

Warm Springs, for instance, did not come “to be called the Little White House”: FDR built the house that did in the extensive grounds of the Warm Springs spa which he had transformed into a polio rehabilitation centre. It is a bit harsh to call John A Toomey a “not particularly well-informed doctor” (see above) on the basis of one insignificant article. The bald statement that, apart from humans, the “only other creature susceptible to the disease was the monkey” is not true: monkeys were not *naturally* susceptible to polio; they could only be infected *experimentally*, i.e., by artificial means (as Black seems to recognize when she says a few pages later that “animals don’t get the disease naturally”). Chimpanzees, in fact, are the only animals known to have caught polio from humans and suffered epidemics as a result. Finally, the precise cause of the failure of the Cutter-manufactured Salk vaccine is known, *pace* Black: it was the failure of virus-inactivation due to a phenomenon known as “clumping” (when stored virus fluids tend to congeal) and this was corrected by an extra filtration process.

All this is incidental, however, to the main thrust of the narrative, which Black sums up in a single sentence: “My family’s polio story is a tale without heroes and without victory”: The importance of this perspective can hardly be exaggerated. Those who go under do not write books, but their point of view is a vital corrective to the triumphalist slant of so many survivor stories. Troubled by failures in her own life, Kathryn Black searches for the source of her discontent and finds it in the silence surrounding her mother’s illness and death. She, too, became a polio victim—though she was hardly aware of it—in that polio destroyed her family: “With mother’s death, we lost her, our father, and, in a way, our grandparents, too. They couldn’t be ‘grand’ to us, indulgent and playful. Instead, in the wake of their great loss, they became our disciplinarians, saddled with child rearing again.”

The question of why her mother died young, when several other similarly disabled men and women have survived to a ripe age, naturally torments Kathryn. The physical cause may

have been pneumonia or something else, but the most likely explanation, as one doctor tells her, is that “she lost the will to live”. With her illness her family had become dysfunctional and she was helpless to do anything about it.

Insofar as there is a villain in the story, it is Kathryn’s father. He simply could not face life with a woman as totally disabled and dependent as his wife had become, so he turned to drink and other women for consolation; and in that state he was no use to the children either. Ignoble, perhaps, but hardly incomprehensible. “Adversity”, his daughter writes, “brought out the worst in him”. A harsh judgement, but she adds: “I believe him when he says no one could judge him more harshly than he has judged himself”. He was yet another casualty in the polio epidemics.

And Kathryn herself? She has found contentment in a second marriage and having children of her own, but also, interestingly, in doing what so many polio survivors have done when faced with the late effects of the disease, commonly called post-polio syndrome: that is, in searching out other survivors and comparing notes. “Are you one of us?” a correspondent wants to know; she replies that she is and, if long experience of pain and isolation are the hallmarks of disability, so she is. Her book is a major contribution to the literature on polio.

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Ove Hagelin (compiler), *Old and rare books on materia medica in the library of the Swedish Pharmaceutical Society [Apotekarsocieteten]: an illustrated and annotated catalogue*, Stockholm, Swedish Pharmaceutical Press, 1997, pp. 223, illus., SEK 625.00 (EU), SEK 500 (outside EU), orders to: Swedish Pharmaceutical Press, P.O. Box 1136, SE-111 81 Stockholm, Sweden.

In recent years, the Swedish Pharmaceutical Society’s library has been much enlarged by the substantial collections of two Swedish pharmacists, Ernst Matern (1879–1954) who was particularly interested in pharmacopoeias,

and Carl David Carlsson (1875–1965). The compiler, Ove Hagelin, has written that he hopes that this illustrated and annotated catalogue will help to popularize the history of pharmacy, a hope which is echoed by this reviewer for it is sadly in need of such a stimulus.

This is a beautifully produced book which any pharmaceutical historian would be proud to have on his shelves. Well written, with touches of humour and few infelicities in the English, it has no less than 94 full-page illustrations, 16 of them in excellent colour. Printer's errors are few but the reference to Cowen and Helfand's book *Pharmacy: an illustrated history* (p. 18) concerning Mesue the younger, should be to page 52 and not page 68. The index is largely confined to personal names, which is unfortunate, but there is an excellent list of the reference books used and cited in the catalogue.

The annotations, almost short essays, are full, informative and accurate. Such errors as have been detected are of a minor nature, Pena and Lobel did not botanize throughout the British Isles but only in a limited portion of England. Willem Piso, a Dutch physician who after some years in Brazil became a pioneer in tropical medicine was not quite the first to bring Ipecachuana root (*Cephaelis ipecachuana*) to the attention of Europe as Purchas's *Pilgrims* (1625) had already noted that it was useful in the "bloody flux", probably amoebic dysentery. Nevertheless, Piso not only depicted it in his 1658 edition of his *Medicina Brasiliensi* but noticed that there were two varieties of it. One wonders if these were the ones which came to be known as Rio and Cartagena Ipecachuana, the latter being the sturdier of the two, and some regard as distinct species.

Having just celebrated the 400th centenary of John Gerarde's *Herball*, it was of particular interest to note the first edition of the first illustrated herbal in Scandinavia, *Dansk Urtebog*, by Simon Paulli published in 1648. All the woodcuts except two had come from other works printed by Plantin of Antwerp as the Danish printers were not then sufficiently

experienced. It is noticeable that only one of the books is of English origin: Christopher Jacob Trew's extended edition of Elizabeth Blackwell's *Curious Herbal* (1737–39) and that was published in Nuremberg.

Most touching of all is the manuscript of Johann Martin Scheele (1734–1754), the eldest brother of Carl Wilhelm, with its round childish handwriting which recorded what he was learning as an apothecary's apprentice at the Unicorn pharmacy in Gothenburg.

It should be pointed out that the difference in price between "outside EU" and "EU" of 125 Swedish crowns (about £10) is due to the fact that the European Union has the uncivilized habit of charging VAT on books—except in Britain.

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Giovanna Ferrari, *L'Esperienza del passato. Alessandro Benedetti, filologo e medico umanista*, Biblioteca di Nuncius, studi e testi XXII, Florence, Leo S Olschki, 1996, pp. 357, no price given (88-222-4465-6).

Carrying out anatomies during the Renaissance was never a straightforward business, even though it now seems it was not the Church which prevented them. A casket of bones prepared during a dissection in Padua was sequestered from a student on his way to Venice by greedy treasury officials. When they opened the casket the next day, and saw the whitened bones amidst sweet-smelling herbs, they mistook them for saintly relics and went down on their knees to venerate them. When the casket was brought to the Venetian counsellor Francesco Sanudo (uncle of the famous chronicler Marino), he forced the officials to return the bones to the student. This incident is recounted in Alessandro Benedetti's 1502 study of anatomy, the *Historia corporis humani sive anatomice*. Benedetti, a Veronese, is remembered as the inventor of a "portable" anatomy theatre and rather dismissively ranked amongst the pre-Vesalians. In this elegant and