

Book Reviews

William Croone, *On the reason of the movement of the muscles*, translation by Paul Maquet, Introduction by Margaret Naylor, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 90, Pt 1, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 2000, pp. 130, \$20.00 (0-87169-901-X).

This is the product of a well-matched alliance: a translator (with his reviser), and an editor who has set the work in context. Croone wrote in sensible workaday Latin of his time, the long shadow of Cicero's long periodic sentences being by then much dimmed. The excellent translation is in careful workaday English of today. A single cavil: I do not think that Croone's word "autopsy" (in Greek) can be rendered nowadays by the word "autopsy", as the translator has done. As Castelli's dictionary confirms, it meant for Croone (and long before and afterwards too) "actual visual inspection". But now in Britain, according to Chambers' dictionary, the meaning is restricted to the examination of a corpse by a pathologist, the wider meaning having become obsolete. In the United States, Merriam-Webster does not mention that restriction, but no longer includes the "visual" element as necessary in the meaning.

The editor has undertaken her task with care and scholarship, teasing out Croone's inheritance and his legacy. Croone could discern with remarkable penetration some aspects of how muscles work and are controlled. The belief of his time that muscle volume increased (even if only minimally) when the muscle contracted led him to create an impressive geometric model, and to take part in experiments to show that inflation of a bladder could create substantial lifting forces. His concise reasoning carries respect whether it turned out well-founded later or not. And he must have been physically fit too: "I have easily maintained, lifted up from the ground, a weight of eighty pounds attached to the tendon of the muscle . . . the other extremity of the muscle being held in my hand. I have no doubt that I should have

supported a much heavier weight, if one had been at hand" (p. 81).

The reproduction of the Latin text is regrettable. It relapses repeatedly into illegibility. The representation of the title page of Croone's work here, with large inexplicable blots and barely legible characters, can be compared with the model clarity of that in *Selected readings in the history of physiology* (John F Fulton, completed by Leonard G Wilson, 2nd ed., Springfield, Illinois, 1966, plate 42; plate 41 is a nice portrait of Croone). If adequate photocopying cannot be provided for some reason, there is another option: a faithful transcript of the original, the time-honoured procedure of Loeb editions of the classics, which do not of course start from a printed original. Such a transcript, once prepared, has the added advantage of being easily searched and styled.

Croone refers (p. 119) to the phenomenon of sneezing in response to sunlight (or indeed other bright lights). It is inherited, and found in about one in four of the population (J M Forrester, 'Sneezing on exposure to bright light as an inherited response', *Hum. Hered.* 1985, **35**: 113–14). Croone's reference is evidently the earliest yet noted; none before last century is mentioned in a recent review (Bradley W Whitman and Roger J Packer, 'The photic sneeze reflex: literature review and discussion', *Neurology* 1993, **43**: 868–71), although it would hardly be surprising if someone were to unearth an account in, say, Pliny.

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Massimo Galuzzi, Gianni Micheli and Maria-Teresa Monti (eds), *Le forme della comunicazione scientifica*, Milan, Francoangeli, 1998, pp. 438, L. 57,000 (88-464-0924-8).

This book on the forms of scientific communication demonstrates that certain