

contemporary cheap print medical texts, and particularly in William Bullein's *A Dialogue both Pleasaunte and Pietifull* (1564), written a year after the devastating plague of 1563. However, there is perhaps less of direct interest for medical historians here than in earlier chapters and the entire section has the air of an appendix, somewhat detached from the core of the book.

This is a valiant attempt to extract meaning from a range of materials that tantalise and entice, whilst remaining stubbornly resistant to easy interpretation. The author herself concludes her work with an exhortation to others to ferret out further examples of female ownership and use of printed herbals, and this is surely right. It is in the nature of pioneering works to be provisional and open-ended. Few rare books catalogues provide the level of provenance detail that makes identification of female owners or inscribers anything other than serendipitous. Meanwhile, conventional, and no doubt unavoidable demarcations between the management of printed books and manuscript holdings in libraries inevitably militates against seamless access to these resources by scholars. In these circumstances, Rebecca Laroche has made a commendable contribution to establishing foundations for further study in this area.

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**Rosemary Poole,** *A Truly Happy and Affectionate Family: Life Among the Denmans, Crofts and Baillies 1733–1847* (Sawbridgeworth: privately published, 2008), pp. 144, £15.00, paperback, ISBN: N/A.

*A Truly Happy and Affectionate Family* is an edited collection of personal documents from three eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English families, the Denmans, the Crofts and the Baillies. The editor, Rosemary Poole, who herself is a direct descendent of the

Denman–Croft line, focuses especially on the characters of Thomas Denman (1733–1816) and his wife Elizabeth (1747–1833), their twin daughters, Margaret (1771–1847) and Sophia (1771–1845), and their son, Thomas (1779–1854). Poole wished to incorporate 'as much original writing as possible in order to enlarge an understanding of the conventions that the writers used in their recording of events and not in any way to fictionalise the narrative' (p. 9). This original material includes extracts from the diary of Elizabeth Denman, the autobiography of Thomas Denman, family correspondence, poems penned by the sons of Margaret Denman, Thomas and Richard Croft, and fourteen illustrations of the family members. The editor intersperses these primary documents with her own editorial comment and narration in an attempt to give the reader as full a picture as possible of the lives of the families under examination. The book has a broadly chronological structure, with eight chapters, some of which concentrate on specific characters, and others on particular primary sources. There are also five appendices, which contain additional primary documents.

As reflected in the title, the book's most striking feature is the emotional warmth enjoyed between members of the families, and particularly between Elizabeth Denman and her children and grandchildren. '[I] felt truly thankful to the Father of all mercies, for permitting me at my advanced age, to enjoy the cheerful sport of my children and my grandchildren and I was highly gratified to see the harmony which subsists amongst them' (p. 66), is a typical entry in Elizabeth's diary. Poole writes about the family with empathy, respect, and sensitivity, and displays a real interest in the thoughts and feelings of the central characters. Her expert knowledge of the family history is demonstrated by her clear and detailed descriptions of the events, and her subtle piecing together of the various strands of the family's complicated history in order to create a coherent overall story. Through this story, the reader gains an insight into the everyday life of an upper-class family, and

encounters a range of historical topics, such as family relationships, medicine and health, death and bereavement, entertainment and leisure, religion and spirituality, and the hazards of travel. Elizabeth Denman's delight in choosing a 'Pedlar Doll' for her little niece Maria Brodie (pp. 99, 100, 105), her 'perplexity' and worry about her granddaughter Fanny, who was about to 'bring forth her first born [child] in a foreign land, far away from her husband' (p. 103), and her descriptions of the 'gayeties of the Chimney Sweepers' during the May Day celebrations of 1832 (p. 92), are just a few of many intriguing glimpses provided by the primary sources. The book would be especially useful to medical historians, since some of the main characters were eminent physicians or surgeons, including Thomas Denman, his sons-in-law Richard Croft (1762–1818) and Matthew Baillie (1761–1823), and his nephew, Sir Benjamin Brodie (1783–1862). Elizabeth Denman frequently refers to her own health and the illnesses of her relatives and friends in her diary. For example, in 1825 she was 'seized with sickness at dinner', and 'did everything that I was ordered' by the doctors, but still she had 'a very restless night' and 'felt so weak and feeble in the morning, that I could not venture to leave my room the whole day' (p. 80).

While the book would be useful to historians, it is not actually clear whether this was in fact the editor's aim. The narrative style, and absence of critical analysis or argument in her commentary, indicates that it may be intended for the interested public rather than for the professional historian. If the book *is* aimed at historians, it could be improved in various ways. Firstly, the Introduction could be restructured and expanded so that it contains sections on the book's aims and structure; the nature and limitations of the sources; the key historical issues and themes that emerge in the primary sources; and the social, cultural, medical, and economic context. Secondly, it would be useful if the editorial comment were distinguished more clearly from the primary source extracts in its format, since at the moment it is not immediately obvious where

the editor's voice ends and the primary sources begin. Thirdly, the Index could be organised by theme or subject as well as by name, so that historians could more easily locate the information they require. Finally, the editor might like to consider including a short conclusion to draw out some of the main themes which arise in the primary sources, and to evaluate what these reveal about the emotional character of family relationships in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But even without these alterations, the book will be appreciated by the historical community for its rare and intimate insights into the lives of three very interesting families.

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**Grégoire Chamayou,** *Les Corps Vils: Expérimenter sur les êtres Humains aux XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècles*, Les empêcheurs de penser en rond (Paris: La Découverte, 2008), pp. 423, €24.50, paperback, ISBN: 978-2-7071-5646-4.

Grégoire Chamayou's historical–conceptual study of experimentation on human beings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries focuses on the category of 'vile bodies', as in the expression *experimentum in corpore vili*. Vile bodies are categories of experimental subjects who have been judged to be 'beyond the pale' and thus can be used at the experimenter's will. Chief amongst these are criminals condemned to capital punishment: we learn of the raft of Enlightenment arguments justifying the worst forms of experimentation on such prisoners, because they owe a moral debt to society, or because of variations on a utilitarian calculus.

Maupertuis devoted an entire section of his *Lettre sur le progrès des sciences* to the 'usefulness' of experiments on criminals. He had the decency to suggest that if the criminal survives the experiments, he should be pardoned, since he has by a basic calculus