

In our cyber age with access to bibliographies online (both for classics and for medieval studies), the number and quality of omissions present in both García González and in Mandrin is astonishing; the ones I consider the most serious concern newer editions of Latin texts, like the Dioscorides mentioned above, of Philumenus and Philagrius (Mihăileanu 1910; now also Masullo, 1999, for Philagrius), of Marcellus (Empiricus), whom Mandrin quotes in the 1889 edition by Helmreich, (which used only one manuscript, from Fulda, now in Paris), of the 1999 edition of Theophilus *de urinis* by Sonya Dase, and García González's serious oversight of Peter Stotz's five-volume *Handbuch zur lateinischen Sprache des Mittelalters*, to which he should have referred for phonetic changes (rather than Biville). His minute subdivisions of the bibliography (pp. 324–9 and 577–94) do not help the reader. (Stotz acted, by the way, as thesis supervisor for Mandrin and is the current editor of the series, where three volumes of *Physica Plinii Florentino-Pragensis* appeared some twenty years ago which could also have been consulted to advantage, like Önnersfors's *Physica Plinii Bambergensis*.)

García González's book is the first in a series called *Nova collectio Salernitana*, a national (Italian) edition of Salernitan writings comprising the texts found in de Renzi's five-volume *Collectio Salernitana* and edited by that scholar (who was no philologist) almost singlehandedly; now, there is a "commissione scientifica" of nineteen scholars of international repute. García González's volume is indeed welcome and marks a tremendous step forward, but is still marred by a number of imperfections, some of which could have been avoided before the work was committed to print. Similar reservations must be made for Mandrin, a book that contains good work but does not make full use of older studies that should have been consulted.

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Girolamo Fracastoro, *De sympathia et antipathia rerum, Liber I*: edizione critica, traduzione e commento **Concetta Pennuto**, Studi e Testi del Rinascimento Europeo, 31, Rome, Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 2008, pp. cii, 358, €58.00 (paperback 978-88-8498-383-1).

Concetta Pennuto, *Simpatia, fantasia e contagio: il pensiero medico e il pensiero filosofico di Girolamo Fracastoro*, Centuria, 5, Rome, Edizioni di storia e Letteratura, 2008, pp. xx, 526, €55.00 (paperback 978-88-8498-384-8).

In 1546 the Giunti press in Venice published as a single book two philosophical tracts by the Veronese physician Girolamo Fracastoro—*De sympathia* and *De contagione*. The second of these explored the contagion of specific diseases that then afflicted Europe—plague, syphilis or the *morbo gallico*, leprosy, scabies, a disease of spots the size of lentils that historians now maintain was typhus, rabies, phthisis (or possibly tuberculosis), and others. From the historical evaluation of these diseases, Fracastoro developed a theory of contagion that analysed diseases according to three specific modes of dissemination—by contact, by contact as well as through contamination of another substance such as cloth (*fomes*), and by distance. This second tract had a profound impact on medical thought and the subsequent questioning of Galenic and Renaissance ideas of disease from the mid-sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century. Almost to the complete neglect of *De sympathia*, this tract has engaged medical historians ever since, despite Fracastoro's remarks in his dedication to the Farnese cardinal and passages in both tracts that argue for a close interconnection between the two works: *De symphatia*, a work of natural philosophy and physics, underpinned Fracastoro's theory of contagion.

In two companion works, Concetta Pennuto has now addressed this oversight in the history of medicine and philosophy. The first is a

critical edition of *De sympathia*, applying manuscript skills in philology to the twelve published versions of it from the Venetian edition of 1546 to one in Geneva in 1671. In addition, she supplies a hundred-page introduction, an Italian translation of the text, and 191 pages of notes, bibliography and indices. The second is a monograph developed from her 2005 dissertation at the University of Geneva. It is an exhaustive chapter-by-chapter analysis of *De sympathia* that places Fracastoro's physics and natural philosophy within the framework of ancient thought from Plato and Aristotle to the multiple trends of Aristotelian thought in the Renaissance and developments in Neoplatonism into the sixteenth century. In this work and unlike *De contagione*, the physician Fracastoro makes few references to disease or medicine. Instead, the first half of this treatise explores the wonders or puzzles (*mirabilia*) of the natural world, such as why lightning strikes ships' masts and not their hulls, why lightning supposedly does not strike laurel trees, why wine and water mix but not water and oil, why magnets attract iron, and more. In the second half, Fracastoro utilizes the same principles of attraction and repulsion to understand the passions such as love, anger, melancholy, and the senses according to Aristotelian characteristics of the body, blood, coldness, and warmth. Throughout, Pennuto argues vigorously that Fracastoro rejected notions of the occult and the influences of eclipses, stars, and planets to explain these puzzles in the natural world: although the physical forces of the cosmos were neither visible nor tangible, the "principles of Fracastoro's physics" held that they could be understood through "the instruments of reason" (p. 153). Some may question whether Fracastoro so radically rejected the influences of the stars for understanding all sub-lunar matters. In *De contagione* he held: "No contagions per se can be produced by the sky; but there is no reason why certain contagions should not be produced by it, by accident, and they might even be predicted by astrologers . . . Now the sidereal conditions which are most apt to

produce new and serious effects [of diseases] are those in which several of the planets are in conjunction." (*De contagione et contagiosis morbis et eorum curatione, Libri III*, ed. and trans. W C Wright [New York, 1930], pp. 58–61.)

Such notions show that Fracastoro (unlike many less known Italian physicians of the later sixteenth century) had not yet weaned himself so radically from the physics and medicine of Marsilio Ficino and the heritage of late medieval and Renaissance astrology.

The introduction and final 72-page chapter of Pennuto's monograph vigorously tie Fracastoro's first tract to the second and will be of the most interest to historians of medicine. In addition to the indispensable interconnection of the two works, Pennuto argues against the grain of much recent historiography that while Fracastoro may have used the language of Lucretius and was influenced by his use of verse for scientific topics, Fracastoro rejected the "atomism" of the ancients and relied instead on the "corpuscularism" of Aristotle's physics. Fracastoro's *seminarium* was not the same as Lucretius's *semina* or Galen's *semen*. Instead of a seed or atom, Fracastoro's *seminarium* was the vehicle by which putrefaction in one body was transported to another, "creating the conditions in the second body that generated a new infection analogous to that born in the first" (p. 420). Fracastoro criticized the atomism of Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius as "crude and silly [*rudis et ineptus*]" (*De sympathia*, p. 32). But more importantly, he employed *seminarium* in response to Galen's notion of seeds, to overturn his miasmatic understanding of contagion that placed a heavy blame on the patient (*aptitudo patientis*), on diet and bad habits. Fracastoro reflected empirically on the plague experiences of his own time: of ten thousand who had fallen to plague, all were nourished much the same as the survivors and were no guiltier of heavy drinking and eating or of indulging in the excesses of the dissolute life.

In this remarkably erudite study comprising 907 pages of apparatus and commentary focused on the sixty-five pages of

De sympathia, Pennuto leaves one question underdeveloped: Fracastoro's impact on his own generation of physicians and his importance for the understanding of diseases in the early modern period to the end of the seventeenth century. His new notions of contagion became the Ur-text of the next generation of Italian physicians, who were forced to confront the Italian-wide pandemic of 1575–78. His *De sympathia* and *De contagione* gave them the intellectual armament to attack models of medicine, astrology, and universals that had become so well entrenched with Marsilio Ficino's *Consiglio* and the Greek editions of Galen during the first half of the Cinquecento. Perhaps this will be Pennuto's next assignment.

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Deborah Madden, *'A cheap, safe and natural medicine': religion, medicine and culture in John Wesley's Primitive physic*, Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine, Clio Medica 83, Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 2007, pp. 313, €65.00 (hardback 978-90-420-2274-4).

In the Preface to his immensely successful *Primitive physic*, John Wesley asked whether there were not too many books already on the art of medicine. His answer: "Yes, too many ten times over, considering how little to the purpose the far greater part of them speak." Additionally, they were "too dear for poor men to buy, and too hard for plain men to understand". As one who famously twinned the roles of pastor and physician, Wesley considered it his duty before God to assist the labouring poor, to ensure that, through his mediation, they had access to sound and affordable medical advice. In an impressive monograph, notable for the thoroughness with which the most recent secondary literature has been assimilated, Deborah Madden offers a systematic study of Wesley's motivation and

its grounding in his primitive Christianity. His prescriptions for fighting the diseases of his day, his advocacy of an austere preventive regimen, and his responsiveness both to criticism and to the latest medical innovations are presented as the products of a sincere, practical piety.

Madden makes no secret of her intention to lift Wesley's reputation by rescuing him from contemporaries who falsely accused him of quackery or who exaggerated his disrespect for professional physicians, to whose authority he frequently deferred. He has to be rescued, also, from historians who have accused him of making medicine too subject to theology, and, specifically, of conflating madness and demonic possession. One consequence of Madden's rescue operation is that Wesley is instated as an exponent of Enlightenment culture rather than marginalized or excluded from it by his fideism. His sensitivity to environmental determinants of disease, his willingness (as with George Cheyne) to interpret the body mechanically, his empirical insistence that remedies must be tried and tested rather than deduced from conjectural theories are described as conforming to a Lockean epistemology that was also compatible with the neo-Hippocratic writings of Thomas Sydenham.

Central to Madden's argument is the claim that, despite the analogies Wesley drew between physical and spiritual healing, he regarded the two as separate, in the sense that the former addressed diseases of the flesh, the latter the life of the spirit. She insists that he did not confuse medicine with religion, did not suggest that health of body and soul were one and the same, and did not teach that the spiritual world could affect bodily organs. At first sight, this might seem to sit uncomfortably with another of her main contentions—namely that to understand Wesley we have to recognize his holistic understanding of the human subject, in which "theological abstraction and biological study were fused together in a dynamic and powerful way because he was fascinated by the full range of human existence" (p. 267).