

Book Reviews

FRANCIS DOHERTY, *A study in eighteenth-century advertising methods: the anodyne necklace*, Lewiston, NY, and Lampeter, Dyfed, Edward Mellen Press, 1992, pp. xv, 464, £49.95, \$89.95 (0-7734-9177-5).

Widely dubbed the “golden age of quackery”, the eighteenth century was also the era when newspapers and the periodical press first boomed and the arts of publicity became big business. The connexions between these phenomena have long been recognized—as early as 1934 Fielding H. Garrison published his pioneering ‘Medicine in *The Tatler*, *Spectator* and *Guardian*’ in the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (ii: 477–503); but only with Francis Doherty’s remarkable volume has the promotion of nostrums been examined with the depth it deserves.

Doherty has followed a very specific line of research. He has chosen to investigate and document with great meticulousness the hundreds of newspaper and journal insertions and all the handbills and other ephemera promoting the anodyne necklace, for a period covering more or less the whole of the eighteenth century. Long manufactured and marketed by the Chamberlen family—for generations encamped in the disputed territory between medical fringe and medical orthodoxy—the amulet was a teething aid for infants, sales of which were evidently boosted by the prevailing belief that teething troubles precipitated the convulsions and fits that destroyed so many babies. Harking back to the celebrated Sir Kenelm Digby, the anodyne necklace’s publicity material explicitly drew upon theories of sympathetic magic and action at a distance—thereby in some measure substantiating the view espoused by many historians that the official and popular magic of the early modern era was given a new lease of life by commercial hype.

The advertising copy examined by Doherty frequently touted lengthy pamphlets sold, or given away, with the necklace—reading matter purveying weird and wonderful information (‘The travels of a shilling’, ‘A dissertation upon noses’, ‘A new way of breeding canary birds’)—which surely indicates very advanced notions of sales psychology and sophisticated techniques for highlighting products and creating brand loyalties through indirect associations. In conjunction with the necklace, a range of other proprietary medical products was marketed, including sundry VD cures, gout remedies and general restoratives, bitters, *Cephalick* tobacco, purging sugar plums, and so forth. Despite the dearth of manuscript business records or biographical records, Doherty is able to demonstrate how the Chamberlen firm was constantly assailed by competitors and counterfeiters. Highstreet wars flared in the metropolis as to who was the true proprietor of the authentic necklace, and eventually, through a struggle that remains somewhat obscure, a successful adversary—Basil Burchell—was able to muscle in from around 1740.

Those historians who subscribe to the view that Georgian England gave birth to a “consumer society” have tended to see the flood of quack medicine advertising as a significant symptom of that development. But Jonathan Barry (‘Publicity and the public good: presenting medicine in eighteenth-century Bristol’, in W. F. Bynum and R. Porter (eds), *Medical fringe and medical orthodoxy 1750–1850* (London, Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 29–39) has argued that the quack’s commitment to saturation advertisement might be read as a mark of business weakness, not strength. The mass of material presented by Doherty in a fascinating 400-page book does not resolve this question, but certainly suggests that commercial medicines were indeed big business and long-lived concerns.

In certain respects, *A study in eighteenth-century advertising methods* is also an opportunity wasted. Doherty pursues what might be called an “antiquarian” style of inquiry, concentrating on recovering the texts of the anodyne necklace publicity to the exclusion of wider contextualization within, or evaluation of, the advertising milieu of Georgian England. Comparison with George Packwood, the dynamic promoter of razor strops, would have been welcome: see Neil McKendrick, ‘George Packwood and the commercialization of shaving: the art of eighteenth-century advertising, or “The way to get money and be happy”’, in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, Europa, 1982), pp. 146–96). And one looks in vain for references to the highly germane work of P. S. Brown

Book Reviews

(‘The vendors of medicines advertised in eighteenth-century Bath’, *Medical History*, 1975, **19**: 352–69; and ‘Medicines advertised in the eighteenth-century Bath newspapers’, *Medical History*, 1976, **20**: 152–68) and also that of J. J. Looney (‘Advertising and society in England, 1720–1820: a statistical analysis of Yorkshire newspaper advertisements’ [Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1983]). One also wishes that Doherty, a literary scholar by training, had been more adventurous in literary analysis of the promotion materials, perhaps using the methods of Roland Barthes. Not least, it is a great shame that the volume reproduces none of the advertisements in facsimile: here was surely an opportunity for the evaluation of visual as well as verbal evidence. These however are minor blemishes. Thanks to Doherty’s diligence, dedication and flair, we now possess, for the first time, an in-depth account of the promotion of proprietary medicines in the emergent commercial society. Let us hope that this exemplary work will provide the model for similar product biographies.

Roy Porter, Wellcome Institute

THOMAS NEVILLE BONNER, *To the ends of the earth: women’s search for education in medicine*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. xvi, 232, illus., £27.95 (0–674–89303–4).

Over thirty years ago, while doing research on American doctors in European universities before 1914, Thomas Bonner was struck by the “remarkable number of foreign women, including Americans” enrolled in medicine at Zurich, Bern, Paris and Geneva (p. vii). Historians of women’s role in medicine have cause to be grateful that he has now been able to follow up this (at the time) intriguing observation. And, as he shows the numbers were remarkable. Bonner estimates that, in the half-century before 1914, “well over ten thousand women . . . took some medical training in Switzerland or France”, three-quarters of them from the Russian Empire and only a handful actually from Switzerland or France (p. 62).

To the ends of the earth provides the first detailed English language account of the opening of these first continental European universities, most importantly Zurich, to would-be medical women in the 1860s and 1870s and a biographical picture of the women who went there. This detailed description is combined with a comparative analysis of the opportunities and constraints facing these women in their home countries, particularly in Germany, Russia, the United States and Britain, as these developed during the following century. One of the strengths of the book is his emphasis throughout on political and institutional factors in the specific countries, particularly of the different forms of state intervention in medical education, as more significant than levels of prejudice alone in shaping women’s opportunities.

Bonner’s book is a valuable corrective to several recent accounts of the campaign for women’s entry to medicine in Britain. These have paid almost no attention to the European dimension, generally supporting Sophia Jex-Blake’s public rejection of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson’s advocacy of the “back-door route” via French or Swiss degrees, as a means of exercising leverage of public and parliamentary opinion at home. Bonner makes it clear that Garrett Anderson’s proposal might have been viable. And Bonner’s detailed and often poignant picture of the thousands of Russian women who sought medical training long before 1917 should go a long way to eradicate the misconception that the high level of women in (erstwhile) Soviet medicine is a specifically post-revolutionary phenomenon.

Mary Ann Elston, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College

PETER MORRIS (ed.), *First aid to the battlefield: life and letters of Sir Vincent Kennett-Barrington (1844–1903)*, Stroud, Glos., and Wolfeboro Falls, NH, Alan Sutton, 1992, pp. x, 231 illus., £14.99 (0–7509–00164).

Possibly one of the least-researched aspects of Victorian philanthropy is its internationalism. The European wars which accompanied the struggles for German and Italian unification from the mid-nineteenth century onwards threw larger and larger numbers of young men into nationalistic