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How did early modern Germans cope with serious injury to a limb and with its loss? Heidi Hausse’s carefully researched book explores this question through material culture. She addresses the complexities of, and collaborative efforts in, early modern surgical medicine and prosthetic technology. The book recognizes early modern Germans as patients, surgeons, medical professionals, families of the injured, representatives of religious belief systems, and most of all artisans with unique expertise. The material culture discussed consists mainly of arm prostheses, and in this respect the book includes many fascinating photographs of high quality, illustrations, and paintings. Hausse comes to the conclusion that the body was seen as malleable and that the amputation of a limb increasingly implied subsequent use of early modern prosthetic technology, thus influencing decisions about surgical procedures.

In her introduction, Hausse situates her work within the fields of history of medicine and history of technology as well as within disability studies. The book examines evidence of a shift in which “early moderns cut apart the body and worked to put it back together” (p. 15). However, she sees it “not a story of progress” but one of transformation (p. 13). Therefore, the book is structured according to the process experienced—departing from barber-surgeons and the decision to remove the limb, to postsurgical care and the making of artificial limbs—rather than along a temporal line. The narrative begins with a discussion of surgeons through texts written in vernacular language, by a group of authors that Hausse calls “vernacular surgeons” (p. 21). This group has, so far, received little attention within the academic context as these surgeons operated outside of a university context in a master-apprentice structure that focused on the experience gained through a practical approach. This can be traced in their writing, and Hausse includes fascinating examples in English translation.

The book continues with an investigation of the decision-making process concerning amputation, a very risky and often deadly undertaking in early modern Germany. Hausse uses examples
from her body of vernacular texts that reveal the vivid conversations about hot and cold fire (kalter und heisser Brand); she, for instance, examines Fabry von Hilden’s study *Gründlicher Bericht vom heissen und kalten Brand*, first published in 1593. Hausse points out that the decision to amputate was a collective decision involving a number of actors and critically discusses an (idealized) illustration from a 1545 procedure. The many examples that she provides in English translation reveal a fascinating glimpse of early modern injuries and the lives of these patients. In a footnote, Hausse also corrects Roy Porter who attributes a well-known anecdote on von Hilden to Hieronymus Fabricius ab Aquapendente.

Once the decision to amputate was reached, the site of surgery became “an increasingly controversial subject” in the surgeons’ treatises (p. 83). Again Hausse introduces fascinating examples with illustrations and reveals how the prospect of an artificial limb increasingly influenced surgical practice so that, with “their tools and treatises, they actually created a ... malleable body” (p. 112). But before the new limb could be crafted, the body needed to heal. Hausse devotes a chapter to (the lack of) sources on postsurgical care of patients. She presents a vivid discussion on early modern phantom limbs that reveals radically different positions toward the phenomenon. She includes surgeon voices on skin grafting, critically discussing the famous case of Cosmas and Damian supported by an illustration. However, there is no evidence that surgeons were involved in the process of acquiring the artificial limb. Based on the available sources, “authors offered no case histories suggesting their involvement in designing, fabricating, or obtaining” the artificial limb (p. 142). This task fell to the amputee.

Chapter 5, “Mechanical Hands,” “examines the material culture of mechanical hands as evidence of the crucial role that amputees played in expanding the pliability of the early modern body” (p. 153). It includes great photographs of artifacts from different collections and archives with a detailed critical discussion of these and their popular or museal narratives: for example, the assumption that mechanical construction to make the fingers of an artificial hand movable was needed to hold the reins of a horse. Hausse meticulously looks for evidence before making conclusions. How do we know that all these arms were made and worn by men only? Her discussion of the Ingolstadt Hand raises serious doubts in common narratives and wonderfully embraces questions rather than answers. Rather than speculating who may have worn the material, Hausse is interested in the evidence-based complexity of craftsmanship involved. The objects that she has been able to research originated with owners who had the “economic means and/or kin network” to help them commission their artificial limb when others did not have those means (p. 192). Wooden limbs and those made of leather have not survived, and individuals “who wore prostheses rarely appear in institutional records,” making less privileged wearers impossible to trace. Nonetheless, the artifacts Hausse has thoroughly researched reveal an economic spectrum, and all of these were “more complicated than required for everyday tasks” (p. 197). She also argues that “the more expensive and complex the artifact, the less user-friendly and efficient it was to operate” (p. 196).

The last chapter revolves around Ambroise Paré’s *Les Oeuvres* (1575), which was translated into vernacular German and circulated widely. Hausse reveals the mistakes made in the translation—the “fundamental misunderstanding of the way the technology depicted in the woodcut worked”—and shows how the locksmith, essential to the design, disappeared in the publication so that the technology was attributed to the surgeon (p. 211). This chapter highlights the role of locksmiths, gunsmiths, clockmakers, and other specialists in the making of artificial limbs and shows that each object represents a collective endeavor designed for the specific needs (aesthetic and otherwise) of an individual. The role of the amputee-
patron is crucial here and is one of the most valuable concepts offered by Hausse. The active role of the amputee, from the decision to remove a limb to the construction of an artificial replacement, is highlighted throughout the book in a way that goes beyond solely the patient.

The book ends with a carefully chosen contemporary example, Iraq veteran Elana Duffy, to highlight the shift (and progress) in the history of artificial limbs. This example also reveals many commonalities in the desire to functionally replace a lost body part through making use of the possibilities technology has to offer. Hausse's book is an essential read for scholars of the history of medicine, early modern disability studies, cultural history, and the history of technology. It makes valuable sources accessible and provides thoughtful discussions using material and visual evidence as well as translations of vernacular German sources.

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