

**From Flesh to Text: The Chapters on the Uterus and Its Parts in  
Rodrigo de Castro's *De uniuersa mulierum medicina***

**Da Carne ao Texto: os capítulos sobre o útero e suas partes no  
*De uniuersa mulierum medicina* de Rodrigo de Castro**

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**Abstract:** The anatomy of the uterus and its constituent parts was an essential section in early modern medical treatises, both general texts and specialist texts in gynaecology and obstetrics. In this paper, I examine the section of Rodrigo de Castro's *De uniuersa mulierum medicina* devoted to the subject (chapters 2 and 3 of Book 1, Part 1 "Theoria"), both as regards what he says about the anatomical characteristics of these parts and the controversies and questions of morality associated with the uterus.

**Keywords:** history of gynaecology; anatomy of the reproductive tract; Rodrigo de Castro Lusitano; *De uniuersa mulierum medicina*.

## 1. Introduction

Rodrigo de Castro Lusitano was a Portuguese physician of Sephardic descent who dedicated his life to the practice of the medical profession in Portugal but also notably abroad. He settled in Hamburg at an unknown date, probably in the late 1580s or early 1590s, and there published three medical treatises: a small book on the plague that afflicted Hamburg in 1596; a treatise on women's diseases that went through several editions from 1603 to 1689; and another on medical ethics, published in 1614 and 1662<sup>2</sup>. The frontispieces of the last two books describe Castro as *per Europam notissimum*. Nevertheless, Castro and his works are virtually unknown in Portugal, though there have been some

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<sup>2</sup> On the possibility of Castro having lived in Antwerp before settling in Hamburg, cf. DIAS (1887-1889) and PINHEIRO (2021a). Some authors mention a fourth book, written in vernacular, *Tratado de herem*, now lost.

recent efforts to publicise and to study his contribution to the history of medicine in Portugal and in Europe<sup>3</sup>. The fact that he was labelled as Galenic, when this was understood as a synonym of conservatism and scientific backwardness, played against him and contributed to consign him and his medical work to oblivion.

If we consider the history of science in general and of medicine in particular to be a story of individual geniuses, then Castro probably has no place in it. But if we consider that it is a continuous and culturally conditioned movement towards innovation, where all efforts are important, then we must give Castro the place he deserves. He was obviously a man of his time and had a solid knowledge of medicine, both theoretical and practical, and his work bears witness to this. The references to the many patients he treated attest to his success, as do the privileges that were granted to him in Hamburg, despite his origins and the obstacles they may have posed, indicating that he achieved there an unprecedented social status<sup>4</sup>. He is credited by DIAS (1887) 52 as being the “father of gynaecology”, but, like so many others who left the country in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, escaping religious prosecutions and searching for more tolerant places, he is “a lost glory” of Portuguese culture<sup>5</sup>.

Castro earned his medical degree at the University of Salamanca in what has been considered the period of the establishment of Vesalian anatomy in Spain. The construction of the university’s permanent anatomical theatre — one of the first to be built in Europe — was finished in 1554,

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<sup>3</sup> The most significant efforts, in Portugal, are the ongoing Gynecia project and the project “Filosofia, Medicina e Sociedade” (2007-2011), coordinated by Adelino Cardoso.

<sup>4</sup> As BRADEN (2001) 75, 178, 465, n. 250, and (2016) 240 notes, he was given permission to bury his wife in the Lutheran cemetery of the church of Saint Mary Magdalene, to have his sons enrolled in the Johanneum academy and to buy a property in the *Wallstraße*, when these were not usually rights granted to foreigners settled there. On Castro’s life, see DIAS (1887-1889), KAYSERLING (1902), LEMOS (1909) 230-233, STUEMUND-HALÉVY (2009), ARRIZABALAGA (2009), FRADE and SILVA (2011), PINHEIRO (2017) and PINHEIRO (2021a).

<sup>5</sup> The expression is used by WILKE (2018) 197 and refers to Filipe Montalto and to Rodrigo de Castro.

probably a few years before Castro arrived in Salamanca<sup>6</sup>. His interest in anatomy is evident throughout his work and his chapters on the anatomy of the uterus prove his knowledge of Vesalius' *Fabrica*. It is the aim of this paper to explore how Castro uses certain previous texts on anatomy in his chapters on the uterus, and how his appropriation of these texts relates to the pedagogical frame of the *De uniuersa mulierum medicina* (*Complete Women's Medicine*). At the same time, I hope to show that this textual dependence provided Castro with a coherent system of medical terminology related to the female reproductive organs and that it enabled him to approach some important cultural, moral and social issues related to them.

## 2. The Chapters on the Anatomy of the Female Reproductive Organs

In the first part of his treatise on gynaecology, Rodrigo de Castro presents, as he himself asserts in his preface, the theory of the "natural history of women" (*naturalis mulieris historia*). In the four books that constitute this first part, entitled "On the nature of women", he explores, as he says, "all matters relating to the anatomy of the uterus and breasts, to the philosophy or history of the female sex, and those concerning semen, menstruation, sexual intercourse, conception, pregnancy, parturition and breastmilk"<sup>7</sup>. In the eleven chapters that constitute the first book, Castro analyses topics ranging from the difference between male and female, in chapter 1, to their similarities, in chapter 11. In the intervening chapters, he describes in detail the nature, arrangement and functioning of the female reproductive organs and the structures that support them, such as blood vessels, bones, membranes, etc. He also describes the breasts, the uterus during pregnancy and the physical structures that support foetal development.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. on the Vesalian movement in Spain, and particularly in Salamanca: MONTES and GARCÍA (1994), PÉREZ IBAÑEZ (1998) 46ff., MARTÍNEZ-VIDAL and PARDO-TOMÁS (2005), VÁZQUEZ, RIESCO and BLANCO (2015).

<sup>7</sup> *omnia quae ad uteri et mammarum anatomen, philosophiam, uel feminei sexus historiam pertinent, quaeque ad semen, menstruum, congressum, conceptum, uteri gestationem, partum et lac spectant*. All translations, when not indicated otherwise, are my own. The transcription of all the Latin texts follows the rules of APENEL-Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Neo-Latinos. The text is from the second edition of the *De uniuersa mulierum medicina* (1617). On the prefaces, see PINHEIRO (2021b).

But this series of chapters constitutes more than a description of what the author may have learned in his anatomy class in Salamanca or in his personal experience as a physician. As we can see in other parts of the treatise, it includes countless critical assessments of a considerable range of sources that Castro quotes from, comments on and evaluates. In the preface, he points out precisely this component of the work: “we shall expose ... the difficulties of the texts, the controversies, the problems and any matter that need further reflection”<sup>8</sup>. Castro’s treatise, and specifically the chapters concerning us here, has two distinct focuses: on the one hand, description of the female anatomical structures involved in reproduction and, on the other, scrutiny of the medical tradition, especially regarding controversial issues such as, for instance, the existence of the hymen (1.8) or of chambers in the uterus (1.6), the assessment of social practices like female genital mutilation (1.9) or of controversies like the possibility of women with an excessively large clitoris becoming men (1.11). It provides, therefore, a certain amount of information about the author’s ethical, social and cultural standpoints, but it also shows his position in relation to the medical knowledge of his time.

In this paper, I do not seek to understand if Castro was right or wrong in his anatomical descriptions (that goes far beyond what a philologist can do), but rather to analyse chapters 2 and 3 of Book 1, Part 1 “Theoria” as texts that evoke — and sometimes quote — other texts, creating a new textual construction and establishing more or less evident relations with the ancient and contemporary late sixteenth-/early seventeenth-century medical traditions<sup>9</sup>. The sources identified by Castro in this anatomical section are diverse. However, in this specific set of chapters, the most important authors are Galen and Vesalius. The former is frequently cited and referred to, and Castro sometimes even identifies with precision the relevant Galenic treatise, identifying in the margin of the page the excerpt that is being quoted or paraphrased in the body of the text. Vesalius’ name, however, is mentioned no more than four times in the entirety of book 1. In three of these four times, Castro censures

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<sup>8</sup> *textuum praeterea difficultates, controuersias, problemata et quaecumque longioris sunt speculationis, Deo bene iuuante, exponemus.*

<sup>9</sup> Citations to Castro’s work are not to chapters but to Part 1 or Part 2, followed by the page number. Thus 1.8 means page number 8 of Part 1.

or refutes the anatomist's opinion, particularly where he is critical of Galen or Hippocrates, but the first time he mentions Vesalius' name, in the marginal title of the section on the hymen — *Vesalii et aliorum opinio de hymene* (1.8) — he criticises Vesalius for confessing never to have observed the hymen in dissection but nevertheless trying to establish its thickness<sup>10</sup>. This difference of treatment, which at first sight seems to indicate a tendency towards the Galenic doctrine to the detriment of Vesalius' anatomical work, leads us to compare Castro's description of the uterus and its parts with, on the one hand, those of two ancient authors, Soranus and Galen, which together constitute the ancient foundations of the subject, and, on the other, Vesalius' *Fabrica*.

Although Soranus' *Gynaikeia* was not available to Castro in its entirety, the section on the uterus and its constituent parts was included in Oribasius' *Collectiones medicae* 24.31. A Latin translation by Giovanni Battista Rasario was printed together with Theophilus Protospatarius' *De corporis humani fabrica* (1566). In addition, Castro surely had access to some of the adaptations of Soranus' treatise, as one of them, made by an otherwise un-known author named Mustio or Muscio, had circulated widely in the West, in Latin and in Greek, both autonomously and included in a huge compendium that was very well known to Castro, the *Gynaeciorum libri*<sup>11</sup>.

Galen described the uterus in the treatise *On the Anatomy of the Uterus* and in his massive work *On the Utility of the Parts of the Body*. The first was written in his youth and, as he himself states in *On My Own Books* (19.16-17K), it is a short book (in fact, Galen calls it a μικρὸν βιβλίδιον, "a little small book", emphasising its brevity), dedicated to an unnamed midwife. PENNUTO (2013) has explored the transmission of this text, much criticised by Vesalius and widely disseminated from the end of the fifteenth century<sup>12</sup>. Castro seems to

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<sup>10</sup> CASTRO (1617a) 1.8, 1.14, 1.21, 1.29.

<sup>11</sup> The *Gynaeciorum libri* was edited in 1566, 1586-1588 and 1597. On the compendium, see KING (2007). On Castro's use of this compendium, see PINHEIRO (2021b). Some of the manuscripts and printed editions of Mustio's text were accompanied by a diagram showing the uterus and its constituent parts and by a series of illustrations reproducing foetal positions *in utero*. See MARCHETTI (2010). On Soranus, see HANSON and GREEN (1994).

<sup>12</sup> See PENNUTO (2013). The Latin translation produced by Niccolò da Reggio in the fourteenth century circulated first in manuscripts then in printed editions. This translation was, however, replaced from around 1530 by other translations more in line with the new

have had a solid knowledge of the treatise, either directly or indirectly. As for *On the Utility of the Parts*, it was an extensive handbook, in seventeen books, that formed the basis of medical teaching for centuries. In books 14 and 15, Galen describes both the female and the male reproductive organs.

Despite the importance of the Hippocratic treatises on gynaecology and embryology — which, once translated into Latin in 1525, triggered a remarkable increase in publications on this subject, creating the image of Hippocrates as a specialist in gynaecology — they offer no systematic anatomical description of the reproductive organs. For this reason, and even though Galen is not recognised as an authority on gynaecology, the references to this author in Castro's first book exceed those made to the Hippocratic treatises. Galenic anatomy thus constitutes an essential basis for the anatomical description of the reproductive organs. The importance of Galen's works to Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica* is also indisputable<sup>13</sup>.

The main distinction established by Castro is between the uterus and its constituent parts on the one hand (chapter 2 and 3) and, on the other, the organs that are attached to the uterus, such as the ovaries and the seminal vessels (chapter 4), or the organs connected to it by *consensus*, like the breasts (chapter 7). The uterus was conceived as a continuum and as a single organic body, from its outwardly visible parts to the so-called "horns"<sup>14</sup>. Many of these parts are controversial and raise questions ranging from their very existence to their shape and function. Others are at the basis of ancient and more or less widespread social customs that Castro evaluates and criticises, resorting both to his own experience and to textual sources.

### 3. The Anatomy of the Uterus (Chapter 2)

Castro's chapter on the uterus is, almost in its entirety, a patchwork made up of extracts, notably from Vesalius' *Fabrica*. Its structure and its length,

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humanistic philological precepts, such as that of Bernardo Feliciano (1533, in volume 6 of the *Giunti* edition of the Galenic *Opera omnia*) or that of Janus Cornarius (with *On Semen* and *On the Formation of the Foetus*, in 1536; in the *Opera* edition of 1549). In 1536, Guinther von Andernach also published a Latin translation of the treatise, in a single edition.

<sup>13</sup> On this, see SIRAISSI (1997) and KING (2013) 52ff.

<sup>14</sup> This interpretation is consistent with the representation of the uterus in Vesalius' *Fabrica*, on which see KING (2013) 57-60.

however, are very different from Vesalius' text. The structure of chapter 1 is rather conventional and repeats the topics as they were transmitted by the textual tradition, at least since Soranus: 1) the definition, accompanied by an elucidation of the words used to designate the uterus; 2) the uterus' position; 3) its shape; 4) its size and how it varies according to age and sexual status<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> This structure is very similar to Soranus' chapter 4, which begins with an explanation of the terms to designate the uterus (Ἡ μήτρα καὶ ὑστέρα λέγεται καὶ δελφύς, 1.4 = Ilb. 1.6: "The uterus (*metra*) is also termed *hystera* and *delphys*", trans. TEMKIN (1956) 8), its location (κεῖται δὲ ἐν τῇ τῶν ἰσχύων εὐρυχωρίᾳ [ἐντὸς τοῦ περιτοναίου] μεταξὺ κύστεως καὶ ἀπευθυσμένου ἐντέρου, τούτῳ μὲν ἐπικειμένη, τῇ κύστει δὲ ὑποκειμένη ποτὲ μὲν ὅλη, ποτὲ δὲ ἀπὸ μέρους διὰ τὸ κατὰ μέγεθος ἐξαλλάσσεσθαι, 1.4 = Ilb. 1.7: "The uterus is situated in the large space between the hips, between the bladder and the rectum, lying above the bladder and sometimes completely, sometimes partly, beneath the bladder, because of the variable size of the uterus", trans. TEMKIN (1956) 8), its size (ταῖς μὲν γὰρ νηπιαῖς μικροτέρα τῆς κύστεως ἐστίν (διὸ καὶ ὅλη ταύτην ὑπελήλυθεν), ταῖς δὲ ἐν ἀκμῇ παρθένους ἴση τῇ κύστει κατὰ τὰ ὑπερκείμενα, ταῖς δὲ προηλικεστέραις καὶ ἤδη διακεκορευμέναις καὶ μᾶλλον <ταῖς> προκεκυηκυῖαις μείζων, 1.4 = Ilb. 1.7: "For in children the uterus is smaller than the bladder (and lies, therefore, wholly beneath it). But in virgins in their prime of puberty, it is equal to the size of the superimposed bladder, whereas in women who are older and have already been deflowered and even more in <those> who have already been pregnant", trans. TEMKIN (1956) 8), its shape (σχῆμα δὲ μήτρας· οὐχ ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων ἐλικοειδῆς, ἰατρικῇ δὲ σικύα παραπλήσιος, 1.4 = Ilb. 1.9: "The shape of the uterus: it is not curved as in dumb animals, but similar to a cupping vessel", trans. TEMKIN (1956) 10); and then proceeds to a description of its parts. Galen's treatise on the uterus has a similar organization. It begins with the presentation of its subject: Περὶ μήτρας ὁ λόγος, θέσεώς τε καὶ μεγέθους καὶ σχήματος αὐτῆς, ὅθεν τε ἤρτηται καὶ ὅθεν τρέφεται καὶ ὅσοις συμφύεται καὶ εἰ τινῶν ψαύει, καὶ περὶ τῶν πλεκόντων αὐτήν, καὶ ὅσα κυούσης τῆς γυναικὸς ἐντὸς τῆς μήτρας φύεται, κατὰ τε τὸ χόριον ἢ τοὺς τὸ ἐμβρυον περιέχοντας ὕμενας (Gal. *Ut. Diss.* 2.887K: "This discussion is concerned with the position and size of the uterus, its shape, from what it is suspended, whence it grows, how it is attached to many structures, how it touches some, and what structures are interwoven with it", trans. GOSS (1962) 77). Then follows the position of the uterus (Κεῖται μὲν δὴ ἐντὸς τοῦ περιτοναίου, μεταξὺ κύστεως καὶ ἀπευθυσμένου, τούτῳ μὲν ἐπικειμένη σχεδὸν ὅλῳ, Gal. *Ut. Diss.* 2.887K: "The uterus lies inside the peritoneum, between bladder and rectum, resting on almost the whole of the former", trans. GOSS (1962) 78); its size (Μέγεθος δὲ οὐκ ἴση μὲν ἐπὶ πασῶν· παρὰ πολὺ γὰρ ἐλάττω<ν> μὲν ἢ τῆς <μη> κυούσης, μείζων δὲ ἢ τῆς ἐγκύου· καὶ ἦτις δὲ οὐδέποτε ἐκύησε, καὶ ταύτης μείων ἐστίν· καὶ παρὰ τὰς ἡλικίας, αἷς μηδέπω τοῦ λαγνευέσθαι ὥρα ἢ μηκέτι καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἄλλως ἐλάττων αἰεὶ ταῖς μὴ λαγνευομέναις. πειρατέον <δὲ> ὑπογράψαι τὸ γε μὴν τῆς συμμετρως ἐχούσης μέγεθος, Gal. *Ut. Diss.*

Castro's definition of the uterus reads as follows:

*Vterum, qui Graecis μήτρα et ύστέρα, Latinis matrix, quasi omnium mater, uulua, mulierum loci et utriculus nuncupatur, partem definimus organicam, in qua semen concipitur, fetus formatur, augetur et nutritur. Medici quicunque eius fabricam enarrarunt, oportune in fundum et collum siue cervicem dissecant.* (CASTRO (1617a) 1.4)

*We define the uterus as that organic part which the Greeks call metra and hystera, the Latins matrix (as if it were the mother of all beings), uulua, mulierum loci and utriculus, where the seed is conceived and the foetus is formed, developed and nourished. All the doctors who have described its structure divide it conveniently into the fundus and the cervix.*

This definition merges the terminological alternatives with the functions of the uterus and the basic Vesalian division between fundus and cervix. It is noteworthy that, in this and in the following chapters, unlike some of his predecessors, Castro does not refer to the uterus as the cause of all the diseases that are peculiar to women, a commonplace dating back to Hippocrates, *Places in Man* 47, nor does he mention here any of the unusual capabilities that the uterus was believed to possess. Castro's is a very objective and neutral description that begins with the definition and clarification of terms, much in tune with the pedagogical objectives of the *De universa mulierum medicina*. Probably the reason for this objectivity is to be found in the division between theory and practice that Castro establishes in the treatise. There is no place here to consider the pathological nature of the womb. This will be the subject of the second part<sup>16</sup>.

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2.889K: "The size is not the same in all for that of the parous individual is less, of the pregnant greater. Also, whoever has never conceived, this also is smaller, both in the mature individual who has not as yet copulated at the right time or no longer does so, otherwise it is always smaller in those not having copulated. One must attempt to write down the greatness of a uterus of average size", trans. GOSS (1962) 78); its shape (Τὸ δὲ σχῆμα αὐτῆς τὸ μὲν ἄλλο πᾶν σῶμα καὶ μάλιστα ὁ πυθμὴν κύσκει ἔοικεν, Gal. *Ut. Diss.* 2.889K: "The shape of its entire body and especially the fundus is like the bladder, but in as much as it has breast-like processes of the sides running toward the flanks, it is not like it", trans. GOSS (1962) 78); and then the parts to which it is attached.

<sup>16</sup> In chapter 5, Castro offers a similar, but more concise, definition of the uterus, which he attributes to anatomy professors: *Idcirco anatomes professores merito uteri definiunt partem in qua semen concipitur, fetus formatur et augetur, nulla de menstruis aut aliis excre-*



Throughout the chapter, the wording is very similar to the text of Vesalius' *Fabrica*, with several textual sequences imported verbatim (see tables 1 to 3 and 5 to 7). The result is a very short chapter — when compared to the others in this section — that essentially constitutes an abridgement of Vesalius' text, with some additions from other authors, but fitting the material into what may be called a Soranic/Galenic framework. Castro's ancient and modern sources analyse the position of the uterus, either highlighting its convenience or associating it with the humble origins of human life, born of a place so near to the excretory parts. Castro has both: he cites Pliny the Elder's lament for mankind (*Heu dementiam ab his initiis aestimantium ad superbiam se genitos, Nat. 7.3*), expanding the commentary with the reference to its abject place of birth, and, quoting again from the *Fabrica*, he remarks how suitable is the uterus' position, far from the face and the head, allowing its expansion and an easier exit for the foetus (Table 3). The idea is not Vesalian, though, but Galenic. It appears in *On the Utility of the Parts* (4.145-146K) as a demonstration of Nature's ingenuity<sup>17</sup>. The emphasis on suitability, usefulness and convenience is evident in Galen's text and, from there, it became a topic present in most descriptions of the position of the uterus. In fact, as a proof that Nature does nothing in vain, the location of the uterus is described as the best possible. The adjectives in Galen's text attest to this: it is "the best" (ἀρίστην), "more suitable" (ἐπιτηδειότερον), "the most useful" place (χρησιτότατον).

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*mentis facta mentione* (CASTRO (1617a) 1.16: "That is the reason why anatomy professors have rightly defined the uterus as the part in which the seed is conceived and the foetus is formed and developed, without making any reference to menstruation or other excreta"). Castro's definitions follow closely Felix Platter's in *De corporis humani structura: Vterus, in quo semen concipitur, fetus formatur, augetur, et nutritur* (in SPACH (1597), n. pag.) "The uterus, where seed is conceived, the foetus is formed, developed, and nourished").

<sup>17</sup> ἐν μὲν γὰρ τῷ θήλει γένει τὰς ὑστέρας ὑπέθηκε τῇ γαστρὶ χώραν ταύτην ἀρίστην ἐξευρουσα πρὸς τε τὴν ἀφροδίσιον ὀμιλίαν καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σπέρματος ὑποδοχὴν καὶ προσέτι τὴν τε τοῦ κηήματος αὐξησιν καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ τελεωθέντος ἀποκύησιν. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν εὐροις ἐπιτηδειότερον χωρίον ἐν ἅπαντι τοῦ ζώου τῷ σώματι πρὸς οὐδὲν τῶν εἰρημένων, ἀλλ' εἰς τε τὴν συνουσίαν ἀριστον τοῦτο πόρρω τῶν κατὰ τὸ πρόσωπον ὀργάνων ἀπωκισμένον καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ κηήματος αὐξησιν ἐγκαιρότατον ἐπὶ πλείστον ἀλύπως διαστέλλεσθαι πεφυκὸς εἰς τε τοὺς τόκους χρησιτότατον, ὡς ἂν εἰς τὰ κάτω τε καὶ πρὸς τὰ σκέλη τῆς ἐξόδου τῷ κηθέντι ῥᾶον ἐσομένης.

In addition, in this position low in the body, the uterus is protected by bones “as if by the safest valleys”, writes Castro, repeating Realdo Colombo’s words in his *De re anatomica libri XV* (Table 4). Then follows the location of the uterus in the pregnant woman, imported from Vesalius: not exactly in the middle of the abdomen, but either situated a little to the left or to the right, a location which, according to ancient theories, determines the sex of the child (Table 5). This last idea is not fully endorsed, however, as Vesalius and Castro both add that it is not always the case, and Castro postpones further explanation<sup>18</sup>. The protection provided to the uterus, and especially to the pregnant uterus, by its specific location is also noted in Galen, *On the Utility of the Parts* 4.207-208K: being positioned between the bladder and the rectum, it can expand easily and without injury, and this is especially important because, during pregnancy, its surface becomes thinner and might otherwise be damaged by the bones around it.

The shape of the uterus is usually compared to that of the bladder: rounded, but elongated in the cervix, like a pear or a somewhat compressed cupping glass, according to Castro (1.4). Once again, his text follows previous works’ accounts of traditional topics very closely, reusing materials that can be found in many older works. The comparison to a cupping glass comes from Soranus; the comparison to a pear seems to have been very common in early modern medical treatises, appearing, for instance, in Jean Fernel’s *Physiologia*<sup>19</sup>.

Variation in size according to age and sexual status is also a topic present in all the texts under analysis. Soranus, Galen, Vesalius and Castro present the same considerations as to the different sizes of the uterus in juvenile, adult, and older women depending on whether they have experienced sexual intercourse and pregnancy or not<sup>20</sup>:

<sup>18</sup> The traditional sources for this right/left opposition, which seems to go back to the so-called Pythagorean table of opposites reproduced in Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 986a20-30 (on which, see GOLDIN 2015), are Hippocrates, *Aphorisms* 5.48; Aristotle, *History of Animals* 583a-584a; and Galen *On the Utility of the Parts* 4.174-175K.

<sup>19</sup> See 1.4 = Ilb. 1.9, n. 14 above. See FERNEL (1567) 21: *Figura illi rotunda, nisi quod ad ceruicem paulo sit longior, piro maiusculo similis* (“Its shape is spherical, except that at the cervix it is slightly longer, like a biggish pear”, trans. FORRESTER (2003) 85).

<sup>20</sup> Soranus describes the size of the uterus in relation to its location and to the size of the bladder: ταῖς μὲν γὰρ νηπίαις μικροτέρα τῆς κύστεώς ἐστιν (διὸ καὶ ὅλη ταύτην

*Magnitudo eius non aequalis existit in omnibus: multo siquidem minor illius, quae peperit, quam praegnantis, eius uero quae nunquam peperit, multo minor, quemadmodum et adhuc minor earum, quae nondum Veneri indulgere. Aetatum etiam ratione non parum euariat, quippe iis, quae adhuc augentur, uesicae sunt matricibus maiores, perfectis matrices uesicas superant.* (CASTRO (1617a) 1.4-5)

*Its size is not the same for all women: indeed, it is much smaller in the woman who has given birth than in the pregnant woman, but much smaller in the one who has never had children, and it is even smaller in those who have not yet given themselves to Venus. It varies greatly with age since, in women who are still growing, the bladder is larger than the matrix; in those who have completed their growth, the matrix is larger than the bladder.*

In *On the Utility of the Parts* 4.155-156K, Galen associates the size of the uterus with age and with the surplus of nourishment, necessary for conception and gestation, and which can only be found in an adult. Once again, these variations prove, in Galen's teleology, the purpose of Nature's creations. Like all the other parts of the body, the organs of generation are fabricated by Nature according to a wise and purposeful plan, and their shape, their size, their position are the most appropriate for the functions they perform. Nature does nothing either in vain or randomly.

With regard to the size of the uterus, Castro reconciles the disagreements of authors he does not identify by describing the average size, as Galen had also done in *On the Dissection of the Uterus* (2.889K). The dimensions established in Castro's text come from Galen too: he states the same eleven finger-breaths for the distance between the uterus' position and the female

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ὑπελήλυθεν), ταῖς δὲ ἐν ἀκμῇ παρθένοις ἴση τῇ κύστει κατὰ τὰ ὑπερκείμενα, ταῖς δὲ προηλικεστέραις καὶ ἤδη διακεκορευμέναις καὶ μᾶλλον <ταῖς> προκεκυηκυῖαις μείζων, ὥστε ταῖς πλείσταις ἐν λήξει τοῦ κόλου προσαναπαύεσθαι, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐν τῷ κυοφορεῖν (ὡς καὶ τῇ ὀράσει καταλαμβάνειν ἔστιν) (...) μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀπότεξιν συστέλλεται μὲν, ἀλλ' ὥστε μείζων ἔχειν τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ πρὸ τῆς ἀποτέξεως. τότε γοῦν ἔστι μείζων τῆς κύστεως, οὐ κατ' ἴσον δὲ ὑπελήλυθεν αὐτήν (1.4 = Ib. 1.7: "For in children the uterus is smaller than the bladder (and lies, therefore, wholly beneath it). But in virgins in their prime of puberty, it is equal to the size of the superimposed bladder, whereas in women who are older and have already been deflowered and even more in <those> who have already been pregnant, it is so much bigger that in most cases it rests upon the end of the colon. This is even more the case in pregnancy (as can also be perceived by the eye)", trans. TEMKIN (1956) 8).

pudendum, highlighting the unavoidable variations<sup>21</sup>. These measures were always under dispute, however. Vesalius offers the most extensive and detailed exposition, which is not surprising if we consider the different nature and aims of his work. Under the heading “The Size of the Woman’s Uterus”, in a section adapted by Castro, Vesalius starts by stating that the size of the uterus is as difficult to define as the size of the stomach, and then asserts that the changes endured by the fundus (its size varying according to conception history and the number of foetuses it holds) and the cervix (related either to intercourse or to pregnancy) make precise measurement impossible, as width and length vary according to the degree of distension of these organs (Table 7). This merits Castro’s expression of wonder: it is remarkable that the uterus, which during pregnancy expands until it reaches the flanks with its horns, cannot be stretched by hand and only yields to the forces of nature<sup>22</sup>.

Despite these final raptures, chapter 2 is extremely concise and comprehensible. Apart from Pliny’s quotation on the humility of mankind, it has no metaphors, no deviations from the main subject. If we compare it to André du Laurens’ description of the uterus, we detect almost instantly the sobriety and intelligibility of Castro’s text. For du Laurens, the uterus is “like a field and the most fertile garden, prepared to receive the male and the female seed”, and “the most noble and almost divine spark, from which the hidden

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<sup>21</sup> καὶ ἔστιν ἀπὸ τοῦ τόπου, εἰς ὃν ἐπιβάλλει, ἐπὶ τὸ πέρασ τοῦ αἰδοίου τὸ ἔξω — οὐκ ἴσον μὲν ἐπὶ πασῶν, ὡς τὸ πολὺ δὲ σύμμετρον — διάστημα δακτύλων ἕνδεκα (Gal. *Ut. Diss.* 2.889K: “The upper end of it is at the pudendum of the female and from the place on which it rests to the outer end of the vagina is not equal in all, the interval usually is proportionate to 11 fingers”, trans. GOSS (1968) 78).

<sup>22</sup> *Mirum dictu, cum receptaculum sit, in quo infans procreatur, quodque adeo, dum mulier uterum gerit, ampliatur, ut apicibus suis seu cornibus ad utraque ilia porrigatur; cum praesertim ipsius substantia, quantumcumque manibus et vi distendas, nec dilatetur, nec nisi naturae uiribus cedat, contra quam de ceruice dictum est, quae rugosa cum sit, leuissimo diducitur conatu* (CASTRO (1617) 1.5: “This is admirable to say [that is, that it varies in length and breadth], since it is the receptacle in which the foetus is created, and because, when the woman is pregnant, it dilates to such an extent that it reaches the hips with its tips or horns, though particularly because of its substance which, no matter how much one tries to stretch it with one’s hands and with force, neither dilates nor yields except to the forces of nature, unlike what is said about the neck, which, being wrinkled, opens at the slightest effort”.

treasures of nature are drawn"<sup>23</sup>. This is not to say that Castro's style is plain or devoid of literary digressions, but that in his description of the uterus he aims, above all, at clarity and simplicity of exposition. In the next chapter, as we will see, he found more opportunities to digress to side issues.

#### 4. The Parts of the Uterus (Chapter 3)

The main parts of the uterus, according to Castro, are the following, starting from the internal to the external:

- 1- the *cornua* (horns) of the uterus: the upper part of the uterus has two protuberances, one on each side, similar to the forehead of a calf when its horns first appear;
- 2- the left and the right *sinus*: the inner substance has two cavities separated by a kind of suture;
- 3- the *os uteri*: the inner opening of the uterus, where the fundus ends and the cervix begins; it means literally the "mouth of the uterus";
- 4- the cervix or the *collum* of the uterus, meaning the "neck of the uterus": its substance is different from the fundus, because it is the channel where the male seed passes inside the uterus and whence the full-term foetus exits;
- 5- the hymen: a thin membrane whose existence was controversial, located in the cervix of virgins and broken in the first sexual intercourse;
- 6- the *muliebri pudendum*: at the outer end of the cervix and a kind of cutaneous addition;
- 7- the *alae uteri*, that is, the "wings of the uterus", or *nymphae*, literally "nymphs", are two fleshy protuberances, one at each side of the *muliebri pudendum*, that protect the uterus from dust and other external elements;

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<sup>23</sup> *Est autem uterus uelut campus et hortus feracissimus, excipiendo uirile et muliebri semini ad sobolis propagationem comparatus. Est matrix nobilissima ac propemodum diuina fauilla, ex qua naturae thesauri conditi depromuntur* (271). Cf. also, for instance, Jean Fernel: *Alterum instrumentum et tanquam nostrae procreationis hortus est uterus* (21: "The womb is the other instrument and, so to speak, the garden, of our procreation", trans. FORRESTER (2003) 85).

8- the clitoris, also called *nympha*, “the nymph”, located where the *alae uteri* come together and considered the seat of female sexual pleasure<sup>24</sup>.

In addition to the parts, Castro describes the outer and inner substance of the uterus itself, as well as its three kinds of fibre (1.5-6). He also includes in its description the *collum vesicae*, literally, “the neck of the bladder” (1.8). Whereas Vesalius’ *Fabrica* was the main source for the previous chapter, here Castro fuses that source with other texts, such as Fernel’s *Physiologia*, as can be seen in tables 8 to 14. This chapter has a more complex structure and in it Castro is as much concerned with providing anatomical information as he is with giving an answer to unsolved issues within the medical tradition. As he stated in the preface, exploring problems that need further examination is an important part of what he wants to accomplish in the treatise<sup>25</sup>.

This striving for precision leads Castro to frequently add the most common names for the parts described. The accuracy of medical terminology is, in fact, an important tenet of Castro’s work and he very often adds synonyms or alternate designations, sometimes in Latin, Greek or Arabic, to the identification of an anatomical feature, or, especially in the second part of the treatise, to a disease or a remedy<sup>26</sup>. He states that the *os uteri* is also called the *os matricis* or *fundi orificium*; the hymen is also known as *eugion* and the *muliebre pudendum* as *muliebre genitale*, *os genitale*, *os ceruicis uteri*, *facies* and *larua*. As the *De uniuersa mulierum medicina* was designed to be a user-friendly handbook, intended to help the medical student and to organize gynaecological know-

<sup>24</sup> On the parts of the uterus in ancient medical texts, see GOUREVITCH (1996).

<sup>25</sup> See above.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, what he writes about the suffocation of the uterus: *et inter hos quidem primus ac communissimus uteri suffocatio existit, quae etiam ablatio respirationis ex utero uocatur et uuluae strangulatus, rectius tamen dixeris strangulationem ex utero, uidetur enim in ea femina suffocari ex causa ab utero communicata* (CASTRO (1617b) 2.152: “And among these [i.e. diseases], the foremost and the most common is the suffocation of the uterus, also called the removal of respiration due to the uterus and strangulation of the vulva. More correctly, however, you would say strangulation due to the uterus, because it seems that the woman is suffocated due to a cause transmitted from the uterus”. Other examples are the clarification of terms related to the so-called white fever or virginal disease (CASTRO (1617b) 2.205) or the terms he uses to identify the condition known as *nymphaea*, that is, the excessive growth of the clitoris (CASTRO (1617b) 2.277).

ledge, which was scattered confusingly in other books, as stated in his preface, Castro tries constantly to maintain clarity of vocabulary and style. The existence of different names for the parts of the uterus does not seem to constitute, in itself, an obstacle to comprehension. On the contrary, it shows that Castro knows exactly which part is designated by each of these words and helps the reader to understand texts that use different terms<sup>27</sup>.

Another strategy used for the sake of clarity and comprehensibility is Castro's comparison of the anatomical structures with normal everyday objects: the upper part of the uterus is, as we have seen above, similar to a calf's forehead when its horns first emerge (1.6); the *os uteri*, observed from the outside, is like the mouth of the fish known as the *tinca* (tench) or like the snout of a dog, and has a transverse fissure similar to the centre of the Greek letter  $\Theta$  (1.7); the *alae uteri* form a longitudinal crack like a channel or the letter I (1.10); the clitoris is like a rabbit's penis (1.10). These correspondences were part of the medical tradition. The comparison between the superior part of the uterus and the emerging horns of a calf originates from Galen's *On the Dissection of the Uterus*, where it is attributed to Diocles of Carystus<sup>28</sup>. The description of the fissure of the *os uteri* as resembling the letter  $\Theta$  is drawn from Vesalius' *Fabrica*, while the comparison of the *os uteri* with the mouth of the tench or the snout of a dog seems to be frequent in medical books, at least since Realdo Colombo (Table 12)<sup>29</sup>.

The Galenic correspondence between the female and the male parts serves the same purpose. Explaining the internal female parts, invisible to the naked eye, comparing them to the external male parts, adds clarity to the discourse. As such, the inner surface of the uterus is described as separated by a kind of suture, like the male scrotum (1.6); the *os uteri* is like the glans of the penis (1.7); the *uteri ceruix* corresponds to the penis (1.7); the *muliebre pudendum* is like the prepuce (1.9). This association is more than a mere allusion to

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<sup>27</sup> This contradicts Laqueur's assertion about the inexistence of proper terminology to designate the reproductive organs prior to the eighteenth century; on which, see KING (2013) 58.

<sup>28</sup> See above.

<sup>29</sup> See also DU LAURENS (1593) 257: *Orificium hoc si exteriore parte inspicias, tinchae piscis uel canini oris nuper in lucem editi speciem prae se ferre uidebis.*

Galen's isomorphism, that is, the understanding that women have the same genital organs as men, but on the inside while they are on the outside in men. Here, and in Galen for that matter, male-female association is a mental aid to understand and visualize what cannot be seen<sup>30</sup>.

For further clarification of a subject, Castro usually draws on the opinions of his predecessors, especially those related to controversial topics. He identifies dissensions in the medical tradition related to the existence of either one tunic or two in the uterus (1.5-6); the alleged division of the uterus into small chambers (1.6); the occlusion of the *os uteri* in pregnant women (1.7); or the thesis supported by Arab authors that the hymen is a *cento*, that is, an amalgamation of veins (1.8-9). He also expresses doubts about the idea that women with an excessively large clitoris can become men (1.10-11).

The hymen had, already in Castro's times, long been a subject of controversy: there was no consensus as to whether it existed or not<sup>31</sup>. Castro adduces the opinions of authors whom he does not identify, simply referring to them using vague, general terms like *plerique*, *nonnullos*, *ipsi* and ending with: "this is the opinion of many about the hymen". If, however, we analyse the text, it becomes obvious that its composition is a combination of passages taken from Fernel and Vesalius, as can be seen in tables 13 and 14. Castro's analysis of the hymen is extensive and uses much of Vesalius' text, including details on its location and his explanation of the fact that it is not seen in dissection: because in some countries midwives break it, in the same way they often insert their index finger into the mouth of a new-born baby or tear the "bridle of the tongue" or *frenulum* if they consider it larger than normal (Table 14).

Castro makes major alterations to the text of the *Fabrica*, however, omitting information, such as the reference to the Jewish practice of circumcision (not surprising for someone raised as a New Christian who, later in life, openly embraced the Jewish faith) and merging segments that are separate in Vesalius' text, resulting in a more concise explanation that, nevertheless, remains grounded in superstition and social or religious customs. Castro is very reluctant to accept certain practices. He considers infibulation

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<sup>30</sup> On Galen's isomorphism and its interpretations, see KING (2013) 34ff.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. SISSA (2013) on the hymen in Greek and Roman culture.



a *fatuitas*, a nonsense, that shows the diversity of opinions in the world (1.9). He is more elusive on the importance of the hymen as proof of virginity: he follows the opinion of those he calls more diligent authors who assert that, in virgins, the sides of the cervix are united as if *conglutinata*, that is as if “glued together”, and that for this reason the first sexual relation is “the most painful”, making a point of saying that this is the testimony of women themselves, with whom he agrees. The very existence of the hymen, even if not taken for granted by some authors, allows Castro to establish a comparison to the *frenum linguae*, showing how relevant it is that Nature has fabricated a physical restraint only in the tongue and in the cervix of the uterus, certainly to recommend continence in the use of these organs from which great harm might result.

When considering the clitoris, Castro also comments on the misunderstandings related to the designation of the organ as *nymphaea* and the disease known as *nymphotomia*, but also called *nymphaea*, and consisting of an excessively enlarged clitoris. Some authors considered it possible for a woman with this pathology to become a man. Castro, however, argues that the supposed cases of sex change are actually mostly cases of revealing the true sex and that women who have an oversized clitoris are a type of hermaphrodite, regardless of the examples found in medical books<sup>32</sup>.

As stated above, alongside the anatomical descriptions, Castro includes his opinions on some of the controversial practices of his time. Even if the source for most of these remarks is Vesalius' *Fabrica*, Castro frequently adds a personal note to them, such as the reference to the women he saw condemned for lesbianism in Lisbon, women with enlarged clitorises who, he claims, polluted themselves with the heinous crime of lesbianism, the same that Amatus Lusitanus identifies in two Turkish women from Thessalonica (1.10). Castro also makes use of some Vesalian comments on social or religious practices and shows his clear approval of the moralistic tone of Vesalius' text, as can be seen, for instance, in both men's commentary on the involuntary closure of the *os uteri*: if women could voluntarily control this occlusion, they would not be afraid to conceive and could easily deceive their

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<sup>32</sup> On this subject, see BEECHER (2005) and KING (2013).

fathers and husbands (Table 10). In the ancient medical tradition, this occlusion is mainly associated with pregnancy and superfetation, but in Vesalius' and Castro's texts it becomes the basis for moral considerations about women's inherent lewdness and the danger of their being able to control the reproductive process.

## 5. Conclusion

Rodrigo de Castro's selection and adaptation of excerpts fulfils, in my opinion, the aim of composing an easy-to-understand treatise that guides the reader through the confusion represented by other contemporary works. Vesalius' *Fabrica* is much more important in these chapters than Castro admits and this applies not only to the anatomical information, but also to Vesalius' moral considerations and attitudes, at least those shared by Castro. The importance of this point may go unnoticed by a modern reader, but it would certainly have been detected by Castro's contemporaries, who were also familiar with Vesalius' text for it was the basis of anatomical teaching at the time. A study covering the whole of book 1 of *De uniuersa mulierum medicina* will be necessary to gauge whether this conclusion holds for the chapters in which Castro examines the anatomy of the female reproductive organs, including the breasts, ovaries, spermatic ducts and also the constitution of the pregnant uterus. But Castro's use of Vesalius' work in the two chapters analysed here allows us to anticipate that the *Fabrica* is likely a crucial textual source for the other chapters that constitute this first book, which should be taken into account in the analysis of Castro's contribution to his field.

## Appendix

**Table 1**

<p><i>Medici quicumque eius fabricam enarrant, oportune in fundum et collum siue ceruicem dissecant.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.4</p>	<p><i>Cum uteri enarramus fabricam, illum opportune in fundum et ceruicem seu collum, non secus ac uesicam, distinguimus.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">VESALIUS (1555) 651</p>
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**Table 2**

<p><i>Situs est supra os pubis, sic, ut ipsius ceruix a mulieris pudendo sursum, uersus posteriorem ipsius ossis et uesicae regionem ac secundum recti intestini anteriora in peritonei</i></p>	<p><i>Ceruix itaque uteri a mulieris pudendo sursum recta per posteriorem pubis ossium et uesicae regionem, ac secundum recti intestini anteriora, in peritonei cauitatem tantisper</i></p>
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<p><i>cauitatem ascendat; donec fere e directo sedis pertingat, qua rectorum abdominis musculorum initia a pubis ossibus exoriuntur: illic namque uteri ceruix in fundum desinit, qui in abdomine consistit, inter uesicam et rectum intestinum.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.4</p>	<p><i>ascendit, donec fere e directo sedis pertingat, qua e pubis ossibus rectorum abdominis musculorum exoriuntur initia. Illic namque uteri ceruix in fundum aut fundus ipse in ceruicem desinit, adeo ut et hic humilior quoque fundi pars plurimum consistat.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">VESALIUS (1555) 651</p>
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**Table 3**

<p><i>Hic tamen situs peroportunus fuit, utpote ualde amplius et a facie, nobilissima rationis arce, longe dissitus; deinde ibi ossa nulla, quo minus uterus distendi queat, atque ipsi parituro exitus ad inferiora et uersus crura facilis est.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.4</p>	<p><i>Haec siquidem longe a facie et nobilissima rationis arce situatur: deinde ossa nulla, quo minus insigniter uterus distendi queat, inibi praepediunt: atque etiam ipsi parituro hinc ad inferiora, et uersus crura exitus facilis est.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">VESALIUS (1555) 660-661</p>
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**Table 4**

<p><i>Tandemque uterus ibi anteriori parte ab osse pubis, posteriori ab osse sacro, a lateribus ab ossibus ilium, tanquam tutissimis uallis, circumdatur.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.4</p>	<p><i>Vterus anteriore parte ab osse pubis, posteriore ab osse sacro, a lateribus ab ossibus ilium tanquam firmissimis ac tutissimis uallis circumdatur.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">REALDO COLOMBO (1559) 241</p>
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**Table 5**

<p><i>Praegnantibus non exacte mediam partem occupat, sed in dextrum aut sinistrum uergit, quod etsi aliquando fetuum sexus ratione fiat, non tamen perpetuo est, ut infra constabit.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.4</p>	<p><i>Quinetiam uterus his non adamussim (ut alias fere) mediam, quod ad dextrum et sinistrum attinet, sedem occupat; sed quasi elatiore apice in dextrum magis aut sinistrum uergit. Quod etsi subinde foetuum sexus ratione fiat, non tamen perpetuum est.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">VESALIUS (1555) 652</p>
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**Table 6**

<p><i>uteri enim fundus ab angulis seu cornibus deorsum recta sensim arctior redditus, ad ipsius ceruicis originem fertur, ita ut ceruice instar meatus cuiusdam longa et tereti, totus interim fundus non multo fiat longior, quam est latus.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.4</p>	<p><i>Ab his angulis, seu cornibus, uteri fundus senior arctior redditus, deorsum ad ipsius ceruicis originem fertur; ita tamen, ut totus fundus non multo fiat longior, quam est latus, ceruice interim instar meatus cuiusdam longa et tereti.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">VESALIUS (1555) 652</p>
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**Table 7**

<p><i>hi uero de eodem cum ceruix complexa rugosaque conuiuet, fundusque in se collapsus concidit. Breuiter non minus difficulter ceruicis uteri, quam penis (cuius instar uagina est) longitudo, latitudoue exacte describi potest; fundus uero pro contentae in illo geniturae, aut fetus quantitate euariat, atque ita quamuis in altitudine recti intestini et uesicae terminis (ut dixi) circumscribatur, mediocris tamen tenuia intestina nonnunquam pertingit; maximus, qualis praegnantium, etiam imum uentrem replet.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.5</p>	<p><i>Fundi enim magnitudo pro contentae in illo geniturae aut fetus quantitate uariat, et ceruix quoque modo complexa rugosaque conuiuet, modo in coitu ad penis, in partu uero ad foetus formam diducitur. Et quemadmodum distentionis ratione, non eadem ceruici adest latitudo, ita quoque neque par longitudo. Nam nobis uterum inter dissecandum attollentibus, in miram longitudinem ceruix porrigitur, adeo ut non minus ridiculum sit, uteri ceruicis quam penis (cui illa instar uaginae censetur) longitudinem latitudinemue describere.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">VESALIUS (1555) 655</p>
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**Table 8**

<p><i>Porro uteri et praesertim fundi ipsius substantia neruea membranaeque est et crassa admodum, externa superficie leuis, madens et aequalis, non tamen adamussim candicans, sed carneum quid prae se ferens.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.5</p>	<p><i>Non praegnantium itaque fundi substantia conspicitur neruea, membranaeque, sed interim admodum crassa et non adamussim, ut caetera quae generatim neruosa dicuntur, candicans, sed carneum quid colore et substantia prae se ferens et passim denique continua et duritiae sibi aequalis, nisi forte ad fundi os paulo durior collectiorque aut densior euadat.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">VESALIUS (1555) 656</p>
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**Table 9**

<p><i>Interna uero superficies, si in longum uterum diuidas, duos sinus promit, dextrum ac sinistrum, nullo septo discretos, sed sutura quadam, qualis uirili scroto inest, obscuriori tamen, ideo antiqui matricem, perinde ac si duae forent, appellauerunt et papillarum numero correspondere dixerunt; qui quidem sinus leues admodum sunt et angusti, adeo ut iis, quae uterum non gerunt, fabam maiusculam uix capiant.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">CASTRO (1617a) 1.6</p>	<p><i>Dissectus in longum uterus duos sinus promit, dextrum ac sinistrum, nullo septo discretos, inanes et admodum leues, angustos adeo ut fabam maiusculam uix capiant.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">FERNEL (1567) 21-22</p>
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**Table 10**

<p><i>alioqui arctissime occluditur os illud, nec ex mulieris arbitrato, sicuti ceruicis orificium, aperiri potest, alias nullo conceptionis habito metu lasciuae mulieres parentibus marisque facile imponerent.</i></p> <p>CASTRO (1617a) 1.7</p>	<p><i>quantaque licentia, nullo conceptionis habito metu, maritis parentibusque imponerent, si modo fundi orificium ita ac ceruicis orificium ex mulieris arbitrato aperiri potuisset.</i></p> <p>VESALIUS (1555) 655</p>
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**Table 11**

<p><i>Communis insuper est uia ab his sinibus in os uteri, qua non concepturae proprium semen deponunt, concepturae uirile excipiunt.</i></p> <p>CASTRO (1617a) 1.6</p> <p><i>eique glandi similem, quae in extremo est masculi genitalis</i></p> <p>CASTRO (1617a) 1.7</p>	<p><i>Communis est ab iis uia in os uteri, quod est arctissimum, eique glandi simile, quae in extremo est masculi genitalis.</i></p> <p>FERNEL (1567) 22</p>
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**Table 12**

<p><i>et, si extra spectes, tincae piscis uel canini oris imaginem tibi offeret, eique glandi similem, quae in extremo est masculi genitalis, ac scissura transuersa ueluti littera Θ centro simili donatur.</i></p> <p>CASTRO (1617a) 1.7</p>	<p><i>quod si extra spectes, tincae piscis, uel canini oris nuper editi imaginem tuis oculis offeret.</i></p> <p>COLOMBO (1559) 241</p> <p><i>Communis est ab iis uia in os uteri, quod est arctissimum, eique glandi simile, quae in extremo est masculi genitalis.</i></p> <p>FERNEL (1567) 22</p> <p><i>(...) ita quoque illud scissura transuersa et ueluti literae Θ centro simili, (at non perpetuo aequali) donatur.</i></p> <p>VESALIUS (1555) 655</p>
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**Table 13**

<p><i>Vteri ceruicem medio circiter progressu a tergo eius partis, qua collum uesicae implanatur, plerique tradunt in uirginibus exili membrana uenulis conspersa dirimi, quae primo concubitu profuso sanguine dirumpatur. Hymen seu Eugion dicitur.</i></p> <p>CASTRO (1617a) 1.8</p>	<p><i>Vteri ceruicem medio circiter progressu plerique tradunt in uirginibus exili membrana dirimi uenulis conspersa, quae primo concubitu profuse sanguine dirumpi solet, unde ὑμήν et ὑμέβαιον Graecis appellatur.</i></p> <p>FERNEL (1567) 21-22</p>
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**Table 14**

<p><i>Neque mirum (inquiunt) si in dissectionibus haec membrana non appareat, quia apud</i></p>	<p><i>Caeterum, ut uulgo (quamuis falso interim) ferunt, modo apud has, modo apud</i></p>
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<p><i>aliquot nationes sedulae obstetrices illam quasi frustra mulieribus datam effringunt; sicuti solent puerorum recenter natorum ori indicem indere ac linguae uinculum, si forte plus iusto contractius sit, dilacerare.</i></p>	<p><i>illas nationes, nuper natis puellis, quo facilius aliquando pariant, pubis ossa, nescio quibus modis seiungi; ita quoque ab obstetricibus matronisque quibusdam interdum audiui, nonnullis morem esse, ut puellulis membranulam quandam, seu peliculam, perinde ac frustra mulieribus datam, ita effringant, ut Iudaeos uirilem glandem detegere, praeputiumque resecare adhuc hodie cernimus; utque etiam sedulas obstetrices puerorum iam iam in lucem editorum ori indicem indere, ac linguae uinculum, si forte plus iusto in anteriora peringat, contractiusque sit, dilacerare nouimus.</i></p>
<p>CASTRO (1617a) 1.8</p>	<p>VESALIUS (1555) 654</p>

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**Resumo:** A anatomia do útero e das suas partes constituintes era uma seção essencial nos primeiros tratados médicos modernos, tanto nos textos de índole geral, como nos textos especializados em ginecologia e obstetrícia. Neste artigo, analisa-se a seção de *De uniuersa mulierum medicina* de Rodrigo de Castro dedicada ao assunto (capítulos 2 e 3 do Livro 1, Parte 1 “Theoria”), tanto no que diz respeito ao que aí se diz sobre as características anatómicas dessas partes, como às controvérsias e questões de moralidade associadas ao útero.

**Palavras-chave:** história da ginecologia; anatomia do trato reprodutivo; Rodrigo de Castro Lusitano; *De uniuersa mulierum medicina*.

**Resumen:** La anatomía del útero y de sus partes constituyentes era una sección esencial en los primeros tratados médicos modernos, tanto en los textos generalistas como en los especializados en ginecología y obstetricia. En este artículo se examina la sección del *De uniuersa mulierum medicina* de Rodrigo de Castro dedicada a este asunto (capítulos 2 y 3 del Libro 1, Parte 1, “Theoria”), tanto en lo que se refiere a lo que dice sobre las características anatómicas de esas partes como a las controversias y cuestiones de moralidad asociadas al útero.

**Palabras clave:** historia de la ginecología; anatomía del tracto reproductivo; Rodrigo de Castro Lusitano; *De uniuersa mulierum medicina*.

**Résumé :** L’anatomie de l’utérus et de ses éléments constitutifs formaient une section essentielle des premiers traités médicaux modernes, tant dans les textes généraux que dans les textes spécialisés en gynécologie et obstétrique. Dans cet article, nous analyserons la section *De uniuersa mulierum medicina* de Rodrigo de Castro consacrée à ce sujet (chapitres 2 et 3 du Livre, Partie 1 « Théorie »), à la fois en ce qui concerne ce qui est dit sur les caractéristiques anatomiques de ces parties, ainsi que les controverses et les questions de moralité associées à l’utérus.

**Palavras-chave:** histoire de la gynécologie ; anatomie de l’appareil reproducteur ; Rodrigo de Castro Lusitain ; *De uniuersa mulierum medicina*.