

## Book Reviews

Arguably, this means that the book's title is itself slightly misleading: though the editors explain that the "medical revolution" that they are chronicling is the process by which "the classical renaissance of the sixteenth century gave way to the enlightenment of the eighteenth" (p. 8), it might be felt that "medicine in an age of revolution" would more aptly have described the work's content.

In the course of indicating the changes that occurred during this seminal period and the way in which medicine related to wider trends, the contributors adopt a variety of viewpoints. One or two represent the cruder end of the spectrum of contextualist approaches which currently flourish in the history of science. In general, however, the essays show considerable subtlety in their exposition of the trends under study, giving a sensitive and valuable view of the way in which medicine reacted to and was shaped by broader intellectual, institutional, and professional pressures.

One perennial theme is the role of the new science and the threat presented by its empirical ethos to the old tradition of learned physic. The way in which the Royal Society provided a formal outlet for medical empiricism in its early years is well illustrated by Roy Porter's study of its correspondence, while the disagreement among medical writers as to how physic should react to this mandate to empiricism is well explored in H. J. Cook's account of the protracted debate on the subject which took place c. 1670. Equally interesting is the relationship of medicine to the ideas of Descartes and Newton: Roger French gives an intriguing analysis of the debate triggered off by Descartes' misrepresentation of the ideas of William Harvey in support of his own philosophy, while the advocacy of mechanistic medical theories in the early eighteenth century by figures like Philippe Hecquet and George Cheyne is surveyed respectively in essays by Lawrence Brockliss and Anita Guerrini (who also illustrates how Newton's own increasing emphasis on the role of "ether" was adapted in a medical context).

No less important was the context of religious change. Thus Peter Elmer argues for the role of eirenicism rather than Puritanism in providing the setting for the challenge to medical orthodoxy in the mid-century, while David Harley considers the survival of thaumaturgical healing among Nonconformists at a time when naturalist explanations of mental illness were gaining favour among Anglicans. Equally interesting is John Henry's examination of the reasons why the implicit or explicit materialism of medical writings was only occasionally attacked by the guardians of religious orthodoxy, the sheer complexity of medical theory deterring all but a few theologians from getting involved with it. All in all, the volume gives a very useful account of the ways in which medicine interrelated with its context in this transitional period. A third volume taking the story on a century further would be welcome.

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ROBERT BURTON, *The anatomy of melancholy*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicholas K. Kiessling, and Rhonda L. Blair, with an Introduction by J. B. Bamborough, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. lxxii, 675, £70.00.

NICHOLAS K. KIESSLING, *The library of Robert Burton*, Oxford Bibliographical Society Publications, n.s., vol. 22, Oxford, The Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1988, 8vo, pp. xli, 433, £25.00.

Given the extraordinary richness of its learning, and its potential rewards for the scholar amply endowed with *Sitzfleisch*, it is peculiar that Robert Burton's *Anatomy of melancholy* (first edition, 1621) has attracted little precise scholarship. Most of the monographs which have appeared on Burton over the last generation have been the work of literary historians primarily concerned to use his views as backgrounds to Elizabethan and Jacobean literature (e.g., Lawrence Babb's *Sanity in Bedlam: a study of Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy* [1959], or S. B. Ewing's *Burtonian melancholy in the plays of John Ford* [1969]). Others have attempted to insert Burton into a "progressive" history of psychiatry, as, for instance, Berger Evans, in his

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*The psychiatry of Robert Burton* (1972). We still lack in-depth analyses of Burton's learning and views in the light of Renaissance medical humanism, Reformation and Counter-Reformation theology, and the neo-Stoic movements of his day. There has long been a question whether Burton was, indeed, as erudite as he liked to parade himself; or whether, rather like his imitator and plagiarist, Laurence Sterne, he was largely a scavenger of other people's learning.

These two impeccable new publications will greatly ease the labours of future Burton scholars. Nicholas Kiessling has patiently recovered the contents of Burton's own private library, superseding the catalogue published by S. Gibson and F. R. D. Needham in 1926. Kiessling adds over 180 titles, and deletes certain erroneous entries from the earlier list. We now know the titles of some 1,738 books and two manuscripts owned by Burton, and, no less valuably, the location of all but 168 of the copies (Burton's library is one of the largest private libraries of its time that survives in part today). This is particularly helpful since Burton was a habitual annotator of what he read, not infrequently scribbling upon his books additional notes, anecdotes, and jottings. It is thus possible not merely to tell the general range of Burton's first-hand knowledge, but, in many cases, to gauge his familiarity with, and degree of application to, particular authors and texts. An intelligent computerized study based upon Kiessling's catalogue would reveal much about the kinds of medical erudition available to, and expected of, a college scholar of the early seventeenth century.

In the meantime, we can be immensely grateful to Kiessling, together with Thomas C. Faulkner and Rhonda Blair, for producing the first part of a projected five-volume scholarly edition of the *Anatomy*. This tome takes in the First Partition; two more volumes of text, and two of commentary, are to follow. Variant readings of all six editions published in Burton's lifetime are given.

As well as providing foundations for future investigators, this publication contains a valuable scholarly Introduction by J. B. Bamborough, who is concerned to present a less sensational reading of Burton than that offered by Rosalie Colie (who underlined Burton's use, or living out, of paradox); by Stanley Fish (who regarded the *Anatomy* as the classic self-consuming artefact); and by Northrop Frye, who read Burton as a precursor of Swift. Contextualizing Burton in respect of the Continental polymaths of the Renaissance, Bamborough plausibly argues for soberer pictures of a scholar-humanist, not of course without learned wit, but primarily a philosopher engaged in the earnest business of utilizing learning for the relief of oppressed mankind. It is a pity Bamborough does not have more to say about the religious implications of Burton's enterprise: his theological opinions remain perhaps the least understood dimension of the *Anatomy*.

Roy Porter, Wellcome Institute

WHITFIELD J. BELL, Jr., *The College of Physicians of Philadelphia: a bicentennial history*, Canton, Mass., Science History Publications USA, 1988, 8vo, pp. ix, 326, illus., \$40.00

The model for Colleges of Physicians throughout the world is the Royal College of Physicians of London. Founded by Thomas Linacre in 1518, it was, during the eighteenth century, a bastion of power and privilege, excluding all who did not subscribe to the Anglican faith and who were not graduates of Oxford or Cambridge. It was for this reason that the Quaker physician and Edinburgh graduate, Dr John Fothergill, Benjamin Franklin's London physician, strongly opposed the proposal by Dr John Morgan of Philadelphia in the 1760s to develop the Philadelphia Medical Society that he had founded into a College on the London model. In the era preceding Independence it would have seemed logical to have followed British practice. Yet it was not until 1787, after the Colonies became the United States, that a College of Physicians was founded in Philadelphia. It is paradoxical that this proposal was now strongly supported by Fothergill's protégé, Dr John Coakley Lettsom. It was he who wrote encouragingly to Benjamin Rush, whose preceptor, Dr John Redman, was to be the first President.