereal cures (Roy Porter, Philip K Wilson, Marie McAllister); discussion of the impact of the disease on “innocent” victims, notably infected wives (Mary Margaret Stewart) and children (Barbara J Dunlap); and a study of the London Lock Hospital and Lock Asylum for Women (Linda E Merians).

Part Two of the volume is devoted to ‘Representations of venereal disease’. A number of the studies, starting with Betty Rizzo’s ‘Decorums’, highlight the somewhat ambiguous status of the disease in cultural production after the Restoration. It was more

## Book Reviews

widely spread, notably in scholarly publications and in the advertising trades, than would seem likely for a “secret malady”. Yet reference to it was far more heavily censured than in the rather sexually free-wheeling late seventeenth century, when the disease had wielded a powerful charge as political metaphor—the gaze on the diseased bodily constitution could subtly shift to meditation on the diseased political Constitution. This chronology seems more English than many of the contributors seem to spot: late-seventeenth-century France was far more sexually buttoned up than England, and the metaphorical freight carried by the diseased body tended to be more in evidence—witness poor Marie-Antoinette!—on the eve of the French Revolution. Only two of the chapters in this second half of the volume are devoted to France, and though of high quality, they focus on somewhat unusual and unrepresentative literary figures, *Rétif de la Bretonne* (Diane Fourny) and *Sade* (Julie Candler Hayes—who offers an interesting study on pornography which transcends its bounds to develop into an analysis of how twentieth-century participants in pornography debates ignore the very different concepts of the body and its diseases available to *Sade*). The English contributions are more strictly confined to the mainstream: satire in the visual (Rose A Zimbardo and, on Hogarth, N F Lowe) and literary media (Leon Guilhamet and, on the novel, April London). In both countries late-eighteenth-century debate was highlighting the dangerous links of the disease to depopulation. Surprisingly perhaps, many of the cultural historians and critics of Part Two seem less secure about medical theories on the disease than the historians who dominate Part One—a fact which points to how much there is still to be done before this particular malady offers up all its secrets.

Colin Jones, Warwick University

**Peter Fleming**, *A short history of cardiology*, Clio Medica, Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, Editions Rodopi, 1997, pp. xviii, 241, Hfl. 35.00, \$21.50 (paperback 90-420-0057-0).

This refreshing addition to the history of cardiology will be welcomed by clinicians, historians, and students. Its many virtues include a concise but lucid presentation of what, to the uninitiated, can seem to be a labyrinth of ideas and language, previously described in selective, Whiggish fashion without reference to scholarship in social and intellectual history.

Fleming begins by acknowledging the anachronistic problem of terminology (“cardiology” being a relatively new word) and by conducting a historiographic review of his predecessors. The eighteen short chapters, each provided with its own set of endnotes, survey the medical literature on symptoms attributable to derangements of the heart from the Egyptians to approximately 1970 and the transplantation triumph of Dr Christiaan Barnard. A clinician, Fleming focuses on clinical ideas about disease of the heart: the interpretation of symptoms through signs and their management. His work is solidly connected to a wide range of primary sources, which are carefully analysed well beyond the tendency to find only the traces of current practice. The impressive reduction of sources sparkles with confidence and clarity and reflects vast clinical experience. The narrative is woven around mini-biographies of certain key players; often, as in the case of James Mackenzie, a single life story conveys a chronological account of the larger professional theme. Other vignettes add grace and style: “Ffelenge the powlse” as the Royal College of Physicians of London described “feeling the pulse”, in 1546; or the breathtaking moment when a spotlight shone on the “pink and healthy” little girl who had been operated on by Alfred Blalock only a week before.

Without neglecting his distinguished clinical predecessors, Fleming has enriched his discussion with consideration of the relevant