

Book Reviews

interesting comments by earlier owners and readers. There are two appendices, one of documents, the other an up-to-date catalogue of Giovanni's manuscripts that supersedes those by Zazzeri and by Baader. Detailed attention is given to matters codicological, although information on Giovanni's scribes is not always easy to locate in the dense entries. Splendid photographs, of the library, of Giovanni's house, and of the manuscripts, make this a beautiful as well as informative catalogue of a striking exhibition.

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Peter Murray Jones, *Medieval medicine in illuminated manuscripts*, London, The British Library by arrangement with the Centro Tibaldi, Milan, 1998 (original edition first published in 1984 under the title *Medieval medical manuscripts*), pp. 111, illus., £20.00 (0-7123-0657-9).

Although published under a different title, the text of Peter Jones's *Medieval medicine in illuminated manuscripts* differs only slightly from his earlier *Medieval medical manuscripts*. The only noteworthy change concerns the provision of medical education in England's medieval universities: whereas we were told that medicine had not become established as an academic discipline in Oxford or Cambridge, now we understand that while it was so established, few physicians were trained at either. The select bibliography is brought up-to-date, and, regrettably, the general index of the first book has been abandoned.

However, this is a book for the general reader and as such it fulfils its purpose admirably. More profusely illustrated than its predecessor, the present volume has many more plates in colour. They range in date from the earliest extant illustrated herbal in the West of c. AD 400 to a depiction of an operation for scrotal hernia of about 1550. Most come from medical books, where the need for pictures seems self-evident today, yet in the Middle Ages there were no

professional medical illustrators and manuscripts of the *artocella* were frequently not illustrated at all. Thus the author has sought medical pictures in other kinds of books as well, including one of a tooth extraction from an encyclopaedia said to have been compiled by a certain Jacobus, recently shown to have been James le Palmer, Treasurer's scribe in the Exchequer of Edward III. While some of the pictures, such as the historiated initials provided by James or the miniature of battlefield surgery from an illustrated chronicle belonging to Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy, are works of art, others are simple outline drawings or diagrams made by a scribe responding to a passage in a text he was copying.

The attractive selection of plates is combined with a readable account which places these illustrations both in their material and historical contexts. An introductory chapter discusses the tradition of medical miniatures, the relationship of text and image in medical manuscripts, the scribes and artists of such books, and the state of medical knowledge in the Middle Ages. The following chapters and accompanying illustrations are organized around the subjects of anatomy, diagnosis and prognosis, materia medica, cautery and surgery, and diet, regimen and medication. The material will be familiar to the medical historian but both the interested layperson and the doctor for whom it would make an acceptable gift from "a grateful patient" will find in it much to enjoy.

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Dominic Montserrat (ed.), *Changing bodies, changing meanings: studies on the human body in antiquity*, London and New York, Routledge, 1997, pp. xvi, 234, illus., £45.00 (0-415-13584-2).

This book derives from a conference held in the Classics Department at Warwick University in 1994, taking its inspiration from a 1654 work by the physician John Bulwer entitled,

Anthropometamorphosis, whose subject is what we would recognize as cultural anthropology. This collection—dealing with the modification of the human body in antiquity and its subsequent interpretation—could be said to have fulfilled its inspirational source. There are nine essays, a comprehensive though selective bibliography, general index and index locorum. The illustrations are well reproduced (except on pp. 188–9). There are a few errors; for example, W C rather than C W Ceram as cited in the bibliography (p. 9); journal articles listed in the Notes to the Introduction are not in the bibliography (p. 215); Staden rather than Von Staden is given in chapter 1 (n. 42 on p. 35); Michel de Certeau, whose “zones of silence” is mentioned in the essay by Nicholas Vlahogiannis, is not cited in the bibliography (p. 14). I also dislike transliterated Greek, as is done in this book. It does not make the Greek easier for the Greekless. The range and scope of these essays is varied, reflecting an interdisciplinary approach that, in theory at least, is commendable. Vlahogiannis discusses the notion of disability and deformity in the ancient world. Missing is a discussion of castration, an important body modification in antiquity (see the analysis in W Burkert’s *Creation of the sacred*). And it is not entirely accurate to assert the Hippocratic Corpus “attributed sickness to natural causes and not superstitiously to divine intervention” (p. 25).

The functions of the beautiful or ideal body in Classical Greece are well discussed by Richard Hawley, a theme taken up by Angus Bowie’s examination of Dido and Aeneas, although what Lacan’s *Imaginary* has to offer us here is not spelt out, for Bowie does not quote from Lacan. We are perhaps meant to equate the Lacanian *Imaginary* with Virgil’s *Imago* (pp. 61–2), but why do we need to? Bowie’s otherwise fine essay does not need a Lacanian cachet. A classical account of a modified body is given by Ovid, and Penelope Murray gives a good account of the *Metamorphoses*, rightly concluding that “The cumulative effect of all these bizarre, sometimes terrifying, sometimes amusing transformations is to remind us of what it is to

be human” (p. 94). Further modifications of the body are well examined by Gillian Clark in her study of the codification of martyrdom by the early Church. Terry Wilfong’s preliminary study, ‘Reading the disjointed body in Coptic’ utilizes little-studied Coptic sources to show how, “In general, Coptic texts treat women’s bodies in terms of their parts, rather than as a cohesive whole” (p. 116). If here we see the misogyny which formed part of the development of the Christian Church, some of the Coptic documents also show how women “occupied an active and highly visible place in the society” (p. 124).

The last three essays describe “The ancient body’s trajectory through time”. Lynn Meskell’s essay on the body and archaeology disappoints. It is problematic to seek to collapse the distinction between sex and gender. Citing Laqueur and Butler, the latter “a practitioner of queer theory” (p. 143), Meskell wonders if the difference between sex and gender is more apparent than real. This is a complex subject, and one must examine the work of, for example, John Archer and Barbara Lloyd, and Marilyn Strathern, none of whom are mentioned. This essay is extremely difficult to read, and incomprehensible in places. So, “Basically a referent is a necessary prerequisite which serves as Other, and thus a situating device” (p. 154); “Thus, subjective bodily experience is mitigated by factors such as social constraints, practicality, contingency and free will: this dialectical position potentially circumvents the determinism associated with extreme social constructionism, Cartesianism and essentialism” (p. 159). Meskell states that “a more positive conclusion is that as a result of archaeology’s increasing willingness to incorporate ideas from other social sciences we might benefit from their insights as to our western intellectual inheritance” (p. 160). It is to be hoped that this is so; but although her form of writing has its adherents, its informative value and relevance is highly dubious, and is another example of what Sokal and Bricmont have conclusively demonstrated elsewhere.

Dominic Montserrat discusses the nineteenth-century interpretation of the

Egyptian mummy as a sexual fetish. The “erotics of the unwrapped mummy” (p. 180) is an intriguing subject, and the mummy as inspiration for Wilde’s *Picture of Dorian Gray* is an interesting one. In the final essay, Jane Stevenson lucidly discusses the reception or “encoding” of the Greek male figure in late Victorian and Edwardian England.

In assembling this collection, Montserrat states that “the source material was analysed using very different theoretical perspectives, ranging from Lacanian psychoanalysis to post-processual archaeology” (p. 6). It shows in places. The scholarship that animates this book cannot be denied, and several of the essays I have outlined are very good indeed; but the postmodern position of some others plays an exasperating threnody. Montserrat also states that “Modern discourse on the ancient body should be serious, but it need not always be solemn” (p. 8). Indeed. But it should always seek to inform, not obfuscate, to speak clearly, not hide behind fashionable clichés posited by some analytical schools. Less of “The Other”, please.

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Troels Kardel, *Steno: life, science, philosophy, with Niels Stensen’s Prooemium or Preface to a demonstration in the Copenhagen anatomic theater in the year 1673 and Holger Jacobaeus, Niels Stensen’s Anatomical demonstration no. XVI and other texts translated from the Latin, Acta Historica Scientiarum Naturalium et Medicinalium, vol. 42, Copenhagen, The Danish National Library of Science and Medicine, 1994, pp. 147, DKK 200.00 (87-16-15100-3). Distributed by Munksgaard, 35 Nørre Søgade, DK-1016 Copenhagen K, Denmark (Fax: +45 3312 9387).*

Niels Stensen’s reputation continues to be well served by his present-day Danish compatriots. This volume’s first component is a major and thorough essay describing his life and scientific achievements, and what later

generations made of him (never enough, Kardel contends). It depicts him too as a philosopher of science, who pondered the principles underlying his work, and generated doubts which he could then seek to resolve, instead of the previously time-honoured practice of retailing lists of past authorities. Kardel regards Stensen as even now inadequately recognized by the English-speaking world. It was not always so. Michael Foster, who probably could read Stensen’s Latin, in his *Lectures on the history of physiology during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries* (1901), wrote of Stensen’s physiological achievements repeatedly in terms of detailed deep respect, and Foster’s judgement was as acute as his lack of any references is frustrating. Incidentally, he evidently regarded Stensen’s geometrical conception of the shape of muscle fibres as of little moment, and I think he is still right, although Kardel argues otherwise here.

The next component is Stensen’s prelude to a dissection he conducted in 1673. His Latin is provided in facsimile, with an English translation. He argues that within the repulsive corpse lie treasures of great appeal to our sense of beauty; the anatomist can reveal them, but any credit must go to the Creator. Anatomy’s prime function is therefore to lead us towards a knowledge of God Himself.

Stensen’s earnestness on this topic makes his Latin here tortuous, much more so than when his subject is anatomy itself. Hence here and there the translation goes awry: twice, surprisingly, theologically awry. “The clumsiness of his [the anatomist’s] hands . . . would rather offend . . . if skillful craft did not rivet all the attention of the spectators” inevitably and confusingly implies that the “craft” is the anatomist’s (p. 115). But surely “rerum artificium” means the product of the Divine hand, and then the passage becomes sense. Similarly, “a knowledge of things appropriate to man’s purpose” (p. 121) suggests a *human* intention. But “fini hominis” is surely the Divine intention for man, “man’s chief end”; a mere human intention might in Latin be “consilio hominis”. And the translator’s “The