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Secrets played a central role in transformations in medical and scientific knowledge in early modern Europe. As a new fascination with novelty began to take hold from the late fifteenth century, Europeans thirsted for previously unknown details about the natural world: new plants, animals, and other objects from nature, new recipes for medical and alchemical procedures, new knowledge about the human body, and new facts about the way nature worked. These 'secrets' became popular items of commerce and trade, as the quest for new and exclusive bits of information met the vibrant early modern marketplace. Whether disclosed widely in print or kept more circumspect in manuscripts, secrets helped drive an expanding interest in acquiring knowledge throughout early modern Europe.

Bringing together international scholars, this volume provides a pan-European and interdisciplinary overview on the topic. Each essay offers significant new interpretations of the role played by secrets in their area of specialization. Chapters address key themes in early modern history and the history of medicine, science and technology including: the possession, circulation and exchange of secret knowledge across Europe; alchemical secrets and laboratory processes; patronage and the upper-class market for secrets; medical secrets and the emerging market for proprietary medicines; secrets and cosmetics; secrets and the body and finally gender and secrets.

Contents: Introduction: secrets and knowledge, Elaine Leong and Alisha Rankin; Part I Defining Secrets: How to read a book of secrets, William Eamon; What is a secret? Secrets and craft knowledge in early modern Europe, Pamela H. Smith. Part II Secrecy and Openness: The secrets of Sir Hugh Platt, Ayesha Mukherjee; Robert Boyle and secrecy, Michael Hunter; Openness vs. secrecy in the Hartlib circle: revisiting 'democratic Baconism' in Interregnum England, Michelle DiMeo. Part III Illicit Secrets: Anna Zieglerin's alchemical revelations, Tara Nummedal; Face waters, oils, love magic and poison: making and selling secrets in early modern Rome, Tessa Storey. Part IV Secrets and Health: Keeping beauty secrets in early modern Iberia, Montserrat Cabré; Secrets to healthy living: the revival of the preventive paradigm in late Renaissance Italy,

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Sandro Cavallo; Secrets of place: the medical casebooks of Vivant-Augustin Ganiere, Lisa Wynne Smith; Index.

About the Editor: Elaine Leong, University of Cambridge, UK, and Alisha Rankin, Tufts University, USA

Reviews: 'The collection makes a welcome and differentiated contribution to this field of research. Complemented by future studies on related aspects - such as political secrecy - this work can help us attain a better understanding of what the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann once called the 'cosmological status' of secrecy in the early modern period.' Ambix

'Clearly, while the larger subject of secrets in early modern Europe is large and diffuse, the carefully limited study of one kind - the recipes of the period - and their proliferation and use, can open our eyes to many of the intertwined relationships among words, things, and values. The fascinating details of secrets are echoed, too, in the often surprising histories offered by the authors in this collection.' Renaissance Quarterly

'These essays all offer new insight into the transmission of natural knowledge in early modern Europe_ this volume should serve as a stimulus to further work on the endlessly fascinating topic of secrets.' ISIS

'_ a strong and well-organised collection.' Social History of Medicine

'The individual essays that make up this volume are certainly well worth reading. Many are of a very high standard, and they make important contributions to debates that would be of interest to specialists of, say, alchemy, or domestic medicine, or to those with an interest in ideals of secrecy and openness in mid-seventeenth-century England, or indeed the role played by craft knowledge during the Scientific Revolution.' British Journal for the History of Science

'This collection of essays draws welcome attention to the role of secrets in early modern 'knowledge making', and brings together diverse work from a research field that is just beginning to realise its potential_ The editors also deserve commendation for highlighting the latest research trends in their introduction as they supplement the essays' perspectives with their own knowledge of relevant primary sources.' Sixteenth Century Studies