

humaniste” as to the late medieval university discipline of medicine, and to the advances made in the fifteenth century by a group of Italian practitioners who wrote broadly about medical and surgical procedures, and who, as even medical hellenists such as Symphorien Champier and Otto Brunfels concede, had surpassed the ancients in their grasp of pathology, therapy and pharmacopoeia. The book ends with an essay on Théophraste Renaudot’s extraordinary medical initiative of 1642 entitled *La présence des absens* which is reproduced here in facsimile: a publication designed to bring health care to the illiterate and the poor through the exercise of diagnosis at distance. The essay which accompanies the text throws a powerful light on early modern institutions and attitudes, and is a fitting coda to a very interesting and well-presented volume.

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Sandra Cavallo and David Gentilcore (eds), *Spaces, objects and identities in early modern Italian medicine*, Oxford, Blackwell in collaboration with the Society for Renaissance Studies, 2008, pp. 123, illus., £19.99 (paperback 978-1-4051-8040-5).

This volume republishes a collection of essays that first appeared in print in *Renaissance Studies*, 2007, **21** (4). The essays exemplify the recent trend for the history of medicine to broaden its scope to encompass diverse aspects of social and cultural life. The essays focus on Italy in particular, but will be of interest to anyone studying the social history of early modern Europe.

The papers by Elizabeth S Cohen and Filippo de Vivo both study the commercial spaces of apothecary shops in the seventeenth century. Cohen’s essay is a superbly researched microhistory of a criminal trial from Rome. The apothecary alleged that an intrusive guild search for counterfeit

confectionary had provoked his wife’s miscarriage and subsequent death. The case incidentally reveals much intriguing detail about the spatial and social organization of shop and home, the role of women in a family business, and the policing activities of guilds. It is a fascinating case that repays such close examination, casting light on many aspects of medicine, culture and society. De Vivo’s essay is a brilliant study showing how apothecary shops in Venice were not simply spaces for buying products, but also centres for socializing and exchange of information, constituting a “public sphere” before the better-known coffee-shops and salons of the eighteenth century. Such was the social importance of these spaces that the security council, particularly concerned that dangerous ideas might spread across social levels, set spies to keep a close eye on the flow of customers.

Other papers centre on the body, addressing the relation between science, society and religion. Gianna Pomata’s study of the role of doctors in canonization proceedings, looks at the case of the body of Saint Catherine in Bologna. This is a very interesting exploration of cooperation between religious and medical authorities in the scientific investigation of purportedly miraculous cures and instances of bodily “incorruption”, often flying in the face of popular cults. Related themes appear in Lucia Dacome’s essay on Anna Morandi, an unusual case of a female anatomist and maker of wax anatomical models in Bologna. The essay provides enthralling details of one of the lesser-studied aspects of empirical science in the eighteenth century, and the opportunities open to a woman in this field. It also contains interesting reflections on the particular qualities that made wax such an effective substitute for flesh, and its associations with religious practices, such as death masks. A similar emphasis on the socially embedded nature of scientific research and medical practice is found in Silvia De Renzi’s essay, a comparative study of the careers of two doctors in seventeenth-century Rome. She examines the various factors that determined

professional success, from anatomical research to hospital practice to dealing in art. Overall this is an excellent and consistently interesting collection of research papers, that reveals new aspects of the central importance of medicine in early modern society and culture.

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Andreas Vesalius, *On the fabric of the human body. Book VI: The heart and associated organs. Book VII: The brain,* a translation of *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem* by William Frank Richardson in collaboration with John Burd Carman, Novato, CA, Norman Publishing, 2009, pp. xx, 413, illus, \$275 (hardback 978-0-930405-90-8).

The great work is now complete. After eleven years, the final volume of this monumental translation of Vesalius' masterpiece has finally appeared. The last two books of the *Fabrica* concern the heart and its associated organs, and the brain, and end with Vesalius' comments on vivisection. Neither is as familiar as it should be, and even those, like myself, who thought they were familiar with large sections of Vesalius, now find new observations and points of interest. The high standards set in the first volume have been maintained throughout. English readers now have both an accurate and an elegant guide to the *Fabrica*, and have no excuse for concentrating on its illustrations rather than its verbal message. Sadness at the death of the translator, Will Richardson, who was thus unable to see his achievement in print, is tempered only a little by the knowledge that he had effectively completed all that he set out to do.

But there are also others who deserve praise, as well as John Burd Carman, who provided an anatomical commentary throughout. The publisher took a big risk with so huge and prestigious a volume: at least one other publisher was certainly reluctant to

commit to a similar project. The design team have produced a page lay-out that mirrors the clarity and elegance of the original, and a series of volumes that are a pleasure to handle. It is a pity that the opportunity was not fully taken to sharpen some of the original images, which are occasionally too dark to show clearly the identifying numbers.

Over a hundred pages of this final volume are taken up with a series of indexes, beginning with a complete translation of Vesalius' own index, reordered according to English word order. This remains valuable because it often gives a context and the ideas that accompany a particular word. It is followed by an index of words, one of names, one of foreign words retained, one of passages cited from ancient authors, and one of topics and names and foreign words included in the translator's notes. These relate only to the text of volume V, and are then followed by cumulative indexes to all the volumes. They will be of great assistance when trying to look up a particular passage even if, as I found, one may have to consult a variety of entries before alighting on the right one.

But this is a quibble, as is the wish that some of the notes had been fuller and had explained more of the context. It would also have been nice if Professor Carman had given us a retrospect of the changes that have taken place over the last decade or more in the understanding and interpretation of Vesalius and his book. When this book was begun, its authors were working in isolation, as much intellectual as physical, and O'Malley's (not always accurate) interpretation held the field unchallenged. The last fifteen years have seen major advances in our understanding of dissection in the Renaissance and of Vesalius in particular. Scholars in England, France and the USA have challenged many of the central themes of the older historiography, and some of their findings could well have been incorporated in the notes. But this would have added to the work, and possibly delayed production even longer, so that the decision to present a slimmer Vesalius is understandable.