

Book Reviews

Chiefly thanks to the studies by Lester King and Karl Eduard Rothschild, historians have been broadly informed about the iatromechanical system of Friedrich Hoffmann. More recently, Ingo W Müller has examined the influential Halle professor's main work *Medicina rationalis systematica* (1718–40), including its parts on therapeutics, in greater detail, critically comparing it with examples of modern Galenism. Almut Lanz, in her Braunschweig inaugural dissertation under Erika Hickel, adds to this research by asking whether and how Hoffmann's pharmacology, materia medica, and actual therapeutic practice were influenced by his iatromechanics.

Based on her reading of his *Fundamenta medicinae* (1695), she concludes that his theoretical, corpuscular pharmacology followed logically from his physiology and pathology. Differently shaped particles of the remedies were thought to act on the "particles" of the blood and "nervous juice", improving their flow and thus the all-important "tone" of the muscular fibres. In accordance with his mechanical ideas, Hoffmann distinguished four large groups of remedies: evacuants, alterants, roborants, and sedatives.

Moreover, Lanz has scrutinized 54 of Hoffmann's case histories from the first three parts of his *Medicina consultatoria* (1721–39) and provides a pharmaceutical historical analysis of the 286 different remedies prescribed or recommended by him in these cases. Compared to an average materia medica of eighteenth-century German pharmacies (worked out in 1962 by Herbert Wietschoreck), Hoffmann used proportionally more simples for his recipes—in line with Hermann Boerhaave's motto "the simple is the seal of truth". Many of the medicines could be prepared in the patient's house. If the Halle professor prescribed composita, he preferred his own proprietary remedies, such as his *Balsamum Vitae* and his *Liquor anodynus mineralis*, the famous "Hoffmann's drops" still known today. As Lanz further shows, both the Hippocratic-Galenic and the Paracelsian-chemiatic tradition were represented in Hoffmann's materia medica. What was new

was his interpretation of the medicines' mode of action. Evacuants were still very prominent in his pharmacotherapy, although he apparently refrained from using cantharides and emetics. Some characteristics of his prescribing habits, such as a preference for fluid medicines, for balsams, and ethereal oils, seem to have stemmed more directly from his corpuscular pharmacology. And his *Liquor anodynus mineralis* was supposed to have antispasmodic properties, reducing the tone of the fibres.

On the whole, Lanz's results suggest that Hoffmann's iatromechanical ideas did guide his choice of remedies and pharmacotherapeutic practice, though rather in terms of adjustment, modification, and addition, than in the form of a radical change of conventional treatment. Her careful study contributes to our understanding of the difficult relationship between new theories and actual practice in eighteenth-century medicine. It would gain in comparative value, if researchers were stimulated to conduct similar analyses of the therapeutics of other, differently oriented "innovators" of this period. Without doubt, the prime candidate for such an investigation would be Hoffmann's colleague and intellectual "rival" at Halle, Georg Ernst Stahl.

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William Turner, *A new herball*, Parts II and III, eds George T L Chapman, Frank McCombie, Anne U Wesenraft, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 846, £125.00, \$185.00 (0-521-44549-3).

The layout of text, transcription and indices of this edition of Parts II and III of William Turner's *New Herball*, corresponds to that of Part I, also published by Cambridge University Press in 1995 (see review in *Medical History*, 1997, 41: 246–8).

Parts II and III, originally published in 1562 and 1568, are treated separately; it might have been preferable to have the two texts following each other and then the complete, modern

Book Reviews

typeface transcription. Part II has a black-letter text of 348 pages, plus 2½ pages of 170 corrections by Turner, after which come 21 pages of modern notes. Part III has a text of 89 pages, uncorrected by Turner, plus 4½ pages of modern notes. Some notes from Part I are repeated and occasionally elaborated upon. The volume concludes with glossary, bibliography (rather confusingly entitled 'List of References') and seven additional reference indices on the whole volume.

As an introduction, replacing the biography in the previous volume, is a ten-page assessment of Turner's status as a scholar, aiming to give an insight into his style and contribution to botany and medicine in the sixteenth century; in such a large volume perhaps a few more pages could have been given to this discussion, which can only whet the reader's appetite. The editors' intention is that "he will be considered not so much for what he contributed as for what he was: warts and all" (p. 8). Whether they achieve this in such a short space is a moot point.

Although Turner wrote in English so that his work could be used by those without knowledge of Latin, he is frequently vague in the medical usages of plants, especially in the drug quantities to be prescribed. As the editors explain, Turner was "nearly always more vague than his principal sources" (p. 13). This will be frustrating to medical historians and also surprising since Turner was a practising physician. It is emphasized that Turner was selective in the medical conditions included in his work (pp. 13–14); thus historians must not use this *Herball* as a definitive source for sixteenth-century medical treatment. We must also appreciate that Turner wrote his *Herball* over a period of many years and, as the editors point out, he sometimes contradicts himself within it (p. 14). It must be remembered that, first and foremost, Turner was a clergyman; as Whitney Jones says: "in his duty to explore the natural causes of disease and treat the sick accordingly he must never forget that illness may also come through the direct agency of God—in whose hands the ultimate success of any remedy must always rest" (*William Turner*, Routledge, London, 1988, p. 101).

Useful alphabetical, reference indices (pp. 781–846) are included in the same order as in the previous volume. In Index I and Index IV information from Parts II and III of the *Herball* is treated separately, whereas the other indices combine such material. Consistency would have been an advantage. As with the earlier volume, I feel that for ease of reference it would have been better to re-order the indices as indicated in the review of that volume.

Included is a three-page glossary; the list given is not identical to that in the previous volume but one feels that where words are repeated but given a slightly altered meaning, this may be a case of "change for change's sake"—odd since both volumes were published in 1995 and presumably edited at approximately the same time. For example: "barbarous" in Part I is given the meaning "not classical or pure, uneloquent" but in Parts II and III "(of writers and writing) not classically pure".

Despite any minor criticisms, the representation of the whole of Turner's *Herball* for the first time in over 400 years is a commendable achievement. Turner would have been immensely proud of those members of the teaching staff of his old school in Morpeth, who have edited both volumes. This is a work which will be useful to botanists, medical historians and also to modern medical researchers, who are now returning to the study of early literature in the search for medical remedies.

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Gerhard Endress and Dimitri Gutas, A Greek and Arabic lexicon (GALex): materials for a dictionary of the mediaeval translations from Greek into Arabic, Fascicle 4, Handbook of Oriental Studies, vol. 11, Leiden and New York, E J Brill, 1997, pp. 160, Glossary, pp. 42, Nlg. 97.50, \$57.50 (90-04-10489-5).

This volume comprises the fourth fascicle of the authors' first volume of their magisterial