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compares the journals of experiments of Spallanzani and Haller to published results. I will not expand on Buscaglia's essay, in which the now familiar path of investigation on the rhetoric of experiment is pursued. How iconography complements a text, how publishing can influence one's understanding of previous laboratory research, are issues tackled there and investigated through Trembley's astonishing 1744 *Mémoires* on fresh-water polyps.

Maria-Teresa Monti's is, in my view, the most impressive paper. Indeed, no one before, to my knowledge, has used the methodology of comparing a laboratory journal to published work for a stylistic comparison of two authors. Monti's analysis of Haller's embryological works and Spallanzani's essay on regeneration reveals the ways in which various forms of writing shape the forms of communication, as well as the changes in scientific opinions of the scholars. Interaction between many levels of the agonistic field, and particularly between forms and contents, shows that the way of writing can influence the way of thinking. In such a study, laboratory journals are concerned with both experiments on animals and experiments with communication. I would especially draw attention to Monti's acknowledgment of self-conviction, in Spallanzani, as a process close to communication. An illuminating outcome of Monti's—and other papers—is that if the comparison of two journals shows so many differences in style, communication, self-conviction, forms of writing, types of influence, how can broad generalizations such as Woolgar and Latour's stochastic model of construction of experimental protocols be maintained?

This collection shows a combination of two concepts—at least—of the form of communication. The first relates to a classic methodology, looking for the public to whom a work is addressed, and

reconstructing, through analysis of certain texts and their reception, the strategies used to reach such a goal. A second emerges in certain studies, particularly in Monti's. In addition, she aims at understanding how strategies are elaborated during the writing process, in the course of practice, during reading, re-reading and re-writing. As a consequence, the question is not what is the strategy, but how could this strategy be elaborated, and according to what factors. While in the former, the forms of communication are treated as if discovered, or revealed, in the latter, they are definitely constructed.

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Stephen Porter, *The great plague*, Thrupp, Sutton Publishing, 1999, pp. ix, 213, illus., £20.00, \$34.95 (hardback 0-7509-1615-X).

From the sixth and seventh centuries CE until the fourteenth, plague epidemics did not occur in Europe, but from the Black Death of the 1340s until the early eighteenth century, Europe seldom experienced thirty years without an outbreak of a plague epidemic somewhere. Then plague, in its meaning of human infection with the bacillus *Yersinia pestis*, disappeared in Europe. No one knows why; nor does anyone know why the bubonic form of plague, with perhaps a 60 per cent case fatality rate in the seventeenth century, was much more common in the early modern period than pneumonic plague, which is more lethal, though both are caused by the same microorganism. While reliable knowledge of the vagaries of plague epidemiology in Europe continues to elude investigators, the wealth of extant primary sources from the Black Death onward provides historians, among others, with sufficient evidence to assess the impact of

specific plague epidemics on individuals, cultural norms, and social arrangements. Stephen Porter's *The great plague* provides the most comprehensive historical account to date of a spectacular example, the English Plague of 1665–6 that decimated the cities of London, Colchester, Norwich and Cambridge, as well as country villages such as Eyam in Derbyshire.

Like most plague epidemics, England's great one came without warning. Indeed, at the end of 1664, English authorities were optimistic that plague would not visit their island. Amsterdam had been devastated in 1663–4, to be sure, but controls imposed by the Privy Council on shipping, with quarantine of vessels coming from continental ports that had experienced plague, seemed to be successful, for London recorded but five deaths from plague in 1664. By the middle of June 1665, however, more than 100 Londoners per week were dying of plague, the number that polymath William Petty speculated as the critical marker indicating, in his words, "the Plague is begun" (p. 36). By the end of 1665, London's Bills of Mortality attributed 68,596 deaths to plague, which knowledgeable contemporaries thought was a low estimate. As with most lethal epidemics before and since, greatest mortality rates occurred among the poor, especially women and children. When the king returned to Whitehall on 1 February 1666, it was almost over. In the meantime, however, 100,000 Londoners had died of the disease, 30,000 more in the provinces, and most English institutions had been severely tested.

Stephen Porter's account makes rich use of contemporary texts and images. He writes clearly and carefully, using an economical prose style to guide the reader through the epidemic in London and heavily affected provinces. Separate chapters are devoted to the epidemic's impact on policy and to its interpretation by notable contemporaries, such as Isaac Newton, and subsequent generations of the English. The

publisher, Sutton, has produced a handsome and well-edited volume.

As with most disaster accounts, Porter lets the woeful unfolding of the plague hold centre stage. Unlike most chroniclers, however, he takes pains to document the ambivalence with which contemporaries regarded the epidemic. Also, he avoids making the kind of historiographic claims that academic practitioners of "Disaster Studies" self-consciously advanced during the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the multi-disciplinary genre emerged as a discrete sub-field. That is, he does not claim that disasters are worthy objects of scholarly attention primarily because their proclivity to provoke extreme reactions among individuals and populations reveals crucial dimensions of the quotidian. Instead, Porter seems to prefer a straightforward and balanced chronicle of the disaster at hand, whether the great plague, as in this narrative, or in his other books, which tell of destruction during the English Civil Wars and the great fire that occurred in London during September 1666. Porter's historiographic reticence accords well with perspectives on the 1665–6 epidemic that contemporaries recorded. When he opened his diary on 31 December 1665, Samuel Pepys, for example, noted "great joy" that he had more than tripled his wealth during the year even though he had been put to "great charges" by keeping his family and employees away from plague-ridden London. Writing a few lines later that a number of his young cousins had died recently of the plague, he considered the year's "great evil, the only one indeed" not their early demise (or that of thousands of his fellow Londoners), but rather his friend Lord Sandwich's fall from political favour for mishandling some proceeds of piracy (Samuel Pepys, *Diary and correspondence*, London, Henry Colburn, 1848, vol. 3, pp. 139–40). Awful things happen, individuals and groups respond effectively or not, systems work

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or fail or partly work, and the disaster may or may not retain a large place in individual or community memory or their on-going life.

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Andrea Carlino, *Paper Bodies: a catalogue of anatomical fugitive sheets 1538–1687*, trans. Noga Arikha, *Medical History*, Supplement No. 19, London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1999, pp. xvi, 352, illus., £32.00, \$50.00 (hardback 0-83484-069-9). Orders to: Tracy Tillotson, Wellcome Library, The Wellcome Trust, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE, UK.

Andrea Carlino's new book addresses those elusive anatomical illustrations, the compound situs or flap anatomy prints and not, as the title implies, all anatomical fugitive sheets from 1538 to 1687. The flap anatomy was essentially a representational convention confined to the earlier sixteenth century, though debased copies and strange hybrids of alchemical-astrological-anatomical content were published well into the eighteenth. His catalogue section includes sixty-two entries with reproductions, often with their flaps raised in cases where he was able to locate an impression. He gives their current locations, most valuable for scholars in the field.

He begins with a history of Renaissance anatomical illustration and is curiously dismissive of previous authors, saying "The existing literature on the subject . . . belongs to a school of history that is rooted in the tradition of philology and erudition which . . . fails to address the questions that today can be asked". A major concern of his book, the purpose for which the flap anatomies were done, has in fact been addressed: in Ludwig Choulant's summary account of 1852, Fritz Weindler's work on

the gynaecological figures in 1906, Le Roy Crummer's cataloguing and his establishment of an iconological classification system in the 1920s which was later refined by L H Wells in the 1960s. Some of these writers favoured a popular orientation, suggesting that the prints might have been done for barber-surgeons, treatment guides for phlebotomies, their deterioration due to having been stuck up on anteroom walls of bathhouses and apothecary shops. Others hypothesized a professional audience such as medical students, the prints a cheap substitute for books similar to "the quiz compends of today", phasing out as books became cheaper. Confounded by the total lack of contemporary documentation on the edition-size, modes of distribution, costs of production, prices of prints and characteristics of the buying public, their explanations remained tentative.

Carlino also promises "an account of the commercial success and diffusion throughout Europe of the fugitive sheets", stating that "between 1538 and 1545 some twenty editions were published in Europe". The magnitude of this production, an essential basis for many of his arguments, strikes one as astonishing until one realizes that he has enumerated as separate editions impressions taken from the same block and often by the same printer, the sometimes minute changes in the brief text, the formatting of the letterpress, or the colour enhancements which were ordinarily added later.

One of Carlino's most intriguing claims is that "An analysis of the intellectual, religious and professional context in which [the type of image] was produced led me to identify a network of connections, spread all over Europe". Collaboration between printing workshops would be more effectively deduced by tracing the journeys of the blocks themselves from one centre to another. The mere diffusion of a printed image does not constitute a network.

Carlino is the first to consider the texts in