

also how the teachers were far from being mere theorists but were concerned also with the consequences of their interpretations for medical practice. When these lectures were delivered is difficult to decide, for there are hints both for and against a date around 550. While the commentary on *On the nature of the child* is edited from the single surviving manuscript, the other two have a much more complicated textual history. All derive from fragments preserved in manuscripts of a Greek translation of an Arabic book, the *Zad al-Musāfir* of Ibn al-Jazzār. Eighty years ago, Mercati argued that Vatican gr. 300 was the single source of all other manuscripts. It was the property of a medieval Italian Greek doctor from Reggio, who copied into its margins the opinions of much earlier Alexandrian lecturers. But while Dr Xeros certainly had some involvement with the *Zad al-Musāfir* in Greek, Vatican gr. 300 cannot be his personal copy or the source of all the other manuscripts, for they preserve good readings that it has lost. Hence the need to collate a further twenty-three manuscripts scattered across Europe, of which eight have been selected as adequate witnesses. The result is a complex textual history that allows the editors to produce a much more accurate text than that presupposed by Mercati. Like De Lacy's edition of Galen, this volume shows the remarkable resurgence of studies of ancient medicine over the last few years, and, not least, the important role in this played by the Corpus Medicorum series.

Vivian Nutton,

Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine

Gilbert Geis and Ivan Bunn, *A trial of witches: a seventeenth-century witchcraft prosecution*, London and New York, Routledge, 1997, pp. xix, 284, illus., £45.00 (hardback 0-415-17108-3), £14.99 (paperback 0-415-17109-1).

An unexceptional court case at the Suffolk assizes in March 1662 has permanently tarnished the reputations of two exceptional

participants. Both the judge, Matthew Hale, and a medical witness, Thomas Browne, were highly regarded in their own day and have been venerated by their respective professions ever since. The execution of two Lowestoft witches has been the only stumbling block for their many admirers.

Geis and Bunn have studied this notorious case for many years. The former is a criminologist, now retired, and the latter a local historian. As might be expected, legal procedure and local detail are their strongest suits. It was they who finally determined the correct date of the case, often mistaken, and they have uncovered a great deal of information about the local politics and religious affiliations of the people involved. Unfortunately, important findings, such as the connection of this case with the bewitchment of two nonconformist clergymen, tend to disappear under the welter of biographical and topographical data.

Their view of Hale is fairly harsh, echoing his Tory critics rather than his Whig admirers. Regarding his "religiosity" as the source of credulity, they perhaps do not give sufficiently sympathetic attention to Hale's Calvinist beliefs or his natural philosophy, which they dismiss as "fearsome theological inflexibility" and "puerile scientific writing". More might have been made of his opposition to Thomas Hobbes and the perils of atheism, even though the connection with this case can only be inferred. Such concerns were voiced by many of his contemporaries, who denounced the fashionable disbelief in witchcraft, represented in this case by Hale's rival, Serjeant Keeling. Reading Ian Bostridge's 1991 thesis, now published as *Witchcraft and its transformations*, would have strengthened their comments about the relevance of Restoration religious politics.

Historians of medicine will wish to know how Thomas Browne fares in this account. According to the trial report, Browne testified that the afflicted girls were suffering from fits of the mother, but that this natural disease was exacerbated by the involvement of the Devil, at the instigation of witches. Geis and Bunn

provide a context for this diagnosis by reference to Michael MacDonald's study of the Mary Glover case, and by a brisk tour through recent work on modern hysteria. In view of the intensely culture-bound nature of such phenomena, it is not clear that most of this is directly relevant, although it is suggestive. Further discussion of the flexible boundary between natural illness and demonic phenomena would have been more helpful. The authors quote in full Browne's later suggestion that many possession cases were misdiagnosed as bewitchment, without apparently understanding its significance. As with Hale, comments on Browne's personality are provided instead of close examination of his opinions. Andrew Cunningham's recent essay on Thomas Browne should be consulted for a clearer view of his religious and philosophical beliefs, which were markedly different from those of Hale.

Geis and Bunn have read widely but not well in the secondary literature, which they quote at excessive length. Hoary antiquarian studies are cited as if they were of equal weight with more recent scholarly work. In the discussions of medicine, this leads to curious value judgements about the ignorance and incompetence of early modern physicians, whom the authors believe to have been consulted only by the rich and only in grave cases. They also believe it was necessary to incorporate foreign degrees, which was only technically the case. Moreover, since they cannot identify even famous graduate practitioners such as William Petty and John Pordage, it is difficult to know what to make of their failure to locate the Dr Feavour mentioned in the trial, whom they suggest might actually be Browne. He was perhaps a licensed physician in a neighbouring town or village, but they show no sign of having investigated episcopal licensing and visitation records in search of him.

By comparison with European cases, it is unusual for an individual English witchcraft case to offer scope for detailed analysis. This study is the fullest of its kind. It is therefore unfortunate that it is characterized by antiquarian digressions rather than analytical

direction. Nevertheless, the authors have discovered a great deal that would have escaped other historians. This is a useful book that will long be necessary reading for historians of witchcraft.

David Harley, Oxford

Robert A Erickson, *The language of the heart, 1600–1750*, New Cultural Studies, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, pp. xxi, 273, £34.95 (0-8122-3394-8).

We live in an age so culturally preoccupied with incorporations of the human body into cognitive structures that even the parts of the anatomical body have been turned into developed empires of meaning: tongue, belly, foot, sex organs. Such close scrutiny and analysis are not new: think no further than the foot for Freud and the fetishists, or the Jewish hook nose in the cultural history of semitism. The new dimension entails the temples of historical learning our generation erects: whole edifices of thought dedicated to the organs of gross anatomy. Freud knew that the foot was more significant than (say) the arm or the knee, but he could not have compiled the kind of metaphoric history of the foot that Erickson provides here for the heart.

It is not merely the *anatomical* heart that engages Erickson but its symbolisms and vocabularies as the seat of love. How did history configure this development? Why not the lungs or bowels or rectum or even Freud's famously erotic feet? And why not the uterus or penis? What is it about the *heart* that configured it as the superlative source of love's devotees: Cupid and Eros, reproduction, passion, tenderness? Erickson's conclusion is that the early modern history of the heart is fundamentally a linguistic heritage associating it with writing and thought: cognitive accretions and transformations grounded in desire. This constellation (language, writing, thought) forms the most interesting part of this book.

The "language of the heart" denoting the realms of emotion and sincerity had been a