

Food and Cancer Paduan Diets in Early Modern Times

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ABSTRACT

From the last third of the thirteenth century, an extensive literature of consilia developed in Italy. This 'epistemic genre' has been widely studied by Nancy G. Siraisi. A second investigator, Marilyn Nicoud, specifies that the genre 'belongs to a class of texts which are clearly identified, particular and autonomous, even if it maintains close and sometimes ambiguous links with other genres, especially with diets and recipes for health'. 'Generally, the consilia deal with a particular patient and a disease for which a physician from whom the advice has been sought proposes in writing specific types of care, often organized into three distinct parts: after a description of the symptoms allowing the formulation of a diagnosis (the casus), the treatment consists in a diet which is based on the 'six non-natural things' (diateia), followed by therapy using a pharmacopoeia (potio)'.

Some of these consultations deal with 'cancer'. In the present article, the nature of the disorders treated under this heading will not be given detailed consideration in terms of contemporary science. In considering the medieval terminology of the disease, Luke Demaitre notices its relative inconsistency: 'one ailment could have several names, and one term could refer to widely varying conditions'. In his awesome book on Medieval Medicine. The Art of Healing from Head to Toe (2013), Demaitre methodically considers the lack of distinction among several diseases by 'early Latin compilers, including Copho, Gariopontus, Petrocclu, John of Sint Paul, and other Salernitan masters'. A confusion was especially fostered between cancer and cancrena or gangrene as they were supposed to be due to an excess of yellow bile, according to Avicenna. For example, in the Breviarium attributed to the famous Arno of Vilanova (c. 1240-1311), a chapter is entitled 'On fistulas, cancer, lupus, and the like'. Demaitre's approach to the question of the real diseases with which are dealing the consilia will be adopted, when he explores these notions 'with an eye on their medical implications for the time' and 'on the attitudes evoked in definitions and analogies, rather than on their closeness to the latest perspective on modern mentalités and mythologies of cancer'. The elements allowing us to make some circumstantial remarks about the disorders will be treated the same way.

Alongside this literature of personal consultations, a literature of compendia or theoreticae included substantial treatises which sometimes contained chapters on 'cancer'.

Keywords: Cancer; Dietetics; Foods; Renaissance

PADUAN DIETS

According to the same historian, Giovanni Battista Da Monte (1489-1551) was the 'leading professor' of the faculty of Padua, in the first half of the sixteenth century. He published in centuriae from 1554 onwards Consultationes which recounted many 'cancerous' cases. He also published text-books intended 'for the

universities of the whole of Europe' which received praise from Vesalius, Fracastoro, Fallopius, etc. His most important treatise of this sort was the Medicina universa published in 1587 where he devotes a number of observations to cancer, and especially to the fact that it is not contagious. This summa was accompanied by various books of commentaries on Hippocrates, Avicenna and Rhasis published by his students after his death.

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Other 'universal treatises' and text-books were published in Padua after Da Monte's death. Gabriele Falloppia or Fallopius (1523-1562), had studied under the latter in 1545 before he joined the university of Padua in 1551, where he was professor of anatomy and surgery, as a successor to Vesalius, and of botany until his death. In 1556, he gave lectures for example on 'unnatural tumours' which supposedly deal particularly with cancer. In 1561, Fallopius published his *Observationes anatomicae*. In 1563, his students published his *Libelli duo, alter de ulceribus, alter de tumoribus praeter naturam* (Two Short Books, One on the Ulcers, the Other on the Unnatural Tumours) from the notes taken during his lectures, where some pages are devoted to cancer and to the contagiousness of 'ulcers'. A whole chapter is devoted to cancer in his *De ulceribus liber* of 1577.

In 1565, Girolamo Fabrici or Fabrizio d'Acquapendente (1533-1619), who studied under Fallopius, was appointed professor of surgery and anatomy in Padua. His *Pentateuchos chirurgicum* (Five Surgical Books) first published in 1592 has twenty pages on cancer. The volume considers successively: *Nomen, Causa, et differentia, Subjectum, Definitio, Signa, Prognosis, Curatio* and 'external causes' of the disease, among which are 'food and drink'. The account of the surgical treatment includes statements taken from Rhasis (865-925), Albucasis (c. 940-1013) and Aëtius of Amida (fifth-sixth centuries).

We have records of several consultations by da Monte concerning a supposed 'cancer' or 'cancrosus ulcer' or carcinoma or scirrhus – the preliminary and virtual form of the disease, theoretically curable. Four of them in particular will be considered here. One of them, in the first centuria, deals with 'a scirrhus of the liver', 'with obstructions that show a danger of dropsy', in a very learned young man from Udine named Luvisinus (mentioned below as no. 61). Three other consultations concern a *noli me tangere*, (literally 'do not touch me'), that is to say, a disease of the face. No. 116, in the 1583 Consultations, deals with 'an ulcerated lip burnt by material which causes melancholy, which was prescribed for in Italy'. Nos 48 and 49, in the first centuria, consider two cases of possible cancers: one of 'the nostrils in a German' and the other of 'a polyp in the nostrils which could become cancerous'.

We may note that a 'cancer' of the nose or of the nostrils is quite frequently mentioned in medieval and Renaissance literature. Alanna Skuse writes that this concern for the nose and 'nosethrills' may be underscored because it would be more socially visible as the 'stigma of the marked body', which was 'often taken as a sign of bad luck' like every other disfiguring disease of the face. Or could this concern be linked with plague? Girolamo Fracastoro wrote in his *De contagionibus et contagiosis morbis* (On Contagions and Contagious Diseases, and on their Cure) of 1546 that this disease 'occurs without any pain and starts with the nostrils, as Paul Aëgineta, Avicenna, etc. Vivian Nutton, in contrast, puts emphasis on the opposition between Fracastoro and Da Monte concerning the causes of contagion 'in its various manifestations in scabies, ophthalmia, and plague', with Da Monte 'strongly attacking Fracastoro in his lectures at Padua' and 'rejecting any spiritual causes'.

In the case of Da Monte's concern with 'malignant abscess' in the nose and nostrils, the suspicion of elephantiasis is probably more decisive: the disease, that 'occurs without any pain, without any fever, and remains hidden for a while before it develops', manifests itself by 'initial signs' which 'appear soon, most of the time around a nostril where a pimple grows that looks like a blackish lentil'.

Another Paduan professor wrote several consilia dealing with cancer. Girolamo Mercuriale (1530-1606) obtained his doctorate in Venice in 1555. From his early relationships with Padua, in the 1550's, he remembered Fallopius as his favourite praeceptor and it seems that he had mostly attended his lectures in surgery and anatomy. In 1569, he was appointed in Padua to the chair of practical medicine but in 1587, around twenty years before he died, he left for Bologna university, where he occupied the chair of theoretical medicine.

Mercuriale published five volumes of Books of Medical Responses and Consultations from 1587 to 1604. The most interesting deals with the case of a Spanish lady who suffered from a cancer of the right breast. In another one, he says that he will not prescribe any diet for a woman who suffered from a tumour of the uterus 'because I am sure that everything has been carefully prescribed by the eminent physician'. Is it for the same reason, or because he was sceptical as to prescriptions for diet that he writes in a third consultation about a scirrhus which was 'easily identified'? 'I do not prescribe any victus rationem because I am expecting that you have neglected no attention, knowledge and constancy to cure the patient submitted to your treatment, so that she could recover her previous state of health'.

This sceptical attitude is even clearer in a French physician such as Guillaume Baillou (c. 1538 – 1616), who enjoyed fame for his Hippocratic return to facts and nature. In the second volume of his *consilia medicinalia*, he prescribes giving a cancerous woman 'everything which could please her' or 'excite her appetite' – 'even food which is bad, but which she would like'.

Christoforo Guarinone (1540-1610) also published *Consilia medicinalia* in 1610. Born in Verona probably in 1540, he may have known Mercuriale under whom he could have studied. Having received his degrees in Padua, he was called, due to his reputation, to the court of the duke of Urbino and later attached to the emperor Rodolph II in Prag. His *Consilia* deal with several 'tumours' of the breast and uterus or of other organs, such as the jaws or throat, and elbow. We consider the *Consilia* that he devoted to 'A cancer of the left breast of doctor Todesch's wife' In a consultation 'On the tumour of the breast of a nun, the Duke and High Chancellor of Bavaria's daughter', he does not propose any diet as a treatment for cancer, but he suggests an *electuarum* or syrup which typically includes plants or elements which ordinarily appear in diets appropriate to the disease, such as 'betony, chicory, fumitory, lemon balm', etc.

Similar ingredients are involved in the *intentiones curativae* proposed as a treatment for cancer by Roderic a Fonseca, who was born in Lisbon at an unknown date and died in Padua in 1632, where he had been professor at the university since 1615. These 'intentions', as Luke Demaitre has recalled, were

discussed during Middle Ages in a three-parts program devoted to 'topical, humoral, and even surgical treatments for the early ages. For example, Gilbertus Anglicus (*Compendium medicinae*), published in Lyon in 1510, wrote: 'If the site is hard around the cancer but the rest is soft and malleable, it may be treated with powder of asphodel (*affodilus*) and a caustic (*ruptorio*) ointment, or even by incision'. As for Roderic a Fonseca, he proposes in his *Consultationes medicae* of 1609 to cure in three stages the non-ulcerated breast cancer of a woman aged thirty-three whose menses had ceased six months previously. The first one mentions, as purgatives for the blood, medicinal decoctions of plants sometimes used as foods: borage, sorrel, agrimony, chicory and maidenhair fern or capillary. Then, the *victus rationem*, which was intended to 'refrigerate and humidify' the bad humour 'with some attenuation' and occupied the second stage will be detailed below.

From Lisbon to Padua and back to Spain, our search for European testimonies lead us to Valladolid, where Luis Mercado (c. 1525-1611) was professor. He was also attached to King Philip II, and published *Institutiones medicae* which had many editions not only in his own country but also in Frankfurt from 1594 to 1620. His *Complete Works* contain one volume on the 'internal diseases' and another on those which are 'complicated and very serious'. An article is devoted to 'The scirrhus tumour of the uterus' and another to 'Cancer of the uterus'. The first thing, in a diet, is 'to serve foods which cool and humidify, generate soft juice, stop any serous fluid, or warming and burning', and thus restore the 'suppressed menses and hemorrhoids'. But obviously, he does not want to spend much time on detailing which foods could be useful. This man, seduced by iatrochemical novelties, prefers to provide a series of potions, poultices, etc. to stop the progress of the scirrhus.

Orazio Augenio (1527-1603) searched for a similar result in similar circumstances in his letters of 1592. Appointed the same year at Padua as professor of theoretical medicine, he proposed a composition whose typical ingredients include: 'bugloss, borage, lemon balm, betony, anise, hop, cuscuta or devil hair, root of polypodium or fern, of oak, chicory, licorice', etc. But for the rest, he declares that he will 'write nothing on diet, for he knows that the patient has learned, from her relationships with many doctors, whether foods are suitable or not'.

BEEF, PORK, LAMB

The diets mentioned above are, as usual, deeply rooted in Galen's *Ad Glauconem de medendi methodo* (Therapeutics, to Glaucon). Chapter twelve of the second book deals with the 'Causes and treatment of cancer and elephantiasis'. Galen writes: 'As for diet, you may prescribe profuse quantities of the juice of the ptisana, the serum of milk and vegetables, mallow, saltbush, chard, and gourd in season. Give rockfish, give all types of birds, except those living in marshes'. It is well-known that serum lactis was whey and that the ptisana was a decoction of hulled barley. The latter 'has the virtue of humidifying', an important quality when 'it is a question of curing a disease that burns and desiccates the whole body'. Thus, Galen introduces us to the theory that will structure Renaissance diets through the combination of the four qualities - hot, dry, moist and cold

- whose mixing constitutes the four humours of the body: blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile. Health was supposed to depend on the balance of the humours as disease depended on their unbalanced mixing.

Galen's *De alimentorum facultatibus* provides the basis for any Renaissance diet discussing the qualities of the flesh of quadrupeds and birds. 'Beef furnishes nourishment which is substantial and not easily digested, although it generates thicker blood than is suitable. If anyone more inclined by temperament to melancholy should eat their fill of this food, they will be overtaken by a melancholy disease. These diseases are cancer, elephantiasis, scabies, leprosy, quartan fever, and whatever is detailed under the heading *melancholia*.'

In prescription no. 116 for Italy, Da Monte recommends the patient to abstain from 'beef and pork, freshly cut or salted and spiced'. His *Universal Medicine* explains that salt beef has a high degree of *terrestreitas*, a quality that, according to Avicenna, characterizes a food whose dryness and, so to say, its heaviness makes it comparable to soil and even to stone. Guarinone suggests a diet with no meat which comes from 'old' animals, whether 'terrestrial or aquatic', and which, in any case, must be free from 'any salted, raw or sour food'. Jean-Louis Flandrin has noticed in the French proverbs which supposedly keep alive the memory of the ancient diet a warning. 'De chair salée, de fruit ni de fromage nul ne s'en fie tant soit prudent et sage': 'No one relies on salted meat, fruit or cheese, if one is careful and wise'.

On the contrary, the list of the meats which are recommended is ruled by a general principle: that of young animals is better, especially for young persons, according to Galen. 'So not only do calves have flesh that is better for the digestion than fully grown cows, but kids are better than goats', etc. Da Monte prescribes to Luvisinus 'the flesh of kids or young lambs, or of calves which are still suckling from the udder'. 'These meats are good when they are cooked in water as in broths made from the roots of fennel or leaves of parsley, as well as all the foods of bad quality prepared with cinnamon and vinegar'. In the *consilium* addressed to the Spanish lady, Mercuriale writes that she should take 'food which is not too nourishing, easy to cook, and which cools the body somewhat': the cancer, which is hot, must be fought by its contrary. Thus, he prescribes veal and kid, but also mutton, 'whose meat is so salutary and certainly so delicious to Spaniards'.

GOAT, HARE, DEER, VENISON

Tommaso Giannotti Rangoni (1493-1577), who took his degrees in medicine in Bologna and directed a college in Venice, also disapproved the general consumption of 'old smoked meat' in a book announcing some recipes intended to prolong human life until the age of 120, and he specified that he also excluded, deer and hare. More than a century after Rangoni, at a time when Galenism had supposedly been set aside to some extent, or even challenged by the development of new medical theories, the flesh of the same animals was still the subject of critical remarks by Giovanni Battista Sitoni in his *Iatrosophiae miscellanea* of 1669, in relation to a cancerous patient named Marcellina Osia.

This prohibition was widespread in Europe. Jean Fernel (1497-1558), who also published *Medicinalium consiliorum centuria*, entitled one of them 'On the treatment of a starting cancer, which is not yet ulcerated'. Confronted with a disease of such a 'malignant and arrogant obstinacy', the physician has to safeguard the patient from everything generating muddy blood in the liver and the spleen, and then to restore a good blood flow in women, with menses, and in men, with hemorrhoids. Hence, 'old and salted meats, beef, deer, goat, hare' must be avoided.

The Scotsman Peter Lowe (c. 1550-1610), in his *Discourse of the Whole Art of Chyrurgerie*, writes that 'a good dyet must be cold and humid', and he excludes 'all things which ingender the melancolicke humour and heat the blood, like as hares, venison, goates'. Reiner Solenander (1524-1601), who was attached to William of Jülich-Cleves-Berge in Dusseldorf, expresses the same disapproval with a different humoral comment, in a consilia for a 'tumour under the knee'. He recommends avoiding 'beef, goat, smoked and salted meat, hare, deer', etc. The reason is that they are not only coarse foods, but also cold and dry meats. Scully reminds us that beef – the most paradigmatically rejected meat for cancerous patients – 'tends naturally toward the cold and dry'.

The sources of all these considerations may be picked up in Galen. As we have seen, 'kids are better than goats', whose flesh is drier, even if it is 'by temperament less dry than beef'. 'Lambs have moist and phlegmatic flesh. The flesh of sheep, on the other hand, is even more excrementitious and unwholesome. The flesh of nanny-goats combines unwholesomeness with bitterness'. 'Hares have flesh that generates thicker blood, although as regards wholesomeness it is better than beef and lamb. Venison is no less unwholesome than these and difficult to digest'.

BIRDS

What has been said of the strict Galenism of Renaissance diet may be repeated in relation to birds. Galen wrote: 'All birds are less nutritious compared to animals, particularly pigs, in comparison with which you can find nothing more nutritious'. We have seen that Mercuriale recommended a 'food which is not too nourishing' for the Spanish Lady. Galen states: 'the flesh of birds is more easily digested, particularly that of partridges, francolins, pigeons, cocks and chickens'. In his treatise *To Live a Long Healthy Life of 1600*, Nicolas Abraham de La Framboisière grants to domestic birds 'the first rank' among foods because 'their juice in neither greasy nor thin, but moderate and temperate'. His compatriot Joseph du Chesne confirmed in 1627 that hens, chickens and capons are especially healthy because they have 'the most temperate flesh'.

Da Monte confirms the statements about chickens, especially if they are 'cooked in their juice', in his consultations on nasal cancer. He writes, for the benefit of the young man from Udine, that the latter must favour 'chickens and hens, or pigeons living in towers, small birds that search their food in trees, mountains or fields'. But he also disapproves, in consultations nos. 48 and 49, of the consumption of birds 'living in water or close to

ivers'. And he repeats the warning in the consultation about the 'ulcerated lip': we should keep away from 'birds which live in marshy places, such as geese and ducks' (no. 116). We find the same rejection in the works by Sitoni, Solenander, Lowe or Barrough.

This is not surprising, as Galen wrote in the *Therapeutics to Glaucou* he only recommended 'rockfish' and he explained why in *On the Powers of Foods*. 'There is a considerable difference between animals that live in lakes, marshes and swamps; and those that live in mountains and dry areas. The flesh of animals is analogous to these places: either dry, devoid of excrementitious matter and easy to digest; or moist, excrementitious and difficult to digest'. The mullets which live in the sea, 'where there are rocks and cliffs', have a better flesh, because they have to struggle against them and the wind. But those who live in 'meads or channels that flush the lavatories in the cities' are 'excrementitious and rather slimy'.

Da Monte agrees: 'Fish are no good, except those living in rocks' (c. 61). Beware of 'all fish, especially those taken from marshes' (c. 116). And Guarinone concludes that no victus ratio should include 'meats either terrestrial or aquatic'.

VEGETABLES

Jean Céard has stated that 'herbs and vegetables are little esteemed in Renaissance dietetics'. Gentilcore adds: 'Although legumes were one of the most frequently eaten foods during the early modern and modern periods, medical opinion was hostile to them. They were considered a gross (heavy and coarse) foodstuff, difficult to digest and the cause of flatulence. Only labourers were thought to have stomachs strong enough to digest them, to the extent that 'bean-eater' became an abusive label'. And he quotes Juan Sorapán de Rieros, for whom 'eating vegetables and falling ill are one and the same thing'.

In consultation no. 49, Da Monte writes that, in the case of a cancer of the face, 'all sorts of vegetables and herbs fried in the pan must be avoided', especially garlic and onions, which are 'hot' and thus may excite the disease. His *Medicina universa* emphasizes that 'bulbs, such as garlic and onions, have every defect', because of their 'aqueous and terrestrial' character. On a more general level, he writes that people 'should avoid garlic, onions, all sorts of herbs, especially parsnips, turnips, and the small root of parsley'.

In contrast, he praises 'good lettuce, endive and borage', which are good for everybody, but especially the sickly and convalescent. Did Galen sum up the essence of the discourse on lettuce? He wrote: 'Many doctors judge this vegetable to be superior to all the others, just as the fig is among the autumn fruits; for it has better juice than they'. Due to its 'cooling quality' and 'moisture in the third degree', as Pliny mentions, Roderic a Fonseca also prescribes the lettuce as having 'good juices', as it helps in healing cancer. But, as we shall show elsewhere, the advices concerning lettuce was not so unanimous.

Chicory and borage were first-rank vegetables, especially among poor people who could disguise their poor taste in soups or broths. Roderic suggests that they must be 'cooked in a water-bath for four hours'. Thus, the optimal meat-and-greens dish was

perhaps chicken-and-borage, or 'borage-soup with chicken-broth', for the strong stomach of the labourers or for more delicate but voracious clerics, among whom was the famous Bartolomeo Scappi (c. 1500 –1577), chef to cardinals and popes.

CHEESE

Da Monte, Mercuriale, Acquapendente are unanimous. Be careful 'with dairy products, notably with cheese', Da Monte writes in the consilium 116, and especially with 'hard cheeses' because they are 'the worst by far'. Sitoni fully agrees: old cheese could be harmful. The question of its influence on health was raised by Johannes Lange in 1589: 'Is eating cheese healthy?'

The lactinia, dishes made with milk, are also forbidden in diets of many diseases (Da Monte, 1554/39, 73; 1583/96, 100; Mercuriale, 1587/61, etc.). The word often appears with other dishes which could be generally bad: the pastilia (Da Monte, 1554/39 ; 1572/154, Augenio, 1592/XII, epist. 3, p. 141) and the pasticia (Mercuriale, 1597/ sans n° 77v°, 98v°, 105, 117). Was the pasticia an ancestor of the pasticcio, whose word is registered in 1612?

Another interesting question: Gentilcore thinks that 'the rustic associations of cheese help explain why the elites were advised to avoid it'. But Galen had already written that cheese 'absorbs during its preparation an element of harshness, and it becomes wholly removed from moistness' so that it 'becomes harsher, definitely hotter and more heating', which is bad for somebody suffering from cancer, because it produces 'blockages in the liver and stone in the kidneys'.

EGGS

The same unanimity characterizes observations on the consumption of eggs. Da Monte, Mercuriale, Acquapendente, Sitoni or Lowe and Solenander. and, as the French Barthélemy de Chasseneuz, in his encyclopedic *Catalogus gloriae mundi* (1586), say that the best way is to swallow them raw, *forbilia*. Da Monte tolerates those that are 'cooked in water', but disapproves of the patient who consumes them 'hard and fried' (c. 116, c. 49). Mercuriale accepts them *tremula*, that is to say as poached eggs.

Everything was already in Galen. He wrote: 'The best for food are soft boiled eggs, suckable eggs being less nutritious but passing through the body more easily and soothing a rough throat'. 'Better than boiled and baked eggs are those called poached', etc.

However, egg yolk was a common remedy against cancer. Johannes Petrus Arlunus mentions it in 1539, as does Antonio Fumanello in 1557.

Drink

Nothing, of course, is better than clear water, especially 'with a good flavour and not mixed with extraneous things, such as those which come from marshes'. The Venetian Antonio Benivieni (1443-1502) expresses in his Health System the idea of purity that dominates our diets. If the patient is a gourmet, he

could take, Da Monte writes, a 'light, clear, white wine, which is not too rough' (C116, C118). Guarinone agrees: 'very light wine, with the least possible sourness', but no wine which could harm the intestines and the stomach of a woman suffering from 'tumours of the pubis and the uterus'. Fernel, Solenander and Lowe also recommend white wine: 'slightly yellow' or 'diluted with a reddish wine, which is called claretus', or a 'white wine that is old' mixed with *theriacke*, an antidote found by Galen. But the Scottish Lowe does not forget ale among the drinks allowed to his patient.

On the other hand, the Italian Mercuriale prefers 'a fruit wine, especially one made from pomegranates, or 'some water mixed with lemon juice and sugar, cooked slowly'.

CONCLUSION

To get a broader understanding of anti-cancerous diets, at least two developments of the inquiry would be useful. First, it should be extended to encompass the literature devoted to the 'best way of staying healthy'. For example, one of the authors who was most critical and explicit on traditional beliefs concerning food, and who expressed the most personal testimony on the subject, is Luigi Cornaro, who lived for about hundred years (Venice 1464/1467- Padua 1566). 'Most diligently', he tried the foods which would be the best for him, among those which he liked or which could not do no harm. He realized that many of them, that he greatly enjoyed, were in fact bad for him: 'watermelons, green salads, the fish, the pork, the tarts, the vegetable soups, the pastas and other similar foods.'

From this point of view, the chapter entitled « Rich food, poor food : diet, physiology and social rank » in Gentilcore's *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*, should be considered in relationships with Galen's seminal statements in the *De alimentorum facultatibus*. And a link with the graphic representations of foods in Valérie Boudier's *La cuisine du peintre. Scène de genre et nourriture au Cinquecento* (2010) is too substantially evident to be taken up here.

The similarities, but also the great differences, which exist between the large literature on Food and Health and the consilia on cancers are obvious in researches by Ken Albala or David Gentilcore, notably on Pisanelli. On the one hand, the latter repeats that pork is 'the best nutriment', 'more adapted to human nature in smell, and flavour, than any other meat' when 'its excessive moistness is eliminated'. 'With a little salt', it is even 'much better'. It might look like a sacred gift to humanity, if the animal did not bring harm when it is 'much sought after', especially by 'the old'. Hares and geese, which are 'hot and moist', are also harmful to 'melancholic' persons, especially for 'those who study' or for Jews, who are fond of geese, show a sad complexion and have indeed 'very bad customs'.

Another literature which should be more consistently considered is that devoted to diseases of women, as Mercado's *De mulierum affectionibus* (1579), who calls cancers *zaratanes*.

Another kind of extension of the inquiry might consider diets for other diseases. An attempt will be proposed, on the basis of the full corpus of the Paduan consilia, in the enlarged version of

a conference given in February 2020 at the Académie royale de Belgique. Some are qualified by Michael Stolberg as the most feared in early modern times: besides cancer, dropsy and consumption, which will be defined. A dozen of other important and frequent diseases has been considered: apoplexy, stroke, paralysis, gout 'in feet and hands', kidney stones, renal colic, spleen and liver disturbances and 'obstructions', 'hypochondriac melancholy', vertigo, heart palpitations, headaches, sex problems and sexual abstinence. Some 'open questions' will remain outlined from the point of view of dietary and alimentary recommendation, such as syphilis, toothache, glandular problems, deafness, sight problems and cataract, diseases of the uterus, etc. Some detailed programs will be analysed, as the prescription for the famous Venetian writer, poet and cardinal Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), who probably looked like his portrait by Jacopo Bassano (c. 1545) when he consulted Da Monte.

At this point, we may state that several dietary variations or contradictions will be modulate what the present inquiry on anti-cancerous treatment has sketched out. We shall not try to check, even when it is possible, to what extent the consilia were beneficial to patients. Da Monte concluded his consilium 116 with: 'The first thing concerning the preservation of health consists in moderating all the vexations of the soul and escaping as far as possible from sad and worrying thoughts'. Fernel warned, to avoid cancer, against 'insomnia, working too hard and sorrows', and Peter Lowe warned against 'sadness, anger, melancholie'. The last advice from the Paduan master was: 'It is important to keep a happy and cheerful spirit in gentle relationships with those that you love'.

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