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Fabrizio Baldassarri, Fabio Zampieri

***SCIENTIAE* IN THE HISTORY
OF MEDICINE**

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Scientiae in the History of Medicine

Edited by
Fabrizio Baldassarri
Fabio Zampieri

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Via Marianna Dionigi	70 Enterprise Drive, Suite 2
57 - 00193 Roma	Bristol, CT 06010 - USA
http://www.lerma.it	lerma@isdistribution.com

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Fabrizio Baldassarri, Fabio Zampieri

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FOREWORD

Scientiae in the History of Medicine is much more than just a collection of re-worked conference proceedings; it is a step forward in the generation of a new kind of historiography of early modern medicine. Goodbye to old personality-centred stories, dangerously akin to early modern antiquarian compilations; welcome to texts-in-context arguments based on research which mimicks early modern practices of connecting textual and empirical knowledge. This book stems from the *Scientiae* conference that took place at the University of Padua in Spring 2017. *Scientiae* is an international research group at the nexus of early modern studies with the history and philosophy of science. We believe in today's unwaning relevance of early modern knowledge practices even though, by definition, past innovators worked in fields which were distant from later applications: think of astrology in relation to astronomy, or alchemy in relation to medicine, for example. *Scientiae* historiography aims at getting back behind modern ideas of knowing while, at the same time, investigating the early modern antecedents of ideas in the discrete disciplines in which they have occurred.

Scientiae in the History of Medicine presents a number of case studies about different, yet inter-twined ways of knowing nature in the early modern period. Be it the medicinal properties of plants or the functions of the human body, ending with a thought-provoking essay on taxonomy, this collection of essays will not cease to stir counterintuitive thinking about both early modern medical practices and our understanding of old world views.

As Convenor and past President of *Scientiae* we cannot but commend yet another successful outcome of our scholarly community's efforts. We thank Fabio Zampieri and Fabrizio Baldassarri for making *Scientiae* in the History of Medicine into such an engaging work which we believe fellow scholars will not fail to appreciate fully.

Giovanni Silvano
Convenor, *Scientiae* Padua 2017,
Director of CISM-University of Padua

Vittoria Feola
President, of *Scientiae*, 2017-2020

ALESSANDRA CELATI*

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PHYSICIAN
GIROLAMO DONZELLINI IN THE 1575 VENETIAN
PLAGUE: BETWEEN *SCIENTIA* AND HETERODOXY

Introduction

In this paper I am going to deal with early modern medicine as a “*Scientia*” against the background of the reception and repression of the Protestant Reformation in Italy. In particular, I will examine the 1575 Venetian plague, by taking into account the personal and scientific experience of the heterodox physician working in the Republic, Girolamo Donzellini, a very well-known medical doctor and humanist in what he himself defined the sixteenth-century *Respublica Medicorum*.¹ During the pestilence, he was serving an Inquisition life sentence in prison, and it was precisely because of the medical activity he provided in this tragic situation that he was able to re-gain freedom. As a heterodox doctor, a prisoner and the author of a treatise on plague, he provides a good case-study to frame the rise of medicine as a *Scientia* against a very tangible context: one made of cells, corpses, and pages secretly written under the first lights of the day.

In this paper, thanks to the rare evidence provided by the minutes of Donzellini’s fourth trial in 1575/1576, I will describe what a prisoner doctor’s daily life was like in times of plague and I will analyse the medical treatise that he wrote during his detention: the *Discorso Nobilissimo e Dottissimo Preservativo et Curativo della Peste*.² By taking into account

* Università di Verona. E-mail: alessandra.celati83@gmail.com

¹ Letter by Donzellini to Theodor Zwinger, Universitätsbibliothek, Abteilung Frey-Gryn, GII 37.

² Archivio di Stato di Venezia (here after ASV), Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Girolamo Donzellini*, Busta (here after BU.) 39: see the *Capitoli della peste* (in the 1574-1575 trial). These “plague chapters” are reported in English and in the original version at the bottom of this essay; DONZELLINI 1577.

both Donzellini's life and the book he wrote during the plague, I hope I will be able to provide fresh insights about the intersection among medical, religious and social aspects in the development of sixteenth-century *Scientia*.

Medicine, heterodoxy and the life of Girolamo Donzellini

As historiography has demonstrated, in the Renaissance period medicine was going through many changes, resulting from the humanistic approach taken up by physicians. In this period, medicine re-discovered the value of *conjecture* and its ancient nature of *practica rationale*: an epistemological shift, which invested the exploration of pathology (including epidemics), diagnosis and therapy.³ This innovation was the result of multiple factors. First of all, the revival of the classical concept of *ars*, intended as a valid form of knowledge able to mediate between *theory* and *experience*. Such a revival derived from the reading of the original versions of ancient medical texts restored by physicians themselves, and in turn it stimulated the *reading* of the book of nature. At the same time, the gradual legitimacy of the concept of medicine as a pragmatic discipline (dealing with inherently uncertain and unstable material like individual human body and human illness) did combine with the challenges posed by the spread of new diseases and by that of old ones, which yet, bore unprecedented characteristics.⁴ Finally, as physicians stressed the Galenic idea that “the best physician is a philosopher”, many of them claimed unprecedented and wider spaces of freedom for this kind of rational inquiry. This complex and tortuous process legitimated an experiential approach towards the body and towards health/illness, while still distinguishing learned medicine from the unreliable methods of the quacks. Hence, a gradual move to an independent search for new theories and solutions slowly took place and new medical trends spread out in Europe, allowing physicians to acquire new lenses in the study of nature. The approaches inaugurated by Jean Fernel or Girolamo Fracastoro, and even by Paracelsus (although the latter rejected the reliance on

³ This epistemological shift, and in particular the concept of medicine as an *ars* and as *conjecture* is the object of numerous studies, among which see in particular: MACLEAN 2002; FERRETTO 2011; MAMMOLA 2012; FERRETTO 2012.

⁴ ARRIZABALAGA ET AL. 1997.

the ancients) opened up new practical and theoretical possibilities to the adoption of experience. Donzellini incorporated these new trends in his personal scientific research and, as I will show in the second part of this paper, elaborated his own way to look at illness (i.e.: pestilences).

The changes through which early modern medicine went in the Sixteenth Century, in the attempt to reshape its epistemological and methodological ground, can be related to the contemporary experimental approach which occurred in theology.⁵ In times of intellectual crisis, the turmoil which was occurring within one field could affect the other, and in fact it did. The fluid combination of physical and metaphysical approaches to reality that informed the minds of sixteenth-century men of culture, and specifically the strong connection between the body and the soul and between medicine and religion, made this intersection possible.⁶ Many physicians grew non-conformist religious ideas, they spread them in the cities and villages in which they worked, and they often run up against Inquisition repression. Girolamo Donzellini was one of them.⁷

Before I can go deeper into the topic, I need to shortly sum up Donzellini's biography. And in order to do so we shall go back to another pestilence, the one that in 1513, during the Italian Wars, hit Orzi Nuovi, a little town near Brescia in the Venetian Republic. This is where our story starts. During that eight months epidemics, about 3.500 inhabitants out of 3.900 died. The sources describe this pestilence in apocalyptic terms: while stranger armies devastated the town and its surroundings, the morbus infuriated and even an angel was seen crossing the sky with a bleeding sword in its hand.⁸ Our main character, Girolamo, was given birth in this tragic scenario. His father, Buonamonte, had arrived in town from Verona in order to escape from the War of the League of Cambrai soon before: in this context he had married a Brescian woman and

⁵ Historiography has long suggested this kind of link, dealing with Miguel Servet, for which see BAINTON (2012), but also examining Italian heretics, for which see CANTIMORI 1939; STELLA 1967, and also considering the topic in general, for which see GRELL-CUNNINGHAM 1993; BROOKE-MACLEAN 2005. Lately, historians have started to look at this subject systematically: KOSTYLO 2016; SUITNER 2016; CELATI 2018a; IDEM 2018b; IDEM 2019; QUARANTA 2019.

⁶ On the relationship between medieval and early modern medicine and religion the historiography is wide, see in particular DONATO ET AL. 2013.

⁷ On Donzellini see, SCHUTTE 1992; PALMER 1993; CELATI 2014; QUARANTA 2014.

⁸ CODAGLI 1592, pp. 130-131.

founded his family.⁹ Against the odds, the infant Donzellini survived. It is tempting to imagine that, while breathing death and sorrow in the first months of his life, he was also acquiring a sort of resilience, which allowed him to survive the many perils he would encounter in his life (one more plague, torture, exile). The perils he was doomed to, however, had spirituals rather than physical features.

Having been exposed to the reception of Reformation ideas, the “*peste luterana*”, in his domestic environment by his parents since he was a child, over the course of the century Girolamo became a central hub in the Venetian, Italian and even European network of heterodox thinkers. A fruitful “asset” in this respect, was the fact that he graduated in Padua (1541), where he cultivated relationships with students and colleagues coming from all over Europe, and in particular from Germanic lands. In Padua, he was taught by some of the main innovators of Renaissance medicine, like Gian Battista da Monte and Andreas Vesalius, and as a professional doctor, he became well respected and obtained prestigious jobs. He worked in Rome, as the personal doctor to two cardinals; in Venice, healing the English ambassador; and even in Germany, where he had to escape in 1553 in order to avoid his first Inquisition trial. During his exile he received prestigious job offers from the archduke Ferdinand and from his sister the queen of Poland and he initiated relationships with illustrious political figures including the emperor, who finally provided him with a safe conduit. During the exile, having already being influenced by the spiritual currents of the Italian Reformation when he was in Rome (i.e. Valdesianism), he made his doctrinal profile more and more nuanced. He renounced any religious dogmatism and he opened up to hermeticism both in science and in religion. This is shown by his collaboration, in Basel in 1559, with the group of radical exiles and promoters of religious tolerance gathered around the printing press house of Donzellini’s dear friend Pietro Perna, within which he produced an edition of Themistius’ orations introduced by a dissertation on the concept of *docta religio* (or *Prisca theologia*), and, in the years to come, by his interest in Paracelsianism.¹⁰

⁹ REDMOND 1984, p. 14-15.

¹⁰ On Pietro Perna, see ROTONDÒ 1974, pp. 273-391; PERINI 2002. On the Basel group see: CANTIMORI 1939, in particular pp. 117-127; BIAGIONI & FELICI 2012, pp. 90-94 and *passim*. On Donzellini’s interest in Paracelsianism see FERRARI 1982, pp. 23-24. On *prisca theologia* see MUCCILLO 1996; VASOLI 2010, pp. 175-205. See also DONZELLINI 1559.

When he went back to Veneto in 1560, having taken up a *nicodemitic* approach to religion, he got away with a light Inquisition sentence, and after that he became a member of the College of physicians in Verona.¹¹ Here he developed with some of his colleagues harsh medical controversies about the nature of pestilential fevers, which resulted in a new denunciation to the Inquisition and in the detention that is the object of this paper. Over the course of his entire life, he dealt with the publication and distribution of reformed-oriented books, most of which were published and smuggled with the support of Perna. Donzellini also corresponded for almost 30 years with Protestant humanists in Germanic lands, acting as an intermediary in the importation of learned (mostly medical and philosophical) volumes, prohibited in the different “classes” of the numerous Indexes that, in the second half of the century, followed one another in Italy.¹² It was indeed the possession and the circulation of forbidden books, which he was incapable to renounce, that finally sealed his fate. After one more trial (1578), he was caught by the Inquisition again and drowned in the Venetian lagoon in one spring night in 1587. He was 74 years old.

Facing the plague in an Inquisition prison

Having provided some more context, let us now move *in medias res*. The epidemic of plague that affected Venice in 1575 was one of the most traumatic that the city ever experienced. Over the course of two years, more than 50.000 Venetian citizens died. Since they worked in close contact with the ill, physicians were particularly exposed to the contagion and, after one year, most of the doctors in the city had either died or escaped to the countryside. Reading the documents of the Venetian College of Physicians, one can apprehend the concern that public authori-

¹¹ Archivio di Stato di Verona, *Atti del Collegio de' medici, Comune* 610, (30th July 1561-30th September. 1569); *Comune* 611, (13th December. 1569-14th April 1574). Donzellini was expelled from the College as a heretic in 1575. On the concept of nicodemism see at least the masterpieces, ROTONDÒ 1967, pp. 991-1030; GINZBURG 1970.

¹² This activity emerges from the correspondence of Girolamo Donzellini: see the letters he sent to Theodor Zwinger in Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Frey-Gryn Mscr I and II, G II and G2 II; and those he sent to Joachim Camerarius Jr, in Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek, Briefsammlung Trew. This correspondence has been studied by Alessandra Quaranta: QUARANTA 2014, pp. 1-34; IDEM 2018, pp. 72-101; IDEM 2019.

ties nourished towards the lack of physicians who practiced in the context of infected Venice. In June 1575 doctors were ordered not to leave the city, but the documents report that many disregarded this directive. Probably the fact that they were supposed to heal the population, running the highest risk, with no additional salary, had an impact on this choice. If nothing else, the rents that physicians had to pay to their landlords would be suspended for the time being, but apparently this was not enough.¹³

As I pointed out above, during the plague Donzellini was in prison. In 1575 he had been condemned to a life sentence, and the numerous pleas that both him and his desperate wife Lucrezia sent to the Inquisitors could not change his condition.¹⁴ As a trick of fate, it was instead the burst of the plague, and the chance to show his loyalty to the Venetian civic and ecclesiastical authorities, that favoured him. Fulfilling his duties as a Venetian prisoner, citizen and doctor, and serving his penalty while taking care of ill Venetian people, he could restore his reputation and possibly re-gain his freedom. The description of the time he spent in prison during the plague is reported in some “plague chapters” that Donzellini wrote and submitted to the judges so that he could highlight his honesty and reliability.

In these chapters, Donzellini narrates that between the end of August and the beginning of September 1576, the plague spread out in the *sestiere di Castello*, the area where the Inquisition prison was, and in a few days the bacterium penetrated inside the prison itself. The wardens died, and at this point, Donzellini and his fellow prisoners were abandoned to themselves. The building was put in quarantine and everybody was denied access to it. As a result, the prisoners found themselves completely neglected. There was nobody who would bring them food or water, nobody who would take care of cleaning the place, removing garbage, excrements and corpses.¹⁵ The only person who showed some mercy for

¹³ The information that I provide in this paragraph, about the city policy towards physicians and their general behaviour during the 1575 pestilence, come from: Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Ms Ital VII (2342=9695), *Notizie cavate dai libri dei priori*, ff. 15v-16v. For the general regulations that Venice adopted in times of plagues since 1541, see BELL 2019, pp. 177-178, who publishes the text of the Venetian “plague orders” – the ordinance which regulated the system of examinations and notifications related to the discovery of contagion.

¹⁴ ASV, Sant’Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Girolamo Donzellini*, Bu. 39, f. 195r; 200r.

¹⁵ IVI, f. 203r.

the inmates was an agent of the Inquisition called Biasio, who managed to get the gates of the prison opened and allowed the prisoners to beg for food on the threshold. In his chapters, Donzellini underlines that for ten days he and his fellow prisoner, friend and comrade in faith Nascimbene Nascimbeni stayed in prison, despite the gates being open, and even convinced (and actually forced) other prisoners not to leave “for their own sake”.¹⁶ Donzellini wanted to present himself as honest and trustworthy. His final goal was to be pardoned, not to spend the rest of his life at large. In a condition of despair and great danger for his safety and life, he was able to calculate costs and benefits of his actions: he took the burden of a concrete risk of either contagion or starvation for the time being, in exchange of a potential liberation to be obtained in the future. Time proved that he was right in his calculation.

Before that, however, he had to endure a dreadful situation. The number of people who died around and inside the *cason* (the Venetian name of this Inquisition jail) rapidly increased, and Donzellini and Nascimbene started to submit several pleas to the ecclesiastical authorities, begging to be transferred to a safe prison. However, they were denied mercy. Particularly striking for Donzellini must have been the death of Giulio Trissino, the only prisoner killed by the plague that Girolamo overtly nominates in his report. Trissino belonged to the aristocracy of Vicenza, strongly pervaded by reformed ideas. He was the archpriest of the cathedral of Vicenza when he converted to Calvinism, in the 1530s. Since then, he became active in heterodox networks, cultivating relationships with the circle of Renée de France in Ferrara and even with Zwingli.¹⁷ It is not surprising that, in prison, Donzellini became friends with a man who was so much involved in the Italian and extra-Italian circuits of the Reformation. After Giulio’s death, Donzellini and Nascimbene felt particularly scared (had they been in close contact with him? had Donzellini tried to heal him?) and insisted to be moved to a clean place. However, the only answer they repeatedly received was “to be patient”. They then turned to the municipal authorities, but the latter refused to help them as well, asserting that Inquisition prisons were beyond their jurisdiction.

¹⁶ *IBIDEM*. On Nascimbene Nascimbeni, see PROSPERI 2000 *ad indicem*.

¹⁷ On Giulio Trissino and the heretical circles of Vicenza see: OLIVIERI 1992, pp. 345-348 and *passim*.

Donzellini's firmness was rewarded on September 24th when he was relocated along with Nascimbeni, in a clean house in San Giuliano, and he was given the permission to go out in the city to heal the ill. The decision was not agreed on by every side of the Inquisition, and two months were necessary before the religious and the social-political institutions, who bore opposite interests, could come to a compromise. While the patrician lay members (whose presence within the tribunal was a unique characteristic of the Venetian Holy Office) first agreed and then actually *forced* Donzellini to practice medicine (under a 500 *scudi* bail), the patriarch of the city did not trust Donzellini and did not want to let him go out in the city.¹⁸ The motivations for this opposition are clear: only 5 years before, in 1571, the whole community of physicians in Venice had been the object of an attack by the Inquisition (*Contra medicos*), which charged Venetian doctors with the allegation of disregarding the *Super Gregem Dominicum* (the papal bull that forced physicians to stop providing care to the patients who did not confess).¹⁹ The ecclesiastical authorities were aware of the propagandistic potential inherent in the medical activity, and they wanted to submit the medical community, as much as any other social category, to the Counter-Reformation action.²⁰ If this was not enough, they certainly mistrust Donzellini in particular: during the trial which resulted in the 1575 detention, the doctor had been discovered having performed religious propaganda while practicing medicine, managing to convince two nuns to escape the nunnery of Santa Lucia in the early 1550s.

This episode shows how the distinctive ecclesiastical and political jurisdictions typical of early modern Venice, would overlap and compete in a time of sanitary and religious emergency (the *peste luterana* was not yet defeated). The municipality's civic and political interest clashed against the Inquisition's disciplinary goal and as the "plague chapters" report, several political and diplomatic actions were needed before Don-

¹⁸ As it is well-known the Venetian Inquisition had a peculiar institutional configuration and in Venice jurisdictional issues among the political and the religious power (and between Venice itself and Rome) were not rare. Historiography on this subject is wide, see at least: PASCHINI 1559; DEL COL 1988, pp. 244-294; IDEM 1991, pp. 189-250; IDEM 2006, pp. 342-394. In this case, the Inquisitor immediately authorised Donzellini to practice medicine, the Patriarch remained long reluctant (see the "plague chapters" at the bottom of the text).

¹⁹ ASV, Sant'Uffizio, *Processi, Contra Medicos*, Bu. 35.

²⁰ CELATI 2018, pp. 72- 91.

zellini could start healing the infected. Finally, the aristocrat Danilo Priuli, stressing the professional value of Donzellini and the tragic situation of the city, interceded with the Patriarch, and the prisoner doctor was allowed to start practicing medicine on December 16, 1576. Donzellini concludes his chapters by stressing his own charity and benevolence towards the poor ill, whom he assisted without earning any money and actually self-sponsoring the expenses due for the medication. In April 1577, he was finally pardoned.

Donzellini's prison work: healing the body, nourishing the soul

Before being pardoned, and while living in the dreadful state I described, Donzellini concentrated all of his physical and intellectual energy on writing a *Very noble and learned discourse which can heal and preserve from the plague (Discorso nobilissimo e dottissimo preservativo e curativo della peste)*.²¹

This work meant to advise the *Provveditori alla Sanità* on how to handle the epidemic. In the text, Donzellini put forward theoretical insights along with practical suggestions. I argue that, in addition to its immediate pragmatic goal, the writing of such a treatise bore, for a man of culture like Donzellini, a subtler meaning. In times of “great mortality” and “big catastrophe”, Donzellini found consolation in his medical vocation and in the use of his own “reason”. Moreover, as we have already seen, Donzellini was trying to turn the plague circumstance to his advantage: in this case, he probably thought he would gain respect from the authorities by offering them such medical contribution, and, as a result, he would increase the likelihood to be pardoned. Indeed, he composed (or at least he started to) the treatise in the hardest times of his imprisonment, in the dark of his cell, without having the chance to consult any book and only relying on his knowledge and his memory. The dedication to the *Provveditori alla Sanità* is dated December 3rd, 1576, which implies that Donzellini conceived of this work in the terrible time I described above and before he could walk through the city to heal the infected.

²¹ This book has received attention by PRETO 1978, pp. 60-63; COHN 2011, pp. 165-166, 274-275.

The treatise bore an ill-concealed polemic against the two Padua professors Girolamo Mercuriale and Girolamo Capodivacca.²² When the morbus had just started to spread out, the two physicians had received by the Venetian authorities the task to verify whether it was indeed a form of plague, or not. Since Galen had asserted that a high level of contagion was a fundamental characteristic of plague, and since in the Venetian epidemic of 1575 the contagion increased over time, but was limited at the beginning, the two physicians all too soon ruled out that it was not plague. As it is well-known this was a disastrous mistake. Not only did the two professors hinder the sanitary authorities from taking the correct measures against plague, but visiting the ill without observing the necessary prophylaxis, they actually contributed to the diffusion of the morbus.²³ On the other hand, the prisoner Donzellini clearly maintained that plague should be diagnosed whenever specific symptoms were detected, regardless how little the amount of people infected was and no matter what Galen had taught.²⁴

In the most genuine humanistic approach, Donzellini's way to look at illness and at the human body did not passively reproduce the knowledge of the ancients, although his method was deeply grounded in their teachings. In the first part of the treatise, Donzellini shows to be familiar with and to put into practice a strongly *conjectural* concept of medicine. For instance, when examining the aetiology of the Venetian plague, he maintains that different plagues have different causes that depend on the different contexts in which the morbus develops. The attention towards the specificity of the Venetian environment leads him to rule out that the 1575 plague could have derived from the corruption of the air: the salt which exhales from the water prevents the air from rotting. Moreover, taking into account also historical/social aspects, he is able to determine that the current plague was not due to malnutrition: that year there had been no famine.²⁵

²² On Girolamo Mercuriale see MERCURIALE 2008; ARCANGELI & NUTTON 2008. On Capodivacca see: GLIOZZI 1975.

²³ The episode is examined in NUTTON 2006, pp. 5-19; SIRAISSI 2007, pp. 102-105; PALMER 2008, pp. 51-65.

²⁴ "Even if there was only one case in the world which had that poisoned characteristic of plague, which is the essence of the plague, along with its effects and accidents, there would be no doubt that it would be plague although it did not create a popular epidemic. Yet, it is true that where the plague meets crowds, it spreads very easily". DONZELLINI 1577, c. 1r. A similar argument is advanced at c. 2r.

²⁵ DONZELLINI 1577, c. 6r-6v.

The cause of the plague was therefore “the contagion” triggered by the importation of infected objects from Trent, soon before.²⁶ In particular, in this section Donzellini shows to be well aware of the novelties brought about by medical scholars in sixteenth-century physiology. When explaining how the contagion spread out, he spoke about the “*seminario della peste o fomite*” (the plague seed or *fomite*), which men breath in and which “penetrate the heart and infect the spirits of the whole body”: by doing so, Donzellini referred to Girolamo Fracastoro’s theory, enunciated in 1546, although he did not quote him directly.²⁷ In the thought of Fracastoro, a multifaceted man of culture, who dealt with astronomy and literature along with medicine and philosophy, the theories of the ancients are harmonised with what experience shows. An approach which matched Donzellini’s. A certain convergence between the two physicians was also made possible by the fact that both shared a Neoplatonist conception of nature, perceived as animated and alive. Relying on this image of nature, Fracastoro spoke about the very least of its components, what he called *seminaria*, which were involved in the organic process of spontaneous generation and self-destruction and were responsible for infective diseases. Following Fracastoro, Donzellini stated that an important agent in the spread of plague was a “filthy microscopic animated body called *seminario* or *fomite*”, which moved from object to object, including human skin and propagated the morbus.²⁸ Then he reminded the sanitary authorities about the fact that, although at an early stage the diffusion of the bacterium was limited, all the necessary prophylactic measures needed to be taken when even one only person showed certain symptoms characteristic of plague. Otherwise, the infection would turn into an epidemic.

In some other books by Donzellini it is possible to apprehend the same interest towards sixteenth-century medical innovations. And in particular, towards those currents which conceived of illness as ontologically autonomous and which stressed the importance (and the existence) of the secret properties of substances. In the last book he wrote, the *Remedium ferendarum iniuriarum* (1587), Donzellini referred to the concept of “*tota substantia*” developed by Fernel and reflected upon the ways in

²⁶ IVI, c. 6v.

²⁷ On Fracastoro see: NUTTON 1990, pp. 196-234; PERUZZI, voce *Fracastoro, Girolamo*; PASTORE & PERUZZI 2006; PENNUTO 2008.

²⁸ DONZELLINI 1577, c. 6v-7r.

which different physical/animal bodies behave and interact, and above the mechanisms of sympathies and antipathies in nature.²⁹ Many years before, in one of the first texts he wrote, he lined up with a colleague, Vincenzo Calzaveglia, who claimed the efficacy of theriac in the cure of pestilential fevers (so much so that his rivals denounced him to the Inquisition in order to get rid of him, as I have anticipated above). The attention towards poisons and towards the mysterious dynamics which operated in nature is continuous in Donzellini's thought and I argue that it mirrored his inclination towards religious spiritualism. It is not possible to go into details here, but I suggest that it is not coincidence that other doctors, who inclined towards spiritualism and had been influenced by Valdesianism, such as Bartolomeo Maranta or Vincenzo Abbaticchio, zealously explored the inscrutable world of poisons, studying their powers and their properties and deepening in particular the functioning of the most enigmatic of remedies, theriac.³⁰ As a matter of fact, we also know that Donzellini knew and read Paracelsus sometimes in the 1570s, although his relationship with the Luther of physicians is still controversial.³¹

Going back to the *Discorso nobilissimo*, the most relevant feature of this book is the conception that medicine is a "practical discipline", an idea which goes hand in hand with a strong optimism about the possibilities of the therapeutic action. Thanks to human reason and to the value of experience, the good physician can obtain any result, including the permanent extinction of plague. This optimistic approach also explains why Donzellini wrote his treatise in Italian: he wanted to divulge his "preservative and curative system against the plague" and make it understandable also by popular social classes. If Venetian citizens were able to recognize the symptoms of the morbus, they could take the necessary precautions and limit the diffusion of the contagion. Moreover, Donzellini was aware of the fact that the poor were particularly exposed to the morbus and that they often concealed to the authorities their infected status, in order to avoid seeing the few goods they owned being burnt, and not to be taken to the Lazzaretto (which Donzellini considered the

²⁹ DONZELLINI 1586, c. 51r-51v.

³⁰ MINERVINI 2004; RICCI 2002.

³¹ CELATI 2014, pp. 5-37.

waiting room of death).³² With this in mind, Donzellini seek to obtain the collaboration of the population, and he advises the sanitary authorities to employ skilled learned physicians in the hospitals; to turn on many fires in order to purify the contaminated air; to facilitate the production and sell of pricey medication (even describing how to prepare these remedies at home); and he suggests those who had the money for doing it, to escape the infected city as soon as possible.

Donzellini's pragmatic approach did not entail a refusal of the connection between medicine and religion, established since the middle ages. However, he declined this relationship in a non-Catholic way. While he thought that man was in the hands of God, who was ultimately responsible for man's health, sickness, life and death, religious practice took for him an individualistic and introspective shape. He did suggest praying to God in order to be free from the morbus, but he did not refer to any collective ritual or religious intermediate. It can be useful as a comparison, to mention the thaumaturgic measures that at the very same time Carlo Borromeo was bringing about in order to fight back the plague in Milan: processions, propitiatory masses, fasting, devotion to the saints.³³ On his hand, Girolamo, hostile toward Counter-Reformation culture, claimed that the only valid spiritual remedy was interior faith and the certainty that, praying to God with a sincere heart, the believer would be safe.

The general cause of all pestilences is the will of God, which is the source and the cause of everything's origin. For this reason, the first therapeutic and prophylactic remedy is the pray to the great God, who sent the plague for no other reason than to punish the sins of men. But God is bent by men's repent and orations, he changes his mind and relieves men from the flagellum. In fact, the good Christian has no better means to make his wishes be granted by God than praying to him, with perseverance and strong faith, that God satisfies him.³⁴

³² DONZELLINI 1577, c. 4v. On this subject see CARMICHAEL 1986, an examination of the connection between plague and the poor in mid-fifteenth-century Italian cities and the related legislations that municipal and sanitary actors established (also as a disciplinarian measure against the burden of poverty), of which the Lazzaretto was an essential part.

³³ PRETO 1978, pp. 77-79.

³⁴ DONZELLINI 1577, c. 4r.

As I mentioned, the practice of medicine in time of plague and the publication of the treatise allowed Donzellini to be pardoned. The work was also appreciated outside the Venetian context. Donzellini's friend and correspondent Joaquim Camerarius edited a Latin version of the text. Camerarius included the work within a *Synopsis ... de peste* published in Nurnberg in 1583 and this work was included in one of the lists of books which were compiled for the preparation of the Sistine index of prohibited books, with the label "*Donzellini et al.*"³⁵ Considering the attention that the ecclesiastical authorities paid to Donzellini it is not surprising that they also inquired into his scientific works. This censorship can only be found in the Sistine index. In the list compiled for Clement VIII's index in 1596 the work does not appear; however, after Donzellini's execution, and probably because of that, the circulation of the work, with its reformed-oriented approach to religion, was hindered and stalled.

Conclusion

As Samuel Cohn has shown, Donzellini's work shared some characteristics with other treatises published during the 1575 pestilence such as the vernacular language, the ambition to make some practical difference in a situation of emergency, and a certain open-mindedness about how to interpret Galenic knowledge.³⁶ However, I think that Donzellini's case is especially meaningful and not just because in his book these characteristics are particularly striking. The fact that he came to such conclusions while writing alone in his cell, suggests that fresh trends in medicine were then circulating enough. Simultaneously, the same occurrence suggests that, while still free, a "heterodox physician" like Donzellini had not been marginalised by his colleagues for having been on trial twice (1553, 1560), and that he had had the chance to take part in the medical debate to a deep extent. So, when speaking about *heresy*, we need to avoid any reductive simplification that could lead to divide the early modern society into distinctive "religious zones": while this was probably the goal of the Inquisition, the medical professional network in

³⁵ BALDINI & SPRUIT 2009, vol. I, p. 318.

³⁶ COHN 2010, pp. 274, 275.

Venice admitted a grey zone in which a therapist like Donzellini could operate and flourish.

At the same time, Donzellini's religious inclination circularly impacted and nourished his medical approach. Not only is this visible with respect to the connection between his spiritual approach to Christianity and his interest in the medical theories that investigated the secret elements of substances. Donzellini also showed a pragmatic approach to medicine, and in this regard, his book can be compared to the one that, during the same plague, the heterodox exile doctor Simone Simoni wrote in Leipzig.³⁷ The two non-orthodox physicians shared an open-minded way to look at the medical doctrines of the ancients, they both committed to the provision of practical advice to the ill and to the institutions, they both referred to minor authors and practitioners as valuable sources to fight back the plague (Donzellini mentions the *speziale* Bellicocco in Verona, Simoni an unknown doctor who was a friend of his in Germany), they were both aware of the innovations brought about by their colleagues (apart from Fracastoro, they also refer to Falloppia), and they both focused on the social, environmental and even psychological aspects of epidemics.

Another treatise on plagues and epidemics can be quoted in a similar vein: the one written by the heterodox physician from Ferrara Marcantonio Florio in the 1570s and published by his son, after the author was dead, in 1587. Florio had been a follower of Giorgio Siculo (the heresiarch who had funded the sect to which Nascimbene Nascimbeni, Donzellini's cellmate, belonged too) and he had been sentenced to life in prison in 1568.³⁸ Like Donzellini, he was pardoned years later, in 1574. It is possible that Florio wrote the book in prison like Girolamo, although the text shows no clue in this sense (the fact that book was not published when the author was alive suggests that it did not obtain much success and was hardly related to the prisoner's release). What is certain it that the book was written after 1572: when dealing with the possible causes of epidemics, Florio speaks about the years between 1570 and 1572, referring to some natural events (Ferrara's earthquake in 1570 and an infection that, in 1572, hit the animals of the area) that he says happened

³⁷ On which see: NUTTON 2006, pp. 5-19.

³⁸ PROSPERI 2000, p. 280.

“years ago”.³⁹ Although we cannot know whether the book was conceived and written in prison, the attention that Florio poses to the natural and medical events that happened during his imprisonment makes this treatise comparable to Donzellini’s, while his attention towards practical remedies and their recipes, to be composed by common people (which covers 90% of the book), makes it very similar to Simoni’s too.

The case of Donzellini also shows that the catastrophic event of plague could turn the regular social dynamic upside down, inverting religious order and intellectual hierarchies. The prisoner Donzellini gained more respect for his medical intervention than the prestigious professors Mercuriale and Capodivacca did. And as a result of the plague, the gates of the prison were opened, and even a “heretic” serving a life sentence like Donzellini was granted pardon, which implies that plague somehow suspended the ecclesiastical law. The case of Donzellini is somewhat exceptional in this respect. In times of plague, Italian cities had long legitimated the expulsion of specific categories of people: individuals who could be physically contaminating (such as lepers, in addition to the plague-infected themselves) and persons who could be morally contaminating, like prostitutes and heretics. Against the latter, it was allowed to use all the necessary violence.⁴⁰ Donzellini’s exceptionality needs to be related with his professional skills, which he made available to the infected city: one more interesting way in which medicine and heterodoxy intermingled in his experience.

But his case also illustrates how bizarre history can be. In one simple twist of fate, the same contingency which had blessed Donzellini, seemed to doom him again. As I mentioned, during his imprisonment, he had become close friends with the radical heretic from Ferrara, Nascimbene Nascimbene. After being pardoned, Donzellini continued visiting Nascimbene in jail as his doctor, and insisted with the judges that Nascimbene should be moved to a healthier place. The judges then decided that Donzellini would be responsible for Nascimbene’s health and gave the prisoner over to his custody. However, while confined at Donzellini’s house, Nascimbene broke out and left the city, putting his friend in trou-

³⁹ FLORIO 1587, c. 5.

⁴⁰ About these laws see for instance what is reported in PREVIDELLI 1524, 4r, quoted in PASTORE 2006, and Pastore’s examination, p. 39.

ble. As a result, Donzellini lost his freedom again and he temporarily lost the possibility to practice medicine.⁴¹ We know how his story ended.

Plague chapters (English translation)⁴²

Since myself Hieronimo Donzellini and [my friend] Nascimbene Nascimbene have always been obedient and respectful, in the deep of the heart, towards you illustrious lords, God has decided to give us the chance to prove our loyalty. And although nothing is more of a challenge than the risk of losing one's own life, which is the dearest thing to anyone, we put our life in danger twice, with the specific purpose to demonstrate our devotion to this holy tribunal.

The first time was when, deprived of any human support and of all the goods which are necessary to sustain this terrible life, for many days we stayed in need of food and water.

The other was when we thought that death was coming for us at any time, since people continued to die, not only in the houses close to us, but in the very one in which we were living -- where six people died. And, despite the gates of the prison being open, we had a strong conviction in our soul, that we would rather have died remaining obedient to the Holy Office, than save our life by abandoning the prison without being authorized.

Although this thing is acknowledged already by everybody who know us, so much so that we are certain that your illustrious lords know it as well, nonetheless we thought it was worthwhile writing down some chapters (through which one could understand the history of our perennial obedience) and to present these chapters to the Holy Office, since you may either not know the details, or you may have some doubts. We beg you illustrious lords, that, considering the above mentioned obedience, along with our old age, our infirmity, and the infinite trouble and pain we have been going through, you will grant us freedom, and not because we deserve it, but because you are clement and merciful and because Jesus Christ died for all of us. We pray to our Lord for your joy and we genuflect in front of you.

⁴¹ This episode of Donzellini's life can be examined in Nascimbene's trial: ASV, Sant'Uffizio, *Processi, Contro Nascimbene Nascimbene*, Bu. 30.

⁴² For the English translation I have slightly adjusted punctuation where necessary.

Chapters by Doctor Girolamo Donzellini and mister Nascimbene Nascimbeni produced in order to prove with witnesses our loyalty towards the holy inquisition of Venice.

Between the end of August and the beginning of September, as ourselves (above mentioned Donzellini and Nascimbeni) saw that the plague was not only killing people in the surroundings, but it had penetrated in our *cason*, we sent letters to the father Inquisitor and to lord Foscarino, asking to be moved to a different prison. We did not get any response, other than trying to be patient, because the Inquisitor was in quarantine, for the death of many friars. And since in the *cason* the wardens died from plague, and three women who used to work in the prison moved out being infected (and soon they died at the Lazzaretto), we urged again the above mentioned lords, by sending them letters, but again we were told to be patient.

Since there was no one who could bring food, wine and water, and no one who could throw away the daily garbage, we, Donzellini and Nascimbeni, sent letters to the civic authorities of the *sestiere di Castello in San Zaccaria*, begging that someone would provide for our needs. However, the answer [from the civic authorities] was that they could not do anything, since this was not their jurisdiction.

Urged by hunger, since we continued not to receive any support by anybody, we opened the gates in order to beg for food on the threshold, being authorized by the Inquisition official Biasio.

For ten days we remained obedient and stayed in prison, in spite of the fact that the gates were open, and we could have gone wherever we wanted.

When a prisoner, Costantino da Osiago, planned and then managed to flee (and was condemned to the galera), another prisoner, Niccolò da Castelfranco, wanted to follow him, and we, Donzellini and Nascimbeni, exhorted him to remain obedient. And because he was stubborn and wanted to leave, we locked with a chain the door of the prison. He went out of mind and said that such a behaviour deserved the dagger, to which we replied that we were acting like that for the sake of him and that we needed to tie him like a crazy person, and finally we managed to persuade him, and he became calm and remained in the open prison being obedient.

In the days when the prison was open, not only was our life in danger because the house was infected, but also because the people in the surroundings were dead or they were in quarantine, in a bigger quanti-

ty than those who were alive, [and I mean] the people who sell food in the neighbourhood: shepherds, fruit sellers and others were died or in quarantine.

When the prison was open, we immediately sent letters to the very reverend Inquisitor and to the excellent Foscarini, to inform them about the circumstances which had forced us to open the doors and to tell them that we did not want to leave without permission, and again we begged to be moved to a clean place, but we did not obtain anything because of the current ruin produced by the plague.

When our fellow prisoner Iulio Trissino died, hearing death approaching we begged again Biasio that he interceded with the judges and made them aware of the serious danger in which we were all living, since we preferred dying obedient, rather than leaving without permission, and we were certain that our lords would have been merciful.

The father Inquisitor, having heard Biasio's words and having been alarmed by lord Foscarini, decided he did not want to let us die and, appreciating our obedience, asked Biasio to tell us that we could go to a clean house and that, after 22 days, me, Doctor Donzellini, could treat the infected.

In order to allow me to practice medicine, the father Inquisitor wanted from me, Doctor Donzellini, a bail of 500 *scudi*, and he recorded this act on September 24, 1576, thanks to a notary who worked in S. Basso. After our quarantine, the first time we went out we went to visit the Inquisitor, who confirmed the order.

The doctor of the neighbourhood of San Giuliano in which we had been moved visited us, and myself, Donzellini, I was prayed to visit the poor ill and, considering the great danger that the whole city would have been in if I refused, I decided to accept.

Since I was ordered by the Patriarch of Venice that I did not leave the house and did not practice medicine, I was obedient. However, the lord patricians, and especially lord Bragadino, reassured me that I needed to serve my fellow citizens providing them with medical care (since most of the physicians had already died, and there was a great necessity of doctors): they had established in Santo Stephano that the Patriarch had to concede me the licence to practice medicine.

As I did not want to disobey the Patriarch, I was subjected by the civic authorities to a potential 500 *scudi* fine, in case I did not obey and started treating the infected in the whole *sestiere* of Saint Mark.

When I received this order, I refused it, unless the political authorities convinced the Patriarch to accept the order as well: I did not want to be disobedient towards your very reverend lord.

Mr Bolani again threatened me with the above mentioned fine, if I did not obey and promised he went to the Patriarch in order to obtain a license which allowed me to work.

Since he could not go in person, being very busy, he sent a letter to the Patriarch, asking that, for the sake of the city, I could practice medicine.

The letter, along with another similar one sent from lord Danilo Priuli (who also wrote to the Patriarch, having heard of the value of the physician [Donzellini] and knowing of the great necessity of medical doctors that the city had), was presented in front of the Patriarch on December 12, 1576.

Myself, Doctor Donzellini, have always proved to be good towards the poor, treating them with generosity and compassion, without receiving any compensation, and actually aiding them with my medical remedies for free, and sometimes even spending my own money.

Since I was ordered to present myself to the new prisons, I always declared that I was happy to obey, but I prayed the Holy Tribunal to discharge me from the penal warrant.

Original text from Donzellini's Trial (*Capitoli della peste*)

Sicome la volontà di mi Hieronimo Donzellini et Nascimbene Nascimbene sempre è stata verso voi signori illustrissimi humilissima et ubidentissima nell'intrenseco del cuore, così è piaciuto alla divina maestà mandarci occasione per la qual potessimo farne esterior testimonio et darne pienissima certezza. Et poiché non è maggior cimento di quello della vita, cosa sopra tutte laltre carissima, noi in due modi l'habbiamo esposta a manifestissimo pericolo, solo perché questo sacro tribunale con eruditissima dimostrazione conoscesse l'intrinseca devotione e ubidienza nostra.

Il primo fu quando privi di servitù et delle cose necessarie alla sostintazione di questa infelice vita, per molti giorni fossimo in gran bisogno de necessari alimenti.

Laltro quando non solo per le case ci eran vicine ma per la stessa dove noi eravamo, essendovi morte sei persone, ogni ora credevamo la morte vicina per la peste. Et benché le porte ci erano aperte, sempre però ne steti nell'animo un risoluto proponimento di voler più tosto morir in ubedienza al

Santo Officio che senza licenza partendo salvar la vita.

Questa cosa benchè sia notoria et a tutti che ci cognoscono apertissima tanche non dubitiamo che ancho a voi signori illustrissimi sia notissima, nondimeno perché può esser che non a tutti sia chiara, et che molti particolari non siano venuti alle orecchie loro, ci è parso notar alcuni capitoli, nei quali si comprende la historia di questa nostra perpetua ubidienza e presentargli a questo Santo Officio supplicando che ci sia fatto gratia di essere accettati se non ad altro fine almeno a ciò ne gli atti questo sacro tribunale sia ritratto d'emplar ubedienza, a vostri posterì proposto ad imitatione. Supplichiamo anchora voi signori illustrissimi che considerata la già detta ubbidienza la grave età, le infirmità, gli infiniti danni, pene et tormenti già tanto tempo da noi per ubidienza tolerati, non già per merito o dignità di nostra ubidienza, ma per gratia, benignità, clemenza et misericordia di questo sacrosanto officio et per i meriti del nostro salvator Hiesu Christo ci sia concessa quella libertà che voi signori illustrissimi parerà di concederne: alli quali pregando dal nostro signore Dio filicità humilmente et genuflexi ci raccomandiamo.

Capitoli prodotti dall'eccellentissimo dottor di medicina messer Girolamo Donzellino e messer Nascimbene Nascimbeni per provare con testimonij la lor ubidientia verso il sacro tribunale della santissima inquisitione di Venetia.

Che nel fine di agosto e nel principio di settembre vedendo i sopraddetti che la peste non solamente haveva fatto gran mortalità et faceva tuttavia nelle case circuncivino et contiguo alla cason, ma già era anco entrata in detta casona, i suddetti per vari messi et lettere mandato al predetto reverendo Inquisitore et al clarissimo Foscarino, sollicitation di esser mutati in altra prigione et che altro non li fu risposto se non che havessero patientia essendo il padre Inquisitore sequestrato per la morte di più frati. Et essendo già in essa cason morto il casoniero et casoniera di peste et essendo venuti via tre donne ferite del male, che poi sono morte al lazareto sollicitarono i suddetti già prenominati signori con lettere e messi ma mai impetrarono altro che questo di sopra cioè che l'havessero patientia.

Che non havendo essi niuno in casa che sumministrasse le cose necessarie, pasti, vino, acqua, né potendo buttar fuori le immondizie quotidiane, mandarono a signor presidenti del sestiero di castello a San Zaccaria per impetrare che a questo loro bisogno fusse fatta provisione, da quanto si hebbe risposta che non volevano far nulla non essendo sua iurisdictione.

Che astretti dalla necessità non havendo alcuno sussidio da parte alcuna, così esortati da Biasio ministro della santa Inquisizione apersero le porte

della prigione per andare all'uscio della strada e poter tuor dentro le cose necessarie essendo la casa sequestrata, né potendo alcun venir dentro.

Che per dieci giorni continui stetero nella sua prigion in obediencia con tutto che la porta fusse aperta e che [fosse] loro libertà andar dove volevano.

Che volendo un prigioniero Costantino da Osiago fuggire come poi fuggì, condannato alla galea, et volendo anco seguirlo messer Nicolò da Castelfranco imprigionato dall'Inquisizione i suddetti sempre lo essortarono stare in ubidienza et pure stando lui pertinazzo et volendo partir serrorono con catenozzo la porta della lor prigione, facendo lui gran bravata e dicendo queste esser cose da pugnale a che risposero i suddetti che ciò facciano per il suo bene e bisognava ligare i matti come egli si mostrava esser nel fatto e che finalmente persuaso delle lor ragioni si chetò et stette in prigione aperta a ubidienza per tutto il tempo suddetto.

Che in detti giorni che stettero in prigione aperta non solamente erano in pericolo della vita per esser in casa apestata ma anco perché i vicini homini e donne erano morti o siquestrati in più de quelli esser saviti, et i vivandieri della contrada, pastori, fruttaruoli, et altri erano morti o sequestrati.

Che subito aperta la prigione tutti duo i supradetti mandarono litterae suae al reverendo Inquisitore e al clarissimo Foscarini, avisandoli che la necessità li haveva constricti ad aprire le porte, ma intendevano di voler stare in obbedienza, non voler partir senza licenza, supplicando tuttavia di esser messi in prigione netta, ma non anco per all'hora impetrarono cosa alcuna per attual ruina che facea la peste.

Che essendo morto messer Iulio Trissino et udendo la morte anche esser vicina a loro, di novo pregarono Biasio che facesse sapere alli signori del tribunale il pericolo suo e benché essi piuttosto volevano morir in ubediencia che salvarsi con partir senza licentia, che non di meno confidavano nelle lor signorie che non gli hariano mancato di pietà.

Ch'il reverendo padre Inquisitore havendo inteso le dette parole da Biasio, et a signor essendo stato inmisso in sua conscienza il stato delli sopraditti dal clarissimo Foscarini, si risolse di non lasciarli morire in quella miseria, et vedendo la lor pronta ubediencia li mandò a dire per Biasio, che andassero con sua bona licentia in casa netta et ivi finita la lor contumacia di giorni 22 et al dottor Donzellini che potesse medicare.

Che il ditto reverendo padre Inquisitore per la libertà concessa al dottor Donzellini volse sicurtà di scudi 500 del qual atto surogato messer nodaro presso San Basso adi 24 settembre 1576.

Che finita la contumacia nella prima lor uscita di casa andarono a visitare il padre reverendo Inquisitore il quale di bocca confermò quanto fia

inanzi aveva mandato a dir per Biasio.

Che essendo andato il medico della contrata di San Giuliano nella quale si trovavano i sopraddetti per stanza, fu pregato il Donzellino dal reverendo prete e signori deputati di visitar i poveri infermi e fare dipositioni, il che per il gran periculo che vi era ricusando, fu tanto pregato che per coscienza a lui parve non poter mancare a un tanto bisogno.

Che essendo il ditto dottor intimato per nome del reverendissimo Patriarca chi s'astenesse dal medicare e stesse in casa che egli in questo fu obediante, ma i signori deputati et il clarissimo Bragandino lo assicurarno (la tanta necessità essendo morti quasi tutti li medici) che dovesse servir la contrada, perché essi haviano operato così i signori presidenti a Santo Stephano che dal Reverendissimo Patriarca li fusse concessa la licentia.

Che recusando lui, sempre con dire che non voleva disubidire monsignor reverendissimo Patriarca fecero lui fare un mandato penale di 500 scudi se non ubediva in medicar; et fare la depositione per tutto lo sestiero di San Marco.

Che quando a lui fu intimato il ditto mandato chi lo ricusò, se prima quelli signori clarissimi del sestiero non operavano che monsignor Patriarca consentiva a detto mandato: perché in modo che non voleva esser disubidiente a sua signoria Reverendissima.

Che il clarissimo Bolani di nuovo fa intimare il mandato con la detta pena, minacciando di farne esecutione, se non ubidiva, et promiso d'andar da monsignor Reverendissimo Patriarca per impetrar licentia.

Che non potendo il suddetto clarissimo Bolani per le molte occupationi del suo officio andare in persona dal Reverendissimo Patriarca li mandò una lettera richiedendo chel fusse consintito per beneficio della città che il ditto medico medicasse.

Che la detta lettera insieme con un'altra dell'istesso tenore scritta al clarissimo signor Danilo Priuli (qual inteso il valor di ditto medico et il bisogno ch'ista nella città di medici volse anche lui far officio con monsignor Patriarca) furono presentate al ditto monsignor Patriarca alli 12 dicembre 1576.

Ch'il ditto dottor Donzellini sempre si è mostrato verso la povertà et infermi amorevole et l'ha medicata con carità et senza premio, anzi l'ha soccorsa con suoi medicamenti gratis, et amor Dei et alle volte anco con la sua borsa.

Che essendo a lui stato intimato che si presentasse alle prigion nove sempre egli ha detto di voler ubedir volentieri, ma che havendo il mandato predetto penale, prigava lo sacro tribunale che lo fusse levato dalle spalle detto mandato.



Fig. 9.1. "The Plague" by Davide Fasolo, 2019. This original illustration represents the facts reported above and it has been produced for the documentary: *A Faceless Man: The Faith and Fate of Girolamo Donzellini*, which I have conceived, written and co-directed along with Emma Hinchliffe (PhD candidate, University of Washington) within my Marie Curie project Netdis (2017-2019), Horizon 2020, grant agreement 748645.

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LIST OF ABSTRACTS

Fabrizio Baldassarri & Fabio Zampieri, “Scientiae in the History of Medicine: an Introduction”

Abstract: In its history, medicine has undergone transformations through a combination of various, intersecting disciplines of knowledge, what early modern scholars called *scientiae*. Indeed, the early modern time appears to be one of the most thriving moments, and is probably the perfect period for exploring the active presence of these diverse disciplines at work. Since the sixteenth century, physicians benefitted from the creation of anatomical theaters as locations for the study of anatomy and for inspecting the human body more directly. At the same time, botanical gardens were built at universities as repositories of vegetal bodies (both medicinal and general plants) to be observed, studied, accommodated, and cultivated, while the construction of medical museums helped in shaping the discipline and favoured scholars in observing corpses and diseases, besides the mere instruction of non-experts. For example, the museums of anatomo-pathology at the University of Padua collect a case of the congenital condition *situs inversus*, that is, the reversed arrangement of visceral organs, making this peculiar case visible to scholars and learned people. In this sense, these locations represent both a historical venue, where one could explore the history of medical disciplines, and a place for current study and research. Understanding their construction and uses in the early modern time appears thus crucial to comprehending the boundless condition of medical knowledge and its changes and transformations at the beginning of the scientific revolution.

Fabio Zampieri, “The University of Padua Medical School from the Origins to the Early Modern Time: A Historical Overview”

Abstract: This chapter outlines the Medical School of Padua from its beginnings, especially shaping the interconnections and contexts that grounded the medical revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Particular attention is devoted to highly-significant moments in the story of Padua, namely Vesalius and Harvey. Yet, in this chapter, I put such moments in their context, revealing how much the medical revolutions developed out of an interconnection of studies. First, we have decided to delineate some of the crucial cultural

characteristics of Padua. We believe, for instance, that the pre-humanistic movement which born already in the 13th century might be fundamental for understanding the following development of the University. Then, we have focused our attention on two of the most famous figures of the Padua medical school, namely Andreas Vesalius and Hieronymus Fabricius ab Acquapendente. About Vesalius, we have tried to highlight his humanistic culture, perfectly in line with Padua environment, and his revolution based on a new conception of anatomy as the queen of natural sciences. About Fabricius, we have highlighted his new philosophical approach in anatomical studies, based on the study of Aristotle, as well as his new use of anatomical illustrations, giving also a brief description of how his achievements were fundamental for William Harvey's discovery of blood circulation. With that latter discovery, we might support that ancient science definitively declined, opening the way to modern medicine based on the anatomo-physiology of man for understanding and curing human disease.

Cynthia Klestinec, "The Anatomy Theater: Towards a Performative History"

Abstract: Inside the anatomy theaters of the early modern period, professors pursued many pedagogical goals, introducing students to the subject of anatomy, investigating a certain region or function, and so forth. But what difference did it make if the anatomy lesson was conducted in a theater rather than the back room of a pharmacy, in a hospital, or in the private chambers of a professor? While there are many historical changes to document in the study of anatomy and in the form and content of the anatomy demonstration, this essay argues that the anatomy theater played a significant regulatory role in the educational and cultural history of anatomy. Focusing on the University of Padua's theater, this essay develops the theme of regulation—in statutes and decrees as well as descriptions of particular demonstrations—in order to reconstruct the performative history of the theater.

Florike Egmond, "Sixteenth-Century University Gardens in a Medical and Botanical Context"

Abstract: In the middle of the sixteenth century, a young physician from the south of Germany undertook a long journey in order to improve his professional knowledge. During this medical peregrination that lasted some seven years (1548-1555), Lorenz Gryll (also Laurentius Gryllus, 1524?-1560) visited nearly the whole of Western Europe. His trip was funded by the extremely wealthy Fugger family, and one of its explicit purposes was that Gryll – after his return to Germany – would help improve the standards of medicine and medical teaching in his native region by introducing what he had learned in the core zones of medical innovation in Europe, that is Italy and France. Gryll's journey, which we can follow thanks to his own account, triggers the main themes in this contribution about university gardens, medicine and botany in the 16th century:

how medicinal were these university gardens, and in which contexts can we study their functions and uses? This excursion ultimately reveals the multifunctional organization of university gardens that went beyond mere medical teaching and ultimately shaped early modern culture.

Alberto Zanatta, “The Origin and Development of Medical Museum Heritage in Padua”

Abstract: Although scientific museology developed in Padua from different sources and attention, medical museology has a precise path, and it is especially interesting in defining medicine as a disciple of knowing or *scientiae*. In this chapter, I analyse the history of medical museology in Padua, revealing how much the history of medicine plays a crucial role in the development of medicine as a science, and in highlighting the central role of Padua in the history of medical knowledge. Scientific museology started in Padua with the Museum of Natural Philosophy of Antonio Vallisneri (1661-1730). By the end of the Seventeenth century, he started to collect specimens and rare product of nature. The purpose of his museum was to instruct students and demonstrate what Vallisneri called “philosophical curiosity”, a different concept from the 16th century Cabinet of curiosities. In 1756, Giovanni Battista Morgagni (1682-1771) developed the Padua medical museology. He planned the creation of a museum of anatomical and pathological specimens. Regrettably, this project was never achieved. Luigi Calza (1736-1783) composed in the 1760s a series of anatomic models in wax and clay, used for Calza’s practical teaching to the pupils. This collection composed the cabinets of obstetrics. These models represented the physiology and the pathology of the pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. Reports claim of an “anatomical cabinet” developed in Padua from the early XIX century: Leopoldo Marcantonio Caldani (1725-1813), Francesco Luigi Fanzago (1764-1836) and Francesco Cortese (1802-1883) collected pathological specimens in different part of the university. The final passage from Cabinet collection to pathological Museum took place in the early 1870s, thanks to Lodovico Brunetti (1813-1899).

Roberta Ballestriero, “The Science and Ethics concerning the Legacy of Human Remains and Historical Collections: The Gordon Museum of Pathology in London”

Abstract: This chapter addresses the issue concerning the legacy of human remains as it affects historical collections and museums of pathology, mentioning the legal approach to the dead. The changes ethical norms have undergone in recent decades in storing and exhibiting human remains, revealing a new moral attitude towards the manipulation of them, will be analysed. The Gordon Museum of Pathology at King’s College London, one of the largest pathology Museums in the world, will be presented as a case study to underline the educational value of antique and modern scientific collections. A series of pathologi-

cal paintings and the wax models of the first British anatomical ceroplastic artist who worked in the nineteenth century will be discussed in order to remind us of the importance of the history of medical knowledge that acquires particular significance nowadays to document ancient, new and emerging diseases.

R. Allen Shotwell, “Between Text and Practice: The Anatomical Injections of Berengario da Carpi”

Abstract: In 1521, the surgeon, Berengario da Carpi, published a commentary on a fourteenth-century anatomical text. In his commentary, Berengario made reference to injections that he made in the study of the kidney and of fetal urination. Berengario’s work predates the standard account of the development of anatomical injections by nearly a century, and it is my goal to provide the context for them. I describe how the injection procedures can be linked to medical practices of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries while the purpose to which Berengario put them arose from debated topics found in the anatomical texts he was consulting. Berengario’s injections therefore demonstrate that medical *scientiae* in the early sixteenth century combined practical experience and bookish, theoretical knowledge.

Maria Kavvadia, “Sources and Resources of Court Medicine in Mid-Sixteenth Rome: Erudition as an Epistemological and Ethical Claim”

Abstract: In his medical book entitled *De arte gymnastica* (Venice, 1569), the humanist physician Girolamo Mercuriale of Forlì (1530-1606) noted that the human body is the focus of several arts and disciplines of knowledge. Mercuriale put together his *De arte gymnastica* during his residence in Rome (in the years 1562-1569), where he served as the personal physician of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520-1589), one of the most powerful Churchmen and patrons at the time. The *De arte gymnastica* is a book of exceptional erudition that combines medical with broad philological, historical, and antiquarian learning in Mercuriale’s endeavour to recover the Greco-Roman gymnastics as the true medical gymnastics. Mercuriale’s erudition reflects the intellectual trends of the Roman *milieu* that combined, rather than divided, *scientiae*, while it emerges as an ethical stance and tool of criticism against aspects of medical learning and practice at the time.

Alessandra Celati, “The Experience of the Physician Girolamo Donzelini in the 1575 Venetian Plague: Between Scientia and Heterodoxy”

Abstract: This chapter deals with early modern medicine as a “*Scientia*” against the background of the reception and repression of the Protestant Reformation in Italy. In particular, it examines the 1575 Venetian plague, by taking into account the personal and scientific experience of the heterodox physician

working in the Republic, Girolamo Donzellini, a medical doctor and humanist in the sixteenth-century *Respublica Medicorum*. During the pestilence, he was serving an Inquisition life sentence in prison. As a heterodox doctor, a prisoner and the author of a treatise on plague, he provides a good case-study. Thanks to the rare evidence provided by the minutes of Donzellini's fourth trial in 1575/1576, this article describes what a prisoner doctor's daily life was like in times of plague. Moreover it analyses the medical treatise that Donzellini wrote during his detention: the *Discorso Nobilissimo e Dottissimo Preservativo et Curativo della Peste*. By doing so this paper intends to provide fresh insights about the intersection among medical, religious and social aspects in the development of sixteenth-century *Scientia*.

Elisabeth Moreau, “Pestilence in Renaissance Platonic Medicine: From Astral Causation to Pharmacology and Treatment”

Abstract: Pestilential diseases formed a category of epidemic and often fatal diseases, whose outbreak, causes and treatment were challenging to explain in the Renaissance. In exploring this theme in sixteenth-century Galenic medicine, I examine the Platonic account of “occult” diseases and treatment that was proposed by the French physician Jean Fernel (1497–1558). While Fernel developed a philosophical explanation of pestilential diseases in *On the Hidden Causes of Things* (1548), he also suggested a therapeutic application in his *Pathologia* (1567), *Therapeutices* (1567) and posthumous *Consilia* (1582). By considering Fernel's synthesis of ancient, medieval and Renaissance medical approaches to plague and pestilence, this chapter traces his views on astral causation, poisonous seeds and the innate heat in relation to pathology, pharmacology and therapy.

Fabrizio Baldassarri, “Elements of Descartes' Medical *Scientia*: Books, Medical Schools, and Collaborations”

Abstract. In this chapter, I explore the sources and collaborators that assisted Descartes to shape his knowledge of medicine, a branch of his tree of philosophy. I highlight three aspects: (1.) a direct collaboration with Dutch scholars such as Plemp, Vorstius, and Regius, who helped Descartes acquire anatomical skills, or develop anatomical observations; (2.) the contacts with scholars and physicians working in Leiden; and (3.) the references to, and possible uses of, medical books. What permeates all these three areas is the underlying presence of the Medical School of Padua, where the large majority of these scholars had their training, and the connection he had with the Medical Faculty of Leiden. In sum, Descartes' medical knowledge emerged from a combination of personal reflections, anatomical observations, collaborations, and the contacts with institutions that grounded medicine as a modern *scientia*.

Luca Tonetti, “Testing Drugs in Giorgio Baglivi’s Dissertation on Vesicants”

Abstract: Discussions on the medical use of vesicants—a remedy able to induce redness and blisters upon application to the skin—attracted the attention of early-modern physicians due to the severe side effects on the body. Helmontian physicians in particular claim that vesicants are always harmful and, therefore, must be prohibited. Giorgio Baglivi (1668-1707), however, believes that vesicants could be useful under certain conditions. His *De usu et abusu vesicantium* [On the use and misuse of vesicants] aims at analysing exactly the cases in which such an application is permitted, and the cases in which it is not, and to explain how this remedy works. For Baglivi experimentation on living animals by means of infusory surgery plays a pivotal role in testing the efficacy of drugs or trying and discovering new ones. In this paper, I will provide a short overview of this undeservedly neglected dissertation, by describing Baglivi’s experiments on vesicants and their implications for his medical perspective.

Manuel De Carli, “Tracing Senguerd’s Footprints: Sciences and Tarantism at Leiden University (1667-1715)”

Abstract: The present paper deals with the reflection on Apulian tarantism – the disease produced by tarantula’s poison – of the Dutch philosopher Wolfert Senguerd (1646-1724). According to him, tarantism is a phenomenon which consists of many aspects explained previously throughout different traditional occult qualities; the various occult aspects of tarantism are clarified by Senguerd using several “scientiae”, such as natural history, physics and medicine. Showing this particular view of tarantism, the first part of this paper is dedicated to the analysis of Wolfert’s thought about tarantism and occult qualities, with particular reference to the analysis of the wondrous effects deriving from tarantula’s poison. The second part focuses on how Senguerd used his source, namely Athanasius Kircher and Giorgio Baglivi, in order to prove that there is no chromatic attraction in those who are poisoned by the spider.

Pierdaniele Giaretta, “Classifications from an Epistemological Point of View with Particular Attention to the Classifications of Diseases”

Abstract. Classifications are connected with theories. The connection allows us to say that classifications have something to do with truth and knowledge. The kind of intended connection influences the way of conceiving the multiplicity of possible classifications for the same collection of entities. In some cases, a classification not only organizes the knowledge we already have of the classified entities but it helps to increase it. The aspect under which knowledge and classification interact most often concerns the identity of the classified entities. A brief survey of the classifications of diseases highlights this aspect. Moreover, it highlights the fact that different classes of diseases correspond to different theories, and that there is no clearly preferable way of classifying all diseases. Some ideas for a uniform and systematic management of this variety are proposed.