

medieval hospitals. To my knowledge the most recent is Brodman's 2009 book chapter «Hospitals in the Middle Ages» Finally, the section on medicalisation focuses largely on the ecclesiastical response to medicine, which somewhat downplays the state of medical knowledge in the wake of the twelfth-century medical renaissance. Nevertheless, Brasher's *Hospitals and charity* is a well written and comprehensive introduction to medieval hospitals in Northern Italy. ■

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Estela Roselló Soberón. Enfermar y curar: Historias cotidianas de cuerpos e identidades femeninas en la Nueva España. Valencia: Publicacions de la Universitat de València; 2017, 214 p. ISBN 978-84-9134-057-7, €18.

Despite decades of sustained research, scholars continue to utilize the vast documentation generated by early modern inquisitions for novel and important research. Estela Roselló Soberón's new book breaks new historiographical ground by using inquisitorial *legajos* of Mexico's *Archivo General de la Nación* to uncover the lives of female healers in viceregal Mexico. Roselló Soberón's research focuses on the moments of sickness and the search for relief, but the book is not exactly a history of medicine. Instead, Roselló Soberón argues that the perspective of female healers offers valuable new insights into the cultural history of femininity, subjectivity, and corporality in colonial society.

In the first of two parts, Roselló Soberón examines how healers constructed identities, navigated social spheres, and responded to inquisitorial persecution. These women, like their counterparts in many premodern societies, approached healing in a way that was intertwined with religious and magical cultural practices. As Roselló Soberón describes «*curanderas... sabían 'cosas' que otros desconocían*» and «*la posesión de dicho conocimiento especial, ya fuera mágico, religioso o empírico, permitió que este tipo de mujeres transformara realidades dolorosas, angustiosas o problemáticas en algo diferente*» (p. 63). In the seventeenth century, officials grew increasingly interested in demarcating and enforcing the boundaries between legitimate medicine and superstition and many of these women were subjected to inquisitorial investigation and punishment.

Roselló Soberón analysis of these women owes much to anthropological «thick description». She carefully and descriptively uses Inquisition sources to tell the story of their lives, their healing, their role in society, and the circumstances that led to their inquisitorial entanglement. Roselló Soberón's analysis successfully navigates the inherent tension in examining these women as a collective while maintaining her focus on their individual and subjective experiences. This approach dispels ongoing myths about early modern female healers. The women that she describes were neither magic-wielding crones nor angelic wise-women. Instead, they reflected the diversity of viceregal Mexico, showing how healing intersected with deviance throughout the social strata and in a range of contexts. Female healers entangled in Inquisition trials tended to be beyond the age of raising small children and they came, above all, from popular classes, but their social statuses and even their ethnic categories were flexible. The book's documentary base includes a range of women who identified themselves as *mestizas*, *mulatas*, *españolas*, *indias* (although they were officially outside of inquisitorial jurisdiction) and even one *filipina*. Such categories, however, were contested in trials. Juana de Bustos, for instance, considered herself an *española pobre* although inquisitors preferred to refer to her as a *mulata libre* (p. 69). Above all, Roselló Soberón shows how female healers were women who were deeply engaged in their communities and acted as nodes of contact between and among social groups.

In the second part of the book, Roselló Soberón focuses on bodies and embodiment. In particular, she examines how *curanderas* acted as guides who helped women articulate and make sense of their physical and reproductive experiences. These women acted as healers in a broad sense—their role was to restore equilibrium in both physical bodies and social bodies. They applied medicaments, administered herbal remedies, and provided a range of gynecological and obstetric services. They also smoothed family tensions and calmed passions. Thorough detailed case studies, Roselló Soberón demonstrates how the social position of female healers was delicate and sometimes precarious. Their ascribed expertise in magical remedies often embroiled them in controversies that resulted in inquisitorial denunciation.

In both parts of the book, Roselló Soberón bookends fine-grained case studies with erudite and sophisticated theoretical interventions. In these sections, Roselló Soberón examines intellectual trajectories that span classical, patristic, medieval, and early modern writers, investigating the point of contact between discourses (both European and indigenous) and lived experience. Roselló Soberón's approach to theoretical issues is broad and far-reaching, but she is

most effective when linking larger trajectories with contemporary concerns. In several occasions, for instance, Roselló Soberón documents how Inquisition cases reflected seventeenth-century anxieties regarding illusion, the baroque tensions of *ser/parecer*, and the acute epistemological skepticism of Hispanic early modernism. Roselló Soberón may have revealed additional intellectual layers had she included analyses of the inquisitors and bureaucrats who managed the patriarchic mechanisms of control, but this was a conscientious decision that she made in order to foreground the experiences of women.

Roselló Soberón clearly succeeds in arguing that despite the rigid prohibitions of a patriarchal society, female healers were protagonists who actively shaped their own lives and intervened in their communities. *Enfermar y curar* is a valuable work that adds depth and breadth to our knowledge about gender, healing, and Inquisition in New Spain. ■

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Cristian Berco. From body to community: Venereal disease and society in Baroque Spain, Toronto: University of Toronto Press; 2016, 288 p. ISBN 978 1 4426 4962 0. \$65.

Pocas enfermedades crónicas tuvieron un vínculo social tan fuerte como el morbo gálico en la edad moderna. El morbo gálico o mal francés, también conocido como sífilis en su categoría etiológica actual (aunque bacteriológicamente y en su significado socio-cultural tiene muy poco en común con la enfermedad experimentada y sufrida por las sociedades europeas en la edad moderna), ha atraído desde siempre el interés de los historiadores de la medicina. Existen por ello numerosos estudios de referencia que se han ocupado de la dimensión social de esta enfermedad venérea, como por ejemplo los de Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson y Roger French, y el más reciente de Claudia Stein.

El libro de Cristian Berco se inserta en esta línea y da un importante paso más allá, ya que es el primero que centra la mirada de la investigación en los pacientes de un hospital dedicado al cuidado del mal francés. Su gran y extraordinaria contribución radica en que analiza cómo vivían los enfermos antes