

could easily have been used by a leech. Vitellius is akin to the famous Bury St Edmunds herbal, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 130, a volume known to have been stored in a cupboard or chest ("de armario").

The care with which Vitellius was produced is seen in the scribe's anticipation of pictures. He wrote "a shorthand visual sign" for the artist in the spaces he left for them. The two signs employed seem to me to be the Runic letter wynn (used by the Anglo-Saxons for w) and the letter l with a stroke through it (see, for example, fol. 56r). Perhaps they were meant to indicate Old English "wyr̄t" and "leac", both meaning "herb".

The manuscript was occasionally consulted. Chapter numbers were soon supplied to the table of contents and at the head of each column of text to facilitate reference to the appropriate remedy for the illnesses listed in the contents. Recipes were added on endleaves in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. However, later medieval additions of Latin plant names need not attest a reader's medical concerns. When, in the early thirteenth century, the well-known "tremulous hand" of a Worcester monk glossed the copy in Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 76, it was evidently from linguistic interest.

The origin and provenance of Vitellius are unknown. D'Aronco's brief account of its history ignores the suggestion that it was the volume recorded as "Herbarius anglice depictus" in the fourteenth-century library catalogue of Christ Church, Canterbury. Such an institution was its likely home. However useful the text, the manuscript itself suggests a book stored in a monastic library, or perhaps the infirmary, for reference only when necessary.

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William Birken, *Puritanism and medicine: the transatlantic medical family of Dr. Edmund Wilson the elder (1583–1633), Dr. Edmund Wilson the younger (1617–1657), and Dr. Thomas Sheafe (1603–1657)*, Studies in English medical history, no. 1, Willow Bark Press, 1998, pp. vi, 106 £5.00, \$7.00 (prices include p&p. Orders to: William Birken, 302 Davie Road, Carrboro, NC 27510, USA).

It should be noted at the outset that this publication is little longer than a journal article and has a Spartan bibliography. The publishing format, composition on what appears to be a typewriter, and billing as the first in a series of studies in English medical history, combined with various hints within the paper that indicate that its author is at odds with other scholars' opinions, all point to serious disaffection with the traditional venues for academic contribution. Were it not for the author's past record of scholarly publishing (see, for example, *Medical History*, 1995; **39**: 197–218 and *Journal of British Studies*, 1983; **23**: 47–62), one might suppose this piece to be the work of a disenfranchised amateur or perhaps a crank.

Here is "the story of the Wilson family" (p. 83), complete with a tedious tangle of genealogical information and spiced up with undocumented connections between unsung family members and their better known contemporaries; details of bequests could usefully have been relegated to an appendix. The family produced the three Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians named in the subtitle—"no other seventeenth-century English family could make such a claim" (p. 98)—yet, despite their prominence, historians have generally overlooked them. This is undoubtedly because, as the author notes, they made no great contributions to medical science. Nor, it would seem, did they leave much written record by which their individual medical scholarship and practice might be assessed. However,

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despite their individual obscurity, Birken claims that as a group they can tell us something of the closeness of seventeenth-century Puritan medical and clerical families, and also reveal “the mighty compatibility of Puritanism and medical professionalism”, which is “not fully appreciated” (p. 101). And here we glimpse an axe that the author has brought with him to the historical mill: Puritans were good, orthodox members of the College of Physicians.

The patriarch of this family, Dr Edmund Wilson, Sr, was a Puritan who early in his education opted for a medical career to avoid the bureaucratic hindrances that were being created to block Puritans from ecclesiastical careers. This choice worked because the College of Physicians was more concerned with candidates' credentials and medical orthodoxy than with their religious background or views, and therefore provided a professional refuge from policies aimed against dissenters. This helps “to cast doubt on the common assumption that the College was an extension of royal and ecclesiastical authority in Church and State” (p. 41). Owing to the complete lack of references or other critical apparatus, the reader has no idea whose views Birken is addressing. However, examination of his earlier work suggests that he is still engaging George Clark, Christopher Hill, Charles Webster, and others who have portrayed the College as an instrument of official policy and Puritans as champions of sectarian, Paracelsian medicine. This is a profitable discussion, but one to which this paper makes little contribution.

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Timo Joutsivuo, *Scholastic tradition and humanist innovation: the concept of *neutrum* in Renaissance medicine*, Humaniora series, vol. 303, Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1999, pp. 288 (951-41-0863-9). Distributed by: Bookstore Tiedekirja, Kirkkokatu 14, FIN-00170 Helsinki, Finland.

This fine example of traditional intellectual history tells the story of the concept of the neutral body during the Renaissance. This is an important story to tell because the idea that a human body could exist in a state that was neither healthy nor sick was integral to the doctrines of *complexio* and latitude of health which lay at the heart of Galenic medical theory. Joutsivuo shows how Renaissance commentators changed the terms within which this concept was traditionally debated, and thus contributed to the introduction of Renaissance humanism into university medicine.

The depth and range of Joutsivuo's scholarship is impressive. His research is based upon a thorough investigation of 27 printed commentaries and one manuscript commentary on Galen's *Tegni* (where the idea of the neutral body is most clearly stated), dating from the 1520s (when Galen's collected works were printed in Greek for the first time) to the early seventeenth century when interest in the *Tegni* died out. For the earlier period, he relies primarily upon printed editions of well-known scholastic commentaries on the *Tegni* by Pietro Torrigiano, Gentile da Foligno and Giacomo da Forlì. In addition, Joutsivuo makes use of other theoretical works, such as the *Canon* of Avicenna, and a number of practical gerontological treatises where the idea of the neutral body is also discussed.

His investigation of these sources provides a wonderful mine of information on how Renaissance expositors understood many of the central concepts of Galenic medicine, such as *sanum*, *aegrum* and