

of vibrating strings. The next three chapters focus on the ‘elasticity of animals fibers’ (ch. 3), on the ‘continuity and change’ of theories between mechanistic and vitalistic viewpoints (ch. 4), and the nascent field of ‘fiber psychology’ (ch. 5).

In the third and final part about the cultural embedment of fibre-bodies, the first chapter is about ‘The Fiber Body and the Baroque’ (ch. 6). Again, it begins in the second half of the seventeenth century. Drawing on Deleuze’s and Guattari’s analysis of the role of the fold in the Baroque, Ishizuka examines, in a period that stretches from Jan Swammerdam (1637–1680) and Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715) to Georges Cheyne (1641–1743), the preformationist logic of folding and unfolding processes of membranes, themselves composed of interwoven fibres, during the development of organic beings. He concludes that, if ‘a garment with folds is another word for membrane, it is arguably true that the fiber body. . . is a product of the Baroque’ (p. 204). In the last chapter of this part (ch. 7), Ishizuka characterises the Age of Enlightenment as an age of sensibility and of new anthropologies that rely on centres of action and reaction both within living bodies and between these bodies and their environments. He dismisses the ‘hegemonic tone of historiography’ on the Enlightenment as an age of sensibility primarily dependent on models of brain–nerve connections, and convincingly argues that these models only emerged within an already existing debate about fibres and their different kinds of sensibilities and sympathies (p. 228).

With a general focus on the British Enlightenment and on the transition from ‘ancient humoralism’ to ‘modern solidism’, the great strength of Ishizuka’s book lies in his systemic, well-structured and meticulously documented long-term reconstruction of the development and the differentiation of a complex discourse about fibre-bodies, in which plants, animals and humans are just variations of a single model of organic organisation. It would certainly be interesting to explore various alternative perspectives about the cultural embedment of this discourse within the European context, especially the relation between ‘modern solidism’, Lockean empiricism and the materialist anthropologies of the so-called French ideologues, and to have a closer look at the microstructure of certain crucial shifts: for example, of Glisson’s concept of living matter and self-active fibres. But more important is the fact that all these aspects and questions have now to be re-discussed in the light of Ishizuka’s work.

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Sabrina Minuzzi, *Sul filo dei segreti: Farmacopea, libri e pratiche terapeutiche a Venezia in età moderna* (Milan: Unicopli, 2016), pp. 349, €25, paperback, ISBN: 978-88-400-1869-0.

Defying their nomenclature, ‘secrets’ were a familiar part of the early modern medical world. Offering cleansing, curing or cleaning, their significance has already been recognised in two significant historical studies, both with an Italian focus: David Gentilcore revealed the secrets sold by the entertaining and controversial Charlatans of the *piazza* and William Eamon explored the books of secrets collated by, amongst others, the fascinating figure of Leonardo Fioravanti. In Sabrina Minuzzi’s new volume, which includes and enhances the work of her PhD thesis, she situates medical secrets within a distinct spatial and intellectual context, exploring the home as a point of invention,

exchange and sale. Drawing together some familiar material in the early chapters, Minuzzi's analysis becomes increasingly specialised and the final sections bring her considerable expertise in the history of the book to bear on fascinating and revealing case studies of individuals and their remedies. Here, her work does much to extend and to amend our understanding of the meaning and importance of early modern 'domestic medicine', contributing significantly to a vibrant area of research.

Using a rich variety of source material, including inventories, almanacs, printed secrets, books and gazettes, alongside extensive archival research, her analysis provides an impressively full account of secrets during the early modern period, considering continuity and change between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. She adopts as an important theme throughout her work the developing boundaries between pharmacy and chemistry. In this, as in many other aspects of the analysis, the richest comparison is drawn with early modern London. Beyond the intellectual interest of the period, this broad chronological framework allows Minuzzi to use the eighteenth-century archival material of the Venetian Health Office (the *Provveditori alla Sanità*) to great effect – particularly the *filza* (file). Equivalent files do not survive for earlier centuries but this eighteenth-century material allows Minuzzi to expand her case studies with details of individual remedies and their histories.

Throughout the book there are intriguing examples which allow the reader to explore the boundary between public and private – although this is not an overarching theme of the analysis. Such material includes the interesting case of the official *Pharmacopoeia* in the first part of section two. The Venetian example, not published until 1617, had a short-lived and troubled history in comparison with other European examples, reflecting the nature of 'official' pharmaceutical cures within the city. Later in the same section, Minuzzi considers the development of pharmacy within a city which lacked an official botanical garden. She recognises the ambiguity of that situation and discusses the various attempts to establish an official garden and also acknowledges the use of privately owned spaces. These included the garden owned by the quasi ubiquitous seventeenth-century medical figure of Cecilio Fuoli (who was instrumental in the development of the city's anatomical theatre) who bequeathed his garden for the use of the Venetian College of Apothecaries for botanical cultivation and development. Such examples introduce fascinating suggestions about the potential public function of private spaces. Minuzzi also explores the intersection between private and public, between domestic medical activities and those of hospitals, religious institutions and workplaces. She recognises that individuals worked across a number of such institutions and that a variety of printed medical texts was found in each of these locations. What Minuzzi's volume reveals above all is the way in which medical texts, like the individuals who read and wrote them, mediated the boundary between the public and the private. This is shown particularly in connection with the work of Giovanni Beni and Giuseppe Felice Maria Scutellio – with the latter keeping a book of attestations of former patients, in many ways a private record, made available within his home for viewing by prospective clients.

One of the most engaging themes of the work – which could be developed even further – is that texts and spaces were used by the owners of secrets in order to convince others to use their remedies. This was particularly important for those practitioners who did not engage in the entertaining displays of charlatans and the details of whose treatments were generally not divulged. The establishment of the reputation of particular cures, or particular practitioners, some of whom used their medical secrets as a way in which to

establish lives and careers within the Venetian Republic adds further weight to Minuzzi's argument regarding the social value of these treatments.

An enticing contribution to this well-respected series, there is much here to fascinate both general and specialist readers. Minuzzi deepens our understanding of a further subset of medical secrets and convincingly complicates our understanding of the medical and intellectual activities of the home. Her work also points to possible future lines of research, including the economic aspects of the medical secrets, which would provide further fascinating detail on this important element of the early modern medical world.

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