

Débats scientifiques: Autour de la jeûneuse prodige du XVI^e siècle; La querelle de l'abstinente (1566–1602). François Béroalde de Verville, François Citois, Israël Harvet, and Laurent Joubert.

Eds. Colette H. Winn and Graziella Postolache. *Masculin/féminin dans l'Europe moderne* 19. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2019. 212 pp. €29.

This volume's editors present four works written in French concerning the so-called quarrel of the abstinent one, that is, the question of how long human beings can live without ingesting food. The four texts are framed by a substantial introduction and a glossary, an appendix, indexes, and several bibliographies on the question of fasting. This question met with renewed interest in 1566 from the best known of the quarrel's four participants, Laurent Joubert, whose treatise *Second Paradoxe* the editors offer based on one of the last editions of the *Erreurs populaires* (1601), of which it is a part.

The four medical practitioners are then introduced—Laurent Joubert (1529–83), Israël Harvet (active 1597–1605), François Citois (1572–1652), and Béroalde de Verville (1556–1626)—followed by the reasons for the quarrel, which arose because Harvet thought it worthwhile to answer Joubert in writing, thirty years after the initial publication of the *Second Paradoxe*. Not long afterward in 1601, Citois was confronted with the case of an adolescent girl who, as he was told, survived an illness in 1599 and had not eaten since. He published his observations in Latin and French, which provoked Harvet to issue a refutation in 1602 that elicited an immediate rebuttal by Citois. This emerging medical quarrel aroused the interest of Béroalde de Verville, who mentions it in *Le palais des curieux* (1612) and in the better-known *Le Moyen de parvenir* (1616). The editors present the four texts with a mini-analysis of each, emphasizing what they may have in common and what might strike the contemporary reader as unusual.

Then follows a short survey of the history of fasting that is fruitfully contextualized with the fashionable genre of the *ars moriendi* and Luigi Cornaro's *Trattato della vita sobria* (1558) recommending moderation. The editors then discuss the secularization of fasting in the sixteenth century, which caused a proliferation of notable cases across Europe: they mostly featured adolescent girls, a fact that, as the editors plausibly show, produces the dual image of the female human being as medical aberration and of woman as wonder of nature (“prodige de la nature,” 42). This logically leads to remarks on the question of gender. Some notes on editorial practices and which editions were used round out the introduction. The four texts then follow in chronological order, all of them thoroughly footnoted. A glossary of terms used by the four writers, an appendix of texts regarding fasting, and several bibliographies complete the volume.

For this reader, Harvet's dedication to Marie du Fou, Dame de Mareuil, is of particular interest, as it encourages a parallel reading of the author's *Discours* and Michel de Montaigne's essays, in particular the one on children's education. Moreover, both Joubert and Harvet use the literary genre of the paradox, which the

former bases on a syllogism that is then dismantled by Harvet. The overall erudition of all four texts is remarkable and reflects the general public's interest in health issues; only Verville cannot refrain from eroticizing his account, and the editors underline the way he slants his narration of the case.

This volume is suitable for scholars of sixteenth-century literature and of medical texts written in French and Latin. It also speaks to readers of essays, observations, and exempla, as well as to scholars of the medical humanities in general. Moreover, as the editors indicate in their introduction, the volume fills a gap in adding cases from the Renaissance to the medieval anorexic saints discussed in Rudolf M. Bell's *Holy Anorexia* (1985). The volume potentially would also speak to instructors in the medical humanities who might pair it with Marya Hornbacher's *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (1997) or with discussions surrounding hunger and society's recurring interest in exploring how long we can survive without food.

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Disease and Disability in Medieval and Early Modern Art and Literature.

Rinaldo F. Canalis and Massimo Ciavolella, eds.

Cursor Mundi 38. Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. 380 pp. €100.

In recent years, we have witnessed an increased interest of scholars and institutions in medical humanities, and the interdisciplinary volume published by Brepols is a good example of this trend. Despite its title, the book is almost exclusively dedicated to disease, and the introduction and four of the essays focus on the usual suspects: bubonic plague (Lori Jones, Efraín Kristal), leprosy (Gaia Gubbini), and syphilis (Alfonso Paoella). Still, the editors should be commended for the inclusion of research on mental illness (Sara Frances Burdoff), ailments that affected artists (Manuela Gallerani, Roberto Fedi), and the role of built environments in the healing process (Francis Wells). Likewise, essays dedicated to such canonical works as *Tristan et Yseut* (Gubbini) and *Hamlet* (Burdoff), alongside paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Nicolas Poussin (Gallerani, Fedi, and Kristal), demonstrate that somatic, mental, and psychosomatic illnesses must be considered central to the cultural history of medieval and early modern Europe.

Beyond the general interest in disease and disability, the volume does not follow any more specific theme, and the quality of essays remains uneven. Alain Touwaide analyzes a fascinating disparity between visual and textual information in Byzantine medical and non-medical manuscripts, and his chapter in the volume also serves to summarize some aspects of classical medicine and its impact on the arts. A similar conundrum—the dearth of symptom-specific descriptions and depictions of the bubonic plague for much of the