

English herbals and floras', in which *The Grete Herball* of 1526, the second printed herbal in English, is subjected to "systematic analysis". Rydén's book is a philological study of *The Grete Herball's* 500 English plant names, their frequency of use, provenance, typology, and synonymy (i.e., identity). The purpose of the larger study of which this book is a part is to understand "continuity and discontinuity in plant-name patterning" (p. 7); that is, to determine not so much the history of every single plant name in early-modern English, but to outline changes in groups of names. Rydén's work will be useful to anyone studying medieval or modern plant names as well. He finds a number of first usages in English, provides modern identifications, and gives the reader a good introduction to his subject.

Historians will, even so, find some of the author's assumptions disturbing. The Swedish project removes plant names from their herbal context, omitting from the study animal products, stones, and other non-botanical substances. In doing this, the study becomes ahistorical. We read, for instance, that *The Grete Herball* "is a mixture of facts and fancies, a reflex of both rationalism [empiricism] and irrationalism [superstition], . . . In no respect does it foreshadow the expanding knowledge of botany in the 16th century" (p. 18). The perspective of several centuries will no doubt reveal our own times to be a "mixture of facts and fancies" too, littered with continuities and discontinuities apparent only to future generations. The important fact about early herbals — that, like renaissance anatomies, they served a rather different purpose in society from their modern "counterparts" — is not dealt with in *English plant names*. Despite this limitation, Rydén's work is of much philological interest, and helps supply a shocking gap in English-language scholarship.

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G. C. AINSWORTH, *Introduction to the history of medical and veterinary mycology*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. xi, 228, illus., £30.00.

The relationship between man and fungi has a long and varied history. In an earlier (1976) history of general mycology Dr Ainsworth (who is a former Director of the Commonwealth Mycological Institute at Kew) traced references to fungi in art and literature back to the Greeks and Romans; as fungi predate man on earth, presumably even early man found, by trial and error, that some fungi were edible, some were poisonous, and some were lethal. Particularly notorious among the latter is *Amanita phalloides*, which has induced apprehension and has caused occasional fatalities among careless mushroom-gatherers over the centuries. Its less poisonous but more decorative cousin *Amanita muscaria*, the fly agaric, has appealed to painters and photographers in recent times. Long before that, Norse warriors found this spectacular toadstool and its toxins useful to accentuate their natural ferocity and terrify their enemies with wild berserker frenzy (in Iceland today, the fly agaric, the only poisonous species among the country's many wild toadstools, is commonly known as the *berserkr* fungus). In appropriate doses the effects of the toxins would last for about three weeks, after which the recipients would return to normal levels of barbarity. More recently, the fly agaric has been in regular use among tribes in north-eastern Siberia to induce intoxication and consequent "uncontrolled excited dancing" on special occasions; and in 1970, John Allegro, in *The sacred mushroom and the cross*, suggested a connexion between cults using the fly agaric for similar purposes and early Christianity.

An equally dramatic type of frenzy results from ergot poisoning. From the early Middle Ages until surprisingly recently (the last English outbreak of note occurred in Manchester in 1927), contamination of staple grain with mycotoxin of *Claviceps purpurea* especially following cold, wet summers caused epidemic outbreaks of ergotism throughout Europe. In its convulsive form it is thought to have been behind the "dancing epidemics" reported until the late-sixteenth century, when the causal relationship with contaminated grain was gradually recognized and replaced the theory of the dancers' possession by the devil. Other mycotoxicoses of man and especially of animals have traditionally been studied in Russia and in Japan; more recently, they

have become an object of general concern and even acquired a certain fashionable notoriety particularly in the USA. The most celebrated of the new generation of mycotoxins so far has been aflatoxin. It was first implicated in diseases of domestic animals — turkeys and other fowl fed on contaminated groundnut meal, and subsequently cattle, pigs, and sheep — by veterinarians in this country in 1960. Since then, it has been shown to be present in various foodstuffs of animals and of man, and the story of control is not entirely uncontroversial.

Perhaps less spectacular in their effects but equally insidious are the infections of animals and man caused by microscopic fungi, and here Dr Ainsworth elaborates the more specialized aspects of medical and veterinary mycology. Two of man's common mycoses today are thrush in infants and the skin infections known collectively as tinea, or ringworm, of which the best known is probably the *Trichophyton* infection favus. They were known to the Greeks and Romans; thrush was noted in the Hippocratic writings as *aphthae*, and the Romans, according to Celsus, knew favus under the name *porrigo*. These two conditions were also the first to be described and shown to be of fungal origin in papers published between 1841 and 1844 by David Gruby in Paris. Gruby was born in Hungary of Jewish parents, and having graduated in medicine at Vienna, he found his faith an obstacle, as did a number of other gifted early microbiologists, to obtaining an official position. Undeterred, he worked privately at his chosen subject, and Dr Ainsworth dates the beginnings of modern medical mycology from Gruby's papers, which he analyses at length. Equally seminal, and probably an influence on Gruby's work, was Agostino Bassi's demonstration of the fungal identity of the agent of the muscardine disease of silkworms in 1835. And it was in large measure due to these two discoveries that there was a tendency in the mid-nineteenth century to speculate on fungal identities for many of the disease agents which were later in the century to be shown to be bacteria, or even viruses.

From these beginnings, Dr Ainsworth moves with authority through the development of medical and veterinary mycology with a wealth of detailed information on individual contributions from later major and minor mycopathologists who over the years came increasingly to include mycologists, microbiologists, and biochemists outside, as well as inside, the medical and veterinary professions. In addition to the many and varied problems of aetiology, taxonomy, nomenclature, epidemiology, therapy, and education in this rapidly developing field, the text deals also with the relatively late appearance of specialist journals and textbooks, and with the evolution of the worldwide organizational bodies and societies which culminated in the formation of the International Society for Human Mycology in 1954 (assuming that the date of the document reproduced on p. 37 is correct rather than that given in the text on p. 38).

All in all, this is a meticulously compiled record of the development of a highly specialized subject. As such it should be required reading for all specialist students of mycopathology — incidentally, a term disliked by Dr Ainsworth. As in his earlier volumes, the author has chosen his delightful illustrations with great care.

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DEBORAH DWORK, *War is good for babies and other young children: a history of the infant and child welfare movement in England 1898–1918*, London and New York, Tavistock Publications, 1987, pp. 307, illus., £27.00.

This book reviews the development of the infant and child welfare movement in England from the start of the Boer War to the end of the Great War. During this period, several different factors combined to make it a time of rapid improvement and change for child life and health.

In the nineteenth century, infant mortality was high, and was largely accepted as inevitable by the public, both rich and poor. It was well known that artificially-fed babies were at a greater risk of dying than those breast-fed, and there were many innovations in both types of feeds and feeding bottles, but the situation seemed resistant to change. However, at the beginning of this century, things changed rapidly. The campaign to improve the purity of the public milk supply,