

Browne. There is a concomitant concern with symbolism and meaning (rather than practical and material technologies) across ten of the sixteen chapters, with some employment of Wittgensteinian notions of language (chapters 6 and 8). Only the last two of the sixteen chapters in this volume offer an argument for how their literary and intellectual descriptions of Browne might serve as reflection upon twenty-first-century notions of sickness, mortality, memory, authority and identity. That is, most of the contributors do not demonstrate how their readings of Browne are important critiques of certain aspects of current practices that constitute our selfhood. Browne's medical arguments are presented in such a way as to leave the present somewhat unchallenged. Presumably, we are not to question current medical beliefs, but instead to use them to assess those of the past. This is unfortunate given that this volume is precisely an engagement with ethical and aesthetic truth together with related subjectivities. Notwithstanding this, the contributors provide a wide-ranging, finely-detailed, lucid and highly readable account of the writings of Sir Thomas Browne in relation to the pressing spiritual and political problems of seventeenth-century England.

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**Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen and Karl
A E Enenkel** (eds), *The sense of suffering:
constructions of physical pain in early modern
culture*, Intersections, Yearbook for Early
Modern Studies, Leiden and Boston, Brill,
2009, pp. xxiii, 501, €99.00, \$148.00
(hardback 978-90-04-17247-0).

The sense of suffering is a fascinating study of the perception and experience of physical pain in early modern England and Europe. It contains seventeen chapters written by scholars from a range of academic backgrounds, including history, art history,

literary criticism, philosophy, psychology, and law.

The book is groundbreaking in four respects. Firstly, it focuses specifically on early modern pain. Previous histories of pain, such as Roselyn Rey's *The history of pain* (1993), have tended to take broad sweeps of history from ancient times to the present day. Secondly, the book does not confine itself to just one or two contexts in which pain was present, such as torture or surgery, but instead examines suffering in a variety of arenas, including politics, law, art, literature, medicine, religion, philosophy, and education. Thirdly, whereas many scholars have explored the history of emotional pain, including grief, fear, and jealousy, very few have concentrated on the subject of physical pain. The editors of *The sense of suffering* believe that this is a consequence of today's preoccupation with mental suffering, and assert that "Early modern perceptions of pain frequently work in precisely the opposite direction: they invoke the physicality of pain to invest other, non-bodily categories of experience with the authority and palpable reality of bodily sensation" (p. 6). Finally, the volume focuses on the experiences of sufferers as well as the views of those inflicting pain or debating the meanings of pain. Consequently, *The sense of suffering* is perhaps the most ambitious of all existing studies of pain: its authors believe that it is possible to access the experience as well as the meanings of pain.

A central theme throughout the book is the intimate relationship between the early modern mind and body, and between physical and emotional suffering. As the editors state in the introduction, "Pain . . . confronts us with basic questions about the relation between body and mind, and challenges common-sense dualist assumptions about the nature of physical and mental experience" (p. 1). This thesis is upheld by many of the authors. Michael Schoenfeldt, in his chapter on pain management in medicine, states that early modern people "did not make a hard and fast distinction between physical and emotional pain", as demonstrated by the fact that "the vocabularies of suffering continue to migrate

between these two realms that for us designate quite separate phenomena” (p. 29).

The authors of *The sense of suffering* argue that during the early modern period, physical pain was viewed in strikingly ambivalent terms. Unlike today, suffering could be “profitable in itself” (p. 191) as well as an unpleasant, undesirable experience. In the context of law and torture, Jetze Touber shows that pain was thought to be a useful means through which the truth could be accessed. Similarly, in medicine, painful treatments were considered helpful for distracting the patient from “the primary pain” of the illness itself (p. 32). Pain could also be positive in the context of religion: Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen and Jenny Mayhew both assert that godly Protestants hoped that pain and illness would improve the health of their souls by inspiring them to repent of their sins, and empathize with the sufferings of Christ on the cross. Likewise, in the field of education, Anita Traninger suggests that pain was regarded as a “helpmeet to learning and memorising”: the blow of the cane embossed the abstract subject matter on the pupil’s memory (p. 53).

One feels that the editors of *The sense of suffering* could have been more forthright about the originality of the volume and its contribution to the historiography of pain, medicine and other historical fields. It would have been helpful to the reader if the introduction had included a review of the existing literature on pain. The book would also have benefited from having a conclusion, to draw out the key arguments and themes of the contributions. These shortcomings, however, are minor when one considers the ambition, breadth, and erudition embodied in *The sense of suffering*.

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Angela Ki Che Leung, *Leprosy in China: a history*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. xi, 373, £35.00, \$50.00 (hardback 978-0-231-12300-6).

Leprosy has been a subject of great scholarly interest among historians of medicine in Europe and in colonized geobodies, but it has attracted little attention from East Asian scholars. *Leprosy in China* is an important contribution in this regard, as the first study of its kind detailing the social, cultural, and intellectual dimensions of a single disease in Chinese history. The book revises the influential theses of Michel Foucault and, more recently, Rod Edmund from a China-centred perspective. If the disappearance or continuing presence of leprosy marked the transformation of European modernity for these scholars, Angela Leung reveals both the relevance and irrelevance of similar debates for understanding the significance of the disease in China’s past.

Similar to its historical status in Judeo-Christian civilization, leprosy has important social and epistemological roots in China’s long religious and medical traditions. In the early imperial period (fourth century BC to eleventh century AD), there were two terms associated with what we might call leprosy in the modern era: *dafeng* or *efeng*, which refers to the aetiological pattern of the intrusion of Wind, and *li* or *lai*, which describes the symptom of sores on the skin. The ambiguous distinction between the two medical categories of *dafeng/efeng* and *li/lai* began to disappear around the tenth century, and, from that point on, experts in northern China continued to use the broad configurationist aetiological pattern of the intrusion of Wind to combine them into a single disease group, whereas southern experts voiced growing suspicion of this approach.

By the late imperial period (from the fourteenth century AD onward), with the gradual maturation of *waike* (or external medicine), the disease was perceived less and less to be Wind-induced, and was understood more and more as a skin disease belonging to the *waike* category, which was more commonly associated with the hot and damp regions of the south, including Fujian, Jiangxi, Guangdong, and Guangxi provinces. This