

Yet Jackson's collection, in which the objects are inserted into a system whereby they figure as 'evidence of mastery and control' (p. 106), highlights yet another issue, bringing us into the realm of psychobiography. What did these repeated efforts to tame the body mean for Chevalier Jackson himself? Cappello sees a puzzling contradiction between Jackson's account of his life in his autobiography and his collection. The surgeon had a troubled childhood as a victim of severe bullying, making his later insistence that the presence of a foreign body was invariably the result of 'carelessness' surprising. Thus, Cappello suggests that a focus on the surgeon himself can mask other important issues raised by the collection: the acts of violence glimpsed in cases such as the nine-month-old baby whose sister fed him four open safety pins, or Joseph B., force-fed over thirty objects by his babysitter.

Thus, in addition to relating the life of an innovative surgeon, Cappello also uses the Chevalier Jackson collection to explore the human dramas within the cabinet. What does it mean, she asks, to swallow something that is not food? What does the foreign body become, once it has been swallowed? And what significance does it hold for the individual after its removal? In her analysis, Cappello deftly weaves anecdotal accounts – her own and those of others – into historical research. Correspondence from Margaret Derryberry, searching for a hatpin aspirated nearly eighty years before, provokes reflection on the way a foreign body might be absorbed into the individual, for Margaret still speaks of the pin as a part of her, telling Cappello that: 'We're in drawer number seventy' (p. 200). There are occasional problems with this approach, most often in the author's tendency to privilege psychoanalytic readings of objects and acts. This suggests that there is, somehow, a 'real' meaning to be uncovered behind the swallowing of foreign bodies, an idea which undermines some of the more complex questions asked: for instance, what does the foreign body suggest to us about the ways in which self-concepts are created and revised?

Thought-provoking, affecting and stimulating by turns, *Swallow* is a highly readable work. Nonetheless, Cappello's eclectic style will take some getting used to for many historians. There is no linear story here: like the objects and cases she investigates, the book is fragmented into ideas, anecdotes, and episodes in Jackson's life. Anyone wanting to use the volume to flick through Jackson's life story, uncovering key dates and episodes, will be sadly frustrated in their search. Yet, *Swallow* raises many pertinent questions, and the reader who perseveres from cover to cover will be well rewarded.

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Leigh Whaley, *Women and the Practise of Medical Care in Early Modern Europe, 1400–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. vi + 316, £55.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-2302-8291-9

This is an ambitious book with an extensive bibliography. The subject matter covered, a comparative study of women and medicine from the late medieval to the modern period, is far too broad for the less than two hundred pages devoted to it. Because of this, a number of problems arise in the book. The most serious of these is that, because of the amount of information packed into every page, no space is left to develop a coherent over-arching argument that would make sense of this information and give the reader insight into the temporal and cultural contexts in which the women medical practitioners were working. The writing is also very hard to follow at a very basic level; in one paragraph, the author

will jump from one topic or historical figure to another without explaining the connection between the two – this happens, for example, on page 13, but also on many other pages. Other information is presented in misleading or confusing ways, for example when we are told on pages 15 and 16 that one practitioner flourished for thirteen years, but died at the age of nineteen. Certainly these implausible circumstances justify some explanation of the miraculously youthful prodigy who was practising medicine at the age of six!

With a fair degree of frequency, historical figures are briefly introduced, dropped, and then reintroduced with a more extensive biography, often after a long digression into another figure or historical context with no apparent link to the first figure. It is hard to discern a structure other than the roughly chronological one in each chapter.

The encyclopaedic method of writing the history of women in medicine leads to some truly grievous errors, of which I will offer only two of many examples. First, the author repeatedly cites the works of François Rabelais as historical documentation of negative attitudes towards midwives. She treats these satirical literary works as if they function in the same way as court documents or other historical records. To make this work, she has to perform a sleight of hand on page 105, when she cites the story of the giant Gargantua's miraculous birth through his mother's ear. By cutting out the actual description of this impossible birth, the author tries to convince her readers that Rabelais's text is a straightforward condemnation of midwives rather than a satirical account of a mythical birth. This one example demonstrates amply how problematic it can be to use literary works as historical documents without the benefit of in-depth textual analysis.

Even more problematic to my mind is the brief discussion of Louise Bourgeois, midwife to members of the French royal family (pp. 96–105). Although she cites Wendy Perkins' excellent book on Bourgeois, the author does not seem actually to have read it, because she seems unaware of the controversy fueled by Charles Guillemeau, which virtually ended Bourgeois's career following the death of the princess Marie de Bourbon-Montpensier a week after the birth of her child. Given that one argument that could be made, based on the evidence cited in this study, is that the role of women in medical practice was increasingly circumscribed over the course of the early modern period, it is odd not to include this very well-known example of the marginalisation of midwives.

Much recent scholarship has been devoted to the topic of women in medieval and early modern medicine, and there are significant gaps in the author's knowledge of current scholarship, most notably Katharine Park's superb study, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (Cambridge, MA: Zone, 2006), which would have been particularly useful for Whaley's third chapter, on 'Early Modern Notions of Women'.

The wealth of material available on the topic of women and the practice of medicine in pre-modern times, both primary and secondary sources, is so considerable as to make the task of writing a general study of this subject daunting, if not impossible, for one person to take on, particularly in such a brief space. So it is perhaps inevitable that this book, for all the extensive research undertaken, is nonetheless disappointing.

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