

Book Reviews

owners are blameworthy because of an interest in high profits rather than in healthy workers. The American Medical Association in general and white Southern physicians in particular receive their share for a dogged determination to maintain segregated medicine and a tendency to ignore problems of occupational health. Censured, too, are black physicians, many of whom also had a vested interest in a continuation of segregated medicine.

The task of uniting these two, somewhat disparate, stories—the health of white millworkers and the health of black people—was no small challenge and Beardsley is to be commended for accomplishing it in surprisingly smooth fashion. The study is lavishly documented, rests in part on oral interviews, and contains numerous photographs, as well as a useful bibliographic essay. In short, this is an important book which joins other recent studies in exploring questions of the history of Southern health since the Civil War.

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MICHAEL HUNTER and ANNABEL GREGORY (editors), *An astrological diary of the seventeenth century: Samuel Jeake of Rye, 1652–1699*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. xxiv, 297, illus. £40.00.

At one point in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, the gullible apothecary Abel Drugger entreats Subtle, the bogus *magus*, to help him discover astrologically the best and the worst days for business. He is modest in his demands and asks Subtle

But to look over, sir, my almanac,
And cross out my ill-days, that I may neither
Bargain, nor trust upon them.

(I.iii,96–8)

Now, thanks to Michael Hunter and Annabel Gregory, an actual Abel Drugger, another star-struck tradesman, has stepped down from the boards in the person of Samuel Jeake, a merchant of Rye in Sussex. Jeake, however, was no bumpkin. He was instead an intellectually inclined Nonconformist and a highly skilled astrological adept, the author of unpublished treatises on astrology who avoided the sort of crude divination that Drugger (and Nancy Reagan) craved. His diary displays an outlook—an eclectic fusion of science, magic and religion—that still appealed to many intelligent men and women in the later seventeenth century, despite the decaying prestige of astrology in fashionable circles and the jibes of satirists.

The bulk of this book is an edition of a long retrospective journal that Jeake compiled in 1694; appended to it is a fragment of a diary he kept in 1699, when he was in London, playing the stock market. Hunter and Gregory display impeccable editorial skills. The annotation is scrupulous and informative; books, people and significant events are briefly and precisely identified. They have also supplied a brilliant introduction, essential reading for historians of the period, and a series of appendices, mainly concerned with astrology, that greatly enhance the value of the book.

Medical historians will find Jeake's descriptions of his illnesses, the treatments he underwent to cure them, and his medical reading of special interest. As Hunter and Gregory observe, Jeake relates the course of the maladies he suffered with almost obsessive precision. Like many laymen of his time, he administered medicines himself, occasionally recording what he took and what effect they had on him. He was as well-informed about medicine as about astrology. He read both popular medical works and abstruse scientific treatises, including Harvey's description of the circulation of the blood. His diary therefore provides one of the fullest and most interesting pictures of illness, healing and lay medical knowledge in the seventeenth century. Jeake's astrological interests do not distort this picture; they add significantly to it. They were shared by many of Jeake's contemporaries, and they encouraged him to be a more exact clinical observer.

Finally, beyond the realm of medical history, Jeake's diary illuminates vividly the interplay of religion and magic (a theme skilfully analysed by the editors in the introduction), and it adds as well to our knowledge of contemporary commercial and financial practices, and of

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Nonconformity during its period of greatest travail. Hunter and Gregory have given us far more than the diaries of an interesting, but minor, figure; they have given us one of the best recent books on the history of medicine and astrology in early modern England and an important contribution to economic and ecclesiastical history.

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NANCY G. SIRAIISI, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: the Canon and medical teaching in Italian universities after 1500*, Princeton University Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. xii, 410, £31.40.

“To what part of philosophy does it belong?” asked the medieval teacher, introducing a new text to his class. The book reviewer often has to do likewise. Here, the expectations of the reader might coincide with one of the motives of the author in seeing this book as an extension of her earlier work on medieval Italian medicine. But in fact it belongs to a different part of philosophy. Although furnished with the same impeccable scholarship as *Taddeo* it is about the *fortuna* of a book, not of people, and this brings it closer in nature to the bibliographical side of the industry, to the establishment of a *Hippocrates, Galenus or Avicenna Latinus*. In this way the book is like a commentary to its appendices, which list editions and commentaries of the *Canon* appearing after 1500.

There is much to be said for the choice of topic. The *Canon* was a central text in medical education; it was used from 1300 to 1800; it was Arabic, and very large. On all counts, a history of its use in teaching links with most of the things we like to think about—humanism, scholasticism, philology, teaching, commentary, new anatomy and physiology, and the scientific revolution. As Siraisi points out, Renaissance medical commentary has remained largely unexamined and one goal of the book is to make such an examination “in an attempt to understand more clearly what it meant to study or to teach a text . . . by such a method”.

We would not expect from Siraisi anything less than first-rate scholarship, and we get it, in heaping measure, in an extensive apparatus. Many additions are made to other stories that were happening in the Renaissance, but the story of the *Canon* itself is, ultimately, not compelling. Partly this is due—quite properly—to the book’s bibliographical function. Partly it is due to the immensity of the subject matter: Siraisi is obliged to limit her attention largely to the first part of the first book of the *Canon* and to a small selection of commentators. And it is partly due to the fact that the life of the *Canon* was given to it only by the people who used it. To make a comparative study of such usage tells us more about the users than the used. Or to employ the *Canon* as a “case study of the extent to which scholastic medical learning of the sixteenth century was capable of assimilating or initiating change” is to give it something of an artificial life, maintained by ancient authority and traditions. I think it is partly this, as well as the magnitude of the field, that contributes to the difficulty Siraisi feels in “weighing the significance of the material examined in the previous pages”.

But then this is not intended to be a book full of answers but of resources and questions. Taken as that “part of philosophy” the book will become indispensable.

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LUCINDA McCRAY BEIER, *Sufferers and healers. The experience of illness in seventeenth-century England*, London and New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, 8vo, pp. x, 314, £30.00.

Lucinda Beier’s investigations into a few casebooks and diaries from the seventeenth century provides solid ammunition for those who seek a history of medicine from a non-medical standpoint. Yet, as she herself admits, it is doubtful if her material is broad enough to admit more than the most banal of generalizations or to mark off that century from any between the twelfth and twentieth. Even Paracelsian remedies, as Gerhard Eis showed, owe much to “folk”