

los elementos, y la conclusión mencionada, hacen de *Los mapas de los Beatos* una obra muy interesante vista y concebida con esos objetivos en mente. ■

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Timothy Miller and John Nesbitt, eds. *Walking corpses. Leprosy in Byzantium and the Medieval West*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press; 2014, 243 p. ISBN 9780801451355. \$ 35 (Hardback).

In the last three decades, the history of leprosy in Europe and the Mediterranean has been characterized by two main questions: the identification of the illness, and its medical treatment. After Gerhard Hansen's discovery of the *mycobacterium leprae* in 1873, leprosy was renamed as Hansen's disease. Although historians have long since identified Hansen's disease with the illness which ancient and medieval sources describe as leprosy, scholars have now questioned this identification. The Hebrew, Greek and Latin terms traditionally associated with leprosy, were used to denote also other illnesses. Terminology was not the only source of confusion. Another important source, in fact, was Michel Foucault's use of medieval leprosy in defining his theory of the interlocking of power and knowledge in modern Europe. In *Folie et draison* (1961) and *Surveiller et punir* (1975), Foucault stressed the analogies and links between leprosy and madness in Western history. According to Foucault, both illnesses were seen as signs of divine justice or mercy. Madmen and lepers were objects of fears and social repulsion, and were separated from the society of the wealth. At the end of the Middle Ages, therefore, leprosariums provided the structures of exclusions for pores, vagabonds, criminals, and finally madmen. Consequently, Foucault maintained that like modern mental hospitals, medieval leprosariums were designed for separation rather than cure.

Walking corpses is an important contribution to the historical study of leprosy. It helps to free the field from the confusion originated by the naive use of modern terminology and the superposition of Foucaultian paradigms over a historically complex reality. Comparing Western European and Eastern

Mediterranean responses to leprosy, the authors demonstrate that in the Middle Ages different ideas on leprosy and lepers circulated, and that leprosariums primarily responded to the need to prevent or reduce contagion rather than segregate those punished by God with leprosy.

Miller and Nesbit show that the negative interpretation of leprosy as a divine punishment was contrasted by the Greek fathers. Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nissa, Gregory of Nizianzos and John Chrysostom called for a new approach towards those affected by leprosy. Abandoned by their families, lepers usually spent their remaining time begging for food. According to those Greek fathers, it was a Christian duty to assist those suffering from this illness. The authors' detailed reconstruction of the arguments used by Greek fathers show the intimate link between theological ideas and medical theories in late antiquity. A passage of the Bible (*Leviticus* 14: 1-8) describes the rules governing the treatment of those affected by *ts'arth* according to the vulgate, or *lepra* as it is reported in the Greek translation of the Septuagint. Lepers are banned from the camp of Israel because they are considered ritually impure. The New Testament confirms this rule. According to the gospel of Mark (1: 40-45), after healing a leper Jesus sent him to the priest in order to be readmitted in the community. The Greek fathers opposed to a literal interpretation of these passages, and underlined the need to practise Christian charity even towards lepers. They argued that the biblical texts should not be used to justify the selfish behaviour of those Christians who ignored the pains of lepers. While the latter suffered from an illness of the body, the former were afflicted by a worse illness, that of the soul. According to Gregory of Nizianzos, it is to these sinners that the exclusion from the community of God described in *Leviticus* (14: 1-18) should apply; not to the lepers. In Gregory's view, rather than a divine punishment, leprosy was a holy disease. Following Origenes, Gregory of Nizianzos and Gregory of Nyssa strongly refused the idea of leprosy as sin in order to support an allegorical interpretation of the holy texts which could encourage eastern Christians to face the social problems originated by the growing number of lepers in the Late Antiquity. How effective were these revolutionary ideas? Chapter 3 interrogates a high number of sources in order to draw an accurate picture of the public and ecclesiastical interventions in the treatment of the disease in Byzantium and Asia Minor from 400 to 1300. Many bishops, including the fathers Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom, and emperors opened or supported leprosariums in various provinces of the empire. Unfortunately, the byzantine sources are almost limited to the capital of the empire. In Byzantium, the main leprosarium was located just outside the city's circuit of walls. This seems to support Foucault's thesis on

the segregation of lepers. But Miller and Nesbitt demonstrate that the choice of such a location was influenced by the fear of contagion and the need for a place where fresh water and healthy air would help to assist lepers.

The contagious nature of leprosy however, was controversial. Like byzantine people and legislators, the biblical rules seem to assume that *tsa'arth* or *lepra* was contagious. For this reason, the Greek fathers accompanied their charitable interpretation of the holy texts with a refusal of the contagious nature of leprosy. Nonetheless, the fear of leprosy contagion was never overcome neither by the religious authority, nor by the medical ones. According to Galen, far from contagious, leprosy was due to the excess of black bile in human body. The prevalence of Galenic theories in byzantine medical science favoured the efforts of Gregory of Nazianzos and the other Greek fathers. Galen's authority was contrasted by Aretaios of Cappadocia's pneumatic approach. In two passages of his work *On acute and chronic diseases* (book IV.13 and VIII.13), reproduced in English translation as appendix 1 by Miller and Nesbitt, Aretaios affirmed that leprosy is contagious, because it is conveyed by the *miasma* or the polluted air exhaled by lepers. Some scholars, such as Aetios of Amida, Archigenes, Paul of Aegina and Theophanes Chrysobalantes, followed Aretaios and claimed the contagious nature of leprosy. The high diffusion of the illness in east Mediterranean since 400 favoured the persistence of popular fear for contagion. Nonetheless, Aretaios' ideas never really challenged Galen humoral theory in byzantine medicine. On the contrary, since Avicenna's *Canon*, Arab and Latin scholars credited the contagious theory of leprosy, even if it was not consistent with their Galenism. In order to explain this apparent paradox, Miller and Nesbitt insist on the influence of the Greek fathers on medical practitioners. Since, as they notice, many medical practitioners trained and worked in Christian hospitals, and some of them even in leper asylums, the authors directed their study «to examining how Christian ideas about leprosy helped shape Byzantine medical theories about the diseases» (p. 49). Thus, they conclude that the powerful sermons of Gregory of Nazianzos and Gregory of Nyssa and the examples of Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom influenced medical practitioners to reject contagion in the case of leprosy for «ethical reasons» (p. 59).

An important part of *Walking corpses* deals with the differences between Byzantium and the Latin Europe towards leprosy and lepers. The prevalence of the contagious theory in Western Medicine and the diffusion of Germanic law originated a different approach to leprosy in medieval West. Thanks to the analysis of leprosarium rules in Europe, Miller and Nesbitt conclude that «these institutions were not designed as prisons to separate lepers from society» (p.

26). On the contrary, the influence of Greek fathers' charitable interpretation of *Leviticus* limited the diffusion in the West of the view of leprosy as divine punishment.

To the relationship between Medieval Europe and Byzantine Empire is dedicated even the last chapter of *Walking corpses*. Here Miller and Nesbitt look for the origins of the order of the Knigs of Saint Lazarus, and find them in the leprosarium founded by the Empress Eudocia in Jerusalem in the fifth century. The book is enriched by the appendixes, containing the English translation of some fundamental texts discussing leprosy. The last one, in particular, contains the translation of part of the still unpublished funeral oration in praise of Saint John Chrysostom.

Questioning the standard view of medieval leprosy, *Walking corpses* provide stimulating new insight for future research on leprosy and on the fascinating, albeit still obscure history of byzantine medicine. ■

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■ **Maria Eugenia Cadeddu e Marco Guardo, eds. Il tesoro messicano. Libri e saperi tra Europa e Nuovo Mondo.** Firenze: Lessico Intellettuale Europeo, Leo S. Olski Editori; 2013, 314 p. ISBN 978-88-222-6235-6. € 33.

Después de la considerable empresa que han llevado a cabo varios historiadores de la medicina y de la ciencia acerca de la vida y obra del médico, naturalista y explorador real Francisco Hernández, parecería que es poco lo que en la actualidad se puede agregar al conocimiento sobre este científico español y su misión llevada a cabo en la Nueva España entre los años de 1571 y 1577¹. No

1. Hernández, Francisco. Obras completas. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; 1960-1984, 7 vols. En el primer número de esta serie aparece la que todavía es considerada por los especialistas la mejor biografía de Francisco Hernández, escrita por Germán Somolinos d'Ardois: Somolinos d'Ardois, Germán. El doctor Francisco Hernández y la primera expedición científica en América. México: SepSetentas; 1971. Lozoya, Xavier. El preguntador del rey. México: Pangea Editores; 1991. López Piñero, José María; Pardo Tomás, José. La influencia