

career focused on writing scientific papers in unadorned scientific style, which belies his passionate commitment to his field. 'I was not a novelist to add interesting or attractive words, only simple facts' (p. 94). Yet the 'simple facts' of Rösch's life are more complex than he gives them credit for, and could do considerably more to achieve the Springer series' goal, to 'stir and motivate readers'. For he is a remarkable figure. His journey began in the midst of the Second World War and across the Cold War, with numerous scientific exchanges across the Iron Curtain and the Free World. Here and there we get a sense of the turbulent times he lived in, particularly in the chapter titled 'My Youth', and his stark account of his 22-year-old daughter's tragic death in a traffic accident (p. 33). But there remains ample room for future biographers to animate Rösch's life, situated as it is at the crossroads of post-war history and the history of modern medicine.

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**Andrew Schonebaum**, *Novel Medicine: Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2016), pp. 296, \$50,00, hardcover, ISBN: 9780295995182.

Among the emerging accounts of the social and cultural histories of Chinese medicine or medicine in China, Andrew Schonebaum's *Novel Medicine: Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China* (2016) is an exceptional attempt to bridge history and literature. The book serves as a lens to probe into the lives of Chinese people and the development and function of popular medical knowledge in the late Ming and Qing dynasties. Instead of analysing how classical medical books or prescription anagraphs were produced, learned, and circulated, Schonebaum decided to read and examine popular novels during the period, e.g., *Peony Pavilion*, *Plum in the Golden Vase*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *The Story of the Western Wing*. Schonebaum's work is neither a book written to attract readers who are interested in the medical traditions in early modern China nor a positivist corroboration of how useful or feasible medical information was in the lives of commoners in Chinese society. Rather, through the characteristics of the literature and the power of storytelling, Schonebaum offers an innovative perspective on how diseases were understood, what treatments were sought because of common beliefs, and how vernacular medical knowledge was shaped between authors and readers of these novels.

Through *Novel Medicine*, the author delves into the literature beyond the scope of literary history. The novels studied are famous for their form, with each chapter headed by a couplet that provides the gist of its content. They are realistic stories that focus on the customs, conversations and ways of thinking of the people who belong to a social class. Although these narratives traditionally occupied a lower rung on the literary hierarchy, they describe heretical understandings of diseases, responses to ailments and health-seeking pathways, and reflect the social world that shows the values and customs related to how health was governed in the public and private spaces. Schonebaum reads the novels not only to conduct a thorough documentation but to engage in a reflective analysis of how popular medical knowledge is read. Therefore, aside from catching the attention of readers who are curious about the use of herbs, poisons and antidotes, medical food and emotional techniques, the book appeals to the inquisitiveness of a wider readership of social or cultural history by reappraising the role and function of medical knowledge in novels.

Schonebaum provides readers with a systematic exposition. First, he introduces the basic understanding of diseases and medicine in traditional Chinese medicine. Then, he explains the literary texts and entertainment literature in early modern China and their positions in terms of authorship and readership. When the culture of curiosity emerged in early modern Europe and stimulated the transformation of science and medicine, the Chinese common people also developed an interest in new ideas. Finally, by using the terms 'novel illness' and 'novel cure', Schonebaum narrows down his scope of analysis to elaborate on why *xiaoshuo* (the novel) is significant in the process of understanding vernacular medicine.

For readers who are new to the field of interest, Chapters 1 and 2 acquaint readers with the author's reading method before unfolding the themes in the four succeeding chapters. In contrast to conventional approaches to Chinese medical knowledge, the anecdotes in *Novel Medicine* demonstrate clearly how they were understood, transferred and appropriated by consulting and cross-checking with other sources on top of analysing the text in the fictional accounts. These sources include early modern medical texts, fictional accounts, critiques, newspaper advertisements, medical manuscripts, essays, collectanea, biographies, oral tales and performance literature. In *Novel Medicine*, readers can find some of the social and cultural origins of the intricate relationships between physical bodies, desires and morals in early modern China. Deviating from early approaches, for example, translating *weisheng* (guarding life) as a colonial prescription from a top-down approach, Schonebaum tells stories of how medical knowledge was shaped in the vernacular world.<sup>1</sup> For example, he introduces the way in which the concept of *chuaran* (transmission by dyeing) became a contagion before the arrival of focal germ theory, and the way in which *jing* (essence of life related to licentiousness and desire) can be nourished or exhausted to consolidate or destroy one's vital energy.

Readers might ask if a culturally specific psychopathology exists in China. Interestingly, one can find in the book that early modern Chinese and European medicine shared similar mentalities, such as their obsession with sex, emotions and moral implications that were often gender-specific. For example, the depiction of women as the sickly sex in Chinese novels was no different from the depiction of seductive and corrupt female bodies as sources of infection in Europe. However, unlike the religious implications of this depiction in European contexts, the representation of sexually transmitted diseases in China was secular. Excessive affections and maladies as causes of diseases were also familiar to historians of Western medicine. By contrast, in China, such reasoning was associated with the obsession with reproductivity in Chinese culture. Although Schonebaum does not provide a thorough comparative analysis of early modern Chinese and European medicine, he opens the door for readers who are concerned about their possible connections and disjuncture.

Much has been written to examine the overlap between medical practice and literary culture in Western contexts. Schonebaum's innovative reading of Chinese novels is the first successful attempt to do so. However, Schonebaum did not conduct a 'me too' study but a thorough study on how a particular type of medical knowledge was formed within a social group in response to the group's need. The genre of literature studied in *Novel Medicine* focuses on teaching and pleasing its readership, and it is defined by the author as 'medical entertainment', which disseminates knowledge about the body, health and illnesses. The book also reflects how professionalism and physician-patient relationships were viewed.

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

As Umberto Eco asserts, ‘the purpose of a story is to teach and to please at once, and what it teaches is how to recognise the snares of the world’.<sup>2</sup> *Novel Medicine* offers readers not only a basic understanding of Chinese popular medical knowledge but also an argumentative thesis on the social and cultural attitudes toward medicine in a specific context. The book can serve as a reference both for scholars of literature and historians of medicine, and in the emerging discipline of medical humanities regarding how the cross-cultural understanding of medicine is embedded in dissimilar narrative forms.

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<sup>2</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Island of the Day Before* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006).