

Book Reviews

factors influencing mortality were the ability to “maintain” oneself and/or to flee (p. 56). Conjecture about who fled and in what numbers (a factor that complicates any statistical study of the mortality patterns of the Great Plague) leads Champion to suggest that those left behind—from single women to “lodgers”—succumbed not through poverty but through circumstances surrounding it.

A Lloyd Moote, University of Southern California and Rutgers University

Ove Hagelin (compiler), *Kinetic jottings: rare and curious books in the library of the old Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics. An illustrated and annotated catalogue*, Stockholm, Idrottshögskolans Bibliotek, 1995, pp. 191, illus., SEK 400.00 (91-972200-4-3). Orders to: Hagelin Rare Books, Box 3321, S-103 66 Stockholm, Sweden.

Medical gymnastics, the practice of curing disease or promoting health by muscular movement, has a long history. It goes back to the Classical ideal of humoral balance, according to which exercise dried and purged the heavy, soggy body that resulted from too much food. This concept of harmonious human excellence was re-created in the Renaissance, and a vogue for self-improvement developed. Inevitably, this became a vogue for the improvement of others, particularly children. There arose a mechanical science of movement, as knowledge of the musculoskeletal system became more sophisticated. The arts of orthopaedics and physiotherapy were born, and the deformed were reformed by manipulation. At the same time there was an increasing earnestness about the exercising of the already fit, and first military cadets and schoolboys and then the general public were jollied into mass gymnastics. There was a particular concern with the health of the round-shouldered, pale-cheeked, shallow-chested, city-dwelling, office-working masses, and they were encouraged to exert themselves and breathe deeply. The exercise culture of today began to take shape.

Anyone who joins aerobics classes in their lunch hour or goes swimming after work should browse through this catalogue and ask themselves how they came to be doing such a peculiar thing.

Popular medical gymnastics is above all the creation of P H Ling (1766–1805), the founder of what became known universally as “Swedish gymnastics”. Medically untrained, but inspired by his own self-cure and equipped with the sort of windswept, burning-eyed intensity of personality that inspires others, he set up the Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics in Stockholm, which became a Mecca for enthusiasts and a training ground for disciples. At length the Institute evolved into a general sports training college, Idrottshögskolan. Its library was absorbed and settled into the sediment. This catalogue is the result of what its compiler describes as archaeological excavations into this sediment.

The result of the dig is a fascinating descent into the story of human preoccupation with our own bodies and what can or should be done with them. The book is more than a mere inventory: its chronological arrangement and discursive notes create a sense of narrative. The illustrations, though not glossy, are generous and well-chosen.

A very broad range of material is covered: acrobatics, dance, fencing, general anatomy and physiology, military education, and the Stockholm Olympics of 1912—a heroic poster for which forms the frontispiece. The crucial texts in the development of medical gymnastics are well-represented, including those of Ling himself. There are also standard treasures of Vesalian anatomy, and some curiosities such as the great Prussian gym-master J C F Guts Muths’ book on wood-turning and C H Liedbeck’s *Description of the vibrator* (“likely to satisfy any just claims upon a good vibration machine”). There are a few significant gaps: for example, there is no edition of Galen’s *De sanitate tuenda*, which held sway over all regimetical literature until the eighteenth century. The selection is of course based on what is found in the library and is “just designed to give a glimpse”. In fact, however,

the glimpse it gives is more enlightening than the compiler's modesty suggests.

A little more editing might have been useful: P H Ling appears in various places as Pehr Henrik Ling, Per Henrik Ling and Per Henric Ling. Some dubious bibliography is propagated from other sources, such as the attribution to Mary Wollstonecraft of the English translation of Salzmann's (i.e. Guts Muths') *Gymnastik für die Jugend* (She died three years before publication, and there is no evidence apart from the fact that she had translated an earlier Salzmann work). All the same, this is an excellent book. Not only is it an essential addition to any collection in the field of medical or sports history, it is a good read and an attractive, informative introduction to the subject.

Sarah Bakewell, Wellcome Institute

Michael Hagner (ed.), *Der falsche Körper. Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der Monstrositäten*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 1995, pp. 230, illus., DM 38.00, SFr 37.00 (3-89244-073-5).

Our fascination with the monstrous and freakish is not new. Victorian literature—medical, literary, popular, historical—already had discovered the monstrous as a topic which would fascinate every audience. And this Victorian tradition built on earlier scholarly books on teratology (the study of the monstrous) in medicine and mass culture going back to the beginning of the printed book and beyond. In the past two decades the monstrous has re-emerged as a means of examining the margins that each age employs to define the normal. (To which category most if not all of the investigators in this field imply they belong. Oh! for a history of the marginal written from the margins! Of the monstrous written by the freaks!) From Leslie Fiedler (*Freaks*) to my own work on embryology, sexology and the monsters (*Sexuality: an illustrated history*), recent work has sketched the contours of the western fascination with the

monstrous as part of the universal history of Otherness.

In this present book, Michael Hagner, one of the brightest and most original historians of science now working in Germany, puts forth the claim that the monstrous has its own specific history. Building on the work of Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, Hagner shows in the brilliant theoretical essay which opens the volume how the monstrous constructs itself and is constructed to fulfil a series of different social, psychological, and critical needs in each age. Each age inherits its monsters, but each age also shapes its monsters.

The rest of the volume provides a series of detailed sketches for this general thesis. Josef N Neumann reads the relationship between birth defects and the monstrous as a seeking after an ideal type. His question is whether birth defects (the real) model the monstrous (the imaginary) or vice-versa? His discussion of classical aesthetic norms is absolutely the space in which to examine this question, as it is the implicit "realism" of these norms which still makes such representations the image of the real world. I went to the Pergamon Altar in Berlin with a friend the other day and we were both struck by how "real" the representations were—they looked "like people". And they did because we had so internalized these aesthetic norms as the real. Neumann's piece is a perfect introduction to the specific problems of how each age uses the norms of the past for its own purposes.

Roberto Zapperi's essay on a "wild man" represented in a work by Agostino Carracci reads the history of "wildness" in the figure of the be-haired man and woman. This reading provides a clear, early modern case of the overlap between "wildness" in a colonial sense (the wild man is supposedly from the Canary Islands) and facial hair. The only problem with this essay is that the painting Zapperi discusses also represents a dwarf and a mad man; he does not relate his notion of a colonial model of the monstrous (Caliban) to either, which he could easily have done. Javier Moscoso discusses the naturalizing of the monstrous in the Enlightenment, and Hagner, himself,