

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Hunger Parshall, Karen, Michael T. Walton, and Bruce T. Moran, eds. *Bridging Traditions: Alchemy, Chemistry, and Paracelsian Practices in the Early Modern Era*

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an Anabaptist. Hill's definition is remarkably inclusive: "[...] all those people whose lives were changed by the arrival of Anabaptist preachers. This might not mean a permanent or complete change, or even approval of Anabaptism, but to understand the impact that Anabaptist ideas had on people's lives we must appreciate its low-level, almost untraceable legacy" (11). One wonders, though, if, in getting away from a confessionally-driven history of Anabaptism as a history of the heroes of the faith, Hill has not gone too far. "Anabaptist" was not a term used by Anabaptists; it was employed by the authorities to justify an appeal to precedent in imperial law to execute religious dissenters. Hill's sources are overwhelmingly trial records, and one has to wonder if she has not exchanged a definition of Anabaptism created by the spiritual heirs of some "Anabaptists" for one created by their contemporary enemies. In the end, this very good book is more about religious dissent in central Germany, and the reaction of the authorities to it, than about "Anabaptism" in central Germany. From the perspective of the study of the Radical Reformation and the groups within it, Hill seems to lose sight of the trees for the forest.

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**Hunger Parshall, Karen, Michael T. Walton, and Bruce T. Moran, eds.**  
*Bridging Traditions: Alchemy, Chemistry, and Paracelsian Practices in the Early Modern Era.*

Early Modern Studies 15. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2015. Pp. xxii + 311. 24 ill. ISBN 978-1-61248-134-0 (hardcover) US\$50.

For some years now, scholars of early modernity have understood that the old-school notion of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century science as a steady march from darkness into light simply will not do, and that scientific endeavour in the period was both more complex and far stranger than such a linear narrative allows. One of the pioneers in building this understanding was the late Allen G. Debus, whose work on Paracelsus and early modern chemistry and medicine helped to expand the notion of "science" beyond just physics and mathematics, and to show that in order to make sense of what Paracelsus and others thought they were doing, we have to try to understand them on their own terms instead

of dismissing them as charlatans or crackpots. *Bridging Traditions* is a memorial Festschrift, assembling essays by colleagues and former students of Debus that revisit and expand upon themes in his work, continuing the rethinking of the relationships between alchemy, chemistry, and medicine in the early modern period that he helped to initiate. One of the volume's editors, Karen Hunger Parshall, provides a careful and thorough introduction to Debus's work. She shows how it emerged in dialogue with his mentor Walter Pagel, and highlights the ground-breaking aspects of his research while not shying away from the controversies and resistance that it generated.

The body of the book is divided into three sections. The essays in the first, "Curious Practices and Practices of Curiosity," examine individual figures or movements that engaged with Paracelsian thinking. Jole Shackelford discusses the seventeenth-century German medical man and uroscopy enthusiast Johann Hayne, using him as a paradigmatic figure to show how physicians brought together Paracelsian ideas and more traditional Galenic theories in the real practice of medicine. Bruce T. Moran discusses Paracelsus's adversary Andreas Libavius, who resisted Paracelsus's bringing together of medicine, cosmic speculations, and chemistry, insisting instead on the practice of chemistry as an independent endeavour, informed both by Aristotelian tradition and by hands-on craft. Margaret D. Garber's essay explores the beginnings of the Academia Leopoldina, whose members were simultaneously practical physicians and *Curiosi*, engaged in exploring the secrets of nature, particularly through alchemy. These researchers saw no particular contradiction between their two fields of study, and Garber discusses how the Leopoldina's cultural capital of trust and authority helped shape subsequent scientific discourse. The famous (or infamous) apostle of phlogiston, Georg Ernst Stahl, is the subject of Kevin Chang's essay, which situates Stahl's theory of the *Principium der Verbrennlichkeit* in the context of Paracelsus's *tria prima* (salt, mercury, and sulfur).

The second section, "Regional Contexts and Communities of Texts," comprises three essays that focus on textual communities across Europe. Expanding on and sometimes challenging the work of Debus, Jorge Cañizares, William Eamon, and others, Mar Rey Bueno argues that Spain was not the intellectual backwater, alchemically speaking, that many have thought. She demonstrates that alchemical inquiry and chemical medicine, Paracelsian and otherwise, were in fact widespread in both aristocratic and clerical circles. In

an essay that focuses on the transmission and annotation of manuscripts, Anke Timmermann discusses the work of two Austrian physicians, Nicolaus Pol and Wolfgang Kappler, using them and their manuscripts as a lens through which to examine the intersection between textual and medical practices in the Hapsburg empire. Michael T. Walton, one of the volume's editors, unfortunately passed away before its publication; the volume is therefore dedicated to his memory as well as to that of Debus. His essay explores the ways in which early modern chemical inquiry engaged with Christianized kabbalah, showing how the two searches for secrets intertwined with one another, specifically in the works of the Venetian Giovanni Agostino Pantheus, the important German Paracelsian Oswald Croll, and his countryman Heinrich Khunrath.

The final section, "Evaluations and Perceptions," is more centrifugal in its concerns. Dane T. Daniel offers a review of the debate between Debus's mentor, Walter Pagel, and the eminent Paracelsus scholar Kurt Goldammer. Pagel saw Paracelsus as heavily influenced by Florentine Neoplatonism, while Goldammer (relying on many manuscripts to which Pagel never had access) emphasized instead the connections between Paracelsus's work—both scientific and theological—and the German Reformation. Daniel finds a middle path, while acknowledging that the debate is to some extent rendered asymmetrical by the issue of access to sources. The extremely strange John Dee—Neoplatonist mystic, alchemist, conjuror, would-be advisor to princes, who regularly conversed with angels—is the subject of Nicholas H. Clulee's review essay, which usefully surveys recent scholarship on this polyvalent and enigmatic figure of the English Renaissance. The final essay in the volume, by Heinz Schott, is a wide-ranging (and illustrated) survey of the imagery of nature in the late Middle Ages and the early modern era, and offers a heartening (and, one hopes, not unwarrantedly optimistic) demonstration that much of this imagery was, if not "feminist" in the modern senses of the word, at least philogynist, and therefore resisting the broader misogynist currents of the time.

The volume as a whole offers a range of thoughtful and well-researched perspectives on early modern chemistry and medicine, showing that the two were intimately linked in both theory and practice, and offering a salutary demonstration of the great diversity of those theories and practices. This diversity is itself confirmation of one of the central tenets of Debus's work, so ably celebrated and extended in this volume: namely, that the evolution of medicine, chemistry, and associated fields was neither linear nor univocal, and

that to understand the history (or histories) of science we must try to understand its curious collections, alchemical transformations, and angelic conversations, as well as the moments when seekers of truth actually got it right.

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**Hurlburt, Holly S.**

*Daughter of Venice: Caterina Corner, Queen of Cyprus and Woman of the Renaissance.*

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015. Pp. xi, 347 + 69 ill. ISBN 978-0-3002-0972-3 (hardcover) US\$85.

The life of Caterina Corner (?1454–1510), late-fifteenth century Venetian queen of Cyprus, Armenia, and Jerusalem, was riddled with paradox: a republican citizen who became a queen, a metropolitan aristocrat consigned to the countryside kingdom of Asolo, and a Venetian symbol of Cypriot appropriation. In many ways, her multiple roles have obscured the reality of her historical existence. The story of her life was romanticized into myth by the nineteenth-century English ex-patriots and rediscoverers of Renaissance Italy—especially by the poet Robert Browning and the art historian Sir Herbert Frederick Cook—and celebrated in an opera by Donizetti. Ever since, she has been popularly marketed as a kind of Renaissance Madame Geoffrin, presiding at her rural villa in Asolo as over a French salon, patron to a courtly assemblage of Venetian cultural heroes from Pietro Bembo to Giorgione to Titian. In *Daughter of Venice*, Holly Hurlburt separates fact from fancy, presenting a lively and meticulously researched account of a real woman in the contexts of “gender history, family history and the history of Mediterranean imperialism” (12).

Caterina’s 1472 marriage to King Jacques II Lusignan was a diplomatic manoeuvre designed to consolidate the domination of the Corner family over the sugar-producing cane fields of Cyprus, and to retain easy Venetian access to trade routes from the east. “Woman as geo-political entity” is not really anything new. Caterina, however, transplanted to Cyprus, found herself a widow after only ten months of marriage, pregnant, and called upon to rule the state. Despite opposition from other branches of the Lusignan family, she