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Lori Jones edits a timely volume that analyzes how humans conceptualized, managed, and interpreted their land and disease-scapes to promote health in medieval and early modern periods. The book is primarily concerned with western Europe, although it includes chapters that cover the Ottoman Empire and Africa. As outlined in the introduction, the book explores the “human interactions and responses to airs, waters, and places,” and the classic Hippocratic text On Airs, Waters, and Places (fifth century BCE) is a common theme throughout; it is cited by nearly every chapter and serves as a unifying element in the collection (p. 1).

The book is a cohesive work that is divided into three sections, which are loosely chronological. The first section, titled “Cleansing and Managing Airs, Waters, and Places,” is composed of three chapters that deal with medieval urban environments in Italy, Spain, and the Rhineland, written by Anna M. Peterson and Courtney Krolikowski, Abigail Agresta, and Lucy C. Barnhouse, respectively. Thematically they all focus on the "healthscaping" (to use the term coined by Guy Geltner) of the medieval city.[1] Together they add to a growing body of research that demonstrates that medieval people and their governments understood the risks brought about by their environments and human activities and developed strategies and programs to deal with these risks.

The second section, titled “Recalibrating Airs, Waters, and Places,” explores how disease was cast as a quality of non-Western landscapes and how this narrative was used as a means of othering as well as a justification for colonial activities. This section deals more directly with disease management, particularly changing perceptions of plague and its origins. This includes an examination by Jones of how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English and French scholars cast the Ottoman environment as a source of plague. This is followed by a chapter by Cindy Ermus exploring the management of plague in eighteenth-century Provence, against a backdrop of medical debate, and the shift from miasmatic theories to contagion theories. The environment and disease link con-
continues with a chapter from Guillaume Linte exploring the association between early modern Europeans' association with tropical environments and disease.

This theme continues in the final section, titled "Science Meets Historical Disease Environments," which again examines the colonial gaze that cast non-European environments (Africa and the Ottoman Empire) as reservoirs for disease. The first two chapters, by Gérard Chouin and Nükhet Varlik, explore insect transmitted diseases and plague, respectively. Methodologically, this section includes data from historical as well as ethnographic sources and this is a welcome addition. Finally, the last chapter, from Sharon N. Dewitte, uses bioarchaeological data to examine resilience and life expectancy in medieval and early modern England and brings the volume full circle.

This book, certainly an advancement for this field, is a stimulating collection of work that is both accessible and academically rigorous. And the theme of airs, waters, and places serves as a unifying link across time and space, and it covers a lot of ground both literally and figuratively. It also rightfully expands plague studies beyond western Europe. However, there are some areas and themes not covered that could serve as springboards for future work. In a book that is focused on the management of environment and disease there is relatively little mention of animals other than rodents as vectors of plague transmission and a few mentions of disease-carrying tsetse flies and mosquitoes. It is a given that humans and animals live and have lived closely interrelated lives. A chapter on livestock treatises and the management of animal health as a means of promoting human and environmental health would have been a useful addition, particularly since the last chapter references the Great Bovine Pestilence and its documented impacts on the great famines of northern Europe. The addition of bioarchaeological data is a rich inclusion, and it makes one desire additional archaeological work. A wealth of material evidence attests to human manipulation and management of the environment for health benefits—such as irrigation systems, the construction of aqueducts, water systems and wells, and the creation of waste disposal methods. A chapter devoted to this would have been a highly useful inclusion in a book devoted to disease and environmental management—a field that is inherently interdisciplinary.

Finally, this book is largely urban focused, without much information about how rural people managed their environments and health risks. Surely they faced different challenges compared to their urban counterparts, and a chapter on the management of floods or crop failures could have perhaps been included. And while the geographic scope of the book includes Eurasia and Africa, these environments and human actions are largely filtered through a Western perspective and draw on data from Western sources. An analysis of how non-Europeans managed disease and their environments and the kinds of paradigms they used would be a very fruitful avenue for future studies. Notwithstanding these minor criticisms, this volume certainly belongs on the reading list of scholars of premodern public health and environmental history, and is relevant to medieval and early modern historians, archaeologists, and urban historians.

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