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thereafter successfully fostered and the supply of specimens to London's colleges and schools for teaching purposes enormously expanded.

Eventually that solution too became unsustainable. By the 1970s, national changes in education had again undermined the assumptions on which the garden was carried on, and it was faced with reinventing itself afresh. After several fruitless years of attempting to find an alternative funder, the decision was taken to turn the garden into an independent charity and seek a substantial endowment by means of a public appeal. The gamble fortunately came off, and in 1984 the Chelsea Physic Garden Company consequently came into being. At last opened to the public, it now receives up to 18,000 visitors yearly and has, *inter alia*, an active programme of research in molecular taxonomy and pharmaceutical bioprospecting.

The previous histories of the garden had the Society of Apothecaries as their principal focus, depending heavily on that body's very extensive archive. In the meantime two very full histories of the Society itself have appeared, freeing the author of this latest volume, the garden's current Curator, to take much of the early part of the story as read and concentrate instead on bringing the account down to the present. The result is as informative as it is readable, even though the strictly chronological treatment makes it rather too like a diary towards the end. The tendency to excessive self-congratulation that blights all too many institutional histories when written by insiders has largely been avoided (though credit is given to the garden that rightly belongs to the firm of Loddiges as the first to popularize that far-reaching invention, the closely-glazed case), while a generous scatter of illustrations, many in colour, help to bring home to the reader better than any words the character of this eternally fragile enterprise and the context in which it operates. There is also a select bibliography and five appendices listing the

names of the staff through the years, the more important maps of the garden, the medicinal plants growing in it in 1772 and 2000 respectively, and the species that line its present-day "historical walk".

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Peter Lewis Allen, *The wages of sin: sex and disease, past and present*, University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. xxii, 202, illus., £17.50, \$25.00 (hardback 0-226-01460-6).

The wages of sin makes a passionate argument for humane and tolerant attitudes towards "diseases tied to sex" by revealing the horrors of the past, when sufferers largely received condemnation and punishment rather than care and compassion. In a very personal book, Peter Lewis Allen is intent on highlighting continuities between ancient and modern views, bringing his narrative up to the present day with an account of AIDS in the United States. His graphic story is told through a series of disease histories, two of which—leprosy and plague—he struggles to connect directly to sex. Indeed, a problem that runs through his narrative is distinguishing between specific linkages between disease and sexual immorality, and the pervasive association between sickness and all forms of sin in medical, religious and other professional discourses, then and now, not to mention in popular culture. The story of AIDS shows that even with powerful naturalistic explanations to hand, the construction of meanings about the causes, nature and management of the disease, within medicine and outside, drew on a wide range of cultural resources, including moral values. The chapters are in broad chronological order, though each ranges over several centuries. Allen begins his survey with the late medieval disease of

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“lovesickness”, a condition for which the standard remedy was sexual intercourse. He relates how certain Christian groups opposed the treatment, and how the power of the religion ensured that sufferers were increasingly left to the mercy of God, rather than allowed the treatment of choice. The account of the rise of syphilis in Europe is conventional, though the emphasis is on how sufferers had to endure the pains of treatments or neglect. Whether treatments for the pox were any worse than those for other similar diseases is a moot point, as is whether their exclusion from hospitals was any more punitive than that of other sick persons who were from the undeserving poor, or had incurable diseases. The account of masturbatory disease—a “collective delusion”—will be rather too presentist for professional tastes. The chapter provides a good synthesis of the current literature, though he has a penchant for leg-crossing details. Given the overall argument of the book, it would be nice to have heard more about how the previously powerful forces that had welded sex and sin together began to be wrenched apart and how masturbation became de-medicalized. AIDS is linked to the past because its sufferers were stigmatized, were often cast out, and, in the case of homosexuals and drug users, were seen to have brought the disease upon themselves through immoral and unnatural acts. Allen focuses on the political history of AIDS and the massive difficulties that doctors and activists faced, first in having the problem recognized, and then in getting safe sex messages into the public domain in effective ways. He shows how attitudes to AIDS did shift, albeit slowly and unevenly, though again it would be nice to know what agencies were critical in this change. This is an important part of the story as activists, sufferers and voluntary organizations arguably played a more important role than did state agencies or the medical profession. Thus, Allen ends on an optimistic note suggesting that lessons have been learned from history,

although he is not complacent as he warns that emerging diseases might rekindle old prejudices and fears.

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Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages. Volume 1: The violent against themselves*, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. xxiii, 485, illus., £30.00 (hardback 0-19-820539-2).

In recording the details of more than 300 cases of suicide, dating mostly from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, Alexander Murray's intention is to bring to light the reality of medieval suicide. Or to put it more poetically, he seeks to rescue these shades from the historical oblivion into which their final acts have cast them. This volume is concerned exclusively with the victims of suicide; a further two complete the project. The second (*The curse on self-murder*) explores medieval society's reaction to suicide, showing how attitudes of shock and horror manifested themselves in legal, religious and conventional terms. Part three (*The mapping of mental desolation*) will investigate the emotional and psychological impact of suicide, showing how poets and pastors responded to it.

This ambitious project is obviously conceived under the influence of French cultural history. In tracing the theme of suicide across national and disciplinary boundaries it seeks to uncover attitudes and sensibilities—mentalities—underlying the medieval view of life. It is curious, then, that in this volume the author should adopt a singularly Anglo-Saxon empirical approach to his work. Murray meticulously combs the surviving sources for any signs of suicide. Each source is carefully classified. Each suicide case is painstakingly analysed for its verisimilitude. Every inference is expressed cautiously, and every conclusion