

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.

Pamela H Smith,
Columbia University

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

much of the experimentation, entertainment, networking and also spying took place. In the footsteps of Paula Findlen, Bertucci highlights the contribution of outstanding women of science to the ongoing debate. A strong paradox emerges from the author's account of eighteenth-century natural philosophy: an almost unbridgeable opposition between love for the truth and love for the marvellous.

In chapter five *Viaggio* takes an almost unexpected turn. Bertucci has thoroughly researched Nollet's travel notes in his *Journal du voyage de Piemont et d'Italie en 1749*. Large parts of the manuscript are devoted not to natural philosophy but to silk manufacturing. Apart from scientific enquiry, the Abbé appears to have had an unofficial reason for visiting Italy: industrial espionage. The report on the silkworm industry presented to the Académie would gain Nollet a professorship in physic at the Collège de Navarre in Paris. Bertucci states that these data remained hidden in Nollet's diary for centuries and are now published for the first time. In an academic world that seeks for novelty, the reader could easily be misled into thinking that the author is the first to refer to Nollet's mission. This is not exactly the case and unfortunately, in her extensive bibliography, Bertucci forgets to cite a 1993 article by Mary Agnes Burnistone Brazier (*J. Hist Neurosci.*, 2) where the silk affair is also briefly mentioned.

A metaphorical thread of silk or, as Bertucci states, a silk road, makes of this monograph a pleasurable whole. Given the sources and the chronological format chosen, the book could easily have become a geographically compartmentalized account of successive stages of six months' travel. Bertucci has magisterially avoided that pitfall. In the historical circumstances she presents, scientific and market laws are tightly intertwined. The author's wide-angled perspective makes a book that will surely engage an academic readership by its style and competence. The same style, the beautiful prose and the restricted recourse to analytical

views has certainly the potential to capture the imagination of a much wider an audience.

Luca Zampedri,

The Wellcome Trust Centre for the
History of Medicine at UCL

Véronique Bouillier and Gilles Tarabout (eds), *Images du corps dans le monde hindou*, Paris, CNRS Editions, 2002, pp. 509, illus., €42.00 (paperback 2-271-06060-5).

Beautifully illustrated and organized with great strategy, this collection of essays is dedicated to the study of "the body as cultural object" (p. 9) in the Hindu world, from the disciplines of history, anthropology, and sociology. The essays provide a wide range of ideas about the body in a variety of contexts, and in its animate and, in the end, inanimate forms. In their introduction, Véronique Bouillier and Gilles Tarabout take great care to situate their collection within the growing bibliography of books dedicated to the study of the body in India. They include a useful overview of the body in the anthropological theories of Louis Dumont (in ideological terms) and of McKim Marriott (in transactive terms), and in doing so, point out that in both camps, the body is "relegated to the margins of analysis" (p. 23). They argue instead for an understanding of the body in its multiple contexts. They describe their book as one which, through its various approaches, will reveal "the reality (or the realities) of bodies" in Hindu India, demonstrated in "popular oral traditions, bodily practices, ritualized or not, in legal statutes" and so on, that will collectively show "continuities between traditional textual knowledge and observed practices", as well as disjunctures in such a way as to "avoid reductionism" (p. 25). As they write, "there is not just one unique body, nor is there just one way of talking about it" (p. 26).

The book is divided into four major segments, each consisting of four discrete articles, and ends with a coda on the body in death. The first segment, titled 'Logiques