

charitable mission found their roots in the Florentine confraternity network of that time. Dell' Ancisa had been, in fact, an active member of Florentine confraternities, from the Arcangelo Raffaello (in his youth) to San Tommaso d'Aquino (in his adulthood).

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Arrizabalaga, Jon, John Henderson, and Roger French. *The Great Pox. The French Disease in Renaissance Europe*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997. xv, 352 pp., 30 plates, 8 figures, 7 tables. ISBN 0-300-06934-0

The great pox—a loathsome disease, often transmitted venereally, characterized by sores and great pain—appeared suddenly and virulently in Europe in the last decade of the fifteenth century. Its arrival in Italy coincided with the French invasion of the peninsula, giving rise to its most common name (at least outside of France), “the French Disease.” Modern scholars associate it with syphilis, but the authors of this new study on the impact of the disease on Europe choose to restrict themselves to the terms commonly used in the sixteenth century. Their choice of terminology is the signal of a new approach. The authors do not study syphilis itself as a biological entity (the traditional approach), but rather the phenomenon of “the French Disease,” that is, the reception of the disease by Renaissance Europe—the social, cultural, and especially intellectual reaction to it.

Despite its general title, the book is in fact a series of case studies, which are focused almost entirely on Italy, with one comparative excursion into Germany. The bulk of the case studies deal with the debates between physicians as they tried to cope with a disease that was not described by the classical and Arabic medical authorities, and did not fit into traditional, Galenic explanations of diseases and their treatments. The authors approach these debates, not from hindsight as a march towards enlightenment, but rather as a strategy to protect the reputation and profession of the physician, which was damaged when doctors could neither explain nor treat the disease. This approach yields useful insights, relating the theories developed by the doctors to explain and categorize the disease to their individual training, and their theoretical and political allegiances. In the process, the authors demonstrate how the sudden appearance of the disease forced the doctors to develop original ways of looking at disease in general, thus helping to transform medical theory. However, the authors' approach leads to a curiously fragmented discussion of the doctors' debates, which are framed almost entirely in terms of their training, their desire to further their careers, and the socio-economic necessity of protecting their profession. There is little consideration given to whether or not they were intellectually intrigued by the disease, or whether they provided any actual insight into its nature or cure. It is as if scholars' publications were discussed purely in terms of the influence of their teachers and as a strategy

to advance their careers, without reference to whether they were genuinely engaged with their subjects or contributed new insights into them. The chapters on physicians' debates are, in essence, intellectual history, and they will be rather arcane and dry to non-specialists.

Scholars of confraternities will be gratified to know that the two chapters devoted to the confraternal response to the pox form the most accessible and interesting case study in the book. Confraternities provided the strongest social (as opposed to intellectual) response to the appearance of the disease. This confraternal response began in Genoa, with the foundation at the end of the fifteenth century of the Company of Divine Love. It quickly set up a hospital for incurables (*incurabili*), a category of the sick normally excluded from traditional hospitals, but which had suddenly become prominent as a result of the French Disease. A few hospitals for incurables were set up in cities in northern Italy (notably Ferrara and Bologna) under the auspices of confraternities dedicated to St. Job (chosen because he too was afflicted with sores). The majority of hospitals for incurables, however, were set up by branches of the Company of Divine Love. It was launched beyond Genoa by the patronage of Pope Leo X, who provided considerable assistance in setting up a Roman branch of the confraternity and helped to launch it elsewhere in Italy as well. The Roman hospital, whose records survive, provides the focus for an in-depth study of the patients (only some of whom actually suffered from the French Disease) and the treatment at a hospital for incurables.

The expansion of the confraternity was closely linked to the Catholic reform movement. Many of the Company's lay and clerical sponsors were active in reforming the Catholic church, notably as members of the new order of the Theatines. The authors, however, make a concerted effort to distance their discussion from traditional Catholic historiography, focusing instead on the political and social factors that helped the company's rapid expansion. They demonstrate that the foundation of these confraternities was a project close to the heart of many important individuals, and that the influence and money of these powerful individuals were vital in establishing the companies and hospitals in cities throughout Italy. These people were motivated partially by their desire for Catholic reform and by a sense of charity towards the suffering of the sick, but equally also by a sense of disgust and desire for public order prompted by seeing the revolting effects of the disease paraded on the streets of their cities. The foundation of hospitals was, therefore, both a benefit for the ill, who received care they could otherwise not afford, and a benefit for the city, who removed a revolting presence from its streets.

While the authors' unconventional approaches to the French Disease provide welcome new perspectives, the book's overall analysis of the phenomenon remains curiously dislocated, a result of the explicit exclusion of the biological reality of the disease from the discussion. Like the doctors they discuss, the authors are reluctant to admit the independent existence of the disease itself. For instance, one of the authors states that "Their [the doctors'] picture of the disease was a construction, not an unveiling, of a medical entity" (87). Yet the pox was

a genuine disease, and the doctors' picture was as much shaped by its biological reality—new, often venereal, chronic and incurable—as by their cultural and intellectual conditioning. The limitations of the authors' approach is particularly noticeable when the strong moral reaction to the pox is related to social and cultural attitudes towards sexuality, without really taking into account the fact that this moral reaction originated in the simple realization by observers that the disease was often spread through sexual contact. The French Disease, as a phenomenon, was a synthesis between the biological condition and the society that received it. While the new perspective provided by the authors is vital to understanding the phenomenon, their exclusion of any biological analysis means that their discussion is as incomplete as a traditional, primarily medical approach to the subject. In spite of this limitation (and the inexplicable absence of a bibliography), their study of the reception of the pox will prove a useful resource to scholars of the French Disease.

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*Carlo Borromeo e l'opera della "Grande Riforma": Cultura, religione e arti del governo nella Milano del pieno Cinquecento.* Milan: Credito Artigiano. 1997. 383 pp., illustrations

This large volume is an example of the kind of cultural patronage so common in Italy and so rare elsewhere. Danilo Zardin conceived of a collection dealing with Carlo Borromeo's reform program for the Diocese of Milan, Credito Artigiano was persuaded to underwrite the project as one means of marking its fiftieth anniversary, and the Accademia di San Carlo in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana offered the necessary institutional collaboration to carry the project through to completion. Volumes of this kind are frequently published by Italian banks, and favorable tax laws are only a small part of the reason.

Zardin assembled leading scholars from both sides of the Atlantic for this project. The individual articles are of varying length, complexity, and depth. Most are roughly ten pages long and, though uniformly well-documented, offer either an overview or a snapshot of work which the scholar has developed at greater length elsewhere. These cover a very wide range, including ritual, liturgy and iconology (Cesare Alzati, Maria Luisa Gatti Perer, Claudio Bernardi & Annamaria Cascetta), music and architecture (Giancarlo Rostirolla, Robert Kendrick, Stefano Della Torre), books and literary production (Claudia di Filippo Bareggi, Amedeo Quondam, Sandro Bianconi, Silvia Morgana), spirituality (Franco Buzzi), issues related to clerical authority, preaching and confession (Flavio Rurale, Luigi Prosdocimi, John O'Malley, Wietse de Boer), and the educational program of the Schools of Christian Doctrine (Angelo Bianchi). A few of the authors tackle their subjects in far greater depth, including Samuele Giombi on Borromeo's preaching, and Zardin himself on reform of manners as a theme