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belief, custom, and ritual of the peoples of Europe and America, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, University of California Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. xxvii, 345, illus., £13.50.

Both of these books deal with folk medicine but whereas *American folk medicine* is a collection of 1973 conference papers edited by Professor Hand, *Magical medicine* is a collection of his own selected essays covering essentially the last decade. The basic tenet of both is that the idea of "medicine" is differentially interpreted and defined according to social, historical, religious, and cultural context. Whereas the former gives individual case histories to describe the variety of folk medicinal practices, the latter tends to be thematic and explores the general ideas and theories which may explain this variety.

American folk medicine gives us a wide range of case histories, from the role of a mole's heart in curing epilepsy, through illness as a result of a spiritual imbalance to the explanation of birthmarks on newly born children as a result of a mother's misbehaviour during pregnancy. This rich variety of ethnographic essays documents individual beliefs and practices, social context and world view, sorcery and shamanism from Pennsylvania to Mexico, and traces the European ancestry of many folk practices and superstitions.

Magical medicine concentrates on what the author calls the magical elements of folklore that have been incorporated into curing ritual both in the New and Old worlds. The ideas of the magical transference of disease and of disease as divine retribution or as the result of animal intrusion into the body are all dealt with at length, as is the magical symbolism involved in passing one's body through a tree's bowed trunk in order to cure hernia or whooping-cough. The antiquity of such practices in Europe and their possible transference to the Americas during the sixteenth century is also explored, as is the possibility that there may be a common substrate of folk medicine held by all the world's peoples which stretches back into the palaeolithic past.

Folk medicine, it seems, is predicated upon mythic explanations which are themselves the rationalization of the irrational. This process of rationalization is at the heart of man's uniqueness, and thus folk medicine is seen as an integral part of his physiological and cultural development.

N. J. Saunders
University of Southampton

BRIAN EASLEA, *Witch-hunting, magic and the new philosophy. An introduction to the debates of the scientific revolution 1450–1750*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1980, 8vo, pp. xii, 283, [no price stated].

Written under the inspiration of Herbert Marcuse, this provocative book provides a breezy and sometimes snide introduction to the history of the scientific revolution, with the larger goal of placing the origins of modern science in their socially and sexually repressive context. In basic argument it is similar to Carolyn Merchant's, *The death of nature. Women, ecology and the scientific revolution* (Harper & Row, 1980). Easlea argues that witch-hunting was the panicky response of men who felt threatened by women and the devil. Since it was angels that made the stars revolve in the late medieval sky, Easlea can suggest connexions between demonology and the new astronomy. In practice, this argument only begins to make full sense in the mid-seventeenth century, when Henry More, Joseph Glanvill, and others attempted to locate spirits in the natural world of experience. And so Easlea's book proceeds along two fairly separate tracks until about 1650. It is perhaps for this reason that the period 1450–1600 comes off rather strangely, with no concern for anatomy and peculiarly little understanding for Renaissance magic. Easlea invokes the philosophy and religion of Paracelsus to show how subversive and potentially atheist natural magic could be, but his arguments seem to rest on an extremely imperfect grasp of whatever does not exist in English translation. The author does not do justice to the intense Christian piety of Paracelsus; and unfortunately for him most of the religious magic of the sixteenth century is still locked up in Latin.

After spending time briefly outlining the theories of Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo on the scientific side, and of Institoris, Sprenger, Weyer, and Bodin on the witchcraft side, Easlea brings the assembled arguments together. He argues effectively that the Christian mechanical philosophers of the seventeenth century were engaged in a war against Aristotle on

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one front and the neo-Platonic tradition of natural magic on another. In fact, Easlea is so enamoured of the socially disruptive and potentially atheist conclusions of the Paracelsian-Hermetic tradition that he allows the Aristotelian tradition to drop without a defence. This is unfortunate because the theology of witchcraft rested less on the natural spirits of the neo-Platonic and Hermetic philosophers than on scholastic and Aristotelian foundations. Easlea also conveys the impression that witchcraft trials declined because of the growth of scepticism about the existence of the devil and witches, and yet it is well known that witch trials declined first in Spain, where one would be hard-pressed to find materialism, atheism, or even scepticism concerning the existence of the devil. I am tempted to argue against Easlea that men came to disbelieve in witchcraft once they found that they no longer knew how to detect witches.

Easlea is more stimulating in placing the new science in its social context. Relying heavily on the theories of Keith Thomas regarding the rise of a new self-confidence in the late seventeenth century and on the work of James and Margaret Jacob who have connected the rise of Newtonianism to the attempt to bolster the ruling class and to debunk religious enthusiasts, Easlea goes further to show that the early (male) scientists expected not only to dominate and exploit a now lifeless nature but that their dominance implied a sexual victory as well. No longer threatened by women witches, these exponents of a macho science intended to penetrate the deepest secrets of nature, laying her treasures bare. The sexist bent of early embryology comes in for a roasting here as well. Although this argument is sometimes flabby, it is suggestive and thoughtful. In a peculiar excursus, however, Easlea goes on a Diogenean hunt for rational man in the seventeenth century and discovers Gerrard Winstanley, to whom he devotes nine pages even though Winstanley had almost nothing to do with magic, witchcraft, or natural science. All of this is to say that Easlea's book, like the curate's egg, is good in parts. I hope that it generates serious discussion so that its merits can be disentangled from its palpable flaws.

H. C. Erik Midelfort
University of Virginia

KURT GOLDAMMER, *Paracelsus in der deutschen Romantik*, (Salzburger Beiträge zur Paracelsusforschung, Folge 20), Vienna, Verband der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaften Österreichs, 1980, 8vo, pp. 212, illus., öS. 250.00 (paperback).

The well-known Paracelsus scholar, Kurt Goldammer, here undertakes to show the lasting influence of his hero during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In their reaction against rationalism and academic orthodoxy many German Romantics found in Paracelsus not only a kindred spirit of rebellion but specific ideas of man as the microcosm, of experience as the root of all knowledge, of magic, pantheism and nature spirits, and they were thereby inspired to some of their best efforts. In literature, Goldammer traces fascinating links between Paracelsus and Novalis, Fougué, and E. T. A. Hoffmann (especially in the Undine motif, to which Goldammer adds an erudite appendix, pp. 89–130); in philosophy the links are mainly with Henrik Steffens, Joseph Görres, C. J. H. Windischmann, and F. X. von Baader, all of whom were interested in ideas of animal magnetism and hypnotism. Although Werner Leibbrand already in 1937 pointed to some connexions between Paracelsus and Romantic medicine, Goldammer's chapters (pp. 56–67) on this subject will interest readers of this journal, especially with respect to C. W. Hufeland, A. Röschlaub, J. N. Ringseis, H. Damerow, J. G. Rademacher, and G. H. von Schubert. It must be admitted that these links are weaker than those with literature, music, and philology, but they are all the more interesting inasmuch as Paracelsian medicine constitutes a standing rebuke to academic medicine in almost all of its forms. After a brief chapter on Jacob Böhme as a mediator of Paracelsus to the nineteenth century, Goldammer concludes rhapsodically that "in Paracelsus and Böhme [the Romantics] learned to understand themselves." The Romantics regarded themselves as students of life in its largest sense, stretching well beyond the realm of organic nature to include "the cosmos, and history, and the whole universe." Goldammer's study thus constitutes the latest echo of this generous view of life.

H. C. Erik Midelfort
University of Virginia