

evolutions of ancient medicine; as such, her book will be a must-read for anybody studying Galen's *Precepts of Health Care*.

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Cathy McClive and Nicole Pellegrin (eds),
Femmes en fleurs, femmes en corps: sang, santé, sexualité âge aux lumières (Saint-Etienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 2010), pp. 368, €23.00, paperback, ISBN: 978-2-86272-539-0.

While reading the collection of articles *Femmes en fleurs, Femmes en corps*, the mediaeval *Roman de la Rose* almost inevitably comes to mind. This allegorical poem describes a lover's quest for the Rose, which not only symbolises the love of a lady but also the lady embodied – 'en corps' to quote the title of this book – who is the living object of his desire. In Jean de Meun's continuation of the poem, the quest for sexual satisfaction is unmistakable. At the very end, Amor conquers the tower that houses the beautiful red Rose, Shame and Dread flee and the flower is plucked. None of the authors in *Femmes en fleurs* mention the poem, which was tremendously popular far into the Early Modern Period, but all its possible pre-modern connotations come up for discussion in this beautifully edited book.

The editors must have asked the individual authors to read each other's work over and again in order to incorporate each other's conclusions into their own argumentation. As a result, the general picture of an ongoing curtailment of the female body and its freedom of movement from the fifteenth century onwards could be refined and justifiably readjusted. It is of equal importance that Anglo-Saxon and French scholarship met in the joint project that produced this book – half of the authors are English/American and half

are French. This resulted in fruitful new insights and pointed to new types of sources for research that may also be available for countries other than pre-modern France. Those who want to use this book should be proficient in French. It took me a while to realise that 'l'histoiregenrée' meant gender history, to mention one of the less difficult language intricacies. An English translation would therefore appear worthwhile, particularly because although all of the articles discuss female body issues, not to say women's complaints, figuring within the present French borders, its conclusions bear a far wider purport.

The agents of this book are the various connotations of 'Fleur', such as menstruation (blood), virginity, rape, female bloom and beauty, the sexual act, conception, pregnancy, giving birth, barrenness and menopause, and each phase or event, including the physical details, is discussed together with its consequences and implications. This poses the question of whether the metaphorical reminiscences of 'fleurs' did not determine the content of the book too much. The answer would seem to be negative: I carried out a quick investigation and it turned out that in my own mother tongue, Dutch, the same implications of rose, bloom, flower etc were current. Twelve case studies are presented under the headings of, I. 'Preserver sa fleur' (keeping her bloom), II. 'Fleurir' (flowering) and III. 'Perdresa fleur' (losing her bloom), which combine a thorough study of many original sources with a sophisticated handling of gender concepts and an in-depth knowledge of past political, scientific and literary developments; for example, Laurence Moulinier-Brogi shows that uroscopy availed itself of detailed gender differences. Nicole Pellegrin surprisingly deals with the bleeding of nuns as a variation on stigmata. Helen King shows the ideas the learned physician Jacques Dubois and royal mistress Diane de Poitiers shared on getting pregnant, whereas Eugénie Pascal has combed through the letters of princesses and found out that they dreaded giving birth.

To which conclusions does reading this anthology lead? First, that things are less simple, more varied and even more ambivalent than historical authors during the second wave of the Feminist Movement and its aftermath advocated. If one listens carefully, the woman's voice is more clearly audible, and independent agency is revealed, also in cases of unwanted childlessness and even in court cases on violation and paternity claims. Second, in the awareness that their topic goes to the heart of the physical matter in cases of involuntary penetration, menstruation and giving birth, the authors keep a careful distance from the predominant cultural constructivism. Third, the opinion of an American male author darts through the pages, although he is not that often explicitly mentioned: he is, of course, Thomas Laqueur. *Femmes en fleurs* furnishes several convincing emasculations of the Two-Sex Model, even though most articles in this book seem to have been written before the publication of Katherine Park's corrective *Secrets of Women*.

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Laura J. McGough, *Gender, Sexuality and Syphilis in Early Modern Venice: The Disease that Came to Stay*, Early Modern History: Society and Culture (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. x + 202, £50.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-230-25292-9.

Laura J. McGough's study of the 'French Disease' in early modern Venice is a much-welcomed addition to both the history of women and gender, as well as the history of medicine. It is also an example of comparative history at its best, for McGough not only offers valuable insights about the Venetian past but also about present-day Africa, where she resides. Mining several rich archival collections in Venice, McGough offers us a variety of contemporary perspectives on

syphilis, ranging from public health officials and Holy Inquisitors to physicians and popular healers, and from the custodians of women's asylums to the afflicted themselves. The author finds that over the course of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, perceptions of the 'French Disease', whose symptoms ranged from syphilis to gonorrhoea and elude post-modern categorisation, changed. First introduced in virulent form by the French armies invading late fifteenth-century Italy, its familiarity, by the sixteenth century, reduced its stature to something characterised by contemporaries as endemic, familiar, and curable. McGough carefully outlines the social, cultural, and institutional processes that helped transform these perceptions. The onset of this sexually transmitted disease was initially attributed to the liaisons of soldiers and prostitutes. But the lagoon also attracted many unmarried migrants, and eventually syphilis became endemic, infecting every neighbourhood and social class in Venice, clergy and lay people alike.

Venice's response to the disease, McGough astutely shows, was gendered. A badge of honour for men, the 'French Disease' was a source of stigma and shame for women. Venetian authorities strove to contain afflicted females in various asylums, while men were given more attentive medical treatment. The women's asylums, in part a product of the Counter Reformation wave of charitable causes, were destined to be venues of lifetime institutionalisation, a kind of punishment for licentiousness. However, perceptions of the purpose of women's asylums changed over the two centuries under study as well: once a place to confine women of beauty, authorities realised, by the eighteenth century, that the real source of peril was the poverty that forced the indigent to become sex workers. Thus, unlike the Convertite, which housed a mix of former concubines, as well as the pretty daughters of merchants and artisans in danger of losing their virginity, the eighteenth-century Pentiti offered their wards vocational training and then reintegrated them into Venetian society. McGough treats us to insightful cases