

*History, Medicine, and the
Traditions of Renaissance Learning*

Cultures of Knowledge in the Early Modern World

Edited by Ann Blair, Anthony Grafton, and Jacob Soll

The series *Cultures of Knowledge in the Early Modern World* examines the intersection of encyclopedic, natural, historical, and literary knowledge in the early modern world, incorporating both theory (philosophies of knowledge and authority) and practice (collection, observation, information handling, travel, experiment, and their social and political contexts). Interdisciplinary in nature, the goal of the series is to promote works that illustrate international and inter-religious intellectual exchange and the intersections of different fields and traditions of knowledge.

*History, Medicine, and the
Traditions of Renaissance Learning*



NANCY G. SIRAI SI

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS • ANN ARBOR

Copyright © by the University of Michigan 2007

All rights reserved

Published in the United States of America by

The University of Michigan Press

Manufactured in the United States of America

⊗ Printed on acid-free paper

2010 2009 2008 2007 4 3 2 1

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored
in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form
or by any means, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise,
without the written permission of the publisher.

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Siraisi, Nancy G.

History, medicine, and the traditions of Renaissance learning /
Nancy G. Siraisi.

p. cm. — (Cultures of knowledge in the early modern world)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-472-11602-7 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-472-11602-9 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Medicine—History—16th century. 2. Renaissance. I. Title.

R146.S57 2008

610.9—dc22

2007010656

For

NOBUYUKI SIRAIKI

PREFACE AND
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*T*his book is a study of connections, parallels, and mutual interaction between two influential disciplines, medicine and history, in fifteenth- to seventeenth-century Europe. The elevation of history in status and significance, the expansion of the scope and methods of history, and the related (but distinct) growth of antiquarianism are among the most striking—and recently among the best studied—features of the humanist culture of that period. Over the same centuries, medical knowledge, too, was transformed in ways that linked learned tradition with empirical investigations and with an emphasis (not new, but greatly increased) on description, narrative, material evidence, and particulars; and humanism—in many senses of that slippery term—strongly influenced not only the content and presentation of medical knowledge but the entire intellectual formation of academically educated medical practitioners.

Since much evidence suggests that medieval and Renaissance medical learning was in general highly responsive to contemporary intellectual currents, I thought it would be worth inquiring into the extent both to which changing notions of history affected the literature of medicine and to which medical men contributed to historical writing. In short, I sought answers to these questions: What aspects of Renaissance medicine resonated with the contemporary understanding of history or historical method? What kind of history did medical doctors write? What kinds of doctors wrote history? Such answers as I found are in the following pages. As I pursued this topic, the

eclectic enthusiasm with which Renaissance physicians embarked on historical writing led me into many new areas and taught me a lot. I shall miss their company.

I owe thanks to many friends and colleagues for their help at different stages of this work. I am particularly grateful to the scholarly editors of the University of Michigan Press series *Cultures of Knowledge in the Early Modern World*—Ann Blair, Anthony Grafton, and Jacob Soll—and to two anonymous referees for the University of Michigan Press for very useful comments on the entire manuscript. I also wish to thank Frédéric Tinguely for reading and commenting on chapter 8 and Ian Maclean and Gianna Pomata for helpful discussions and advice. Remaining mistakes are, of course, my own. It has been a pleasure to work with Chris Hebert as editor. A grant from the Mellon Foundation financed travels to libraries in Europe and research expenses at home. At different times, Manu Radhakrishnan and Christopher Petitt provided research assistance. Thanks also to Alice Falk for help with manuscript preparation. I am grateful to the staffs of all the libraries where I have worked, but especially to Miriam Mandelbaum and Arlene Shaner of the Rare Book Room of the New York Academy of Medicine.

Invitations to deliver the Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in 1999 and the Garrison Lecture at the annual meeting of the American Association for the History of Medicine in 2003 provided opportunities to begin to develop the themes of this book. I am grateful to the Renaissance Society of America for permission to reuse some of the material from my article based on the first of those lectures, “Anatomizing the Past: Physicians and History in Renaissance Culture,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 1–30. Though not incorporated into this book, my article based on the second of those lectures—“Medicine and the Renaissance World of Learning,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78 (2004): 1–36—also sets out a preliminary sketch of some of the questions and issues I have tried to explore more fully here. Somewhat different versions of sections of chapters 2 and 4 appeared in, respectively, “History, Antiquarianism, and Medicine: The Case of Girolamo Mercuriale,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 (2003): 231–51, and “Oratory and Rhetoric in Renaissance Medicine,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65 (2004): 191–211—both copyright *Journal of the History of Ideas, Inc.*, and both reprinted by permission of the University of Pennsylvania Press. Another short section of chapter 2 will appear in Thomas Rütten, ed., *Geschichte der Medizingeschichtsschreibung* (Remscheid: Gardez! [in press]). An earlier version of a section of chapter 5 appeared as part of my article “Cardano and the History of Medicine,” in

Girolamo Cardano: Le opere, le fonti, la vita, ed. Marialuisa Baldi and Guido Canziani (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1999); I am grateful to FrancoAngeli for permission to reuse this material. An earlier version of chapter 6 appeared as “*Historiae*, Natural History, Roman Antiquity, and Some Roman Physicians,” in *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 325–54; I thank MIT Press for permission to reprint this material. An earlier version of a section of chapter 8 appeared in “In Search of the Origins of Medicine: Egyptian Medicine and Paduan Physicians,” in *Inventing Genealogies*, ed. Valeria Finucci and Kevin Brownlee (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 235–61; I am grateful to Duke University Press for permission to reprint.

Finally, as always, my greatest thanks are owed to my husband, to whom this book is dedicated.

CONTENTS

List of Figures xiii

Abbreviations xv

Note to the Reader xvii

Introduction 1

PART 1. HISTORY IN MEDICAL LITERATURE

Preface to Part 1. A Diagnosis from History 23

1. Bodies Past 25
2. History and Histories in Medical Texts 63
3. Life Writing and Disciplinary History 106

PART 2. PHYSICIANS, CIVIL HISTORY, AND ANTIQUARIANISM

Preface to Part 2. Rival Physician Historians of the Italian Wars 137

4. Milan: Problems of Exemplarity in Medicine and History 141
5. Rome: Medicine, Histories, Antiquities, and Public Health 168
6. Vienna: Physician Historians and Antiquaries in
Court and University 194
7. Beyond Europe 225

Conclusion: Medicine, History, and the Changing Face
of Scientific Knowledge 261

Notes 269

Bibliography 357

Index 421

FIGURES

Fig. 1. Portrait of Galen from an edition of his <i>Therapeutica</i> and <i>Therapeutica ad Glauconem</i> (Venice, 1500)	5
Fig. 2. A supposed giant's tooth illustrated in Thomas Bartholin's <i>Historiarum anatomicarum rariorum Centuria I et II</i>	41
Fig. 3. Pirro Ligorio's depiction of ancient Greek athletes lifting weights, from Girolamo Mercuriale's <i>De arte gymnastica libri sex</i>	48
Fig. 4. Title page of Hippocrates' <i>Opera</i> published in Basel in 1526, placing Hippocrates in the company of Greek and Roman philosophers, poets, rhetoricians, and historians	83
Fig. 5. Duke Antoine of Lorraine leading his troops to battle, as illustrated in Symphorien Champier's <i>Le recueil ou croniques des hystoires des royaulmes daustrasie</i>	140
Fig. 6. The physician, poet, and historian Johannes Cuspinianus as depicted in Johannes Sambucus's <i>Veterum aliquot ac recentium medicorum philo-sophorumque icones</i>	203
Fig. 7. Members of the early Germanic tribes as illustrated in Wolfgang Lazius's <i>De gentium aliquot migrationibus, sedibus fixis, reliquiis, linguarumque initiis et immutationibus ac dialectis, libri XII</i>	216
Fig. 8. Title page of the revised edition of Giovanni Tommaso Minadoi's <i>Historia della guerra fra Turchi, et Persiani</i> published in Venice in 1588	253

ABBREVIATIONS

- ADB* Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften. Historische Commission. *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. 56 vols. 1875–1912. Reprint, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1967–71.
- DBI* *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*. 67 vols. to date. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia, 1960–.
- DSB* *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*. 16 vols. New York: Scribner, 1970–80.
- NDB* Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Munich. Historische Kommission. *Neue Deutsche Biographie*. 22 vols. to date. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953–.
- ÖNB Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

NOTE TO THE READER

Sources cited in boldface type in the notes to this book appear in the “Printed Primary Sources” section of the bibliography.

In Latin titles and quoted passages, capitalization has been modernized. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.