

in June 1820. Slow epistolary exchange (consequential throughout these volumes) meant that the arteries of the correspondence survived somewhat longer than Banks's mortal frame. The last letters to the long-dead Banks in this selection came from John Reeves in Canton. We can follow Banks's physical decline alongside his decline in influence. Among the best represented correspondents are John Wilson Croker and John Barrow, the admiralty officials whose influence and activities began to substitute for Banks's own. We see also Banks's support of an ill Matthew Flinders in completing his account of the *Investigator* voyage. Right to the end, we can follow the trade in plants and seeds from India, China, and the Pacific to which Banks was central.

Neil Chambers's editorial practice, as in the earlier volumes, is impeccable: orthography and amendments are faithfully represented. Extensive notes fill out details of personnel and unfolding events. The calendar of the correspondence, with biographical sketches of correspondents, timelines, and a thorough, accurate index, all add considerable value. Production and publication of this series of Banks's selected correspondence, and the earlier scientific correspondence, have been supported by numerous grants and donations, large and small. We should be grateful to these supporters and to Chambers's considerable efforts in recruiting them for giving us much readier access to key correspondence of an endlessly fascinating figure.

David Philip Miller

**Jamie C. Kassler.** *Seeking Truth: Roger North's Notes on Newton and Correspondence with Samuel Clarke, c. 1704–1713.* xii + 374 pp., illus., bibl., index. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014. £80 (cloth).

The new book on Roger North by Jamie Kassler provides valuable insight into the reception of Newtonian natural philosophy in the early eighteenth century. North, an English country lawyer with interests in music, architecture, and more, has received considerable attention over the last three decades. *Seeking Truth* publishes for the first time North's notes on Isaac Newton's natural philosophy and North's correspondence with Samuel Clarke, an early proselytizer of Newtonian natural philosophy and an influential theologian and philosopher who thrived in public debate. It also includes Kassler's substantial introductions to and glosses on these writings.

Writing about North and Clarke requires traversing through law, musicology, mathematics, physics, metaphysics, and theology with the ability to provide illuminating historical context and note the intricacies of difficult arguments extracted from manuscripts, some of which exist only in fragments, some of which are undated and must be pieced together from scant clues. It is a formidable challenge. Kassler succeeds at making a case for ordering and dating the manuscripts in a plausible way, at presenting them with useful footnotes, and at providing necessary context. (It was not possible for this review to compare the published text to the manuscripts.)

North's notes on Newton reproduced in Chapter 2 and his correspondence with Clarke in Chapter 3 will be useful to those working on Newton and Clarke as well as North. Notably, North denies that mathematical demonstrations can be given in natural philosophy, and he relies on special revelation and appeals to mystery more frequently than his more famous philosophical contemporaries. Importantly, we now know that North accused Newtonian gravity of being a "perpetuall [*sic*] miracle" (p. 151) as early as 1706, a full decade before Leibniz developed the same criticism of Clarke in their famed correspondence.

Kassler's descriptions of the philosophical positions and arguments in the first three chapters are often useful but occasionally disappointing. Some terms are used idiosyncratically, and positions and arguments are not stated as accurately as those working on early modern natural philosophy would prefer. For example, she says Descartes's axioms are "assumed to be true" (p. 42); this is not a particularly charitable

or accurate statement of Descartes's model of reasoning. More important, North's fallibilism (Kassler's gloss: "we must continually live with the risk of being in error" [p. 45]) is termed "scepticism." However, in promoting probabilistic reasoning North clearly accepts that we have knowledge of things about which he is supposedly skeptical. Kassler tries to blend North's alleged moderate skepticism with his realism through a discussion of faith's role in reasoning that is not strictly needed (pp. 40–49). Such idiosyncrasies, once noted, are not always consequential, but they require more of the reader than should be needed.

One significant drawback of the book is that Kassler's discussion of Newton, Newtonianism, and mathematical philosophy is not conversant with the excellent recent work being done by Andrew Janiak, Eric Schliesser, Mary Domski, and many others. The bibliography is too heavily weighted toward work done in the 1950s–1980s. (A notable exception is Thomas Holden's *The Architecture of Matter* [Oxford, 2004], which is well used.) The discussion of the manuscripts' importance is thus not sufficiently connected to contemporary debates, even though such connections exist.

The glosses on North's correspondence with Clarke are a strength of the book. Chapter 4, in which Kassler situates the relationships between Newton, Clarke, and North, provides enough context to make the controversial aspects of Clarke's Trinitarian views understandable and North's critiques clear. Kassler's claim that Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* is modeled on the method John Locke proposed in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* is intriguing (p. 216). This chapter also handles well the problem of the slipperiness of various accusatory terms ("Arian," "Socinian," etc.). Chapter 5 includes three previously unpublished letters (one in draft) from North to Clarke. North's mysterianism (he denies that the trinity is conceivable but the doctrine must be accepted on faith) emerges clearly in these letters, and one can easily imagine Clarke's frustration with North, given Clarke's commitment to the orderliness, explicability, and rational apprehension of all the relevant properties of God and the world.

As is typical of books published by Ashgate, the cramped layout makes it harder to scan than one would like. In this case, it is difficult to separate at quick glance Kassler's commentary from North's writings. Separating North's writings out with a different format would have aided the book's use as a reference. Having noted this, it should be added that scholars working on Newton, Clarke, and especially North will find that *Seeking Truth* adds to our picture of their respective views and reception.

Timothy Yenter

**Maria Pia Donato.** *Sudden Death: Medicine and Religion in Eighteenth-Century Rome*. ix + 229 pp., tables, index. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2014. £63 (cloth).

*Sudden Death* offers a learned and original analysis of Roman medicine in the early 1700s, while at the same time addressing a number of issues in the history of medicine. The book is an expanded and revised translation of *Morti improvise: Medicina e religione nel Settecento* (Rome, 2010). *Sudden Death* takes the lead from the perceived epidemic of sudden deaths afflicting Rome around 1705–1706 and the ensuing systematic postmortems carried out by pontifical archiater Giovanni Maria Lancisi at the instigation of Pope Clement XI. Maria Donato places those dramatic events in a broader context and examines them along three lines of inquiry, involving as many historical genres: the first deals with the social background of the perceived epidemic and the related public health issues during the War of the Spanish Succession; the second considers the topic from the standpoint of medical theory and practice, specifically in relation to postmortems; the third moves to ethical and religious concerns. In addition, Donato provides a vivid picture of early eighteenth-century Rome, my favorite vignette being that of the pope spying on his subjects from his balcony with a telescope (p. 25).

This highly successful tripartite approach provides multiple perspectives on a complex historical situation