

Heresy, Medicine and Paracelsianism in Sixteenth-Century Italy: the Case of Girolamo Donzellini (1513–1587)

Alessandra Celati

Summary

Many Italian physicians embraced Protestant ideas during the sixteenth Century: this suggests a connection between medical science and religious nonconformity. But why were physicians so exposed to the influence of Protestantism? Can we suppose that their heretical views affected the way in which they conceived medicine? And can we posit a particular link between certain kinds of medical thinking and specific religious doctrines? In order to analyse this relationship, I will focus on a specific character: Girolamo Donzellini. As a physician of great renown, put on trial five times by the Venetian Inquisition and eventually sentenced to death, Donzellini is a good case study. Moreover, his exposure to the works of Paracelsus allows one to put forward some considerations on Italian Paracelsianism, showing that medical attitudes often described as incompatible by historians could actually coexist in the same person, as a result of the complexity of the cultural and religious context.

Keywords: sixteenth-century Italy, medicine, paracelsianism, heresy, Girolamo Donzellini

Introduction

Considering the different professions practised by Italian heretics in the 16th century, one might well be struck by the high number of physicians who embraced non-Catholic ideas. This paper is an attempt to cast new light on the link between medical science and Protestantism, taking into account the liveliness of the Italian Renaissance medical debate, the variety of currents within it and the complexity of the religious context.¹

In order to examine this topic further I will focus on a specific character: Girolamo Donzellini.² He was a physician of great renown and, between the 1550s and the 1580s, when Italian religious dissent was still widespread and ecclesiastical repression was becoming stronger, he was put on trial five times by the Venetian Inquisition, eventually being sentenced to death. His case is therefore useful in examining religious and medical history from an interconnected perspective. The context is also meaningful. First, Donzellini practised in Venice, where religious dissent was extensive and scientific debate lively. Second, he is representative of the multiple changes Renaissance medicine was going through during the 16th century, most significantly the rise in interest in the radical medical reformer Theophrastus Paracelsus. The records of Donzellini's trials, his medical works and the letters he wrote to Protestant physicians abroad will be the main resources of this study.

If Italian historiography has analysed in detail the history of the Italian Reformation,³ the situation is different when considering the history of Renaissance medicine and, in particular, those currents which, during the 16th century, challenged the dominating Galenic tradition, primarily Paracel-

1 This paper is an extended version of a presentation I gave at the *Healing and Curing, Medieval to Modern* conference (Glasgow, August 27th–28th 2012) and is part of ongoing research for my PhD.

2 The figure of Girolamo Donzellini as an Italian Protestant doctor has been examined in Palmer 1993, 118–133. For further information about Girolamo Donzellini see Schutte 2001; Pastore 1993, 7–28. The main unpublished sources essential for deepening Donzellini's biography are the records of his trials (Venezia, Archivio di Stato, – hereafter ASV- Sant'Uffizio, Processi, "Girolamo Donzellini", Busta – hereafter Bu.– 39) and the letters he wrote to other physicians, now collected in Basel (Universitätsbibliothek, Abteilung Frey-Gryn Mscr I e II) and in Erlangen (Universitätsbibliothek, Briefsammlung Threw). A relevant resource on the general topic relating to the connection between heterodoxy and early modern science is Brooke, Maclean 2005; this connection has been recently suggested also in Addante 2010.

3 It is not possible to provide a complete bibliography here. I shall just quote some of the most important studies on the topic: Cantimori 1939; Ginzburg 1970; Caponetto 1992; Firpo 1997; Rotondò, 2008. As regards Venice, the only work providing an overall view of the Venetian religious context is Martin 1993. Other scholars have focused on specific subjects, or specific characters, within the macro-area of the Venetian Reformation: Stella 1967; Grendler 1977; Ambrosini 1999.

sianism. In Italy, in the last 30 years only a few historiographical works⁴ have dealt with this topic and this scarcity is even more noticeable as far as the relationship between Italian medicine and the Reformation is concerned. As we shall see, the study of Donzellini's experience enables one to have a closer look into the different medical perspectives animating the scientific debate in the 16th century and to relate these medical views to the prevailing religious dissent.

If Girolamo Donzellini's case is particularly meaningful, this does not mean that he was the only physician who rejected Roman Catholicism. The very fact that doctors were involved with heretical ideas suggests that there was a relationship between medical science and this type of nonconformist personal religious research. But why were physicians so exposed to the influence of Protestant doctrines? Can we suppose that Protestant beliefs affected the way in which they conceived medicine? And can we posit a particular connection between certain kinds of medical thinking and specific religious views?

To consider the topic of the inter-relationships between medical and religious views this paper will be structured in four sections. The first section will summarize Donzellini's biography, stressing what concerned his experience as a heterodox physician, describing briefly the contexts of his involvement. Section two and three will examine the connection between medicine and religion, examining the evidence from Donzellini's inquisition trials and his medical texts. The fourth and fifth sections will focus on the reception of Paracelsianism in Italy and Donzellini's role in it. Finally I will summarise the key points of my study and will suggest some perspectives for further research.

Girolamo Donzellini and the Venetian context

During the 16th century, Venice was one of the most prosperous Italian cities, with a population of well over 100,000 and a robust commercial economy. Since the middle Ages, Venice controlled trade with the Orient and, thanks to this economic power, had been able to expand its boundaries both in the mainland and overseas.

Being the capital of a Republic whose borders stretched for kilometres along Germanic lands and as a mercantile city hosting traders from all over

⁴ Considering this topic, it is particularly worth citing the fifth volume of the series of books *Il Rinascimento Italiano e l'Europa* that deals with early modern science: Clericuzio, Ernst 2008. See also Galluzzi 1982, 31–62; Ferrari 1982, 21–29; Zanier 1985, 627–649.

the world (and in particular a big community of German merchants, hosted in the *Fondaco de tedeschi*), Venice was particularly exposed to the influence of Protestant ideas, playing a crucial role in their spread.⁵ However, the city's geographical proximity to the core of the current religious revolution was not the only factor which made Venice the torchbearer of the Italian Reformation. The city was one of the most advanced printing centres in Europe, definitely unsurpassed in the publishing and distribution of Protestant books in Italy.⁶ The Republic's University, in Padua, one of the best known in Europe during the 16th century, hosted many German Lutheran students⁷ who were a vehicle of communication for heretical ideas. Furthermore, unlike most other Italian states, Venice aimed to keep the religious lives of its citizens under local control, employing lay patricians, the *Tre savi sopra l'eresia*, to assist priests in the tribunal of the Inquisition: this made the repression of heresy in the Republic somewhat peculiar in comparison with the rest of Italy.⁸ Donzellini was involved in the smuggling of banned books for about 30 years, he was a student and then a professor at Padua University and he was put on trial by the Venetian Inquisition five times: he is therefore connected to all the main features of the Venetian Reformation.

Born in 1513 in Orzi Nuovi, near Brescia (in the western part of the Republic of Venice), Girolamo Donzellini belonged to a family of intellectual religious dissenters. His father Buonamonte was in contact with many printers and his house was, since Girolamo's childhood, a centre for the circulation of prohibited books and the debating of new theological ideas. Girolamo's brother Cornelio,⁹ a former Dominican friar who openly rejected Catholicism, was a man of letters. Living between Capodistria, Venice, Ferrara and Florence, Cornelio was in contact with many religious dissenters and dealt with the Italian translation of some Protestant works, such as Calvin's *Le Petit traictè de la Sainte Cene*. He was eventually condemned to life imprisonment in Florence as a Lutheran in 1552 and died in the *Stinche* (the ancient Florentine prison) in the same year.¹⁰

5 It is significant that in 1542 Bernardino Ochino, the famous Italian Reformer, had defined Venice as the gateway to the Reformation in Italy. Piccolomini 1907, 201–207.

6 The Venetian publishing industry has been extensively analysed. In addition to the work of Grendler (see note 3), see Brown 1891; Lowry 1979; Bareggi 1988.

7 Bylebyl 1979, 335–370.

8 On the Venetian Inquisition see Del Col 2006, 342–394.

9 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Seguaci del Vergerio", Bu. 4; ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Lucio Paolo Rosello", Bu. 10. See Del Col 1978, 645–46; Fragnito 1986, 42–43; Firpo 1997, 74–77.

10 Girolamo Donzellini had another brother, Pietro, a lawyer who was put on trial by the Inquisition in Brescia too and recanted some time before 1560: the only information about this trial I know of is the one I found in Girolamo Donzellini's trial, ASV, Sant'Uffizio, Bu. 39, f. 106r.

After being educated by Michelangelo Florio, a Franciscan monk who was later defined as a “heretic apostate” by the Inquisition,¹¹ Girolamo moved to Padua. Here he graduated in medicine and philosophy in 1541,¹² becoming professor of medical theory. In 1543 he moved to Rome where, despite his employment as a doctor for cardinals Giulio Della Rovere and Durante Duranti, he started to be involved with Protestant circles, attending the heretical group gathering at the house of the Archbishop Pietro Antonio Di Capua and drawing the attention of the Inquisition for the first time. In order to avoid a potential trial, Donzellini left Rome and took shelter in Venice, where he went on practising his profession and strengthened his relations with Protestants. In 1553, though, he was prosecuted by the Inquisition in Venice and was compelled to flee again: first he went to Switzerland and later on he moved to Germany. While living beyond the Italian Alps, Donzellini became close friends with many Protestant physicians. He edited some important medical books¹³ and was part of a vibrant and lively cultural environment.

In 1560 Donzellini went back to Venice: he immediately presented himself to the Inquisition and got away with a light sentence, being able to practise medicine again. He then became part of the College of Physicians in Verona, a city near Venice, holding important positions there, but in 1574 he was put on trial again, sentenced to life imprisonment by the Holy Office and expelled from the College.¹⁴ Nevertheless, thanks to his medical ability, Donzellini was able to avoid life imprisonment. During the plague of 1576 he was temporarily released in order to fight the epidemic; after that the authorities decided to pardon him and to let him go back to his professional life (April 1577).¹⁵ Yet, he was arrested again one year later, and this time he was compelled to quit medical practice for ever. On September 23rd 1578, Donzellini was sentenced to house arrest, compelled to pay 2,000 *ducati* as a deposit and prohibited to practise medicine: the important patricians who

11 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Girolamo Donzellini”, Bu. 39, f. 35r. Michelangelo, who had fled from Italy to England for religious reasons in 1550, was the father of John Florio, the well-known linguist and royal language tutor at the court of James I.

12 Martellozzo Forin 1970, 97.

13 For example some of Gian Battista Da Monte’s works, one of the most admired physicians of his age, like *Consultationes medicae de variorum morborum curationibus* (Basel: P. Perna, 1557); *Consilia medica quae ullibi extant nunc primum edita ... in tres partes distributa ab infinitis mendis repurgata*, (Basel: P. Perna, 1557); and *Opuscula varia Io. B. Montani medici ... cum eiusdem epistola nuncupatoria d. Iulio Alexandrino medico Romanorum regis*, (Basel: P. Perna, 1557).

14 Pastore 1993, 23.

15 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Girolamo Donzellini”, Bu. 39, f. 212r.

interceded on Donzellini's behalf could not avert the sentence.¹⁶ In 1577 and in 1578 these sentences were decided upon in Rome and communicated to Venice by letter, the first time signed by Cardinal Scipione Rebiba, the second by Cardinal Giacomo Savelli. This testifies that Donzellini's was considered an important case, worthy of careful examination by the central seat of the Holy Office in Rome.

It is likely Donzellini did not honour the prohibition for he went on reading and smuggling banned books and did not abandon his interest in medical science. In 1587, quite recklessly, Donzellini still boasted about his banned book collection¹⁷ and in the same year he was caught again by the Inquisition and drowned as a *relapso* in the lagoon at night, the silent execution that the Venetian government preferred to the spectacular stake. The books belonging to his beloved private library were burned a few days later.

The lists drawn up in order to prepare and publish the *Sixtine Index of Prohibited Books* (1590) bear evidence of the interest that the Congregation for the Index had in Donzellini's medical works. In particular, a list dating back to the period when the *Sixtine Index* was being prepared (1587–1590) records a series of books published in Germany and France considered “dangerous” for Italian readers. This list contains a *Sinopsis de Peste*, printed in 1583, which includes “Donzellini et al.”¹⁸ As is well-known, the Index issued by Sisto V was very severe, containing twice as many names as there were in the first class of the Tridentine Index and forbidding, in the ninth rule, the circulation of innocent books written by heretical writers, unless their names were hidden. This prohibition, already set in Pope Paul III's bulls *In Apostolicis culminis* and *Licet ab initio* (respectively January and July 1542) and confirmed in the 1559 Pauline Index, indicated that the Church was more interested in the heretical author than in his work. Being attenuated in the *Tridentine Index*, which admitted the reading of books by Protestants “qui de religione non tractant”, this rule was set down again in the *Sixtine Index*, where all the books written by heretical authors were prohibited “sive de religione sive de quocunque alio argumento tractant”. It was according to this principle that Donzellini's work was added to the list quoted above. When Sixtus V died, soon after the Index's publication in 1590, the diffusion of his Index was interrupted and in the next list of prohibited books (Clementine Index, 1596) Donzellini's work is not included. Nevertheless, that list of

16 The names of those patricians are not quoted in the Inquisition records; the Inquisitors just speak about “some gentlemen”. For further information about this trial see ASV, Sant'Uffizio, “Nascimbene Nascimbene”, Bu. 30.

17 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, “Giorgio Valgrisi”, Bu. 59, f. 1v.

18 Baldini, Spruit 2009, tome 1, 318.

dangerous works which were published outside Italy is important because it proves that Donzellini's medical books were enjoying international circulation even after his death and that, after he was executed, and actually because of his execution, they were considered for censorship. Given that the Holy Office in Rome had paid considerable attention to Donzellini's case, it is not surprising that this concern also extended to his medical works.

In sentencing Donzellini to death there must have been a Roman intervention as well; at the very least, the new conservative Doge, Pasquale Cicogna, must have sought to please the Holy See. Indeed, in a manuscript collected in the Fondo Cicogna at Museo Correr in Venice, under the date May 10th 1587 we read:

In these days the Holy Office of the Inquisition sentenced to death by drowning Girolamo Donzellini, physician, heretic *relapso*, and then another Frenchman, *relapso* as well, and the pope was very happy with that and thanked Venice saying that God will always protect the *Repubblica*.¹⁹

Apart from witnessing the Holy See's concern regarding Donzellini's case, this document is meaningful because it is one of the few which provide information about Donzellini's execution. Donzellini's death sentence is not recorded in Venice, in the *Archivio di Stato*, and has never been found:²⁰ we must therefore rely on other records in order to reconstruct the last days of the physician. One of these is the declaration a witness gave to the Inquisitors during the trial of Claudio Textor, the Frenchman executed a few days after Donzellini's death. Claudio Textor was an alchemist and a religious heterodox, denounced to the Inquisitors by one of his colleagues, the alchemist Marcello De Giulii, in 1587. According to the informer, not only did Textor use to "say heretical things", but when he heard of Donzellini's execution he was shocked, terrified, as if it meant he would have been next.²¹ Another witness spoke about Donzellini while accusing someone else of heresy. During Giorgio Valgrisi's trial, which took place in August 1587 shortly after Donzellini's execution, Father Alvise Ferro gave testimony saying that Valgrisi, a printer and editor, was in touch with the physician "sentenced to death by the Inquisition" and that that likely meant Valgrisi

19 Fondo Cicogna, ms. 2556, *Annali delle cose della repubblica di Venezia degli anni 1587–1588*: «In questi giorni il Santo Offizio dell'Inquisizione si mandò annegar Gerolamo Donzellino medico eretico relapso, et appresso un altro francese medesimo relapso, di che il papa restò molto soddisfatto e ne ringratiò la signoria dicendo che Dio sempre proteggerà questo stato.»

20 According to Salvatore Bongi, the text of Donzellini's last trial and death sentence might have been concealed, or even destroyed, by the officers of the Republic of Venice for "reasons of state". Bongi 1890, vol. I, 351. Further research in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano in Rome could perhaps help to solve the mystery.

21 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Claudio Textor Francese", Bu. 59, f.1v. For further information about Claudio Textor see Stella 1967, 159–185.

shared the same heretical ideas.²² The testimony of De Giuli and Ferro is not only relevant because it gives some more detail on Donzellini's death, but also because it provides information about the network of Donzellini's relations²³ at the end of his life: he was in contact with an alchemist and with a printer, probably sharing with the former an interest in distillation and new chemical remedies, and with the latter a passion for books, especially those prohibited by the Inquisition.

Medicine and heresy in the Counter-Reformation

In the Middle Ages medical theory was rooted in the work of Hippocrates and Galen but, during this period, there was a general movement toward the Christianization of medicine. The health of the body came to be linked to the purity of the soul; devotional practices such as praying to the patron saints of specific diseases, or believing in the healing power of relics, became common; the image of Christ as a physician (the Augustinian *Christus medicus* healer of both the body and the soul) spread. Thus, in the Middle Ages, the Hippocratic-Galenic medicine mingled with Christianity: religion and medicine mixed with each other, shaping a new kind of medical theory and practice, based on both the Classical and the Christian traditions.²⁴

However, as Donzellini's case shows, this general link between medicine and religion increased during the Counter-Reformation, when physicians were supposed to serve the Church in its claim to a wide spiritual control of society and when practising medicine required strict religious orthodoxy. Throughout the Council of Trent, the Church had defined a specific Catholic doctrine, renewed and reorganized the clerical structure, and strengthened the power of the Pope and the Ecclesiastical hierarchies. After that, they were better positioned to manage some of the population who were still questioning Church's authority, not respecting the new rules set down in Trent, both in terms of private behaviour and of religious beliefs.²⁵ Although renewed and strengthened, Catholic hierarchies needed all other institutions, including the College of physicians, to collaborate in the aim of religious uniformity. At the same time, in the 16th century, when medical practice was

22 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Giorgio Valgrisi", Bu. 59, f. 5v.

23 For further information on Donzellini's relations with other heretics, physicians, printers and alchemists see Shutte 2001 and ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39.

24 As regards the connection between medicine and religion in the Middle Ages, see Ziegler 1998; Biller, Ziegler 2001; Duffin 2009.

25 See Prosperi 1996.

changing and the rise in popularity of charlatan healers posed a challenge to the College's supremacy,²⁶ this institution had to remain spotless and well-respected, and respectability meant being God-fearing Catholics. It is not a coincidence that Pio IV in 1564, soon after the end of the Tridentine Council, established in the papal bull *In Sacrosancta* that, in order to graduate, students had to profess their Catholicism and provide two witnesses who were supposed to testify about the candidates' religious orthodoxy. The solid association between the medical profession and the Catholic Church explains why Donzellini's religious crimes were repeatedly punished in ways directed at his medical career. When he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1575, he was thrown out of the College and his name was literally erased from the membership list, since the sentence was perceived as shameful for the whole medical association. Three years later, Girolamo was ordered to stop practising medicine for being complicit in the escape of one of his patients, Nascimbene Nascimbeni,²⁷ a known heretic who had been put under house arrest at Donzellini's home and had fled. There was no place for heresy in the medical profession and these examples provide some idea of how, in these years, the matter of religious conformity was also becoming crucial in the field of medicine.

That the Roman Church was paying considerable attention to physicians highlights the special position doctors occupied in society: healing the body, they were supposed to deal with the soul too. This statement is not surprising when one considers that, as a legacy of a tradition derived from Plato and broadly received by Galen,²⁸ early modern medicine perceived the body and the soul as strictly linked, holding that the soul could be affected by the states of the body.²⁹ Besides being daily directly involved in the battle between life and death, doctors seem therefore to have been acting on the border-land between the heavens and the earth. In such a religious culture and in times of high mortality, outbreak of epidemics, spread of new diseases, the very mission of physicians, dealing with pain, sufferance and death,

26 Gentilcore 2006.

27 Nascimbene Nascimbeni was a priest and a man of letters from Ferrara. He became a follower of Giorgio Rioli (known as "Siculo"), the radical, mystic monk from Sicily who had founded a heretical sect taking distance from both Catholic and Protestant Churches. Nascimbeni was put on trial three times and eventually sentenced to life imprisonment; after eight years the Inquisitors accorded to him, by that time old and sick, the permission to move to the house of Donzellini, who had been a companion of his in jail and who was supposed to heal Nascimbeni. ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Nascimbene Nascimbeni", Bu. 30. On Nascimbene Nascimbeni see also Prosperi 2000, in particular 322–341.

28 Hankinson 2006, 232–258.

29 We can find particularly good evidence of this conception in Girolamo Mercuriale's *De Arte Gymnastica*. For a deep analysis of the relation between the body and the soul in Mercuriale's work see Agasse 2008, 1041–1067.

acquired a charitable, spiritual, redemptive dimension, sharing the same playground as religion. However, the more the influence of the Counter-Reformation grew stronger, the more it appeared worthwhile to subordinate physicians to Roman ecclesiastical hierarchies. The Roman Church was aware that, in the battle against heresy, doctors could and had to be its useful allies. This explains why they were required to testify about the orthodoxy of their patients and it also says something about Pio's V *Super gregem dominicum*, the papal bull, enacted in 1566, which forced doctors to stop providing care to those who did not confess within three days of the physician's first visit.

Nonetheless, the very fact that the pope had to set out these rules in a bull suggests that they were not completely respected. Especially at death's door, the role of physicians was ambiguous and, in fact, it could happen, as for example in the case of the heretic physician Teofilo Panarelli, that they advised their dying patients not to renounce their Protestant beliefs, to refuse confession and to reject the administration of other catholic sacraments like the *Extrema unction*.³⁰ It is therefore understandable why the Church was so interested in having doctors under its own control. Teofilo Panarelli's case is indeed indicative of the potential intersections between medicine, natural philosophy and heresy in sixteenth-century Italy: as Paul Grendler has shown, having studied medicine at Padua University, Panarelli had likely absorbed Marcantonio De Passeri's teachings on the mortality of the soul and we can't rule out that these theories had something to do with the non-conformist suggestions he gave to his dying patients.³¹ Panarelli's sister testified in front of the Inquisitors that her brother "denied Purgatory as a philosopher", by which she probably meant that he had learned and accepted the philosophical position that soul was mortal, whose logical consequence was Purgatory's nonexistence and catholic sacraments' non-necessity.³² Panarelli was eventually sentenced to death by the Inquisition in Rome in 1572, as an obstinate heretic, and the harshness of this punishment shows that the Church was by no means willing to tolerate heterodox philosophical and religious ideas, especially when expressed by people, such as physicians, occupying such a very delicate position in society. At the deathbed, medicine and religion, the priest and the doctor, stood side by side, but their position was not quite even: in Counter-Reformation Italy, it was doctors who had to

30 Palmer 1993, 120–121.

31 Donzellini was in touch with Marcantonio De Passeri too. During his trial he said to the Inquisitors that, sometime in the early 1550s, the two of them and Girolamo Zanchi had a discussion about free will. See ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39, f. 50r.

32 Grendler 2002, 293–294; Pierce 2003, 123–125.

bow to the authority of the Church, renouncing their philosophical and religious beliefs and adapting their medical action to the Holy Roman Church's demands.

Heresy and medicine in Donzellini's case

Despite papal claims for physicians' orthodoxy, we know that doctors had many chances to come to know religiously non-conformist ideas. For instance, according to what he declared to the Inquisitors, being a physician Donzellini would attend apothecaries' shops, which, as Filippo De Vivo has shown, were actually important centres for the circulation and communication of heretical doctrines.³³ Before his flight, Girolamo Donzellini used to practice at the *Spezieria del Saracino*, run by the Fenari brothers Marco and Ippolito.³⁴ The latter was called before the Inquisitors as a witness during Donzellini's first trial in 1553: he gave his word that Donzellini was a "kind, moderate, erudite person" and said that, when he arrived in Venice, Donzellini first came into contact with the philo-Protestant circle gathering at the house of the English ambassador Edmund Harvel, and later on started to attend the *Spezieria del Saracino*.³⁵ It might therefore be argued that Donzellini's heretic friends suggested that he begin his professional activity at the Fenaris' shop because it was renowned as a safe place, attended by religious dissidents. Moreover, Donzellini himself didn't deny that he had been involved in theological discussions between physicians taking place at apothecaries' shops.³⁶

It must also be considered that, as a general rule, doctors had very close contact with patients, who they used to visit at their homes almost daily. This relationship was sometimes the result of sharing the same religious views; sometimes it represented the opportunity to start some activity of heretical propaganda; sometimes it was one of the ways physicians came into contact with Protestant doctrines. As far as Donzellini is concerned, he embodies all these different aspects in some way. In the first trial in 1553 and in the second in 1560, he was indeed charged with having been too close to Protestants, becoming in this way *vehementemente suspecto* (strongly under suspicion) of heresy. He defended himself saying that, as a result of his

33 De Vivo 2007a, 505–521; De Vivo 2007b, 86–119.

34 For further information about the Fenari brothers see Palmer 1985, 100–117.

35 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39, f. 13r–14v.

36 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39, 49v.

professional life, he could not help being in touch with every sort of person, including heretics. Describing Venice as a city “curious” about all sort of new theological doctrines, he explained that his “art” (his medical profession), being necessary to everybody, had given him many chances to become friends with every kind of person and he also said that learned people living in the city were the most inclined to absorb new theological ideas. It was therefore not surprising that, among his friends, many had been condemned for their religious views.³⁷ Nevertheless, according to what witnesses reported to the Inquisitors, even if Donzellini might have heard of heterodox ideas because he was exposed to the influence of heretic sick people and doctors, he was certainly enjoying their company. Particularly good evidence of this is Donzellini’s relationship with Gasparo and Pantasilea Parma. The latter was a patient of his but, according to many witnesses who gave testimony during the 1575 trial, Donzellini used to visit Parma’s home for non-professional reasons. In particular, Parma’s landlord, known as Agostino Dal Leonbianco, testified that many people, including Donzellini, used to gather at Parma’s house, reading books and debating religious subjects; Gasparo Parma himself, when interviewed as a witness, admitted that the doctor used to “speak freely about religion and read banned books” with him.³⁸ We also know that Donzellini was using his professional role to pass on Protestant doctrines and books, even in a Catholic nunnery. In the deposition a woman called Marietta Cagnon gave to the Inquisitors on April 23rd 1575, concerning the flight of two nuns from the monastery of Santa Lucia in Venice, she said that Donzellini had passed his heretical ideas on to them, providing them with prohibited books and convincing them to escape. Marietta reported that the two nuns used to say that God had established neither nuns nor friars and, when she was asked how she knew that the two religious women owned prohibited books, she answered: “Because that treacherous physician gave those books to them, and he was the reason for all those bad things”.³⁹

Physicians could therefore be particularly inclined to embrace and share non catholic ideas because of their lifestyle. But this was not the only way they absorbed these theories: doctors belonged to the intellectual elite; sometimes they were writers, most of all they were insatiable readers. Considering this, the case of Donzellini is again meaningful: it was primarily through reading the heretical books his religious comrades had given to him

37 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Girolamo Donzellini”, Bu. 39, 48v.

38 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Girolamo Donzellini”, Bu. 39, 134r–135v, 151r–153v.

39 “Perché quel traditor de quel medego ghei dava, qual è stata causa de tutto quel mal”, ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Girolamo Donzellini”, Bu. 39, 123v.

that he embraced non-Catholic ideas,⁴⁰ it was mainly through distributing these books that he carried out his proselytism. In a deposition to the inquisitor he declared that his intellectual curiosity, along with the fact that he was living in a period of intellectual restlessness, had led him to read banned works, smuggling them and being interested in religious innovations.⁴¹ The possession and distribution of prohibited books is indeed a common element in all of Donzellini's trials, being a recurring charge. According to the Inquisition records, Donzellini had read and exchanged with his religious comrades classic books of the Reformation such as Melanchthon's *Loci Communes Theologi*, Urbanus Rhegius' *Nova Doctrina*, Celio Secondo Curione's *Pasquino in Estasi* and Francesco Negri's *Tragedia del Libero Arbitrio*.⁴² Furthermore he owned, and was involved in the smuggling of, scientific works written by authors belonging to the first class of the Index of prohibited books.⁴³ This continued beyond the years of the trials: in May 1581, the Inquisitor of Como held up the transport of some suspect books about medicine and alchemy which some Swiss publishers had sent to a group of Venetian booksellers and which had to be smuggled into Italy by Donzellini.⁴⁴ Moreover, the letters to the Protestant scientist and philosopher Theodor Zwinger, which Donzellini wrote from the 1560s until the last months of his life, show that he did not stop asking for forbidden books from Germany, even after he was put on trial for the fourth time, avoiding permanent prison by a hair. On the contrary, according to a witness, in 1587, shortly

40 When recanting in 1574, Donzellini said: "Il primo mio errore fu quando lasciata la dottrina catolica per la lettura di libri proibiti mi accostai all'heresie" (My first error was when, through reading heretical books, I left Catholic doctrine and approached heresies). ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39, 182r.

41 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39, 48r.

42 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39, f. 47v.

43 When the Inquisition's inspectors searched Donzellini's house in 1574, they found many medical books written by authors such as Conrad Gesner or Joachim Camerarius. ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39, 173r.

44 Here are some titles of the distrained books. If Donzellini was taking the risk of smuggling them, it was because he was interested in their circulation; therefore they provide some meaningful details about his cultural interests: *Fasciculum Remediorum ex Dioscoride et Mathiolo per Iustum Molerum*, (Basel: P. Perna, 1579); *Raymundi Lullij Maioricani Philosophi etc. Libelli Aliquot Chemicis, Excepto Vademecum est Testimonium Novissimum*, (Basel: P. Perna, 1572); *Aureoli Theophrasti Paracelsi Heremitaee Opera*, (Basel: P. Perna, 1575); *Io Chrisippi Famiani de Arte Metalicae Methamorphoseos. Item de Fine Artis Alchemiae, an Alchemia Sit Ars Legitima*, (Basel: P. Perna, 1576); *Ioannis Guinteri Andernaci Medicj etc. de Medicina Veteri et Nova tum Cognoscenda, tum Facienda Commentarij*, (Basel: Henricpetri, 1571); *In Galeni librum de Constitutione Artis Medicae Tabulae et Comentarij per Theodorum Zwingerum Basiliensem*, (Basel: Oporinum, 1561); *Marsilii Ficini Florentini etc. Opera una cum Chronologia hoc est Sententiarum ex Iisdem Operibus Collectarum*, (Basel: Henricpetri, 1561); *Opera omnia Picci Mirandulanij*, (Basel: Henricpetri, 1572); *Item Hieronimi Cardani in Ptolom. De Astrorum Iudicij* [...], (Basel: Henricpetri, 1554). On this episode see Baldini, Spruit 2009, tome I, 683–704.

before he was caught for the last time and sentenced to death, Donzellini maintained that he wanted to “keep prohibited works, in defiance of the Inquisition”.⁴⁵

Donzellini’s adherence to Protestant beliefs and his passion for medicine likely strengthened one another to a particularly strong degree: being educated as a Protestant by his father Buonamonte, Donzellini found in his role as a physician a strong reason for reading and smuggling banned books as well as for being in touch with Protestant physicians, at home and abroad, and for persisting in the rejection of Roman worship. His rational attitude led him to reject those aspects of Catholicism which he considered superstitious and not essential for one’s salvation. For instance, he said to his housemaid that it was not compulsory to observe the practice of fasting during Lent, especially for those who were ill and that “other are the sins which one should not commit”.⁴⁶ Furthermore he denied purgatory, Saint’s intercession and miraculous powers,⁴⁷ the worship of images and the necessity to confess.⁴⁸ As regards Donzellini’s faith, Palmer has argued that he persisted in taking risks (for instance holding prohibited books), because of his theological Protestant outlook, which stressed the *providence* of God. Palmer found some good evidence of Donzellini’s hopeful abandonment to the will of God in the letters the physician wrote to Joachim Camerarius.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, I think that the doctrinal dimension was, for Donzellini, not as important as his inability to renounce his intellectual activity (both in terms of science and religion) which was what led him to break the Inquisition’s rules. As we can argue reading the records of his trials, his faith was in the range of Lutheranism (he agreed with the *Confessio Augustana*), but he was not particularly interested in doctrinal speculation. What was important to him was the moral and spiritual aspect of religion: he was not reticent to recant twice and he adopted *nicodemitic*⁵⁰ behaviour after being released, taking

45 «Un giorno sentii il Donzellino, tratando di libri proibiti che i frati di San Domenico proibivano alcuni libri, e che il Donzellini disse in bottega del Valgriso: io li voglio tener a suo dispetto». ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Giorgio Valgrisi”, Bu. 59, 1v.

46 Donzellini’s maid testified that “Al mezzo della quaresima in circa io dicevo che voglio mangiar anchor mi della carne e lui mi diceva: “mangiaghene” et mi dimandandogli si faria peccato lui diceva “guardatevi de altri peccati”. ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Girolamo Donzellini”, Bu. 39, f. 11v, 101r.

47 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Girolamo Donzellini”, Bu. 39, f. 11v; 104r.

48 ASV, Sant’Uffizio, “Girolamo Donzellini”, Bu. 39, f. 101r, 105r.

49 Palmer 1993, 126.

50 Historiography, starting from Jean Calvin definition, has described *nicodemism* as the behaviours of dissimulation adopted by religious dissidents, that is to say forms of conduct in order to hide a disagreement in respect of doctrine, sacramental device, rituals and ceremonies of the Church in which somebody continues to be publicly a member. On the concept of nicodemism see Ginzburg 1970; Biondi 1974; Simoncelli 1979.

part in religious processions, confessing regularly and being close to Agostino Valier, Bishop of Verona, who interceded on Donzellini's behalf during the physician's third trial. Donzellini did not try to escape from Italy again (except when it was too late, in the early 1580s) and what seems really to have got him into trouble was his attitude as a physician, which led him to practise with heretics and to read banned works.

However, the texts of Donzellini's recantations show that he did agree with the primacy of an evangelical faith, was concerned about the abuses of the clergy, rejected the authority of catholic hierarchies and shared the concept of *sola Scriptura*.⁵¹ It is likely that this kind of faith might have affected the way he conceived medicine: no more merely bowing to ancient authorities, but as a search for new solutions, based on direct inquiries into nature and the observation and study of symptoms. Concerning this, it is worth quoting the case of the Galenic physicians Girolamo Mercuriale⁵² and Girolamo Capodivacca who failed to recognize the illness which spread in Venice in 1575 as plague, since it seemed not to be contagious, and so not to match the main feature stated by Galen as evidence of plague.⁵³ In contrast, Donzellini, in a treatise he wrote about plague in 1576, when he was in captivity, clearly maintained that plague should be diagnosed whenever the appropriate symptoms were observed, no matter if only in one person and regardless of Galen's teachings.⁵⁴

However, the attitude that Protestant physicians such as Donzellini had towards healing, did not affect the general connection between medicine and Christianity: the certainty of being in the hands of God, and that God was ultimately responsible for health and sickness as well as for life and death, continued and was even stronger among those physicians who shared the Lutheran idea of *providence*. On the other hand, as it is arguable referring again to Donzellini's treatise about plague, this religious dimension was, for Protestant doctors, a purely introspective one. Suggesting that his patients pray to God in order to mitigate His anger and so be safe from the plague, Donzellini does not mention any kind of collective rituals or ecclesiastic intermediaries; in contrast, processions, masses, fasting and devotion to statues

51 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, "Girolamo Donzellini", Bu. 39, f. 182r.

52 On Mercuriale and the Venetian plague see: Siraisi 2007, 102–105; Palmer 2008, 51–65; Nutton 2006, 5–19.

53 On the Venetian plague of 1575 see Marsilio 1980; Preto 1978.

54 Donzellini 1577. "I say that everywhere one finds the same sets of characteristics, that is, the effects, signs, and accidents of the plague, and [if these are present] it is right to call it by its name, even if only one man is found with them. To the opposition which retorts that such is not an epidemic, I say that this is not pertinent:" I owe the English translation of this quotation to Cohn 2010, 166.

and images of Saints embodied a typical example of Catholic spirituality during the Counter-Reformation and were, for instance, suggested by Cardinal Borromeo in Milan, as a way to overcome the epidemics.⁵⁵ Opposing this kind of worship Donzellini says that the only valid spiritual remedy is the inner faith of the believer, his certainty that, if he prays with pureness and sincere trust in God, he will be recovered:

The will of God is the general cause for every sort of plague, since it is cause and origin of everything; hence, given that God sends the calamity as a punishment, one needs first of all to pray to Him with true faith, being sure that He will fulfil one's desire if the request is addressed with a pure and sincere soul.⁵⁶

If the arguments for the general practical and theoretical connections between heresy and medicine are convincing, it remains to examine the potential relationship between certain kinds of medical thinking and Protestant religious views.

Galen or Paracelsus?

Medicine in the Renaissance period was going through many changes. If the Aristotelian tradition continued, during the age of Humanism it was enriched as physicians had the chance to read ancient medical books (by Hippocrates or Galen) in restored original editions. The humanistic approach, although conservative in its guiding suggestion to go back to the ancient fathers of medicine, ended up stimulating a new attitude towards nature. When they were trying to find evidence of what they had read in the books of Hippocrates, Galen and Dioscorides, many 16th-century men of science, including Donzellini, developed a new interest in direct observation.⁵⁷ So, if the changes in Renaissance and humanistic medicine did not affect the medieval attitude of dependence on ancient authority, they did increase the breadth of the intellectual vision. In the same period, experimentation with new remedies became more and more important. Considering this, probably the main revolution in Renaissance medicine was that brought about by the very singular Swiss physician Theophrastus Paracelsus, who was actually radically opposed to the humanistic tradition. Paracelsus elaborated an original

55 Preto 1978, 77–79.

56 «General causa di tutte le pesti è la volontà di Dio, che è causa di ogni cosa essere e origine; quindi prima di tutto, visto che Dio manda il flagello come punizione, bisogna rivolgersi a Lui con preghiera, mossi da vera fede, certi che esaudirà nostra richiesta se proposta con animo puro e sincero.» Donzellini 1577, 8.

57 Bylebyl 1979, 335–370.

medical and philosophical system, which was at the same time still connected with the medieval tradition (because of his interest in alchemy and astrology) and was a forerunner of the modern scientific method.

Many historians have dealt with Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, known as Paracelsus; floods of words have been spent trying to describe this slippery and fascinating character, which was at the same time a physician, an empiric, an alchemist, and a theologian. Trying to summarize in these few pages the complexity and breadth of his thought would be impossible.⁵⁸ He can be described as a pioneer in the practice of chemistry, a very strong antagonist of the Galenic tradition, a staunch opponent of a rigid, unchanging, merely theoretical knowledge and an adversary of any kind of institution: from the College of physicians to the University system, from the Roman Catholic clergy to the new Protestant churches. What is particularly interesting here is that, even though Paracelsus actually refused to be associated with Luther (his nickname was “Luterus medicorum”), the connection between Paracelsianism and the Reformation is actually quite strong, as many historians have shown.⁵⁹ These theories developed in the same cultural and religious German context; they shared the same strong anticlericalism, and if Paracelsus, especially after the Peasants’ war, grew distant from Luther, he was nevertheless close to many Swiss reformers and developed an inclusive and spiritual non-Catholic Christianity.

It is therefore worthwhile examining whether heretical physicians might have favoured these new theories. The story of the early reception of Paracelsianism in Italy still has to be analysed in an exhaustive way; nevertheless we know that Girolamo Donzellini was involved in it. In fact, even if, as a learned physician, he claimed to be a Galenic Aristotelian doctor, he actually owned many books written by Paracelsus. He had received them from his friend and companion in faith Pietro Perna⁶⁰, a former monk who had also escaped from Italy for religious reasons and had set up a printing press in Basel: Donzellini was Perna’s first collaborator, and for about 30 years he went on smuggling the books he received from Basel. Perna had been one of the main early printers of Paracelsus’ original texts and he relied on Donzellini to distribute them in Italy.

58 The bibliography relating to Paracelsus is extensive. The pioneer in the study of this character and his thought was Walter Pagel, whose book is still an essential resource: Pagel 1958. Today, one of the main experts on Paracelsus is Charles Webster; see in particular: Webster 1983; Webster 1993, 57–77; Webster 2008. A relevant resource is also Grell 1998; Sholz Williams, Gunnoe 2002; for an introduction and English translation of Paracelsus’s works written between 1529 and 1532, see Weeks, 2008.

59 Weeks 1997; Webster 2008.

60 On Pietro Perna see Perini 2002, Rotondò 2008.

It is significant that the very first edition of Paracelsus' *De Vita Longa*, prepared by Adam Bodenstein in collaboration with Pietro Perna in 1560, had been dedicated to the Venetian Doge and Senate. As Perifano has shown,⁶¹ the aim of these early Paracelsus followers was to establish a connection with a context that they perceived as religiously tolerant, reluctant to accept Ecclesiastical interventions, and active in the printing and distribution of a wide variety of books. Furthermore, despite the law that in 1488 had forbidden alchemy in Venice, the city was renowned as a lively place for the study and practice of this discipline, one more reason, for Bodenstein and Perna, to consider Venice a potential centre for the reception and spread of Paracelsianism. Some of Donzellini's friends were indeed expert alchemists⁶² and in particular one of them, the charlatan doctor from Verona Tomaso Zefiriele Bovio,⁶³ was probably the first to receive Paracelsus' books from Donzellini.

Bovio was not a Galenic doctor at all; he was an expert in alchemy and he became a supporter of Paracelsian theories, differing in this from the description of charlatan healers given in Gentilcore's book.⁶⁴ He belonged to a noble family; he had studied law at university, but he did not graduate; for a while he had been a soldier, then he had started to practice as an itinerant doctor, becoming famous also as an astrologer. In order to be accepted by society and to increase his business, since he was not part of the College of physicians, Bovio used to boast about his popularity and to overstate the qualities of his remedies (for example, he claimed that he had invented two kinds of remedy: the first was for humankind, but he would use the second only when Zeus called him to heal the Olympic gods). It is quite interesting that his books were reprinted many times during the seventeenth century: this shows that, in that period, the alchemical Paracelsian tradition became more fashionable in Italy.

In one of his works, Bovio says that he was a close friend of Donzellini and that, between the 1570s and the 1580s, the physician lent him many Paracelsian books. Donzellini had invited Bovio to his house, in order to show him his Paracelsian collection and ask the charlatan to provide him with the alchemical knowledge essential for a deep comprehension of these works.⁶⁵

61 Perifano 2000, 49–61.

62 For instance, Claudio Textor, the Frenchman who was in touch with Donzellini and was sentenced to death by the Inquisition soon after the physician's execution. According to his own testimony, Textor had moved to Venice in order to enjoy a stimulating environment in the exercise of alchemy. Although it is not entirely clear what sort of relationship existed between Textor and Donzellini, their contact suggests the latter's interest in alchemy and new chemical remedies. See footnote 21.

63 Dal Fiume 1983, 32–59; Ingegno 1985, 164–174;

64 Gentilcore 2006.

65 Bovio 1585, 44–46.

So, as far as we can see, Donzellini was actually involved in the distribution of these books. But that is not all; the matter is much more complicated. In 1583 Bovio had written a book lashing out against learned physicians (*Flagello de' Medici Rationali*),⁶⁶ in 1584 an unknown physician, Claudio Gelli, replied to him with a pamphlet (*Risposta dell'Eccellente Dottor Claudio Gelli ad un Certo Libro Contra Medici Rationali*),⁶⁷ saying that Bovio was an impostor and that he envied learned physicians because he would have loved to be part of the College but they did not accept him. Now, in a letter written in 1585 by Donzellini to the emperor's physician Johannes Crato von Krafftheim, we discover that *Claudio Gelli* was actually the pseudonym under which Donzellini had written the pamphlet against Bovio; the author of the pamphlet was Donzellini himself.⁶⁸

So, we could say that the story takes place on two different levels: on the one hand, Bovio and Donzellini are close friends, they share the same interests and Donzellini, the theoretical learned physician, asks Bovio, the quack, to instruct him in alchemy as an approach to non-conventional medicine; on the other hand, Donzellini (hidden behind a pseudonym) writes a pamphlet against the charlatan, because Bovio practises medicine without being a learned physician, deals with alchemy and is not a Galenic.

Starting from this episode, the few historians who have dealt with the reception of Paracelsianism in Italy have placed Donzellini in two opposite medical traditions. On one side Marco Ferrari,⁶⁹ stressing the importance of Bovio's testimony, has underlined Donzellini's role in the spread of Paracelsianism, and Antonio Clericuzio,⁷⁰ even if not quoting Donzellini directly, has emphasized the connection between Paracelsianism and heresy, maintaining that, at least in the early stages, Paracelsian theories in Italy were especially promoted and absorbed in philo-Protestant circles. On the other side, Paolo Galluzzi⁷¹ and Giancarlo Zanier have deconstructed this image since in Italy Paracelsian theories found a good level of acceptance in Catholic contexts, like the Medici court of Florence, or among characters who were never brought before the Inquisition and thrived in the age of the Counter-Refor-

66 Bovio, 1583.

67 Gelli, 1584.

68 "De chymicis tecum sentio, nec ego illis utor, nisi in chronicis quibusdam, de quibus meam sententiam intelleges brevi, cum leges libellum quendam a me nuper editum contra quendam empiricum chymicum, qui librum edidit, cui titulum fecit Il Flagello di medici razionali, Italica ista sunt. Ego alieno nomine ita illum tractavi, ut illum suae audaciae poenituerit.". Scholtz von Rosenau 1598, 155. This letter has been quoted in Zanier 1985, 635; Ingegno 1985, 169.

69 Ferrari 1982, 23–24.

70 Clericuzio 2005, 59–80.

71 Galluzzi 1982, 31– 61.

mation, like Leonardo Fioravanti.⁷² Zanier in particular has described Donzellini as a conservative Galenic physician, on the basis of his letter to Crato and the treatise he wrote under the pseudonym of Claudio Gelli.⁷³

So, from one perspective one could easily suggest that, after a temporary interest in Paracelsianism, Donzellini sincerely rejected these ideas as he wrote in the letter to Crato.⁷⁴ His interest in distillation and chemical remedies is not enough to consider him a follower of Paracelsus and, as a learned physician, he naturally rose up against Bovio and his claim to practise medicine without the appropriate institutional education. However, Donzellini actually lent Paracelsian books to Bovio, he was the Italian agent of Perna and he corresponded with Swiss physicians like Theodor Zwinger, who used to teach Paracelsian theories and to publish Paracelsian book.⁷⁵ In order to better understand this complex situation, it is worth considering the threat Paracelsianism posed to Galenism and to connect this issue to the spread of heresy in 16th Century Italy. The reaction of the official medical community to Paracelsianism in Italy went through three phases: the first was prohibition; the second was toleration alongside Galenic medicine; the third was admittance into the pharmacopoeias from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, two hundred years after its first appearance.⁷⁶ In the first phase, the curiosity in new scientific ideas could be linked to the embracing of new religious doctrines: as the case of Donzellini shows, those who had an interest in Paracelsianism were often involved in theological dissent as well. It is also worth remembering that by the 1580s, when these events took place, Donzellini had already undergone four Inquisition trials: in Italy, during the Counter-Reformation, “Paracelsian” might have been taken as a synonym for “heretic”,⁷⁷ so the necessity of hiding his interest in Paracelsianism and the need to stress his distance from an ambiguous character like Bovio could have led Donzellini to write the pamphlet. Furthermore, writing a pamphlet, in the name of the whole College of Physicians, could have been a last, desperate attempt by Donzellini to regain respect and consideration from the College after being expelled.⁷⁸ It is also possible that, in the letter to Crato,

72 Camporesi 2007.

73 Zanier 1985, 628, 635

74 «Ego aliquando libros omnes Paracelsi apud me habui, sed cum ex eorum lectione nihil proficerem, pro aliis permutavi, nec in mea Bibliotheca tales libros habere volui, qui nihil docerent.» Scholtz Von Rosenau 1598, 155.

75 Shackelford 2004, 287–288.

76 Gentilcore 2006, 227.

77 Gentilcore 2006, 227.

78 This possibility raises a question: why did Donzellini write the treatise under a pseudonym at all? It might be suggested that he hid his real identity because it would have been shameful for the College members, who had thrown him out, that he published a text in the name of the College. As my research stands, this is only a conjecture though.

he underlined his Galenism in order to please the conservative influential physician (who could help him to leave Italy again).

Some considerations on the nature of Italian Paracelsianism

As the research about Italian Paracelsianism stands, I am wary of endorsing either solution outright (that Donzellini rejected Paracelsianism – that Donzellini hid his Paracelsianism). The complexity of the case of Donzellini and Bovio suggests, instead, that we should avoid strict definitions and put forward an alternative interpretation of Italian Paracelsianism.

First of all, we have to reconsider the very strong opposition between Catholic Galenism and Protestant Paracelsianism. After all, the severest attack against Paracelsus came from the Zwinglian physician Thomas Erastus;⁷⁹ and the rector of the highly Catholic College of physicians in Verona in the 1590s (the same College that had thrown out Donzellini because of his heresy) was Vittorio Algarotti,⁸⁰ a staunch defender of Spagyric⁸¹ medicine. Furthermore, although in 1586, in the Papal bull *Coeli et terra*, the Church had forbidden alchemy as a threat to the established divine order of things, a complete prohibition of Paracelsus' books was made definitive only in the Clementine Index of 1596. Between 1590 and 1593 a negative judgement about Paracelsus had prevailed; nevertheless this opinion was not shared by all the members of the Congregation for the Index. After a long discussion, Paracelsus was included among the authors of the first class; however this decision, although formally definitive, did not prevent some other proposals from including him among authors who were prohibited with the proviso

79 Thomas Erastus, *Disputationes De Medicina Nova Philippi Paracelsi Pars Prima. In qua, quae de Remediis Superstitiosis & Magicis Curationibus Ille Prodidit, Praecipue Examinantur* (Basel: P. Perna, 1571) *Disputationes De Medicina Nova Philippi Paracelsi Pars Altera. In qua Philosophiae Paracelsicae Principia & Elementa Explorantur*, (Basel: P. Perna, 1572); *Disputationes De Medicina Nova Philippi Paracelsi Pars Tertia*, Basileae, (Basel: P. Perna, 1572); *Disputationes De Medicina Nova Philippi Paracelsi Pars Quarta et Ultima*, (Basel: P. Perna, 1573); See D. Gunnoe 1998, 45–66; “Paracelsus’s Biography Amongst His Detractors,” in Scholz Williams, Gunnoe 1999, 3–17.

80 Vitali 1960.

81 Coined by Paracelsus, this term comes from the ancient Greek *σπάω* (to extract) and *ἀγείρω* (to collect) and describes the application of alchemical working methods to the preparation of medicines. According to what Paracelsus maintained in his *Paragranum*, as Nature is extremely subtle and penetrating in her manifestations, she does not produce anything that is perfect in itself, but man must make it perfect through Alchemy. Spagyric medicine, following alchemical practice, aims at separating and extracting from natural substances the different basic elements from which they are made (the Essentials: Salt, Sulphur and Mercury), in order to purify those substances from non-essential components. The Essentials are then combined together again, in order to make up the medicine.

*donec expurgentur.*⁸² The delay in censuring Paracelsus and the debate within the Congregation for the Index suggest that the early reception of his works was not strongly associated with heresy, probably because of Paracelsus' obscure style and limited audience. Perhaps it was the fact that the printers and distributors of his books were actually religious dissidents which scared the Church most.

The rigid opposition between humanistic and Spagyric medicine needs to be revisited too. Italy had been the cradle of humanistic medicine, so it is not surprising that in such a scientific environment the Paracelsian approach, with its strong criticism of Greek and Roman authors, was not readily accepted. However, it is advisable to differentiate between the philosophical adherence to Paracelsian principles and the mere acceptance and rise in use of the scientific methods he suggested, namely distillation and chemical practice. Humanist doctors could clearly see that the new chemical remedies were successful, and in order not to remain marginalized in the medicine marketplace they tried to integrate them into their own practices. Nevertheless, in Italy the influence of the theoretical part of what Paracelsus had taught remained scarce and marginal. Here, the uptake of Paracelsian methods did not raise a violent debate as it did in Germany, where many important Galenic physicians, even though starting to develop an interest in chemical remedies, attacked Paracelsus, his philosophy and his rejection of any official Church, claiming he was an atheist, who was trading with the devil and corrupting new generations.⁸³ In Germanic lands the spread of Paracelsianism, with its radical opposition to the new Protestant Churches, could put under threat the stability of the new-born religious congregation; in contrast in Italy, where this kind of risk did not occur, the medical community was above all inclined to consider the practical advantages coming from iatrochemical practice. If the reception of Paracelsianism in Italy was somehow more than occasional, as Zanier has shown, nevertheless it remained fragmented and the Italian interest in distillation was in most cases not followed by a complete and conscious reception of the philosophical teachings of Paracelsus. Therefore, we should be wary of defining 16th-century physicians as convinced Paracelsians.⁸⁴

Bearing in mind the typical fluidity of early modern society, being aware of how distinguished was the tradition and influence of Paracelsianism, and

82 Baldini, Spruit 2009, tome 3, 2166–2170.

83 Webster 1990, 13–23.

84 Bovio himself, who openly took up iatrochemistry, did not completely appreciate Paracelsus because of the obscure, not understandable way the Swiss physician had expressed his theories.

remembering how complex was the context in which it was received (the Italy of the Inquisition and the Index of prohibited books), we should avoid rigid categories and definitions. In Italy the reception of new ideas, including scientific ones, was often merely partial, not only because of the predominance of the humanistic tradition, but also because of the increasing closure of Italian society due to the advent of the Counter-Reformation. In that period, the religious and cultural debate could only be a secret one, compelling most Italians to a sort of intellectual isolation. Italian physicians were (at least to some extent) cut off from the development of new theories: the impossibility of understanding international medical discussions in a deep way and the fear of the Inquisition, in endorsing new radical doctrines outright, led some lively physicians such as Donzellini to mix up scientific doctrines (Galenism – Paracelsianism) in a way that would not have been possible abroad. This kind of context, the difficulty in communicating and sharing ideas and the lack of any guiding point of reference from abroad had already led Italian religious dissenters to elaborate a theology that integrated elements from various denominations of Christianity (especially during the early reception of Protestant ideas). It can be suggested that a similar pattern worked for medical thinking, so that theories which today seem incompatible could actually coexist in the same medical experience.

Thus trying to pigeonhole Donzellini in a rigid category of Paracelsianism or Galenism is misleading: what we know for certain about him, as we can argue reading the records of his trials and his medical books, is his eagerness for knowledge, his interest in new medical ideas, his conception of medicine as a practical discipline, aimed at providing health to the greatest number of people, not merely as the perpetuation of classical theories. His humanistic approach, far from raising boundaries between different medical currents, aimed at finding a compromise between them. He had developed this attitude as a result of his idea of *sapientia* or *docta religio*, the *esprit* of culture and science which, since the age of antiquity, had spread without interruption and which still connected intellectuals of different religious beliefs and different cultural tendencies all over Europe⁸⁵. Considering this, it is interesting that, although, when writing to Crato, Donzellini denies his Paracelsianism, in the same letter he favours the theory of Johannes Gunther von Andernach, the humanist physician who had tried to reconcile Galen and Paracelsus.⁸⁶ Moreover, in that letter he also admits having resorted to chemistry in

85 He states his idea of *docta religio* in the introduction to the Themistius' orations he prepared a renewed edition of. See Donzellini 1559.

86 About the European spread of Paracelsianism and the first attempts to find a compromise between Paracelsianism and Galenism see Kahn 2007, in particular 200–207.

some cases of chronic disease⁸⁷ and he describes chemical remedies as “the Spagyric miracle”.⁸⁸ Finally, the consignment of books coming from Basel in 1581 which was supposed to be distributed, with Donzellini’s collaboration, in Venice indeed contained Paracelsus’ books and alchemical works,⁸⁹ testifying, if nothing else, to Donzellini’s open-mindedness about that kind of material. All this shows that there was not necessarily such a strong opposition between different medical currents and that the connection between Catholicism and Galenism or Paracelsianism and Protestantism is probably weaker than it initially seemed.

Some perspectives for further research

Moving back to the general connection between medicine and heresy, we can say that it was quite a strong one. Because of their lifestyle as physicians and their intellectual curiosity, doctors were particularly predisposed to embrace non-Catholic ideas, while their medical approach could be affected by their theological beliefs, stimulating for instance a bolder search for new remedies and an unprecedented care for direct observation. During the humanist age, a shift from the reliance on tradition to a personal, independent search for new theories and solutions did take place, but it happened slowly and we can see the Reformation as the beginning of such a transition, or at least as playing an important part in the new attitude towards the questioning of authority. Of course it is better not to overgeneralize: some famous early modern physicians produced significant changes in medicine without ever rejecting Roman Catholicism.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the changes early modern medicine went through in the sixteenth century, in the attempt to reshape its methodological ground, can be related to the coeval experimental approach which occurred in theology. Examining the specific implications of this relation, inquiring upon different heretical physicians’ intellectual experiences, is a worthwhile focus of further research.

87 As regards Donzellini’s resort to chemistry in case of chronic disease see footnote 68. Speaking about Paracelsus’s theories Donzellini says: “Ac puto, si quid dignum unquam ab eo dictum aut scriptum est, id ab Andernaco in suos libros fuisse traslatum.” Scholtz Von Rosenau 1598, 155.

88 “Sed accipe aliud spagiricum miraculum”. Scholtz Von Rosenau 1598, 155.

89 See footnote 44.

90 Considering this, a meaningful case is that of Girolamo Mercuriale. Mercuriale was considered the Galenic Catholic physician *par excellence*: his original treatise *De Arte Gymnastica*, which analysed for the first time the health benefits of physical exercise, marked a turning point in the history of medicine. On Mercuriale see Arcangeli, Nutton 2008; Agasse 2008.

When considering this topic, one should not forget that Donzellini was far from being the only physician to whom heterodox doctrines appealed, as we can see in the cases of doctors such as Niccolò Buccella,⁹¹ Guglielmo Grataroli, Agostino Gadaldino, Gianbattista Susio, Ulisse Aldrovandi, Gabriele Falloppia, Marcello Squarcialupi or Giorgio Biandrata, just to quote the most well-known.⁹² At the end of this paper, it will therefore be useful to briefly describe the religious and scientific paths followed by these characters, in order to strengthen the general argument, widen the scope of the inquiry and provide some perspectives for further work on this area.

Obviously, to pigeonhole under the same label of “heretical physicians” all the different experiences of men who, practising medicine, were involved with heterodox ideas, would be quite superficial. Many and varied were the non-Catholic religious beliefs that they embraced, many the ways they approached medical science. Still, the examination of these different medical and religious experiences is worthwhile because it leads to the emergence of a meaningful, multiform scenario.

For instance, Giorgio Biandrata, Niccolò Buccella and Marcello Squarcialupi, after having left Italy, found themselves involved in the Antitrinitarian movement in Transylvania and shared a rational religious doctrine. In particular, Biandrata worked as a court *archiatra* and, being a gynaecologist, was the personal physician to Bona Sforza and Isabella Jagellona.⁹³ He was the author of many works on gynaecology,⁹⁴ in which he provided original remarks about anatomical issues and significantly developed what Aristotle had said, thanks to a method based on direct observation. Starting from the conception that the Holy Writ had to be examined using the same rigorous criteria, he wrote an important theological treatise on Unitarianism, maintaining that all the dogmas which were not clearly stated in the Scriptures

91 Stella 1961–1962, 333–361.

92 Some other heretical physicians are mentioned in the trial of Cardinal Giovanni Morone (1557–1560): Pietro Fracano, Giovan Battista Pigafetta and Ludovico Manna (who were in touch with Donzellini), Ortensio Abbaticchio, Niccolò Machella, Scipione Iannello, Giovanni Grillenzoni, Bartolomeo Carandino, Antonio Cappelletti da Cagli, Baldo Badalucchi, Giulio Cesare Alois, Macedonio Santorio. See Firpo, Marcatto 1995.

93 Biandrata also enjoyed a successful career as a diplomatist, being active both at the Polish and at the Transylvanian court. See Rotondò 1968.

94 Biandrata’s medical works have not been examined in detail so far. Vincenzo Malacarne’s *Commentario* is the only text which deals with them, focusing in particular on: *Gynaeceorum ex Aristotele et Bonaciolo a Georgio Blandrata Medico Subalpino Noviter Excerpta de Fecundatione, Gravitate, Partu et Puerperio, Argentinae 1539; Cimelia Muliebria; Aeneas Bonacioli Compendiata a Georgio Blandrata; Quae Cur Quando non Sunt Agenda in Gestatione in Partu post Partum eodem Georgio Blandrata Auctore*. See Malacarne 1814.

had to be rejected, primarily Trinity.⁹⁵ In contrast, Marcello Squarcialupi was not as successful a physician and did not reach such a prestigious social position.⁹⁶ However, the treatise on plague he wrote in Milan in 1565, before leaving Italy, which Donzellini read and appreciated, is an interesting example of the “pick and mix” attitude towards medicine I have attempted to describe. While relying on Galen and Hippocrates, proposing ancient healing methods such as bloodletting, the treatise also advocates cosmological theories which look very much connected to those about microcosm and macrocosm put forward by Paracelsus.⁹⁷

Although Guglielmo Grataroli did not appreciate Paracelsus’ unclear and “diabolic” style,⁹⁸ he was interested in alchemy as well and Thorndinke describes his work as a bridge connecting Medieval alchemy and modern Paracelsianism⁹⁹. Whether Grataroli can be considered a Paracelsian doctor or not, his curiosity in alchemy did not correspond to radical religious views: he was a rigid Calvinist and, once he moved to Switzerland, he developed an intolerant opposition to other doctrinal currents, most of all Antitrinitarianism. The cases of Agostino Gadaldino and Giovan Battista Susio are different: both in contact with Girolamo Donzellini, they belonged to the area of the magisterial Reformation and, after having recanted (respectively 1557, 1550), they remained in Italy, perhaps taking up a *nicodemitic* attitude. In particular, Agostino Gadaldino was the son of the heretical printer from Modena Antonio Gadaldino and his main medical work was the Giunta edition of Galen’s *opera omnia* (1541), which he realised in collaboration with Giovanni

95 “We may say that we must refrain to the greatest possible extent from using alien terms and from deviating even to the slightest extent from God’s holy pronouncements since it is a dangerous thing to speak even the truth about God if it is not based on His word, and everything that is from outside that Source is cursed”. This piece comes from the dedication to John II King of Hungary to whom the treatise is addressed. See Pirnat, 1988. On Biandrata’s religious works see also: Lingua, Carletto 2001.

96 Dàn, Pirnat 1982, 269–285; 323–340.

97 “But I say that, since Nature wanted to shape mankind as another little world, she wanted, beyond the other conditions, to put in it all the forces which souls [sic] enjoy. Apart from thinking, apart from having feelings, mankind lives thanks to nourishments, as much as plants do. Hence we see that, if we know what is good and what is evil to lineages, we will easily be able to bring mankind to life, because mankind is not different from vegetation, brutes and plants” (“Dico però che havendo la Natura a formare l’huomo per un altro picciolo mondo, volse, oltre le altre conditioni, porre in lui tutte le forze dell’anime. Là donde oltre allo speculare, oltre al sentire, vive l’huomo per i nodrimenti a guisa delle piante. Di qui vediamo che conoscendo quello nuoca e giovì alle stirpi, facilmente procureremo la vita a questo uomo, non essendo egli diverso, quanto alla vegetatione dalli Bruti, e dalle Piante”). Squarcialupi 1565, 8–9.

98 Kahn 2007, 142.

99 Thorndike 1953, 600–616.

Battista Da Monte.¹⁰⁰ Agostino's interest in philology was shared by Giovan Battista Susio, as it is noticeable in the latter's treatise about bloodletting: before starting to deal with the techniques of this art, Susio spends many pages clarifying what Greek, Latin and Arabic authors meant by the terms they used, in order to solve the confusion that contemporary physicians were experiencing and to put right "the mistakes which occurred during the barbaric age".¹⁰¹ Gadaldino and Susio were both traditional doctors and I suggest that their philological humanistic approach, aimed at cleansing ancient medical works in order to go back to the golden origins of Hippocratic and Galenic medicine, could correspond to the typically Protestant care for biblical exegesis and to the embracing of theories such as *sola Scriptura e sacerdotio universale*.

As far as Ulisse Aldrovandi is concerned, he was put on trial in 1549, charged with having favoured the radical doctrine suggested by Camillo Renato.¹⁰² After having been acquitted, he enjoyed a very fructuous career in Bologna, becoming particularly notorious for his *Teatro della Natura*. Being one of the first museums of natural history, where Aldrovandi would assemble one of the most spectacular cabinets of curiosities, his «theatre» comprised about 7000 specimens of the "diversità di cose naturali" and contributed to the slow shift which occurred in the sixteenth century from collecting in order to recover ancient knowledge to the development of a new experimental approach to nature.¹⁰³

Finally, Aldrovandi's close friend Gabriele Falloppia, the outstanding anatomist whose medical merits do not even need to be listed here, had been part of the circle of heretics gathering at the *Accademia* in Modena (along with, among the others, another physician, Giovanni Grillenzoni, and a *speziale*, Antonio Grillenzoni). Falloppia was charged with being a "haereticus lutheranus pessimus" in 1542 and forced to subscribe to some Catholic articles of faith. After that, likely adopting a *nicodemitic* attitude, he was able to go on with his successful medical career, significantly improving medical,

100 On Gadaldino's biography and philological work see: Garofalo 2004, 283–316; on Gadaldino's translations of Galen's texts see Fortuna's works, in particular: Fortuna 2012a, 112–122; Fortuna 2012b, pp. 391–412.

101 Susio 1571.

102 The original name of this Sicilian radical heretic was Paolo Ricci. After having converted to Protestantism he changed his name, in order to underline that this choice meant genuine rebirth. The important point in his doctrine, half way between Antitrinitarism and Anabaptism, was a spiritual and mystic approach to religion which made any sacraments and any exterior manifestation of devotion needless. Rotondò 1968.

103 On museums of natural history see Findlen 1994.

botanical and above all anatomical knowledge thanks to an open-minded method based on direct observation.¹⁰⁴

If we were to point out the common denominator of all the cases quoted above, we could only find it in the rejection of Roman Catholicism. What those cases show is that the relation between heresy and medicine was polyvalent. It can't be explained as a mechanistic cause-effect relation; it was fluid and it developed in many singular ways. As a result of the different theological paths they followed, these characters ended up building singular religious identities, in the same way as they developed non-uniform scientific conceptions starting from a common scientific background. This variety of approaches is meaningful in itself: as a matter of fact, it shows the tendency throughout the 16th century to develop personal views in those very fields, medicine and religion, which had always been considered the playground of religious and intellectual authorities. The antidogmatic and antiauthoritarian approach to religion, which many Italian physicians embraced, is indicative too: it seems to suggest that the connection between the shifts in early modern medicine and Protestantism was arguably a more specific link between new-born modern medical science and a type of religious restlessness, which also ended up sliding out of the Reformation's doctrinal boundaries. Finally, the cases of the Italian doctors who embraced radical religious views, took up a nicodemitic behaviour (undervaluing sacraments and any exterior manifestation of devotion) and stayed in contact with scholars belonging to all sorts of denominations of Christianity, show that many men of science were trying to overcome religious boundaries, at the very moment when the different confessions were entrenching themselves in positions of doctrinal rigidity. This may suggest that, right at the time when Europe was being torn to pieces by religious wars, some heretical physicians, driven by their rational attitude, were shifting to a position of religious scepticism, questioning the very importance of belonging to a specific confession, developing a sort of freethinking attitude and bringing forward some aspects of 17th-century religious libertinism and scientific revolution.¹⁰⁵ Hopefully continuing research into the religious and medical texts written by these heretic physicians will be useful in verifying this hypothesis, besides further clarifying our knowledge about the relationship between medicine and heterodoxy in 16th-century Italy.

104 Speaking about his scientific approach to anatomy Falloppia said: "Quoniam ex sensu hoc est cognoscendum, non autem ex ratione", see Belloni Speciale 1944.

105 From a wider, European point of view, we can think of the cases of Otto Brunfels, Miguel Servet or Paracelsus himself to see this kind of connection.

Bibliography

- Addante, Luca, *Eretici e Libertini nel Cinquecento Italiano* (Roma/Bari 2010)
- Agasse, Jean-Michel, “Girolamo Mercuriale – Humanism and physical culture in the Renaissance”, in: Pennuto, Concetta (ed.), *Girolamo Mercuriale, De Arte Gymnastica* (Florence 2008)
- Ambrosini, Federica, *Storie di Patrizi e di Eresia* (Milan 1999)
- Arcangeli, Alessandro/Vivian Nutton (eds), *Girolamo Mercuriale: medicina e cultura nell'Europa del Cinquecento: atti del Convegno Girolamo Mercuriale e lo spazio scientifico e culturale del Cinquecento: Forlì, 8–11 novembre 2006* (Firenze 2008)
- Baldini, Ugo/Leen Spruit (eds), *Catholic Church and Modern Science: Documents from the Archives of the Roman Congregations of the Holy Office and the Index* (Rome 2009)
- Belloni Speciale, Gabriella, s.v. «Gabriele Falloppi», in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 44 (Rome 1944)
- Biller, Peter, Joseph Ziegler (eds), *Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (York 2001)
- Biandrata, Giorgio, *De falsa et vera unius Dei Patris, Filii et Spiritus Sancti cognitione, libri duo*, (Budapest/Nieuwkoop 1988)
- Biondi, Albano, «La giustificazione della simulazione nel Cinquecento», in: Albano Biondi (ed.), *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento, Miscellanea* (Florence/Chicago 1974) 7–68
- Bongi, Salvatore, *Annali di Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari da Trino di Monferrato stampatore in Venezia*, vol. 1 (Rome 1890)
- Bovio, Tomaso Zefiriele, *Flagello de' Medici Rationali, di Zefiriele Tomaso Bouio Nobile Veronese* (Venice: Nicolini da Sabbio, Domenico, 1583)
- Bovio, Tomaso Zefiriele, *Melampigo, ovvero Confusione dei Medici Sofisti che si Intitolano Razionali* (In Verona appresso Girolamo Discepoli, & fratelli: Discepolo, Girolamo & fratelli Palazzolo, Marcantonio, 1585)
- Brooke, John/Ian Maclean (eds), *Heterodoxy in Early Modern Science and Religion* (Oxford 2005)
- Brown, Horatio F., *The Venetian Printing Press; an historical study based upon documents for the most part hitherto unpublished* (New York 1891)
- Bylebyl, Jerome J., “The School of Padua: Humanistic Medicine in the Sixteenth century”, in: Charles Webster (ed.), *Health Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge 1979) 335–370
- Caponetto, Salvatore, *La Riforma Protestante nell'Italia del Cinquecento* (Torino 1992)
- Camporesi, Pietro, *Camminare il mondo. Vita e avventure di Leonardo Fioravanti medico del Cinquecento* (Milan 2007)
- Cantimori, Delio, *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento. Ricerche storiche* (Florence 1939)
- Clericuzio, Antonio, “Chemical Medicine and Paracelsianism in Italy 1550–1650”, in Margaret Pelling/Scott Mandelbrote (eds), *The Practice of Reform in Health, Medicine and Science, 1500–2000: Essays for Charles Webster* (Aldershot 2005) 59–79
- Clericuzio, Antonio/Germana Ernst (eds), *Il Rinascimento Italiano e l'Europa. Le Scienze*, Vol. V (Vicenza 2008)

- Dal Fiume, Antonio, «Un Medico Astrologo a Verona nel '500: Tomaso Zefiriele Bovio», *Critica Storica* 20 (1983) 32–59
- Del Col, Andrea, *L'Inquisizione in Italia dal XII al XXII secolo* (Milan 2006)
- Del Col, Andrea, «Il Nuovo Testamento tradotto da Massimo Teofilo e altre opere stampate a Lione nel 1551», *Critica storica* 15 (1978) 642–675
- Cohn, Samuel K, *Cultures of Plague. Medical Thought at the end of the Renaissance* (Oxford 2010)
- De Vivo, Filippo, “Pharmacies as centres of communication in early modern Venice”, *Renaissance Studies* 21 (2007) 505–521
- De Vivo, Filippo, *Information and Communication in Venice* (Oxford 2007)
- Donzellini, Girolamo, *Themistii Euphradae Philosophi Peripatetici Oratione Octo Elegantissimae ac Eruditione Varia Refertissimae. A Hieronimo Donzellino Philosopho ac Medico Brixiano* (Basileae, Apud Petrum Pernam, 1559)
- Donzellini, Girolamo, *Discorso nobilissimo e dottissimo preservativo et curativo della peste* (Venice 1577)
- Duffin, Jacalyn, *Medical Miracles. Doctors, saints and healing in the modern world* (New York 2009)
- di Filippo Bareggi, Claudia, *Il mestiere di scrivere: Lavoro intellettuale e mercato librario a Venezia nel Cinquecento* (Rome 1988)
- Findlen, Paula, *Nature, Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkley–Los Angeles 1994)
- Massimo Firpo, Dario Marcatto (eds), *Il Processo Inquisitoriale del Cardinal Giovanni Morone* (Roma 1995)
- Firpo, Massimo, *Gli affreschi di Pontormo a San Lorenzo. Eresia, politica e cultura nella Firenze di Cosimo I* (Turin 1997)
- Firpo, Massimo, *Riforma Protestante ed eresia nell'Italia del Cinquecento* (Rome/Bari 1997)
- Ferrari, Marco, «Alcune vie di diffusione in Italia di idee e di testi di Paracelso», in: *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi* (Florence 1982) 21–29
- Fortuna, Stefania, «Galeno e le sue traduzioni», in: Daniela Fausti (ed.), *Comunicare Cultura Antica: riflessioni sulla traduzione di testi di medicina e filosofia. Atti del convegno internazionale (Siena, 29–30 gennaio 2008)* (Pisa 2012) 112–122
- Fortuna, Stefania, “The Latin Editions of Galen’s Opera Omnia (1490–1625) and Their Prefaces” in *Early Science and Medicine* 17 (2012) 391–412
- Fragno, Gigliola, «Un pratese alla corte di Cosimo I. Riflessioni e materiali per un profilo di Pierfrancesco Riccio», *Archivio storico pratese* 62 (1986) 31–83
- Galluzzi, Paolo, «Motivi paracelsiani nella Toscana di Cosimo I e di don Antonio dei Medici: alchimia, medicina ‘chimica’ e riforma del sapere», in: *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi* (Florence 1982) 56–62
- Garofalo, Ivan, «Agostino Gadaldini (1515–1575) et le Galen Latin», in: Vronique Boudon-Millot/Guy Cobolet (eds), *Lire les Medecins Grecs a la Renaissance* (Paris 2004) 284–321
- Gelli, Claudio, *Risposta dell'Eccellente Dottor Clavdio Gelli ad vn Certo Libro Contra Medici Rationali ...* (In Venetia: ad instantia dell'Autore, 1584)
- Gentilcore, David, *Medical Charlatanism in Early modern Italy* (Oxford 2006)

- Ginzburg, Carlo, *Il Nicodemismo, simulazione e dissimulazione nell'Europa del '500* (Turin 1970)
- Grell, Ole Peter (ed.), *Paracelsus: the man and his reputation, his ideas and their transformation. Studies in the History of Christian Thought* n.85 (Leiden 1998)
- Grendler, Paul F., *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540–1605* (Princeton 1977)
- Grendler, Paul F., *The Universities of Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore/London 2002)
- Gunnoe, Charles D., “Erastus and Paracelsianism. Theological Motifs in Thomas Erastus’ Rejection of Paracelsian Natural Philosophy”, in: Allen G. Debus/Micheal T. Walton (eds), *Reading the Book of Nature. The Other Side of the Scientific Revolution* (Kirkville 1998)
- Hankinson, Robert J., “Body and the soul in Galen”, in: Richard A.H King/Walter de Gruyter (eds), *Common to Body and Soul. Philosophical Approaches to Explaining Living Behaviour in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Berlin 2006) 232–258
- Ingegno, Alfonso, «Il Medico de’ disperati e abbandonati: Tomaso Zefiriele Bovio (1521–1609) tra Paracelso e l’alchimia del Seicento», in: Paolo Rossi, Jole Agrimi (eds.), *Cultura Popolare e Cultura Dotta nel Seicento. Atti del Convegno di Studio di Genova 23–25 Novembre 1982* (Milan 1985) 164–174
- Kahn, Didier, *Alchimie et Paracelsisme en France à la Fin de la Renaissance (1567–1625)* (Geneva 2007)
- Lingua, Graziano/Sergio Carletto (eds), *La Trinità e l’Anticristo. Giorgio Biandrata tra eresia e diplomazia* (Cuneo 2001)
- Lowry, Martin, *The World of Aldous Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (Ithaca 1979)
- Malacarne, Vincenzo, *Commentario delle opere e delle vicende di Giorgio Biandrata nobile saluzzese*, (Padova 1814)
- Martellozzo Forin, Elda (ed.), *Acta graduum academicorum Gymnasii Patavini: ab anno 1538 ad annum 1550* (Padua 1970)
- Martin, John, *Venice Hidden Enemies* (Berkley/Los Angeles 1993)
- Nutton, Vivian, “With Benefit of Hindsight: Girolamo Mercuriale and Simone Simoni on Plague,” *Medicina & storia: Rivista di Storia della Medicina e della Sanità* 11 (2006) 5–19
- Pagel, Walter, *An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance* (Basel: Karger, 1958)
- Palmer, Richard, “Pharmacy in the Republic of Venice in the 16th century”, in: Andrew Wear/Roger K. French/Ian M. Lonie (eds), *The medical Renaissance of the Sixteenth-Century* (New York 1985) 100–118
- Palmer, Richard, “Physicians and the Inquisition in Sixteenth-Century Venice: The Case of Girolamo Donzellini”, in: Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and the Reformation* (New York 1993) 118–133
- Pastore, Alessandro, «L’Onore della Corporazione. Il Collegio medico di Verona tra il Tardo Quattrocento e gli inizi del Seicento», in: *Studi di storia per Luigi Ambrosoli* (Verona 1993) 7–28
- Perini, Leandro, *La Vita e i Tempi di Pietro Perna* (Rome 2002)
- Perifano, Alfredo, «Considérations autour de la question du Paracelsisme en Italie au XVI^e siècle: Les dédicaces d’Adam de Bodenstein au Doge de Venise et à Côme I^{er} de Medicis», *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 62 (2000) 49–61

- Piccolomini, Paolo, «Due lettere inedite di Bernardino Ochino», *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 28 (1907)
- Pierce, Robert A., *Pier Paolo Vergerio the Propagandist* (Rome 2003)
- Preto, Paolo, *Peste e Società* (Vicenza 1978)
- Prosperi, Adriano, *L'Eresia del Libro Grande. Storia di Giorgio Siculo e della sua Setta* (Milan 2000)
- Prosperi, Adriano, *Tribunali della Coscienza. Inquisitori, Confessori, Missionari* (Turin 1996).
- Renato, Camillo, *Opere, documenti e testimonianze*, Antonio Rotondò (ed.), (Florence/Chicago 1968).
- Rotondò, Antonio, *Pietro Perna e la vita culturale e religiosa di Basilea fra il 1570 e il 1580*, in: Id., *Studi di storia ereticale del Cinquecento* (Olschki 2008)
- Rotondò, Antonio, s.v. «Giorgio Biandrata», in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 10 (Rome 1968)
- Schutte, Anne Jacobson, s.v. «Girolamo Donzellini», in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 41 (Rome 2001)
- Shackelford, Jole, *A Philosophical Path for Paracelsian Medicine: The Ideas, Intellectual Context, and Influence of Petrus Severinus (1540/2–1602)*, (Copenhagen 2004)
- Scholtz von Rosenau, Lorenz, *Epistolarum Philosophicarum, Medicinalium, ac Chymicarum a Summis Nostrae Aetatis Philosophis ac Medicis Exaratarum Volumen*, (Frankfurt: Apud And. Wecheli haeredes, Claudium di Marni, & Ioh. Aubrium, 1598)
- Paolo Simoncelli, *Evangelismo italiano del '500: questione religiosa e nicodemismo politico* (Rome 1979)
- Siraisi, Nancy G., *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning* (Ann Arbor 2007)
- Squarcialupi, Marcello, *Difesa Contro la Peste* (Milan 1565)
- Stella, Aldo, *Dall'anabattismo al Socinanesimo nel Cinquecento Veneto* (Padua 1967)
- Stella, Aldo, «Intorno al medico padovano Niccolò Buccella, anabattista del Cinquecento», *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia patavina di scienze, lettere ed arti* 74 (1961–1962)
- Susio, Giovan Battista, *Trattato ... che sia giovevole rimedio il trarre del sangue nelle volgari varuole, ferse ed petecchie* (Venice: Appresso Francesco Sanese, 1571)
- Thorndike, Lynn, *A history of magic and experimental science*, Vol. 5 (New York 1953)
- Vasoli, Cesare, «La critica umanistica e le origini dell'antitrinitarismo», in: Robert Dàn, Antal Pirna (eds), *Antitrinitarianism in the second half of the 16th century* (Budapest/Leiden 1982)
- Venezia e la peste, 1348–1797* [Exhibition catalogue] (Venice 1980)
- Vitali, Emanuele D., s.v. «Vittorio Algarotti», in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 2 (Rome 1960).
- Webster, Charles, «Conrad Gessner and the Infidelity of Paracelsus», in: John Henry, Sarah Hutton (eds), *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: Essays in the History of Science, Education and philosophy* (London 1990) 13–23
- Webster, Charles, *From Paracelsus to Newton. Magic and the making of modern science* (Cambridge 1983)

- Webster, Charles, "Paracelsus: Medicine as a Popular Protest", in: Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Medicine and the Reformation* (New York 1993) 57–77
- Webster, Charles, *Paracelsus. Medicine, Magic and the Mission at the End of Time* (New Haven 2008)
- Weeks, Andrew (ed.), *Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493–1541) Essential Theoretical Writings* (Leiden 2008)
- Weeks, Andrew, *Paracelsus: Speculative Theory and the Crisis of the Early Reformation* (Albany, NY 1997)
- Williams, Gerhild Scholz/Charles D. Gunnoe, *Paracelsian Moments: Science, Medicine and Astrology in Early Modern Europe* (Kirksville 2002)
- Zanier, Giancarlo, «La medicina paracelsiana in Italia, aspetti di un'accoglienza particolare», *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 4 (1985) 637–653
- Ziegler, Joseph, *Medicine and Religion c. 1300. The case of Arnau de Vilanova* (Oxford 1998)
- Zucchini, Giampaolo, «La costruzione dell'epistolario di Marcello Squarzialupi: alcune lettere inedite dai Grigioni (1586–1588)» in: Robert Dàn/Antal Pirnat (eds), *Antitrinitarianism in the second half of the 16th century* (Budapest/Leiden 1982)