Abstract

This article looks at a 16th-century medical book called *Le medicine partenenti alle infermità delle donne* by Giovanni Marinello (Venice, 1574), who wrote it intending to assist midwives and other delivery attendants in improving their professional practices. It is a very successful text that serves as an illustration of the rich body of treatises on women’s diseases that were published in Europe in the sixteenth century and up until the first half of the seventeenth and which, despite disagreements and controversies, reflect a rekindled and passionate interest in medicine for the uniqueness of the female body that is beginning to diverge from the scholastic view of woman as an imperfect male. In addition, Marinello’s work depicts the nature of contemporary daily life. It provides in great detail natural cures for sterility issues and all conditions related to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, always within the bounds of what is reasonable for a period defined by the ideas of the Council of Trent.

Keywords

- Medical treatise
- Giovanni Marinello
- Modern gynecology
- Obstetrics
- Women’s diseases

The writings of Giovanni Marinello on women’s diseases and cosmetics have two main advantages: first, they present traditional medical notions about female physiology and pathology in a way that is understandable through the use of colloquial language and an unpretentious style; second, they provide invaluable information on aspects of daily life. A significant portion of this practical book, which contains both prescribing and discursive material, is devoted to issues related to health and disease, the look of the body in life, pain, and methods to address these issues. Discussions include the human obligation to compete with natural rules, reflections on aesthetic canons and goals, and the interaction between nature and art or technology.

Exploring Women’s Health and Medical Treatment in Renaissance Italy Through Giovanni Marinello’s Treatise

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The analysis of Marinello’s texts focuses on both the form and the substance to make them accessible to a primarily female readership.

The purpose of Marinello’s three books, organized in a chronological order that starts with marriage and ends with childbirth, is to inform women of all the methods for maintaining their bodies and possessions. In the first book, we discuss eliminating all the annoying obstacles like urinary incontinence or lousy breath while discussing various sterility therapies in the second and pregnancy and childbirth in the third one. Despite the abundance of graphic and comprehensive erotic counsel, Marinello always sees it as an essential medical treatise while guaranteeing procreation. Marinello consequently highlights women’s health through reproduction to safeguard the marriage and family unit.

In addition to viewing health as the outcome of humoral balance, medieval medicine, based on the Hippocratic idea of humor, also considered that physicians were responsible for aiding in the redemption of the soul alongside preachers (Jacquart & Thomasset, 1989; Lan, 1970). Especially when we consider that medical texts were written in Latin, a preferred language for disseminating science, until well into the seventeenth and even the eighteenth century, the healing of diseases was associated with an unquestionable hermeticism, only accessible to specialists, never to patients’ objectives. As a counterpart to the idea of a Latin language associated with science, this study aims to present a guided reading of a work written in Italian, *Le medicine partenenti alle enfermità delle donne*, by Giovanni Marinello, the first to use his language instead of scientific Latin.

**Life History of Giovanni Marinello**

Born in Modena in the first half of the sixteenth century, the cultural climate led Marinello to become a subject of the Duchess of Modena, Altesa Estensi, who made him a good connoisseur of the literature and culture of the time. He was a prolific, cultured author who, between 1560 and 1561, edited some medical texts from Valgrisi, whose catalog included a wide range of scientific treatises.

It can be said that Marinello, in addition to practicing his profession, was an intellectual who demonstrated that he had assimilated the encyclopedic knowledge necessary to dissert on philosophical, scientific, and anthropological aspects. In this sense, in 1574, he published the medical treatise on gynecology and obstetrics. The term obstetrics was a way of addressing midwives in Rome. The etymology of the Latin word derives from the verb *obstare*, in the sense of “to be next to” or “in front of” since the midwife accompanied the midwife (Conde, 2011). *Le medicine partenenti alle enfermità delle donne*, written in “vulgar language,” the term in which the vernacular languages were usually designated in this case, in Italian, not in Latin, which was the language in which medical writings were usually disseminated.

The work of Marinello upholds the scientist’s right and obligation to communicate with a broad audience, to renounce the elitist transmission of a long tradition, to cultivate the Latin language as a mark of distinction and culture suitable for solemn and sacred uses, and to allow for the vernacularization of knowledge (Cifuentes, 2006). The first edition of *Le medicine* was followed by a posthumous edition (Venezia, Bonfadino, 1610), as well as two translations, in French, *Trois livres appartééns aux infirmitez et maladies des femmes* (Paris, 1582) and in German: *Ioannis Marinelli . . . vier Bücher von rechter, vnverfalschter, eusserlicher Zier der Weyber* and again into French, *Thresor de los remedios secretos por las maladies de las femmes* (J. du Puys, 1585). The fact that it was widely translated into other languages proves that Marinello’s treatise had vast repercussions in 16th and 17th-century Europe.

**Medical Content: From Theory to Praxis**

The originality of Giovanni Marinello’s work lies in its first medical treatise, as would later be Girolamo Mercurio’s *La commare o riccoglitrice* (1595) in *lingua volgare*, also in Italian. This initiative was favorably
appreciated on the literary language side shortly after Pietro Bembo claimed the Florentine language as his model to elevate the language and put it on par with Latin. It is also essential to note Marinello’s sensitive nature outside of the professional domain and his interest in citizens’ daily lives, which predisposes him to be immersed in human physiology.

From the standpoint of the medical content, in the area of gynecology and medieval obstetrics, we must assume that in the past, as demonstrated in Marinello’s treatise, obstetrics was administered by women, the so-called "midwives" and "assistants," who passed on their knowledge from mothers to daughters. This is because obstetrics was practiced without having received formal education. Since the middle classes were frequently illiterate, midwives depended on experience and practice rather than showing that they had internalized technical knowledge. As was customary throughout the medieval tradition, the midwife’s duties included helping with childbirth and the postpartum period, acting as a legal witness for any potential wills or inheritance resulting from childbirth, passing on knowledge to aspiring midwives, and providing treatments for a variety of illnesses (Green, 1994).

Contrary to the practical exercise, it should be noted that Marinello’s work does not stand out for its originality in terms of medical techniques, despite raising innovative and original aspects in some chapters. This is because the treatise is the heir to a tradition in the field of obstetrics that takes into account the Hippocratic corpus and the ideas of Aristotle (in De generatione animalium, for example), of Sorano of Ephesus, of the gynecological writings of Galen, of the Salernitan school (with Trotula), of the Canon of Avicenna or Al-bucasi, in Ad docendum obstetrices, a medical treatise in the Arabic tradition. In addition, Marinello’s treatise evidences the tradition of the XI book of the Etymologies of St. Isidore of Seville and the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, among others.

From the previous works, as well as from the whole tradition of biblical and patristic texts that influence all aspects of medieval society, both in literature and in medicine, it is explained how in Le medicine... the consideration of denigrating women from a misogynist point of view also fits: woman, from the very moment of her creation, was considered as a being inferior to man. One of the medical controversies, with a theological background, regarding sexual union was the question of the existence of female semen. According to Aristotle (De generatione animalium I, ch. 19), the woman has no semen. On the other hand, Guillem de Conches, in the twelfth century, in line with Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna, defended the existence of pleasure and, consequently, the effusion of semen in the reproduction of the human species (Verdon, 1996).

Aristotle and Averroes, moreover, reduced the existence of the female sperm in the formation of the embryo, thus demonstrating how pleasure is in no way necessary in women since the female vulva can even attract semen without the intervention of the sexual act.11 The description of female sexual members in the Middle Ages was surrounded by more than a few metaphors rather than scientific precision in the definition; thus, it is not surprising that the uterus is compared to a bottle with a neck or is understood as a reed or a vessel. In this line, we highlight the uterus definition in St. Isidore of Seville, which presents a terminological confusion: "the uterus is proper to women; it is in it that they conceive, and it has the appearance of a reed. However, some authors use the word uterus in the sense of ventre, as proper to both sexes; poets and other writers do this. It is called uterus because it is double and is divided into two perfectly differentiated parts that, folded, arch like a ram’s horn; or because its interior is filled with the fetus" (Oronoz, Marcos, Díaz, eds., 1982, p. 37); otherwise, at the moment of coitus, she would experience two spermatic secretions: semen and menstruation.

Marinello points out less legitimate perspectives when he considers it opportune on the occasion of some philosophical reflection; for example, regarding the feminine imagination about the resemblance of children to their legitimate fathers. If the woman sins of adultery but continually imagines the man, the bastard children can resemble the legitimate father, even if they are only "imagined" (Marinello, 1574, III, ch. 3, p. 247). With what Marinello recommends, men could be assured of paternity and, simultaneously, avoid problems or accusations of infidelity on the part of the woman.

With these observations, further removed from the moralist and medical discourses of Marinello’s contemporaries, as a result of the critical reading of the theological production, we must pay attention to the fact
that the work of the doctor from Modena is close to the reader and addressed to a diverse audience, keeping in mind that scientific texts and, in particular, medical language, is not always accessible to all readers. However, paradoxically, it is accessible. By taking the initiative to communicate in a language everyone could understand, Marinello rejects the mysticism and hermeticism surrounding medicine and instead uses it to reflect on the human being, thought, and reality, far from the proponents of magic or superstitions, which have historically been prevalent.

Structure of the Medical Treatise

Le medicine’s prologue makes it clear that Marinello is aware of the potential critics of his intention to disseminate the work. They may accuse him of acting against all moral standards, of undermining the legitimacy of medicine, and even of making fun of his words for the simple reason that he wrote this treatise in vulgar language and began with the intention of helping women (Marinello, 1574, f. IVa-IVb).

In the same prologue, Marinello delimits the structure of the treatise into three main parts or books, which cover the life of the young woman from the time she is united in marriage until the moment of childbirth:

- **First book**: phase prior to marriage, where traditional criteria are presented regarding the couple’s choice (chaps. 1-13).
- **Second book**: includes references on how sterility or impotence can be overcome, as well as the problems to overcome to ensure success in procreation (chaps. 1-32).
- **Third book**: gestation, childbirth and postpartum (chaps. 1-15), specific aspects of gynecology and obstetrics, without ignoring the importance of the midwife, who must be efficient.

According to Marinello, nine out of every ten women who pass away during childbirth do so due to the midwife’s lack of professionalism. As a result, this treatise will aid in improving the skills of women who, in daily practice, served as healers in the care of newborns and were responsible for childbirth (Marinello, 1574, f. Va-VIa).

**Book I (Chapters 1 to 13)**

In Book I (chapters 1 to 13), it is clear that the tone used to discuss the ideal marriage age is more in line with popular opinion than with science. It is claimed that young women can find husbands as early as 18 because that is the right age to prepare for pregnancy and childbirth. They should always be 25 years old because the process of gestation and childbirth could be more complicated, and the children would be born less perfect (Marinello, 1574, I, ch. 1, p. 2).

As for the sexual union of the couple, two periods must be taken into account: the period that the holy religion dictates, which comes after marriage, and a second period that astrologers advise, during which the woman should not be “purgeta da menstrui,” or with internal traces of menstruation because the child will either be born in danger of dying or with a disease. In any case, it is advised not to wait too long after marriage to engage in sexual activity since, according to Marinello, old age corrupts the mind. This is in light of the entire tradition of theological background (Marinello, 1574, I, ch. 2, p. 3).

Given the era in which the treatise was written, it is evident that Marinello will not make an apology for sexual union strictly speaking, but instead will act as a true man of science of the time and describe the dangers and ailments that can be caused if man allows himself to be seduced by carnal pleasures (Marinello, 1574, I, chap. 4). As Marinello commented, “he will feel too weak, he will lose his sight, his memory, and some accident will happen to him; he will be pale, and his skin will be yellow, a symptom that can have an exogenous cause, such as the bite of poisonous reptiles, or endogenous, as a result of the ingestion of all those foods that multiply anger or melancholy and interrupt the liver process.”

The treatments for these illnesses are described in light of the humoral pathology that Hippocratic and Galenic school-trained doctors refer to as *amor hereos* or love sickness (*aegritudo amoris*), which has a blue background “because of the love of women” (Cull and Dutton, 1991, II, p. 107). Medical manuals consider this melancholy, like any disease, as a deviation from the natural harmony or temperamentum according to
the corpus hypocraticum doctrine. In this line, Marinello suggests several cures for solace, stomach support, better digestion, and overcoming weakness. Food at this time should be mild and healthful, such as chicken, soup made with egg yolk and saffron, or other fragrant spices, but should not be overly hot. Since it will be essential to soothe the spirit, the wine must be sweet. It will be necessary to sleep and rest a lot, to eliminate the worries. In addition, the genital members will have to be washed, since the cure will make essential the recommendation of a diet in the style of what was considered prescriptive in the theoretical medical treatises: use of the bath, the application of "all those things that moisten" (Cull and Dutton, 1991, I, p. 106). Only by bathing can carnal delight be appeased, so it is recommended that the bath include rose water and willow leaves (Marinello, 1574, I, ch. 4, p. 6).

Book II (Chapters 1 to 32)

The second book, which contains chapters 1 through 32 and serves as the main body of the treatise, is the longest. It opens with a poem that serves as a reminder of the purpose of this section, which is to serve as a guide for all those who want to have children but who, realizing their flaws, decide to break the sacred bond. Many ailments that affect both men and women must be added to this situation; treatments are suggested to overcome infertility and prevent violating the indissoluble sacrament of marriage.

Marinello’s treatise explains the types of sterility and the reasons why the woman cannot have offspring and specifies, equivalently, four reasons why the man may impede reproduction:

- **First reason:** The complexion of the man and the woman must be discounted; therefore, if the man is cold, it is convenient that the woman is of a warm complexion (Marinello, 1574, II, ch. 1, p. 53).
- **Second reason:** A central human organ, such as the brain, heart, liver, stomach, or kidneys, is sick. For example, if sterility has its origin in this organ, it is necessary to prepare an ovarium with moss and rosemary flowers for diseases of the brain. There can also be sterility in man when blood has been drawn from some veins near the ears since the spermatic humor descends from the brain, passes through the kidneys, and reaches the genital members.
- **Third reason:** Following, the theories of Lilium Medicinae, Marinello affirms that the cause of sterility can occur because the male semen is not suitable for engendering since it must have a specific temperature and must be thick, not liquid.
- **Fourth reason:** The male genitalia can cause the couple’s sterility. According to Marinello, if the virile member is too small, it will not be able to join the cervix, which usually happens when the man is too big. On the other hand, if the virile member is too large, the sperm cools down, and fertilization cannot occur.

As for sterility in women, it is almost always caused by the complexion of the uterus, which should be warm and moist. To achieve this characteristic and, consequently, become pregnant, the doctor should recommend a syrup and prescribe a diet that includes: young meat, chicken, and lamb seasoned with lettuce, spinach, and wine mixed with water; it will be necessary to avoid eating too much at breakfast and sleep well. One of the tests used to find out if the sterility came from the man or the woman, and which Marinello includes in this second part of the treatise, is to bring a garlic close to the woman’s nose; if she smells it, then the defect is not the woman’s, but the man’s (Marinello, 1574, II, p. 58). On the other hand, if the pain of the womb weakens women, it will be necessary to use a bath with hot water and oil. Then apply to the womb deer marrow, goose fat, white wax, goat dung, and egg yolk, and one of the most effective remedies, spinach seed (Marinello, 1574, II, 9, p. 88).

In this second part of the treatise, it is concluded that when the woman’s womb does not allow offspring, it may be because it is humid and does not retain semen. In other cases, when the sterility has its origin in some wind, the woman’s body should be purged, besides prescribing a diet that includes roasted meat seasoned with fennel; it is also recommended to drink wine, but in small quantities, better during the day, so as not to alter the phases of sleep during the night; bathe for half an hour, with water to which celery, cardamom, cumin.11Cumin, boiled with oil and applied as a template, was used to cure wind in the belly (Cierbide, 2007). caraway, calamus (white pennyroyal22The white pennyroyal, from all. Pulegium is a well-known herb
used as an infusion that aids digestion. In medieval manuscripts, it is argued that pennyroyal cured the bites of poisonous animals; in addition, it provoked menstruation and accelerated childbirth (Cierbide, 2007). mint, and magnolia have been included. In addition, the food should be sprinkled with cinnamon, pepper, and daisy. In the original "diamargariton," whose ancient form is "pearl," according to the DCVB. In the ancient pharmacopeia, an electuary was elaborated whose base was pearls, with curative properties for the heart, as the main property. As the ancient sources state, "make powders and tablets of it, and they serve to fortify the heart, head, and stomach and to be better able to undertake theodoricon and diamargariton when it is alleged the time they want to menstruate" (Sánchez González, 1990, p. 159). (Marinello, 1574, II, 15, p. 95).

**Book III (Chapters 1 to 15)**

The third book (chapters 1 to 15) contains practical advice and care in obstetrics, in everything related to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, as well as the midwife's job. In this part of the treatise, the woman is the protagonist.

The separation of the tasks to be assumed by men and women in childbirth throughout the medieval tradition should be emphasized, which explains why women were dedicated to obstetrics and practiced as midwives or assistants. Men were dedicated to the more theoretical aspects of medicine. Thus, women assisted in childbirth since the modesty of seeing women naked explained the absence of doctors unless the fetus was in danger of death (Green, 2000). On this point, Marinello does not start from a cruel intention *per se* but coincides with a tradition that values women only for the use of their reproductive function. It also continues the tradition of philosophical hypotheses that interpret the female genital apparatus as a sort of internal virile member in the body, together with the female testicles, the ovaries, and the spermatic canals, after Gabriele Fallopio, one of the most important anatomists and physicians of the 16th century, who had already described the functions of the Fallopian tubes in 1561 (Kühn, 1964-1965).

Marinello explains, in this third part of the treatise, how the creature is formed in the mother's womb, following the theories of medieval embryology: the womb closes and catches all the sperm, with whose heat it begins to swell, as happens with seeds when they take nourishment from the roots (Marinello, 1574, III, ch. 1, p. 236). For conception to take place, the formative virtue of the soul will be necessary, according to which the only parts will be formed first. The place of the spirit is the heart, whose pathways conduct nourishment; and being subtle and spiritual, in the first place, the flesh of the heart is constituted; in the second place, the liver, of a warm nature; in the third place, the brain, of a cold and phlegmatic nature. These three sites or parts are generated gradually thanks to the formative virtue, which conducts the heat. The spirit11In the original Italian text, "secondina" refers to the placental membrane. The Greek term "tá déutera" was translated into Latin as "membrana secundae" in the sense of "membrane that is expelled at a second time." Hence the term "seconde or secondina" in Marinello's work. The concepts of right and left, associated with pregnancy, originate in Aristotle and in the model based on laterality, which was later adopted by Galen and taken into consideration for centuries. This model relates to the symbolism of the left-right binomial, in which proper means favorable, and left is associated with everything unfavorable. The Pythagorean symbology of opposites was also important, where the right refers to a man and a warm nature. At the same time, the left is associated with a woman and the cold quality. Avicenna considered that the uterus was divided into seven cells: three warm ones on the right, where males would be formed; three colder left ones on the left, where females would be formed; and a central one that would give rise to hermaphrodite beings. Laterality applies to various circumstances: boys are conceived on the right side of the uterus, and girls on the left side. In the use of the feet to walk, it is taken into account if the foot that the pregnant woman uses first is the right one, which will mean that the child will be male; it is also taken into account if the right eye shines more and the right breast is more prominent, which implies that the child to be born will be a boy (Martínez Ten, Adiego and Pérez Pedregosa, 2010), which remains in the spermatic humor, is divided into vital, natural, and animal so that the first member to be created is the heart. In contrast, the virtues of the soul are divided into animal virtue (in the brain), natural virtue (in the liver), and vital virtue (in the heart); this last virtue is the source and origin of the other two (Marinello, 1574, III, ch. 1, p. 237).
As a result of the nourishment necessary for the newly formed creature, the placenta is generated, which is formed by two tunics; allantois (similar to a large intestine) and amnion (the mantle, according to some authors, like Marinello himself) smooth and humid externally, in which the creature is united through the navel; between both tunics, the urine is located. Sometimes the second tunic does not break, and the child is born wrapped, without this implying, according to Marinello, that the newborn is more fortunate, although some sorceresses say so (Marinello, 1574, III, ch. 1, p. 239).

Marinello explains how to visibly recognize the symptoms to detect a woman’s pregnancy. First of all, the woman’s desire to join her husband disappears; since the blood of menstruation is stopped, the veins of the eyes are swollen; the woman has pains, headaches, smaller pupils, swollen tits, more accelerated dust, and urine, which until six months is yellow and clear, from the sixth month it looks like water. At the same time, at the end of pregnancy, it is already almost similar to the red color. Other aspects that he stops to explain refer to finding out how it will be known if the newborn is male or female. If it is a boy, the woman will have a good-colored face; one of the nipples of the right breast will take black color, and the right breast will become more significant than the left one. Moreover, when the woman walks, she will move her right foot first, then the left; her belly will swell more on the right side, and when the baby moves, the mother will notice him more also on the right side, and she will begin to feel him much sooner than if it is a girl. This means that the qualities described with a more positive tone will refer to the male child, very different from the fact that it is a girl (Marinello, 1574, III, ch. 3, p. 244).

Beyond these natural remedies, for a long time, the moment of childbirth was surrounded by the occult, even magical aspects, based on superstitions transmitted orally and which, of course, lacked any scientific basis, especially about the placenta and the umbilical cord, which were imagined to confer power and other supernatural qualities to those who used them (Laurent, 1989). On this point, Marinello’s treatise insists that there are elements that present occult virtues, such as the ceramide, or magnet stone that can attract iron and steel, or the coral. Thus, it was believed that red stones, such as coral, had medicinal qualities; thus, both coral and jet propitiated good parts, were considered anti-hemostatic, favored fertility, and were the stones most used to combat the evil eye. On the other hand, white stones, such as white coral, helped to increase milk production in wet nurses (García Pérez, 2006), the midwife will have to hold stones in her right hand or wear them around her neck (Marinello, 1574, III, ch. 10, p. 269).

Marinello distinguishes three types of labor: natural childbirth, natural birth, or vertical presentation, for which the midwife should recommend the woman to rest and breathe well so that the delivery is favorable. If, on the other hand, the womb is the cause of the labor complication, it may be because it is of dry quality or too small or because it has hemorrhoids or epistemes that close the exit. As for the placenta, it may be too thick and present problems in rupturing.

It is surprising that Marinello, like any doctor of the time, did not intervene unless it was a problematic delivery. He did intervene after delivery, recommending a lifestyle and specific remedies for recovery. It was the midwife who, consequently, had to keep in mind all the problems that could affect the correct development of labor: to know how long it could last; to be attentive to the woman from the moment she began to feel pain; to make sure that the midwife ate little, but of great food and easy to digest (fresh eggs, chicken or hen’s meat). As for space, the woman had to sit in an obstetric chair for an hour to get used to the place of delivery.

Some of the effective remedies to induce labor or such it is quick, according to Marinello, are anise, celery, chamomile, diluted in red wine, or coriander, which should be held between the groin, or saffron with wine, considered as water of life and one of the most used healing remedies in the entire medieval tradition (Marinello, 1574, III, ch. 11, p. 278). In addition, laurel roots, diluted in wine, malrubin from l. marrubium, this herb was applied in medieval times to midwives who were not well purged to provoke menstruation and cure blood flow (Cierbide, 2007). mint, cumin, and rue. Wild rue was used to cure side, chest, and joint pain; it also provoked urination and menstruation. It was used with laurel to relax the testicles (Cierbide, 2007). and carrot root, linked to the navel, can be used. Another remedy that helps childbirth and the midwife should prescribe is baths, especially those in which mallow, marshmallow, flax seeds, and mugwort are.
was frequently used to accelerate labor, reduce pain and help the midwife dilate. In addition, mixed with
wine, it was used to expel the baby due to a lousy delivery (Conde, 2011). Fennel, wormwood66From ll.
absinthium, in medieval tradition, it was used, mixed with wine, to cure blood flow; wormwood was also
used for halitosis, mixed with honey and previously boiled with wine (Cierbide, 2007). If suppositories are
to be used, the midwife should make them, as an ointment, with myrrh and honey (Marinello, 1574, III, ch.
11, p. 279). Cinnamon, myrrh, and nutmeg have been introduced. However, if the bath is impossible to carry
out because of the woman’s weakness, the midwife can use a sponge bath with this water and rub it on the
belly.

In addition to all the remedies described above, the women who assisted in childbirth had to be good
Christians and of good customs and had the authorization to pronounce a baptism sub conditione in case
of emergency or need (Beltrán, 2014; Gélis, 2006). This is why Marinello emphasizes the significance of the
midwife saying the following prayer to the midwife’s right ear: “Mem-ento, Domine, filiorum Edom in diem
Hierusalem” (Psalm 137, 7), followed by three Our Fathers, and the baby will be born. Marinello bases this
observation on the fact that these women were practicing Christians. Other midwives would rather recite
Psalm 109, specifically the first two verses: "Dixit Dominus Domino nee sede en dextris meis don ponam
inimicos tuos scabillum pedum tuorum; vir-gam virtutis tuae emittet Dominus ex Sion dominar in medio
inimicor-un tuorum tecum”.

Conclusion

After a guided reading of the various parts in which Giovanni Marinello’s medical treatise is structured, and
by way of conclusion, it should be noted that, despite sharing a medical tradition influenced by Hippocratic
sources, which is framed in the European context of medieval misogyny. The reason for approaching an
Italian medical treatise is not only to study a work that aims to provide practical advice on obstetrics and
gynecology. Beyond studying the theoretical content, we have tried to bring Marinello’s work to a broader
public, as well as to vindicate the reading of the classics written in a Romance language as an indispensable
element to know the thought and culture of an era marked by the ideas of the Council of Trent. From these
pages, we have argued the interest in studying Marinello’s linguistic ideology and his taste for the lingua
volgare. In addition, and starting from the approach of medieval medicine, it has been possible to contrast,
from the evident temporal distance, the notions referring to obstetrics and gynecology, the field on which
Marinello’s book focuses, together with elements such as magic, philosophy and 16th-century thought, where
literary, novelistic or even rhetorical elements are not absent, demonstrating an encyclopedic knowledge that
goes beyond the threshold of simple professional medical practice.

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