

Book Reviews

The changes brought about by those who demanded a return to the Greeks are well known, unlike the relationship of these Hellenists to their contemporaries who looked back to ancient Rome. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, these Latin humanists could be seen as progressive, for they distinguished themselves from the barbarities of the Middle Ages and, often inspired by developments in Italy, sought to recreate features of Roman Antiquity. Graf-Stuhlhofer, in his revision of his 1980 dissertation, draws attention to a neglected centre of this humanism among doctors, the University of Vienna, and to one of its leading members, Georg Tannstetter Collimitius (1482–1535), who combined the roles of Dean of the Vienna Medical Faculty and Physician to the Holy Roman Emperor.

Collimitius was a man of wide interests, a poet, a writer of elegant Latin, a doctor, a historian, a geographer, and, above all, a mathematician and astronomer. His friends included many of the leading scholars in south Germany and north Italy, notably Joachim Vadianus, and he was instrumental in furthering the interests of the humanists at both court and university. Although he edited some medieval texts, he was more devoted to those of Rome, especially Pliny, and his involvement with Proclus and Ptolemy comes through the translations of others, not through his own knowledge of Greek. Failure to appreciate the very late arrival of Greek-based medical humanism, only from 1528, leads the author into contorted explanations of Collimitius' role in a type of medical humanism that he could have known, if at all, only in the last years of his life, and that triumphed around Europe only after his death.

What this biography reveals above all is the significance of astrology in university medicine, certainly north of the Alps and perhaps even in Italy. Vienna, with a famous mathematical tradition, chronicled by Collimitius, was particularly favoured, and contemporaries remarked on Collimitius' role in extending further the alliance of astrology and medicine. Apart from a small plague tract, his sole medical publication was a lecture of 1526/7, edited by a

pupil, on the application of astrology to medicine, especially in determining critical days and times for bloodletting. His abilities as a caster of horoscopes were appreciated by the emperor, and he was often called upon, like Paracelsus later, to provide an almanac for the year to come. That German physicians in particular were heavily involved in the publication of such astrological calendars has long been known, as some of the author's footnotes show, but it is good to be reminded of the continuing importance of astrology both within and without medicine. A degree in arts provided the would-be doctor with the technical training necessary to interpret the heavens, and Galen and the Arabs gave him the justification for employing his astrological observations within medicine.

Of Collimitius' activities as Dean, little is said, not least because he himself wrote only extremely brief summaries of them in the Faculty Minute Book, but more space is given to his role in various literary academies, and to his humanist passion for poetry. Although almost forgotten by medical historians, he still claims recognition from historians of Austrian humanism, and of the University of Vienna. Although the revised thesis ranges less widely than the original, and is tailored to fit an audience already familiar with the history and institutions of the University of Vienna, it deserves notice because it describes accurately and succinctly the life of a man who represents a neglected stage in the development of renaissance medicine. If nothing else, it serves to remind the historian that there was intelligent medical life outside Italy.

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Almut Lanz, *Arzneimittel in der Therapie Friedrich Hoffmanns (1660–1742) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Medicina Consultatoria (1721–1723)*, Braunschweiger Veröffentlichungen zur Geschichte der Pharmazie und der Naturwissenschaften, Band 35, Braunschweig, Deutscher Apotheker Verlag, 1995, pp. 241, DM 45.00 (3-7692-1959-7).

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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