

respected, sometimes prominent, members of the community. Moreover, this was not aimless wandering: Gentilcore reconstructs the routes and seasonality of charlatans' travel and the logic behind them. Whether rare or frequent, real or imagined, travel was, however, a cornerstone of the charlatan's identity: exoticism was a key selling point and his references to past travels supported claims to a knowledge and experience far broader than what could be acquired in just one place. Hence, with the decline of this fascination with distant worlds, the itinerant and open air character of medical charlatanism also ceased to appeal, instead becoming a mark of vulgarity, increasingly associated with a plebeian and rural clientele while those at the high end of the occupation turned into sedentary shopkeepers.

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**Thomas Hofmeier,** *Michael Maiers Chymisches Cabinet. Atalanta fugiens deutsch nach der Ausgabe von 1708*, Berlin and Basel, Thurneysser, 2007, pp. 389, €29.00, SFr 45.00 (paperback 978-3-939176-46-6).

This edition of the 1708 German translation of Michael Maier's *Atalanta fugiens* offers the opportunity to look once more at Maier's most beautiful book on alchemy (first published in Latin in 1617), and to linger over the extraordinary plates by Matthäus Merian the Elder. It also allows us an overview of Maier's career as scholar and erstwhile seeker of princely patronage. In his search for patrons, Maier was both spectacularly good at obtaining honorary titles (some of which he bestowed on himself), such as being named Leibartz and Pfalzgraf to Emperor Rudolf II, but not so good at being paid for his services, despite the fulsome letters of dedication included in his numerous alchemical works. Neither of his positions at the Imperial court involved a salary. Indeed his life seems to have been so occupied with writing and

attempts to get paid that there was not a moment left for the actual practice of alchemy. And this, indeed, is the overweening effect of *Atalanta fugiens*: beautiful images, elegant emblems and explanations, even harmonious fugues (the music was not reprinted in the 1708 edition, and the words but not the notes are provided in this volume), but there is little sign of the laboratory or workshop. The stuff of this book is texts, beautifully combined and synthesized to create emblems bursting with a variety of meanings—moral, spiritual, cosmic, material—the more polysemous, the better.

Michael Maier (1568/9–1622) was born in Kiel, studied in Rostock, Basel, Padua, and Bologna, and began alchemical studies in 1604. He travelled as far south as Rome, east through the Baltic, north to England, and became a Doctor of Medicine in Basel, but most of his life was spent between the Rhine, Oder and Danube in the heartland of alchemical patronage and publishing. He spent time at the courts of Emperor Rudolf II, Landgraf Moritz of Hessen-Kassel, and King James I, attempted to gain positions at several northern German courts, and considered settling in Frankfurt am Main. When he attempted to do so in Strasbourg, the city denied his bid for citizenship, because they believed “he must be a most unusual man”. He began publishing a flood of mostly alchemical works in 1614 and put out more than two a year until his death in 1622.

*Atalanta fugiens* remains a kind of prototypical work of alchemy, no doubt mainly because of its plates. One wants to know more—if such can be known—about the collaboration between Maier and the engraver Matthäus Merian. Was it the printer, Johann Theodor de Bry, who brought the two men together or did they come to him? How much did the book sell for at the Frankfurt fair? In short, how did Maier, Merian, and de Bry conceive of this work—primarily as a work of alchemy, as an emblem-book, or as a picture book? No doubt any of the three would have made it a good investment for de Bry, but the combination of all of them would seem irresistible.

Thomas Hofmeier, who has made a speciality of editing and re-publishing editions of rare and little known works of alchemy, especially those having to do with Basel and Switzerland, provides a useful introduction, and took the intelligent decision of having the engravings printed in their full and wonderful murkiness and depth. This edition is worth obtaining just for the indexes, which take up a full 96 pages of the volume. There is an index of Maier's publications, of persons, an extraordinarily detailed index of subjects, one of alchemical authors, and, best of all, an index of all the sources cited by Maier. Sources to which Maier alluded only by author or title are fully resuscitated and listed by Hofmeier in this volume, including citations of chapters and page numbers.

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**Paola Bertucci,** *Viaggio nel paese delle meraviglie: scienza e curiosità nell'Italia del settecento*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2007, pp. 294, €28.00 (paperback 978-88-339-1802-0).

In *Viaggio nel paese delle meraviglie*, Bertucci brings to life the journey of the Abbé Jean-Antoine Nollet. In 1749, the renowned French natural philosopher left the Parisian court and, on the well-trodden routes of the Grand Tour, travelled throughout the Italian peninsula. The official reason for his journey was to question the therapeutic use of medicinal tubes and electricity devised by the Venetian scholar Gianfrancesco Pivati. Italy, with its scenic landscapes and fine arts, was the land that instilled a love for the marvellous. In the context, *Il paese delle meraviglie*—i.e. “Wonderland”—denotes a degree of credulity, of belief in the extraordinary that in many instances characterized that of the locals.

Paola Bertucci is an authority on the origins of medical electricity on which she has worked extensively since the late 1990s.

She revived the then innovative work carried out in the 1980s by Margaret Rowbottom and Charles Susskind and incorporated into her research their museological attention to material culture. In addition, Bertucci mastered social history, in particular the work of Simon Schaffer who notably reminded us that the definition of natural philosophy is never clear cut.

Bertucci's account reflects a historiographic concern with the artificiality of the divide between natural science and medicine, and between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Medical electricians tenaciously tried to carve a niche for themselves against the incursions of prevailing factions of the Republic of Letters, whose institutional outposts were academies and societies. Bertucci clearly renders the extent of political networking between members and patrons of the Académie Royale des Sciences, the Royal Society and, last but not least, the Istituto delle Scienze di Bologna of which Pivati was also a member. Backed by illustrious colleagues, clients and societies, Nollet managed to present himself under an aura of scientific objectivity. Whilst in Rome, he was received by the influential patron of the Istituto, Pope Benedict XIV, who found in Nollet a useful ally against the theologically unsound medical use of electricity. The Istituto was caught in a double bind. On the one hand, its members had publicized Pivati's discovery across Europe and on the other, they were confronted with a high degree of resistance from both powerful insiders and foreign scientific societies. Diplomacy, suggests the author, was the only possible way out. Social aspects easily overshadowed natural philosophical ones.

Much of Bertucci's material is collected from Nollet's public and private writings. As always, the *Gentleman's Magazine* is extremely useful for contextualizing the social milieu of the time. Thanks to a thorough handling of archival sources, the author achieves her stated intent to build a dialogue between the Abbé, his allies and foes. Typically, it is in aristocratic palaces that