A. Lynn Martin. *Plague? Jesuit Accounts of Epidemic Disease in the Sixteenth Century*. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1996.

Since Alexander Yersin's discovery of the bacillus *Yersinia pestis* in Hong Kong in 1894, bubonic plague has been recognized as the culprit behind the great pandemics of Eurasian history. Modern epidemiology has retrospectively established the "unholy Trinity" of *Y. pestis*, the rat flea and the black rat itself as agent of the bubo-producing and generally fatal disease known as the *Atra mors* or "Black Death." The plague caused the mortality of a third of Europe's population from 1347 to 1350, and struck more selectively but with devastating effect in subsequent centuries.

The Jesuits were first-hand observers of plague in Catholic Europe. Engaged from 1540 onwards in the apostolic activity of preaching, teaching and charity, they came into daily contact with the urban populations most vulnerable to what Jesuits described as "pest." Jesuits themselves suffered high mortality: a minimum of 445 disease-related deaths placed a brake on the Society's growth in the sixteenth century.

In *Plague? Jesuit Accounts of Epidemic Disease in the Sixteenth Century*, A. Lynn Martin examines their perceptions of "pest." Martin has two concerns: to test the retrospective diagnosis of bubonic plague in the sixteenth century, and to investigate the culture of Jesuits in its formative years. He has examined 1,500 accounts of "pest" found in correspondence and *litterae quadrimestres* between Jesuit institutions from 1540 to 1600. Jesuit records contradict modern medicine's diagnosis. While buboes, or prominent lymphatic swellings, are amply reported, other indicators of plague — rat die-off, and the invisible (because flea-carried) vectors of infection — are lacking. In the Jesuit view, plague was spread person to person, directly. Did Jesuits fail to notice the mortality of rats, anthropomorphizing the disease at the expense of a clear understanding of its transmission? Or did they encounter something other than bubonic plague? Even without an alternative diagnosis, Martin's scepticism is well founded. The absence of any mention of rats in Jesuit correspondence suggests that the epidemiology of the early modern world must be reconsidered.

Plague? also investigates the Jesuit response. As Martin demonstrated in *The Jesuit Mind: The Mentality of an Early Modern Elite* (1988), the experience of Jesuits of lesser rank reveals as much about this innovative organization as the heroic stories of Loyola and others at the centre of Jesuit affairs. Through extensively quoted correspondence, we learn how Jesuits acted in times of plague, and how the Society coordinated its activities when communications were restricted. Martin finds that fatalism and a search for abnegation often accompanied outbreaks of disease: some Jesuits found solace and a chance to die well, especially if disease were contracted through service to the afflicted. Others sought to address the symptoms of disease, and to preserve healthy individuals from its ravages. Such

pragmatism, derived from Loyola's injunctions to avoid excessive corporal penances and to maintain the body so as to better serve God, was construed by some as a sign of weak religious commitment. The rival order of Capuchins drew great credit for their suicidal forays in Lazar houses where plague sufferers awaited death. Jesuit reluctance to be similarly spendthrift of human resources was interpreted as cowardice and excessive love of this world. As Martin further shows, the 1570s quarrel between Jesuits and Carlo Borromeo, the reforming Archbishop of Milan, derived in part from the perception that the Jesuits were saving themselves while letting plague victims perish unsolaced. The argument that better service could be rendered by the healthy contributed to the stereotype of the worldly Jesuit pursuing the agenda of distant Rome.

To what extent were the Jesuits "modern," or secularized and empirical, in their approach to epidemic disease? Martin reveals that the Jesuit religious commitment did not occlude what we might construe as a "scientific" outlook. Jesuit medical theory distinguished between primary and secondary causes. Divine action produced the plague, as warning to or punishment of wayward humanity. Jesuits promoted the standard religious remedies: reform, prayer and penance. But secondary causes, including such natural and man-made factors such as miasmatic air, the pollution of water, and the crowding together of the afflicted, called for different responses, including medicinal intervention, dietary change and the physical removal of those vulnerable to disease. Aware that mortality could be limited by swift remedial action, many Jesuits were convinced that physical aid was as important as spiritual succour. Other research — notably by Carlo Cipolla — has established that the states of Northern Italy were at the forefront of public health in the early modern world. The term "quarantine," for example, derives from the Italian civic practice of 40 days' isolation. Martin shows that Jesuits contributed to this movement to higher standards of shelter, nutrition and emergency response.

Jesuits did not attain a scientifically-validated understanding of the plague; this in itself may explain why their accounts are not reconcilable with modern epidemiology. *Plague?* demonstrates the tensions within the Jesuit outlook: submission to God and his punishments coexisted with a desire to palliate the plague and to avoid the disease when possible. Fatalism jostled with the call for activism in times of plague. Concerns about loss of property and income, as abandoned houses were ransacked and fee-paying students disappeared from College rolls, are prominent. In other words, Jesuits were like others caught up in the terrifying thrall of a peril which they may have understood but could not control: fear if not panic is close to the surface.

For those who study disease in history, the significance of *Plague?* lies in its investigation of records which do not necessarily indicate *Yersinia pestis*. Historians of the Jesuits will learn how the young organization responded to the not-infrequent assault of "pest," and how this experience affirmed its "modern" orientation.

Students of sixteenth-century social life will learn from *Plague?* that despite panic and disarray, Jesuits acted constructively in the face of this threat. Such activism helped to prevent holocausts on the scale of 1347–1350.

PETER GODDARD, *University of Guelph*

Robert D. Cottrell. *La grammaire du silence. Une lecture de la poésie de Marguerite de Navarre*. Paris, Champion, 1995. Pp. 320.

On doit se réjouir que paraisse en français l'ouvrage de Robert D. Cottrell qui avait fait date en 1986 dans sa version originale, *The Grammar of Silence*, et qui reste à ce jour (malgré la subtilité de Paula Sommers dans *The Celestial Ladders* [1989] et l'essai plus historique de Gary Ferguson, *Mirroring Belief* [1992]) la plus vaste étude sur une poésie encore mal appréciée.

Robert D. Cottrell a le mérite d'avoir conduit sa réflexion sans négliger aucun des textes majeurs et il a cherché à fonder son interprétation de l'écriture de la reine sur de minutieuses analyses stylistiques. Dans la première partie — "La bonne lecture" —, il était tout à fait pertinent de commencer par examiner les lettres de Briçonnet, source essentielle de la spiritualité de Marguerite de Navarre. On n'oubliera pas le chapitre intitulé "Marthe et Marie" qui éclaire si finement une double expérience et le paradoxe d'une écriture à la recherche d'un langage qui "serait l'équivalent du silence" (p. 14). La deuxième partie justifie son titre étrange — "Le texte iconique" — par référence aux distinctions de Lacan entre "imaginaire" et "symbolique." L'iconique, selon Cottrell, serait au delà de ces deux catégories: le je et l'autre n'y "semblent pas identiques, ils le sont," et le texte iconique sait se faire reflet de la réalité chrétienne (p. 98). C'est dans cette perspective que sont placées les analyses du *Miroir de l'ame pecheresse*, du *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*, des comédies de *Mont de Marsan* (où les rapports de quatre voix sont très bien éclairés) et du *Désert*, et l'analyse du *Triomphe de l'Agneau*. La troisième section, de loin la plus longue, — "La poétique de l'amour" — examine les *Chansons spirituelles*, *La comédie sur le trépas du roi*, *La Navire*, *La Coche* et surtout *Les Prisons*.

Mais les chapitres ne sont pas exactement des successions de monographies. Ce sont des mises en perspective qui se fondent chacune sur un texte privilégié pour en déduire une manière, une qualité qui informe aussi les autres textes: ainsi pour l'étude de *La Navire* dans "la rhétorique des larmes" ou pour celle de *La Coche* dans "le mode emblématique." Pour aller et venir avec tant d'aisance à travers cette oeuvre diffuse, il fallait en avoir une intime connaissance, ou, si l'on applique à R. D. Cottrell la formule qu'il a choisie pour présenter les débuts poétiques de Marguerite, une "bonne lecture."