

body from a medieval notion of one characterised by fluidity and amorphous boundaries, to our modern conception of an individuated body bounded by our skin. This idea is accepted uncritically with surprisingly little consideration of the complexity of theories about the body that abounded during the early modern period, including the humoral theory, which placed individual self-knowledge of one's own bodily complexion as central to the maintenance of health. The historical contextualisation here feels perfunctory and potentially undermines one of Stephens' main arguments, that anatomical exhibitions propagated a view of the body as one that required constant self-monitoring, and that this view was decidedly modern.

Though at times frustratingly light on historical detail, *Anatomy as Spectacle* succeeds in presenting the history of anatomy as one of the spectacular as much as the medical, demonstrating the vital role that exhibitions played in the history of the discipline. Stephens' work fits into the phalanx of academics working on visual and material cultures of medicine, arguing that these exhibitions were never mere illustration, but that they played vital roles in the production, as well as transmission, of contemporary ideas and understandings of the body.

Harriet Palfreyman
University of Warwick

Mary Cappello, *Swallow: Foreign Bodies, Their Ingestion, Inspiration, and the Curious Doctor who Extracted Them* (New York: The New Press, 2011), pp. xi + 292, \$27.95, hardback, ISBN: 978-1-5955-8395-6.

Mary Cappello's fourth book is self-described as a work of 'literary nonfiction': a tag which barely seems to scratch at the surface of the author's multi-disciplinary approach. The intimate anecdotal style, frequent departures into philosophical reflection and postmodern narrative combine to make a work as unorthodox as the collection (and, perhaps, the collector) it describes. Yet such a term also threatens to denigrate the work, hinting that it does not quite fit the bill for either field. Nonetheless, historians and literary critics alike should find much of interest here.

Part-biography, *Swallow* details the life and career of an American laryngologist, through a collection of objects housed in Philadelphia's Mütter Museum: the Chevalier Jackson Foreign Body Collection. Jackson collected and stored over two thousand 'fbdies' (as he called them), leaving a legacy as contradictory as it is compelling. As Cappello notes, Jackson dedicated his life to convincing other doctors that ingested foreign bodies were commonplace: yet his collection is regularly interpreted as a curiosity, an assortment of strange and unusual surgical cases.

This contradiction forms the crux of Cappello's analysis, as she delves into publications, letters, case notes and sketches in an effort to explain how such a collection came into being. Why were these objects collected? What significance did they hold to the man who collected them, and what other stories can they tell? The juxtaposition of commonplace to marvellous, medical to miraculous, is never far away. For example, it transpires that early endoscopists were inspired by the technique used by sword-swallowers: throwing back the head to create a straight channel down which an instrument might be passed. Cappello takes such analogy further, relating the sword-swallower's mastery of the reflexes to the surgeon's efforts to gain control of the body through an operation.

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.

Sarah Chaney

University College London

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