The Courtiers' Anatomists: Animals and Humans in Louis XIV's Paris.
Anita Guerrini.
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Anita Guerrini's fascinating and informative study sheds light on ideas, events, patronage, and practices concerning dissection on live and dead animals during the reign of Louis XIV. What were the contributions in anatomical knowledge and medical dissections at this time? Who were the sponsors of such endeavors and how did the art of illustration, printing, and other aesthetic disciplines play a part in the acquisition and dissemination of this knowledge? How did some courtiers during Louis's reign, such as Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Nicolas Fouquet, Pierre Séguier, Charles Perrault, and Henri-Louis de Montmor, support these projects? Who were the chief contributors of our knowledge of medical processes in France? This book examines these questions and more in what is an engaging yet scholarly work on a challenging and extremely important aspect of scientific knowledge at this time.

Paris became a principal focus of activities in dissection during the seventeenth century. In addition, Claude and Charles Perrault, Marin de Cureau de la Chambre, Louis Gayant, Jean Pecquet, and Joseph-Guichard Duverney all contributed to our understanding of human and animal bodies. Animals both living and dead played a significant role in the development of the experimental method in science and fueled the debates about the structure and function of nature.

This book is organized into six chapters, a conclusion, and an epilogue. The first chapter introduces the origins and journeys of dead bodies (animal and human) that were acquired for dissection. Chapter 2 adds descriptions of the major anatomists who were charter members of the Paris Academy of Sciences, augmenting our knowledge of their backgrounds, talents, and contributions. Following this chapter are clear descriptions of the impact of three major scientists of the time: William Harvey, Gaspare Aselli, and Jean Pecquet. Their discoveries of the circulation of blood, lacteal vessels, and the thoracic duct, respectively, helped set the agenda for the kinds of anatomical projects of the Paris Academy of Sciences, which forms the subject of chapter 3. Since the royal printing house was next to the academy's rooms, publications that promoted the king's *gloire* followed. The mammoth work, *Histoire des animaux*, edited and largely written by Claude Perrault, was published in 1671 with the augmented edition in 1676. It is the subject of chapter 4.

The next two chapters examine the courtiers' anatomists in detail and their theories of animal mechanism. When the distinguished and immensely gifted Joseph-Guichard Duverney was appointed professor of anatomy at the King's Garden (the actual title of professor was not used until later), dissections and the knowledge disseminated from them for nearly forty years captivated the public. After his departure from the academy in 1706, "comparative anatomy did not enjoy a revival in Paris for many years" (14). Chapter 6 highlights the work of Duverney

further with the dissections made on such exotic animals as lions and big cats. Also, with the appointment of surgeon Jean Méry as another anatomist to the Garden, disputes ensued that weakened the course of anatomical pursuits there.

The conclusion and epilogue cap this work and provide an explanation as to why the conflicting theories of the time eventually set the royal anatomists on a course toward experimentation and observation. The epilogue explains clearly that eventually Bernard le Bouvier de Fontenelle did a complete revised edition of the *Historie des animaux* in 1733–34 and Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon's appointment as intendant of the Garden in 1739 ushered in a renaissance of comparative anatomical studies "emphasizing observation and description" (251).

Careful and copious scholarship, which involved exhaustive and extensive use of Continental and British archives as well as an exhaustive range of published primary sources, make this work accessible to both general reader and scholar alike. In addition, thirty-five illustrations, which include animal dissections, anatomical drawings, and maps, make this work an outstanding and excellent endeavor that adds to the body of knowledge concerning scientific and anatomical inquiry at the time.

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