

## Book Reviews

service of radical political aims. Advances in wealth and a consumerist attitude to life had created pathological life-styles and addicted people to false medicine. Entrepreneurialism had rendered doctors complicit, finding their own gain in society's sickness. Only a few disenchanting radicals, like Beddoes, were prepared to step back and offer a scientific diagnosis, and they were not only marginalized by the conservative backlash, but fatally divided. Some saw the answer in returning knowledge, and hence power, to the people: a democratic medicine. But Beddoes, like others, had learnt to distrust the people: only the enlightened physician with an outlook formed by the natural sciences (in his case, chemistry) could be trusted to know what was best. Here Porter seems least happy with Beddoes' analysis—after all, like Beddoes, he is a committed and highly effective popularizer of his views on medicine.

Porter points the paradox, yet because it seems to him perennial, fails to offer the reader the detail of Beddoes' own life and times that might explain his deepening distrust. Indeed, the book lacks the flavour of Georgian life usually so strong in Porter's books, despite, or perhaps because of, the lengthy quotations from Beddoes. Notwithstanding Porter's enthusiasm for Beddoes as a writer and "anthropologist" of his times, this reviewer found Beddoes less stimulating than Porter—even a Porter clearly striving not to outdo his subject in eloquence. A more clinical dissection of both the intellectual and social formation of his views, and how original they were, would deepen our appreciation of Beddoes as a doctor of his own society. Nevertheless, this book supplies an essential dimension to Porter's vision both of the period he has made his own and of his own work as a medical historian.

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ALLEN G. DEBUS, *The French Paracelsians: the chemical challenge to medical and scientific tradition in early modern France*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. xvi, 247, illus., £40.00, \$59.95 (0-521-40049-X).

This book is the first since Metzger's (1923) to give an account of the chemical philosophy in early modern France and, unlike its predecessor, it is richly contextual. Professor Debus not only provides a detailed analysis of the published work of French Paracelsians, but also carefully charts the manner in which the chemical philosophy was received and assimilated by the medical establishment. The fate of the chemical philosophy in Catholic France is clearly shown to have been very different from its progress in Protestant Germany and England. While the French court, especially in the reign of Henri IV, and the Montpellier medical faculty showed a certain sympathy for Paracelsian ideas, the pivotal Paris faculty, backed up by the Paris Parlement, was relentlessly hostile until the mid seventeenth century. Even then it was the chemists' drugs, not their philosophy, which gained acceptance in the capital.

Much of the establishment's animus against Paracelsianism came from its Protestant connections. Montpellier was a largely Protestant faculty before 1685 and most French Paracelsians were Huguenots or converts such as Théophraste Renaudot. In the era of the Counter Reformation, Catholic physicians and natural philosophers carefully distanced themselves from a set of ideas tainted with heresy. Nevertheless, the French chemical philosophers were never silenced and Debus emphasizes that followers of Paracelsus and van Helmont could still be found in the first half of the eighteenth century. By then the establishment was dominated by a new medical orthodoxy, iatromechanism, whose supporters were just as hostile to iatrochemical ideas. What ultimately caused the demise of the chemical philosophy in France was the development of a new conception of the purpose of chemistry. The Paracelsian tradition emphasized that chemistry and medicine were indissolubly connected. Stahl was the founding father of a new chemical science which stressed that the domain of the chemist was the inorganic realm. Thereby the way was open for the growth of chemistry as a discrete science and the chemical revolution of the late eighteenth century.

Debus's book is clearly written, carefully researched, and entertainingly illustrated. It is an admirable addition to the existing literature on Paracelsianism, to which the author has already contributed extensively. This reviewer has only two minor criticisms. More could have been

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said about the effect of the hostile environment on the maturation of the chemical philosophy in France. How far, for instance, did figures like de Claves deliberately play down their dogmatic attachment to Paracelsus's elemental theory for prudential reasons? There is more to be said also about the emergence of the new chemistry in eighteenth-century France. Chemistry and medicine were not so radically divorced in the period after 1750 as Debus seems to believe. The foundation of chairs of chemistry in a number of French universities in the decades before the Revolution reflected the belief that chemical analysis was the key to understanding health and disease. As a result, the discoveries of Lavoisier *et al.* were immediately recognized as of profound importance for the physiology of respiration.

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ROBERT I. CURTIS, *Garum and salsamenta: production and commerce in materia medica*, Studies in Ancient Medicine, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1991, pp. xv, 226, illus., Gld. 110.00, \$57.00 (90-04-09423-7).

This is the first general study, taking in recent archaeological evidence as well as the ancient literary sources, of the uses, production and distribution of *garum* (a liquid fish essence), *salsamenta* (salted fish) and related products in the Roman world. After a brief introductory chapter, chapter II identifies the fermented fish products attested in the Roman world, and explains what they were like and how they were made with reference to modern parallels in the Far East. For me this is the most illuminating and fascinating chapter of the book. The ancient diet is a topic receiving increasing attention today, and Curtis shows that *garum*, in particular, needs serious consideration as a major source of protein for the urban poor. Chapter III on the medical uses of these fish products, which is presumably the reason for publication in this series, is inevitably short because they had no particular medical uses. A chapter on consumption and uses in general, which synthesized and elaborated Curtis's scattered comments on the dietary importance of these foodstuffs, would have been more enlightening. Chapters IV to VII, which constitute the bulk of the book, discuss the mainly archaeological evidence for the ancient production and distribution of these products. The geographical survey of the evidence is very thorough, and indeed over-thorough in that evidence for overseas distribution of fish products is usually treated twice with reference to both the exporting and importing areas. A thematic rather than geographical presentation of the data would have been more economical and clearer.

Another related general problem is Curtis's positivistic attitude to the archaeological evidence; he tends to assume that production and distribution were concentrated where masonry-based processing installations and clay transport jars (amphorae) survive, and does not make sufficient allowance for the likely use elsewhere of perishable equipment and containers such as wooden troughs and boxes. Otherwise the archaeological and literary evidence is generally interpreted with good sense. A few minor points deserve comment. The extremely long periods of operation, in two cases over two centuries (pp. 53, 55), claimed for Spanish salting establishments sound rather suspicious, and it is a pity that no plans of the Black Sea installations are given. Juvenal cannot be taken as providing serious proof for a depletion of Italian fisheries since he is just attacking the extravagance of preferring foreign imports (pp. 86, 88); the Bruttians and Campanians were peoples of south Italy, not of the Aegean (p. 117); the quarter of Arsinoe from the first century AD called "Fishmongers' Quarter" was not in fact dominated by fishmongers (pp. 136, 141); it is more likely than Curtis admits that "Spanish" fish in texts from Roman Egypt and Palestine denoted (local) fish processed in a way called "Spanish" (pp. 140, 143); there were seven obols to the drachma of Roman Egypt, and four drachmas were roughly equivalent to a denarius (p. 171, n. 49).

The book is nicely produced, well-indexed, and typographical errors are very rare though there are a number of malapropisms (e.g. p.7 "allusive", p. 35 "tauted"). Overall Curtis has