

Book Reviews

The Culpeper works, published well after his death, were in the vernacular and may well have responded to a market for the more populist or popular editions that from the early seventeenth century had breached the Latinate monopoly of official pharmacopoeias. That this market was buttressed by the lack of fonts in Greek and Latin is well known to students of American printing and explains the persistence of both learned and popular imports until the last decades of the eighteenth century.

One exception to the scarcity of North American imprints was the very mixed corpus of German vernacular medicinals coming from the German presses of Christopher Saur and other German-American printers, which Cowen almost single-handedly snatched from the ethnographers and introduced into the colonial history of medicine. German imprints competed first with John Tenant's *Everyman his own doctor* and later with the more sophisticated domestic manuals by William Buchan and Samuel Auguste Tissot, who found American publishers even before the Revolution. Although later printings brought over old pseudo-Aristotelian tracts, many German imprints were collections of recipes and treatments by German physicians and veterinarians who arrived with various religious groups over the course of the eighteenth century.

That some of the work in this volume and its underlying assumptions have been superseded will be readily acknowledged and certainly by its author, but for the historiography of an often neglected field, the vast and painstaking account of sources that form a major component of this book is invaluable. It permits not only a chronological assessment of how the official materia medica was presented in the English-speaking world over the course of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, but offers the occasion to re-examine the premises and conclusions of Cowen's rich work on the history of pharmaceutical imprints and their translations. What is obvious to this reader is the global market in printing in these centuries, with German printers in particular providing sites for outsourcing and translations from the Latin and into the vernaculars of the various European markets. The interaction between these

markets—not only across Europe but across the Atlantic—is evident from the lists of imprints that are available in this collection. It awaits further and comparative historical study.

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H F J Horstmanshoff, A M Luyendijk-Elshout, F G Schlesinger (eds and trs), *The four seasons of human life: four anonymous engravings from the Trent Collection*, Rotterdam and Durham, Erasmus Publishing and Trent Collection, Duke University, 2002, pp. 109, €85.00 (including CD Rom) (hardback 90-5235-136-8).

This beautiful book presents for the first time a critical edition, transcription, translation, and commentary of a fascinating set of four seventeenth-century medical-astrological prints. Labelled spring, summer, autumn, winter, the prints fit into a medieval genre of the “Schema of the Fours”, but are much more complex. They follow a pattern: in the centre of each are human figures that portray the four seasons of human life—children for spring, a young couple for summer, an adult couple (she, pregnant, and he with a full-on erection) for autumn, and an elderly man and woman stepping into a grave for winter. The sun is on the upper left and the moon is on the right; and each is over-arched by the quarter of the sky (in months and zodiac) that corresponds to the season illustrated.

Unlike the usual schemata, however, each print also displays numerous, mainly medical texts, mostly from the Hippocratic *Aphorisms* but also from the Bible, Pliny, Seneca, Aristotle, and others. Even more unusually, as compared to the medieval schemata, are the paper flaps placed over sun, moon and other figures, which illustrate the anatomy of muscles, ligaments, and vessels. There can be as many as twelve of these flaps over a single figure, each taking the viewer to a different level of anatomical complexity. For instance, underneath the corner maps are diagrams of the anatomies of liver and lung. There are also paper dials built onto the prints, including a pregnancy calculator.

The authors provide not only excellent copies of the prints, but also a Latin transcription of the texts, an English translation and extensive footnotes. There are five chapters of commentary, covering the anatomy shown in the prints; the art history of their numerous hermetic and alchemical images; their astronomical and astrological contexts; a horoscope hidden under one of the flaps; and the botany and horticulture of the plants and trees portrayed. The visual problem of presenting the texts of the flaps was solved by including an animated CD-ROM that gives the reader some sense of how the various flaps open to uncover a new layer or new complexity. For instance, the sun of the print for spring is covered by flaps that progressively detail the anatomy of the eye, including its musculature and its vessels. Of course, the programme was not perfect; it did not allow the reader to zoom in on any random piece of text or flap and it crashed several times, but still.

Even with the CD-ROM, the excellent copies, transcription, translation, and commentary, however, I was still left pleasantly mystified by these prints. For instance, for whom were they composed? They seem to be too medically detailed to have been merely a conversation piece, but the medicine (texts and anatomies) is too disorganized and sketchy to have been used by an actual physician or surgeon. Is there some unifying significance to their extravagant use of alchemical symbols? Can these prints have had an occult meaning? Is that, possibly, why all the hundreds of other copies have disappeared? Is the use of a particular horoscope, 22 May 1605 (originally printed in a medical text by Magini) a hint? In short, is the “text” which ostensibly seems to be a kind of visual Family Medical Digest, a seventeenth-century Da Vinci Code?

The authors do not tell us, but no matter. With this fine production of an important and previously unknown work, we can look forward to further research focused on answering just such questions, and more.

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Florike Egmond and Robert Zwijnenberg (eds), *Bodily extremities: preoccupations with the human body in early modern European culture*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003, pp. ix, 235, illus., £45.00 (hardback 0-7546-0726-7).

This collection explores the “strong preoccupation with the human body” identified as a “characteristic shared by early modern Europeans and their present-day counterparts”: the former apparently evidenced by such themes as monstrous births and body snatching, the latter by cosmetic surgery and genetic manipulation. Whilst wisely avoiding the tendency to make comparisons between those two vantage points, the book is intended as a comprehensive and interdisciplinary historical investigation of the body “*in extremis*, the crossing of physical boundaries, the transition between outside and inside the human body, and bodily orifices”. Acknowledging that many literary studies of the body suffer from “internalism”, and that embodied experience is often overlooked in favour of the textual or metaphorical, it aims to parallel its account of body-knowledge—as acquired through anatomy, torture and techniques of “othering”—with concern for early modern human bodies as “living, acting and feeling subjects”. The inclusion of several interesting yet eclectic essays—varying in chronology, scope and sources—means that these aims are only partly realized.

A strong theme of the book is artistic representation, including Daniela Bohde’s essay on ‘Skin and the search for the interior’ (focusing on the flaying of Marsyas) and Robert Zwijnenberg’s article on Leonardo da Vinci’s *Saint John the Baptist*. In the former, the relationship between skin and self-hood is addressed, whilst Zwijnenberg is one of the few contributors to consider philosophical issues of identity. This he does by recognizing emotional expressions as mediators of mind and body, self and society. Harald Hendrix’s essay on images of torture in seventeenth-century Naples explores the instructive religious potential of images of pain and suffering and their effect upon the viewer. The book shifts gear with Florike Egmond’s “morphological” investigation of the