

Book Reviews

“traumatology” (anachronistically using the term of a modern medical discipline), i.e. the treatment of injuries, and military surgery during the transition period from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. At the same time, it aims to provide a critical evaluation of the plausibility and effectiveness of the diagnostic and therapeutic procedures current during that time period. The basis for this evaluation is a thorough examination of the *Grosse Chirurgie* of Walther Herrmann Ryff, published in 1545. According to the great historian of surgery Ernst Gurlt (1898), Ryff’s work is a representative compilation of the then current surgical techniques. The *Chirurgie*, as Vollmuth claims, not only provides detailed and richly illustrated material, it was also widely read and used.

The study starts off with a biographical section on Walther Hermann Ryff which provides basic information on the life and work of this early modern author. However, Vollmuth’s emphasis on saving Ryff’s reputation is a bit out of touch with the concerns of current historiography of pre-modern medicine. Among other things, he defends the surgeon’s honour against the accusation of plagiarism by explaining that copying others’ books was quite common at the time. This well-known fact, however, is one of the reasons why the issue of originality and priority has become more or less irrelevant for historians working on early modern medicine, so that Vollmuth’s attempt at rehabilitating Ryff seems oddly beside the point.

What is even more problematic, however, is the study’s analytic strategy. As the author explicitly states (p. 323), it consists in taking Ryff’s book apart and reordering it according to modern concerns. Chapter 1 is a description of the surgical instruments shown and described in the *Chirurgie*. Chapter 2 consists in an alphabetically ordered list of all the drugs occurring in Ryff’s book (pp. 82–170). Chapter 3, which the author characterizes as the central chapter, deals with the different injuries, their treatment, and the plausibility and efficacy of the surgical treatment procedures according to modern medical knowledge. The structure of this chapter deliberately follows modern textbooks of

surgery (p. 171). The first part is devoted to ‘General surgery’ and includes questions of anaesthesia and pain management, wound treatment, haemostasis and cauterization, complications and post-operative treatment. The second part discusses injuries of various body regions. This peculiar presentist structure might make it easier to find particular topics, in case one wants to compare them with other books, for example, but it also makes it harder to understand Ryff, and his book, in the context of his time. All in all Vollmuth’s study combines an amazing erudition and thoroughness concerning philological and antiquarian details on the one hand, with an equally amazing naivety as to the aspects of cultural history of the topic, on the other.

Thomas Schlich,
McGill University, Montreal

Susan Wheeler, *Five hundred years of medicine in art: an illustrated catalogue of prints and drawings from the Clements C. Fry Collection in the Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library at Yale University*, Ashgate Publishing, 2001, pp. xxviii, 363, £85.00, US\$144.95 (hardback 0-8596-7992-6).

This catalogue lists and illustrates prints and drawings on medical themes from the Fry Collection at Yale University Medical Library. This wonderfully rich collection consists of about 2000 images gathered over almost thirty years by Dr Fry, who donated it to the library in 1955. The images span five centuries and include the work of over six hundred artists, including great masters such as Pieter Bruegel, Rembrandt van Rijn, Guercino, and Hendrick Goltzius. It is especially strong on French and British works, particularly images representing the interaction of doctors and patients, specific diseases and injuries, and therapeutic practices. Almost half of the works are satirical or humorous, including a large number of excellent caricatures by the French Honoré Daumier (1808–1879) and the British Thomas Rowlandson (1756–1827).

Each item consists of a black-and-white reproduction of the work (all roughly the size of the 35-mm. negative from which they were printed, which makes a magnifying glass a necessary aid for most readers) and a textual entry identifying the artist, title, medium, dimensions, and inscription (if any). The catalogue is organized thematically, with ninety-nine subject groupings arranged into fourteen main topics dedicated to different medical professions and trades, institutions, practices, diseases, therapies, and so on. This arrangement allows for the comparison of contemporary representations of the same topic—for instance, a dozen depictions of grimacing faces ingesting medicines—or even a single subject—such as seven different portraits displaying the obesity of Mr Daniel Lambert of Leicester, c.1800; as well as the examination of continuities and changes in representation over time. (The thematic arrangement, however, is insensitive to differences in medium or genre.) The excellent indexes at the end of the catalogue allow the reader quickly to navigate the collection, searching by artist, title, publisher, name, and subject.

The richness of the collection, the inclusion of a reproduction of every single item in it, and the care with which the catalogue has been edited and put together will make this a valuable tool for those interested in the intersection of art and medicine, as well as for those simply looking for striking images with which to illustrate their research or teaching.

Daniela Bleichmar,
University of Southern California

Robert Richardson, *The story of surgery: an historical commentary*, revised edition, Shrewsbury, Quiller Press, 2004, pp. vii, 304, illus., £25.00 (hardback 1-904057-46-2).

I have fond memories from graduate school of the first edition of this work; it, like this new edition, is an engagingly written story of the innovations which made twentieth-century surgery a safe and widely accepted therapeutic modality; it contains virtually all “the old, old

stories that we love to hear” and was a favourite of one of my teachers, Dr Owen Wangenstein. I have subsequently learned much more about the history of surgery and historiography and could, in good conscience, only give it to my graduate students as a case study in how *not* to do history. However, I still recommend it to medical students and surgical residents as an easy way to learn something about the heritage of their profession. In the same way that Galen, in *Anatomical procedures*, argued that anatomy had different uses for different practical interests, stories of the past have different utilities for different professions.

The original and the second edition of *The story of surgery* begin the story with the advent and impact of anaesthesia. The story of the last third of the nineteenth century continues in both volumes with Lister, early abdominal interventions and asepsis. The classic story of appendicitis and appendectomy is told in both editions. The last decade of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth are considerably extended in the second edition—hernia repair, cancer, and early neurological surgery are all expanded from the original; gynaecological surgery is exceptionally enriched. The story continues through the two world wars and chest surgery, but the second edition contains more on heart surgery, arterial repair and transplantation, stories just begun in 1958. All in all the new text is a very workman like job of updating and expanding the stories told in the earlier book.

In the preface the author tells us, “The two big differences in this new edition are, first, the addition of new material which has increased the length by about a third, and second, the inclusion of the bibliographic sources, missing from its previous manifestations.” My copy of the first edition is the 1964 Collier paperback, published as *The story of modern surgery*, new and revised, a reissue of the 1958 original entitled *The surgeon's tale*; it has no critical apparatus but does contain an appended bibliography; two pages long, listing a collection of secondary sources from which the book was essentially drawn. This bibliography is, I think, fairly named. The bibliography has disappeared from