

Book Reviews

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