Erbolato, written sometime between 1530 and 1533, is translated as *Herbal Doctor*. It is a satirical piece deriding humanistic views and Neoplatonic philosophy, in particular the proposition that “an ennobling education will lift the human from one level of being to another upwards toward enlightenment” (9). It was composed in the form of a monologue delivered by Master Antonio Faventino who represents a kaleidoscope of several contemporary thinkers and intellectuals whom Ariosto met throughout his life, and it masterfully develops the critique of erudition versus practical knowledge. The monologue is divided into five sections. Looney offers a brief section-by-section summary so as to guide the reader through the work. *Erbolato*, first published posthumously in 1545, enjoyed several subsequent editions but has never been thoroughly studied.

Ariosto’s correspondence offers an important insight into the court poet’s daily life, his administrative duties, and his literary works. His satirical work, *Herbal Doctor*, on the other hand, exemplifies Ariosto’s criticism of contemporary intellectuals and, in particular, of intellectual controversies among members of learned academies and ducal courts. For centuries scholars have ignored the literary value of *Herbal Doctor*, considering it Ariosto’s least significant prose piece. The current translation will certainly bring the work to the attention of English-reading scholars.

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Sergius Kodera. *Disreputable Bodies: Magic, Medicine, and Gender in Renaissance Natural Philosophy*. CRRS Essays and Studies, 23. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010. Pp. 320. ISBN 978-0-7727-2060-3 (paperback). \$28.

Matter matters. Certainly, it did to the Renaissance thinkers explored by University of Vienna philosopher Sergius Kodera. *Disreputable Bodies* offers a series of close readings of fifteenth and sixteenth-century natural philosophers including Leone Ebreo, Giordano Bruno, Giambattista Della Porta, and especially Marsilio Ficino. By guiding readers through a marvellous complex of arguments Kodera offers a rich re-thinking of Renaissance metaphysics. Many, though not all, of the topics investigated centre on conceptions of matter: what it was, how it acted, and how it related to non-material entities like form. It is difficult to boil down a book as rich and diverse as this one. But, with that disclaimer, two themes stand out. Kodera explores the metaphors natural philosophers used to describe cosmology, while elsewhere he investigates what he calls ‘go-betweens,’ the intermediaries thought to manage the relationship between the physical and the spiritual.

In terms of metaphors, Kodera finds that Renaissance thinkers describing the universe relied heavily on analogies drawn from the body. Probably unsurprisingly, given the period, such corporeal metaphors were deeply gendered. Yet, even scholars long familiar with this style of rhetoric—ranging nature as feminine or discussing the social order in terms of the body politic—will be intrigued by what

Kodera has to say. Matter, for example, was a whore or more accurately, given the uses of the term *meretrice*, a nymphomaniac. Kodera shows this bizarre formulation provided a useful and fairly common way for natural philosophers to comment on the dynamism of the material world. Matter was subservient to its master, form, much like a wife to her husband. Yet matter, somewhat like a nymphomaniac, yearned for, and in some expressions even seduced, new forms. Betraying contemporary male anxiety (a theme that runs throughout the book), philosophers described the flux of the natural world in terms of female insatiability. Elsewhere Kodera analyzes the metaphor of the mirror to explore Neoplatonic ideas about the hierarchical relationships running vertically to connect macrocosm to microcosm. Commentary on things such as the myth of Narcissus demonstrates the Renaissance anxiety that mirrors did not reflect truly, but rather contained altered versions of the entities they displayed. Because it captured and changed – usually to debase – the mirror provided Neoplatonists with a useful tool to conceptualize connections between form and matter, spiritual and physical, earthly and divine. While the Neoplatonism of thinkers like Ficino receives considerable attention, Kodera also demonstrates that one's worldview mattered significantly. For example, different appraisals of the body in rabbinical thought led to dramatically different evaluations of matter; in stark contrast to the Neoplatonists, Jewish philosophers like Ebreo placed matter and form on roughly equal footing.

Macrocosm-microcosm relationships were mediated by a series of entities. Kodera shows how substances like blood (with its immaterial counterpart 'spirits'), air, soul, intellect, and the Renaissance magus himself can be usefully understood in terms of their abilities to manage the links between the corporeal and the immaterial. Kodera grounds discussions of these 'go-betweens' in fascinating and frequently unexpected explorations; for example, considerations of female vampires and medical bloodletting, of the development of the process of distillation and alchemy, of air's role in the spread of plague, or of Della Porta's physiognomy and the metaphysical implications of cosmetic surgery. In a range of ways Kodera focuses on the forces and things that moved back and forth between realms; by doing so he offers a tantalizing set of avenues in order to explore the minds of Renaissance thinkers. Again and again, he links these ideas to the political context that produced them, highlighting the persistence of gendered, usually sexist, analogies that permeated fifteenth- and sixteenth-century natural philosophy. Readers should not be thrown off by the terms medicine and magic in the title. Historians of medicine will enjoy the chapters on blood and physiognomy, and historians of witchcraft will be intrigued by the numerous examples that Kodera speculates might have had 'daemonic' implications (not all of which convinced this reviewer). That said, much of the book touches on neither magic nor medicine as they are usually defined. Regardless, Kodera brings alive the wild and imaginative world of Renaissance natural philosophy in a series of unique case studies that bristle with big ideas. It is an innovative and impressive book.