

for whom they were written, and how significant their authors may be said to have been in the process of medically reforming the French public. For example, in presenting Charles-Augustin Vandermonde's essay on the perfection of the human species as a foundational work in the hygienic programme of the Old Regime, he passes over the fact that this book fell far short of the success achieved by comparable works such as Michel Procope's *Art de faire des garçons*, nor does he mention that Vandermonde died aged just thirty-five—six years after publishing his essay—having held no public position whatsoever. The attention to the circumstances of production and consumption of books which characterizes the cultural history of medicine is precisely what would be required here to demonstrate that works like this actually affected the public practice of medicine. This weakness pervades the book, which at no point shows degenerationist concerns implemented in actual programmes for the medical governance of the public.

One linking strand throughout the period is the notion of degeneration, for which various physiological models were advanced. Throughout, Quinlan uses the term “degeneracy” as the translation for the French *dégénération*. For the later nineteenth century, the term is perhaps apt, evoking as it does a systematic interest in forms of deviance and decadence and in hereditary social “vices”, such as alcoholism. However, in his eagerness to represent degeneration as a concern which began within medicine, Quinlan fails to do justice to other forms of use, such as animal breeding and horticulture, a central resource for natural historical models of degeneration. Other elements of the hygienic programme were also older than Quinlan imagines: critiques of the adverse effects of civilization may be found in Jansenist medical writings and even in medieval works.

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Rüdiger Schultka and **Josef N Neumann** (eds) in collaboration with **Susanne Weidemann**, *Anatomie und Anatomische Sammlungen im 18. Jahrhundert. Anlässlich der 250. Wiederkehr des Geburtstages von Philipp Friedrich Theodor Meckel (1755–1803)*, Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Band 1, Berlin, Lit Verlag, 2007, pp. 516, illus., €49.90 (hardback 978-3-8258-9755-9).

On the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Philipp Friedrich Theodor Meckel, the eminent professor of anatomy and surgical obstetrics at the University of Halle, an International Symposium on Anatomy and Anatomic Collections in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was organized at the same university in 2005 and this book presents the contributions to this symposium.

Philipp Friedrich Theodor (1755–1803), member of the prominent medical Meckel family, contributed not only to the science of anatomy and the theory and practice of surgery and obstetrics, but also to the holdings of the unique private collection, initiated by his father Johann Friedrich Meckel the Elder, which is now known as the Meckelsche Sammlungen or Meckel Collection. It comprises tens of thousands of anatomical specimens often illustrating congenital abnormalities for the purpose of teaching anatomy.

The twenty-six essays in this book are divided into four sections. In an introductory part we learn about Philipp Friedrich Theodor Meckel, and his involvement in the development of the teaching of anatomy in Germany. The editor Josef Neumann then offers his view on the changing development of anatomical science and practice in relation to contemporary ideas about the body. A second part gathers contributions dealing with anatomy and anatomists in the broader context of eighteenth-century German history of medicine. Hubert Steinke, for example, analyses the importance of Albrecht von Haller's famous *Bibliotheca anatomica* from 1774–77 and dwells on the relationship

between word and image and the theory and practice of anatomy and physiology in Haller's work.

The major part of the volume is taken up by articles within a third section, relating to various eighteenth-century anatomical collections, the techniques that were used for their preparation, and the way they were presented in different German educational institutions. Most of these contributions present new research and therefore often remain mainly descriptive and invite further historical analysis.

Reinhard Hildebrand's article offers a well argued assessment, within a comparative framework, of various ways the human body was represented by different anatomists as a stylized object. He concentrates on William Hunter's *Anatomy of the human gravid uterus* and its focus on the "realistic" representation of the human body and naturalistic style in anatomy that Hunter favoured, compared with the so-called "homo-perfectus"—championed by earlier anatomists such as Albinus, which intended to show an ideal and invariable norm in anatomy, depicting parts of the body as if alive.

In another noteworthy contribution, Christine Loytved is interested in a collection at the university of Göttingen related to the history of birth and midwifery. This collection holds preparations and specimens used as part of the theoretical training championed in the late eighteenth century in addition to the traditional apprenticeship by male obstetrics teachers. There are also instruments and tools used for the teaching of practical obstetrics in a delivery ward to student midwives. Loytved thus tells us the story of the making of midwifery as an *Entbindungswissenschaft* or science of childbirth: the development of midwifery education in northern Germany and the changes male surgeons and doctors

brought to its practice through their teaching of female midwives.

The last section brings together articles addressing the broader social history of anatomy in the eighteenth century. In an excellent contribution on the corpse as anatomical object, Karin Stukenbrock looks at how different encounters with the anatomical object were experienced: in the theatre, by the audience of medical students and by the anatomists themselves, but also by governments and by the broader population. She uses a wide variety of intriguing German examples to illustrate her thesis that there was a big gap between the experience and interpretations of the people on one side and the arguments of anatomists and governments on the other.

The diversity of the contributions in this volume illustrates a wide variety of interests and interpretations of the theory and practice of eighteenth-century anatomy and offers a taste of the different types of research being undertaken by German historians in this field. It would certainly be stimulating to place this work within a broader, comparative European framework. The Meckel family maintained many European connections in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, travelling and meeting French and British colleagues for example, thereby contributing to the broadening and sharing of knowledge and interests. It is doubtful whether this can also be said of twenty-first-century historians of science and medicine. Although the symposium in Halle was organized with an international outlook in mind, the contributions to it remained limited to the German speaking world, and this is without question a missed opportunity.

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