Paolo Savoia, *Gaspare Tagliacozzi and Early Modern Surgery: Faces, Men, and Pain* (London–New York: Routledge, 2020), 284 pp., 29 b/w illus., £34.99 (paperback), ISBN 978 0 36720 173 9.

This is a book about the emergence of knowledge. The author, historian of science at the university of Bologna, puts the problem neatly: Why did the physician and anatomist Gaspare Tagliacozzi publish, at the end of the sixteenth century in Bologna, his own book on one single operation: the reconstruction of the nose? Why did he not write about any of his other multiple specialties in reconstructive surgery of the mutilated parts of the face? Why did he go to such considerable lengths to so fully set forth his ideas in a long and learned book of two volumes? To answer these multiple interrogations, Savoia unfolds, chapter by chapter, the necessary contexts in a well-constructed text.

Let's consider first of all Tagliacozzi's method. To replace the missing nose, he used a skin flap from the upper interior part of the patient's arm. In what must have been a painful ordeal, the arm was bound so tightly to the site of the mutilated nose that the patient was unable to move their head over the course of fifteen days. Tagliacozzi was not the first to proceed in this way. Savoia examines cases of reconstructive surgery of the nose using the same method in earlier years. He found 13 cases with licensed empiric surgeons at work from 1412 onwards. They worked mainly in South Italy and Spain. Despite the fact that the cutting off of the nose was a formal and informal punishment of women, e.g., for adultery, the patients were, with just two exceptions, all noble or upper-class men mutilated during fights, duels, or war. This is confirmed by Savoia's research in Italian archives from the end of the sixteenth century. Savoia suggests that an interest in the reconstruction of the nose was more linked to the public sphere, dominated by men.

The emergence of the textual representation of an already well-established surgical procedure was due to the particular prestige of surgery in the reformed medical institutions of Bologna. At the end of the sixteenth century, the learned surgeons strove particularly to have their work recognized as of a higher order of quality to that of the barber-surgeons. A long and learned monograph like *De curtorum chirurgia per insitionem* (1597) could be especially instrumental in this fight for recognition. Other surgeons with a middle-class background and hopes for a higher social status also published monographs, but none submitted such a scholarly text.

At that historical moment, when the culture of aristocratic violence reached its climax, the book concerned a pivotal issue, the culture of the face. Honor, dignity and the self – these were all linked in different ways to the representational performance of the human physiognomy within a context that was to a

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large extent defined by Renaissance portraiture. Physiology took an ever more normative stance with concepts of the ideal shape of a male's face. Explicit correspondences between the form of the nose and the penis were also popular.

Positioning reconstructive surgery in the field of health and appearance is the next step. Tagliacozzi refers extensively to century-long debates about true and false beauty – the latter falling into the realm of cosmetics. In Tagliacozzi's eyes, cosmetics were less valued, because they tried to provide what Nature had denied. Surgery, by contrast, restored what Nature had given and was lost by chance. Therefore, it merited a more legitimate place in the arts.

In a skillful move, Savoia analyses the debate about grafting – the paradigmatic field to address the relationship between nature and art, and between imitating and perfecting nature. Humans and plants were both considered as elements of nature which allowed for the exchange of arguments from one discourse to the other. In treatises on agriculture, grafting was considered one of the most marvelous accomplishments of the art. Leonardo Fioravanti had already repeatedly insisted on the parallels between surgery and agriculture. This invited Tagliacozzi to exploit the reputation of this technique and to transfer its application from food growing and gardening to his own field of medical practice. Tagliacozzi emphasized that he did not graft flesh but only the skin of the arm – just like grafting only the bark and preventing damage to the plant. Learning from Nature would allow us to improve upon it – as in the literature on natural history, gardening, etc. – thus slowly eroding the clear-cut distinction between art and nature.

After these erudite discourses, I found the last chapter on the moral economy of pain especially instructive. Tagliacozzi represents his surgical operation as less painful than people might believe – particularly, as judged against the positive outcomes his procedures promised. Pain being a part of life, it must be endured, in accordance with the long traditions to which he refers of Stoic and Christian models. At the time, pain was mainly discussed for post-operatory states. Coping with surgical pain required a particular sort of virtue – another link to masculinity beyond the culture of honor and violence. Surgeons exchanged ideas for minimizing pain; they would even resort to secrets, tricks or playing soothing music to the patient. Men were supposed to have a greater capacity to endure pain because of their dry and hot composition. It was not pain itself, but patients' reactions to pain that provided the arena for developing a binary gender code. In general, severe pain was justified only insofar as it was the one way to avoid death or to allow for the restoration of a normal way of living – otherwise made impossible by the socially mutilating nature of having a face disfigured by a missing nose. As Savoia puts it: "Facial surgery was

an element in a moral economy of pain within a moral economy of medicine within a moral economy of power" (p. 216).

In conclusion, Savoia explores the impact of the book. The author's death shortly after its publication might have resulted in his book being forgotten along with the author himself. But in contrast to the common opinion, Savoia shows that copies and pirate prints were not rare in European libraries and these were the means through which knowledge of the work survived. A couple of later publications referred to Tagliacozzi during the seventeenth century. Amongst other references, the book was repeatedly cited in the collections of case histories, which were commonly published in the German lands at that time. During the eighteenth century, the book received more attention in England and France where the operation was ridiculed. All in all, Savoia unfolds an interesting history of European knowledge transfers from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, masterfully describing the unique circumstances in Bologna at the end of the sixteenth century which made this the only place in which a book like Tagliacozzi's could have been published.

Martin Dinges
Prof. Dr. phil.; Institute for the History of Medicine of the Robert Bosch Foundation, Straußweg 17, 70184, Stuttgart, Germany
martin.dinges@outlook.de