

At the Cutting Edge? Training the Late Medieval Surgeon

A. Hit restyth most principally in *manuall applicacon* of medicines: in staunchyng of blod, serchyng of woundes with irons and with other instrumentes, in cuttyng of the sculle in due proporcyon to the pellicules of the brayne with instrumentes of iron, cowchyng of catharactes, takyng owt bonys, sowyng of the flesshe, launchyng of bocchis [lancing boils], cuttyng of apostumes [swellings or tumours], burning of cankers and other lyke, setting in of joyntes and byndyng of theym with ligatures, lettyng of blod, drawyng of tethe, with other suche lyke, which restyth onely in manuall operacon, princypally with the handes of the werkman. And surgery ys in comparyson to phisik as the crafte of carpentar ys comparyd to geometrie: for lyke as the geometer consideryth causis of compasse, quadrangles, triangles and counterpeyses [counterpoises], and as his conyng servyth for buyldyng ... the carpenter occupyeth hit manually to his owne profyte and of necessite profitable to man, wherfor yt ys callyd *ars mechanica*.

The National Archives, Kew, SP1/19, fos 88-9.

B. There shall no ffranchised barbour within the said Citee take any man or child to be his apprentice before that he hath presented the same man or child unto the maister and wardeyns of the said craft for the tyme being, to th'entent that the same maister and wardeyns may duely examyne, oversee, serche and behold by the colour and complexion of the said man or child if he be avexed or disposed to be lepur or gowty, maymed or disfigured in any parties of the body, whereby he shall fall in disdeyn or lothefulnesse unto the sight of the kinges liege people ... and if he be founde defectif in any of these poyntes that than no franchised barbour of the saide citee shall take hym to his apprentice uppon payn to pay v li.

Sidney Young, *Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* (London, 1890), p. 62

C. Every werkman is i-holden to knowe the subiecte in the whiche he wircheth, and ellis he erreth in wirchyng. But a cirurgien is a *werkman* of the helthe of manis body; therefore he is holden to konne the kynde of composicioun of it. And by this manere resoun, he is holden to konne anothomye. It is confermed by a liknes, for in the same manere wircheth a blynde man in a tre as a cirurgien in the body when he knoweth nought anathomye. But the blynde man kyttyng the tree ofte tymes, forsothe as it wer alwey, he erreth in taking uppon hym more or lasse than he schulde, therefore in the same wise a cirurgien when he can not anothomye.

Guy de Chauliac, *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, ed. M.S. Ogden (Early English Text Society, original series, 265, 1971), p. 27

D. We ... at this tyme masturs and wardens of the saide felishyp, ffor the comyn profyte, welth and relefe, socour of owr lordis the kynges lege people, entendyng to prouyde men of good capasite and abill in maners and conyng, sufficiently lerned, enfourmed, and labored by long experyens, and other in the seide craft of surgery, haue prayed and requyred Mastur John Smyth, doctor in phesik, instructour & examener of the seide feliship, and be the same for that intent chosen and elect, to entur & examynacyon ... with divers persons whiche long tyme withowte auctorite haue vsed and haunted with experyens the conyng of surgery, wheruppon, aftur dewe and dyuers monycions made in this be halue, Roberd Anson, on of the seide comialte, at the comyn hall of the same in London appered in his propyr person, the first day of August last past, submyttyng hym selfe to the examynacon and th'aposition [interrogation], wher and when the seide Roberd by the sayde John Smyth, in a gret audiens of many ryght well expert men in surgery

& other, was opynly examined in dyuers thinges concerning the practise operatife and directif in the seyde crafte of surgery. And ther albe it he hathe a fore this many tymys been well approuyd, yet now he is newly habelyd be the seyde doctor and felyship, and found abyll and discrete to ocopy & vse the practise of surgery, as well a bowte new woundis, as cansers, fystelis [fistulae], vlceracions & many other disessis & dyuers ... as an expert man in the seyde faculte ...

Young, *Annals*, p. 70

Carole Rawcliffe
University of East Anglia
30 October 2020