"Biblical geology"—which could hardly be the object of experimental investigation. Yet Marie Boas Hall takes into consideration only the actual performance of real experiments and explicitly declines to take into account "the presentation of random empirical facts, fancies or thoughts" (p. 5).

She begins with a discussion of the original aims of the founders, and, subsequently, of the several schemes for reforming the Society—some of them aimed at arresting the decline in the number of experiments conducted at meetings. Chapters 3, 5 and 7 deal with the performance of experiments as recorded in the minutes of the meetings. These show that the experimental activities were somewhat unsystematic and very much depended on the abilities and interests of the Curator. It is significant that the highest number of experiments was performed during Hooke's Curatorship. Physiology played a prominent part in the early years, and Richard Lower's experiments (chiefly in the field of blood transfusion) were particularly successful.

After a long period of decline, these experimental activities began to revive with Newton's election as President (1703) and Francis Hauksbee's appointment as Curator (1704). Optics and physical science dominated the scene during the first two decades of the eighteenth century. However, after a promising start in the 1660s, the general trend (with a few exceptions) was a shift away from the actual performance of experiments to reporting on and discussing those performed elsewhere. This phenomenon raises some crucial questions relating to the role of experimentation in formulating scientific theories and, in general, to the fundamental credibility of the accounts given by natural philosophers. Despite the richness of recent discussions—both philosophical and sociological—of the status of experiments and of those who carried them out, the author makes no attempt to enlarge on her arguably simplistic statement that the decline of experimental activity was the result of "a greater sophistication on the part of Fellows", who "could understand the experiment described so well that they did not see the need to view it directly" (pp. 22–3).

Chapters 4, 6, and 8 are devoted to the communication between the Society and other English and continental savants. Again, the reader is given the impression that the communication, as well as the actual performance, of experiments was an essentially unsystematic activity, depending largely on the active role and prestige of the Secretary and of the President. The golden age of the international interaction of the Society more or less finished with the death, in 1677, of Henry Oldenburg. It was Newton's international reputation that gave new vigour to the network of communication which Oldenburg had begun. The *Philosophical Transactions*—which Oldenburg conceived and started editing in 1665—were the main instrument of diffusion and communication: they were read all over the Continent, and excerpts from them were translated and reprinted in German, French and Italian periodicals.

In the last chapter, concerned with "the view of the world", Boas Hall states that the intellectual world generally agreed with the Fellows that empiricism was at the core of the Society's activities. But she shows scant interest in the discussions on the Royal Society which occurred in the 1660s and 70s. For instance, Henry Stubbe's criticisms are not taken into account because, she argues, they were simply personal attacks on Joseph Glanvill and did not involve the Society as a whole. On the other hand, the nature and role of Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* (1667) and Glanvill's works in defence of the Society's aims also receive a rather sketchy account.

Despite these problems, this book contains a great deal of fresh material on the history of the Royal Society for which historians of modern science and medicine can be grateful.

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JEAN CÉARD, MARIE-MADELEINE FONTAINE, and JEAN-CLAUDE MARGOLIN (eds), *Le corps à la renaissance. Actes du XXXe Colloque de Tours 1987*, Paris, Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990, 8vo, pp. 502, illus. (paperback).

This handsome volume is the permanent record of a particularly wide-ranging and challenging conference held in 1987 at the Centre d'Etudes supérieures de la Renaissance at Tours. Its theme was nothing less than the hermeneutics of the body in the European

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Renaissance, as it appears through art, architecture, literature, music, dance, anatomy, and much else besides. The subject is vast, and there are thirty-three separate contributions to the volume, together with an introduction by André Chastel and a masterful synthesis of the many and complex themes of the conference by Marie-Madeleine Fontaine. It is impossible to do it full justice here, and different readers will find their own preferences. The book is divided into five sections. In the first, 'Le corps "en montre"', Monique Chatenet throws light on the connections between "corps" and "logis" in the royal château of Saint-Germain en Laye, showing how the architecture reflects the dictates of ceremonial; Alison Saunders writes on the ideal of female beauty represented by the "blasons anatomiques" produced in France in the 1530s; Gabriel A. Pérouse demonstrates how an insight into the norms of masculine beauty as perceived in the Renaissance, and an appreciation of their evolution, may add significantly to our understanding of Renaissance texts from Rabelais to Montaigne; Stella Mary Newton and Madeleine Lazard consider costume, the second in particular with much informative detail; finally, Henri Zerner analyses Clouet's famous picture of *La Dame au bain*, relating it both to pictorial traditions and to social and cultural reality. Other sections are similarly multi-faceted; in the second, 'Du corps maltraité au corps transfiguré', the themes include the body subjected to violence, the body and witchcraft, the cult of relics, and dissection; the third, 'Les expressions du corps' has contributions relating to the literature and iconography of the English Renaissance, the semiotics of the body, and especially to music and dance. Readers of this journal will perhaps find most of interest to them in the fourth and fifth sections of the book, dealing with bodily exercises ('Les techniques du corps') and knowledge of the body respectively. Vivian Nutton, for instance, discusses the *De Arte Gymnastica* of Hieronymus Mercurialis, and Guy Bonhomme, in a fascinating article, explaining the evolution from horse to vaulting-horse, sets out the role of the horse in Renaissance gymnastic exercise. The value of the volume, however, is that it sets each of its individual themes against the culture and science of the period as a whole, and it is for this achievement that its editors are to be congratulated.

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MICHAEL R. McVAUGH and NANCY G. SIRAISI (eds), *Renaissance medical learning: evolution of a tradition*, *Osiris*, 2nd ser., vol. 6, 1990, pp. 244, illus., $29.00 (0–934235–18–X), $20.00 (paperback, 0–934235–17–1).

Of the six volumes already published in the second series of *Osiris*, this is the fourth monograph and the first fully devoted to any subject before the eighteenth century—specifically, to medicine in medieval and renaissance Europe. The publication of a volume with these characteristics is reason enough for celebration among historians of medicine and science, since it is becoming increasingly unusual. But, on this occasion it should also be welcomed for the quality and interest of the contributions, as well as for the coherence and balance that the volume as a whole has achieved; not to mention its impeccable editing and printing.

The volume includes nine articles written by well-known specialists in the area (Jerome Bylebyl, Chiara Crisciani, Richard Durling, Luis García-Ballester and his collaborators, Danielle Jacquart, Mark Jordan, and Vivian Nutton, as well as both of its editors). Its scope is restricted to the intellectual history of learned medical culture. It concentrates on the *fortuna* of "scholastic medicine" (in the widest sense of this phrase, that is the medicine taught in medieval and renaissance university schools), the most influential intellectual tradition in western European medicine before the seventeenth century, whose history covers nearly five hundred years—from the late eleventh to the late sixteenth century. During this crucial period, medicine evolved as both a learned discipline closely tied to Aristotelian natural philosophy, mainly cultivated in the universities, which developed an authoritative literature of its own, and as a lucrative profession with particular aims and involving technical skills, that pushed its practitioners towards specific intellectual concerns different from those of the natural philosophers. As the editors point out, the collected essays show "how such things as textual traditions, pedagogical techniques, institutional frameworks, and relations with other disciplines and with the extra-academic world conditioned and shaped" scholastic medicine as it evolved (p. 10).

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