Andrew Cunningham, *The anatomical Renaissance: the resurrection of the anatomical projects of the ancients*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1997, pp. xiv, 283, illus., £45.00 (1-85928-338-1).

This is one of the most stimulating books on Renaissance medicine I have read, and, at the same time, one of the most perverse. It offers a series of challenging theses. The rise of anatomy in the sixteenth century is to be viewed, not as part of medicine or science, but of natural philosophy, a branch of theology concerned with investigating and demonstrating the works of God in nature. The classical authors who had concerned themselves with anatomy, Plato, Aristotle, Herophilus and Erasistratus, and Galen, each had his own idea ("project") of anatomy, as did the medieval scholar Mundinus; each had a different purpose and hence a different view of the body. Their anatomical projects were followed or recovered in turn by the anatomists of the Renaissance: Mundinus by Berengario, Galen by Vesalius, Sylvius and Guenther, the Alexandrians by Colombo, and Aristotle by Fabricius. Other anatomists, like Benedetti or Corti, make a brief appearance in the story, but Platonic anatomy (despite the survival of a major Galenic tract interpreting anatomy in Platonic terms) does not reappear in this account.

There is much to applaud here, not least the elegant demonstration of the way in which Vesalius was the first to put into practice the programme for human dissection advocated by Galen. The influence of the new Galenic translations after 1530 is also well explained. The variety of Renaissance approaches to dissection is established beyond doubt, and historians will have to be careful about bringing under one roof all those who advocated dissection in the sixteenth century. But all these claims demand some qualification or other. "Project" can stand both for what is inferred of a Renaissance anatomist's motives and for what Dr Cunningham believes was the ancient project. Vesalius claimed to be restating a lost pre-Galenic anatomy: that honour is now given to Colombo, who depends allegedly on Erasistratus, although he never mentions his name. Berengario, despite his part in the 1528 version of Galen's anatomical works, is linked only to Mundinus, as is Benedetti, the title of whose anatomy book proclaimed its devotion to the restoration of Greek anatomy, at least in the form of a new technical vocabulary. Writers on anatomy who do not fit easily into this schema (e.g. Canano, Fallopia, or Piccolomini) are simply omitted on grounds of space. The impression of this half of the book is of ingenuity and abundant learning handicapped by the desire to impose a "big idea" on somewhat refractory evidence.

Having sorted out the "what's" of Renaissance anatomy, Andrew Cunningham progresses in Part Two to the "why's". Why did these anatomists view the body in the varied way they did: why was there a renaissance or a reformation in anatomy? In a coruscating display of somewhat outdated scholarship (no O'Malley on Rome, Williams, not Cameron, on the radical reformation), past generations of scholars are castigated for their wrong categorizations and romantic misunderstandings. The key, it is asserted, lies in religion: an individual's religious views determined his conception and use of anatomy. This is not as unlikely as this blunt formulation might suggest. Paracelsus' rejection of anatomy and Servetus' discovery of the circulation may well owe something to their idiosyncratic theology. Melanchthon supported anatomy in part because of its value to Lutheran doctrine, but, *pace* Cunningham, he commended Fuchs' book on anatomy, not because of its Lutheranism but because it offered the most modern, student-friendly account then available (not a bad judgement). But the contortions required to bring other anatomists into line are often extreme. Vesalius is said to be a Lutheran in religion because he did for anatomy what Luther did for religion; because he published the *Fabrica* in Basle; and because a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, like the one on which he died, was sometimes imposed as a punishment by the Inquisition. The fact that Vesalius came from a strongly Catholic part of

Flanders and served that most Catholic of rulers, Charles V, is not mentioned, although Colombo is given counter-reformation Catholic beliefs because he served the Pope, and Fabricius' religious views are deduced from his friendship with Sarpi and his membership of the Venetian intellectual elite.

To his credit, Cunningham is honest in his admission of the theory's weaknesses. He allows that Colombo probably wrote his anatomy book before he came to Rome, and that Vesalius' Lutheranism is a mere inference, but that does not prevent him from indulging in argumentation that is circular or inconsistent. The types of anatomy identified in Part One are "not comparable" (and hence historians are to be barred from comparing them), but in Part Two the very loosest of comparisons are employed to establish a case. Thus, for example, Silvius and Guenther followed Erasmian methods of exposition in their teaching: they may well be Erasmian in religion (certainly untrue for the later Guenther). The politician Contarini's use of Aristotle's *Politics* to praise the Venetian constitution, and Venice's reluctance to obey all the dictates of Papal Rome are taken to indicate that Venetian views on religion ("a patriotic duty") encouraged Fabricius to follow Aristotle. Hypotheses turn into facts, the absence of direct evidence becomes a suggestion, and then reality. The unexceptionable conclusion that religion and science were not then discrete and unrelated fields is turned to mean that anatomy was a religious activity or did not lead to a secularizing worldview (which is far from proved as a universal truth). The rigour applied to the arguments of others is conspicuously missing when Cunningham comes to evaluate his own.

This is sad, not only because the many good things in Part One will be neglected (or, what may be worse, they will compel assent from the neophyte to the speculations of Part Two), but because an opportunity has been wasted to test a provocative hypothesis. There are writers on anatomy (Caius, Gesner, Platter, to name but a few) whose religious beliefs are knowable and whose anatomical books are easily accessible, and the theory of a religious motivation for the study of anatomy, and of types of anatomy differing according to religion, might well be tested against them. One might then establish how far "Wittenberg anatomy" spread beyond North Germany, and whether this represented a specifically Lutheran (as opposed to a Protestant) standpoint. But such nuances are not for Cunningham, whose commitment to his religious thesis is credal.

An opportunity has also been lost to break fully from the idea that dissection was so obviously a good thing that its non-appearance is to be condemned. As Cunningham rightly insists, anatomy is a peculiar practice, and historians must pay far more attention to why it was ever introduced and sustained. But for that a different book is wanted, one that would leave Italy for Vienna, Oxford, or Salamanca, and would combine the intellectual insights of Part One of this book with the practical details analysed recently by Andrea Carlino and Jürgen Helm. Religion would then be seen as a component in the aims and methods of some anatomists, but not the universal and overriding motive that it is made out to be in this book.

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Wendy Perkins, *Midwifery and medicine in early modern France: Louise Bourgeois*, University of Exeter Press, 1996, pp. x, 170, £25.00 (0-85989-4871-1).

Wendy Perkins has written an excellent account of the work, writings and career of Louise Bourgeois, who had a flourishing midwifery practice at the French royal court at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Bourgeois was notable as a successful and articulate woman practitioner and author. As Perkins shows, she not only retained her position at court when to do so required political skills, she also managed to present herself as a learned authoress and along with