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## *The Courtiers' Anatomists: Animals and Humans in Louis XIV's Paris.*

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*The Courtiers' Anatomists: Animals and Humans in Louis XIV's Paris.* By Anita Guerrini. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 344 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. Cloth \$35.00.

From the perspective even of stay-at-home European naturalists in the seventeenth century, the world kept getting bigger, as increasing animal, vegetable, and mineral evidence of its breadth and variety poured into metropolitan centers. At the same time, the technology of the microscope and the virtuoso practice of dissection (of living animals as well as corpses--Anita Guerrini argues that these practices were perceived as less distinct by her subjects, and by their private and public audiences, than has subsequently become the case) turned the attention of anatomists to things that were small and hidden. Written with interdisciplinary erudition and insight, *The Courtiers' Anatomists* persuasively demonstrates that these modes of inquiry were neither independent nor inconsistent; on the contrary they could be pursued at the same time by the same individuals. As her subtitle indicates, Guerrini does not attempt to survey Enlightenment science. Instead she focuses on a particular group of anatomists who were based in Paris and who enjoyed the support of Louis IV.

The story that Guerrini tells is a rich and complicated one. It stretches over more than half a century, and she approaches it from several perspectives. She traces the careers of individual anatomists, from their (mostly provincial) origins, through their education, early experiences, and ultimate establishment in Paris, examining the political and temperamental dimensions of their careers, as well as the intellectual ones. She describes significant locations within the physical and political geography of Paris. She chronicles the emergence of relevant scientific institutions, especially the Paris Academy of Sciences, and of the various debates that united and divided their members (for

example, ancients vs. moderns and Cartesians vs. anti-Cartesians). These interlocking contexts are presented with clarity and in fascinating detail.

One thread that unifies these approaches is the crucial importance of patronage, of politically powerful courtiers as well as of the king himself. It provided funding and prestige, as well as more concrete advantages. Many anatomical investigations required settings of a type and scale unlikely to be found in the private residences of anatomists, no matter how great their scientific distinction. In addition, of course, they required subjects on whom to practice, and, as the frequently recounted stories of Burke and Hare and other grave robbers indicate (albeit with respect to another country and a later century), human bodies were seldom readily available for disaggregation. Royal connections gave Academy members privileged access to some corpses, to the annoyance of the Paris Faculty of Medicine and the local surgeons, who also coveted them. Animal bodies were, of course, easy to obtain, either from livestock markets or from the populations of wild and feral creatures that roamed city streets and rural or suburban fields. But their elite sponsorship also allowed Academicians to variegate their dissections of indigenes with those of exotic former residents of the royal menageries at Versailles and Vincennes, including a camel, an elephant, a crocodile, and a lion, among many others.

Reports of these dissections were published in the *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire naturelle des animaux*. These volumes were distinctive in several ways. They combined anatomical analysis of their subjects with information about the living animal ordinarily found in works of natural history. In form they were lavish folios with restricted circulation (although accounts of the Academy's activities also appeared in

publications with larger audiences). This publication policy, along with the initial requirement that reports of Academy research be published without attribution to individuals (so that results appeared to be a product of the institution), contrasted with that of rival organizations like the Royal Society of London.

Guerrini's explanation of the origin and ultimate disappearance of these restrictions makes *The Courtiers' Anatomist* a contribution to the history of knowledge more generally, as well as to the history of science. This erudite and insightful study is a valuable contribution to the history of the life sciences (to use an anachronistic term) in France and elsewhere in the seventeenth century. In addition, it illustrates the close connections between the history of science and environmental history, especially when, as is the case with these anatomists-cum-naturalists, their subjects are impossible to distinguish.

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