

Book Reviews

Folie et dératisation à la Renaissance, Brussels, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1976, 8vo, pp. 234, illus., 525 FB. (paperback).

An international symposium was held in November 1973 at the Institut pour l'Étude de la Renaissance et de l'Humanisme in Brussels. The subject was the title of this book, which contains fourteen papers presented at the meetings, together with the discussion they generated; nine are in French and five in English. They cover a wide range of topics related to many aspects of the Renaissance: these include folly in non-religious music; Bosch and Bruegel on human folly: the fool in fifteenth-century France; burlesque therapy, mostly involving attacks on the so-called *pierres de tête*; folly and society in the comic theatre of the Pleiade; the ship of fools; madness and demonology in the sixteenth century; Rabelais; Don Quixote and melancholy; metaphors and evaluation of madness in sixteenth-century Italian literature; the debate between Wier, Bodin, and Scot on melancholia and witchcraft.

Each essay is a careful and fully documented study written by an expert in his field, and some are elegantly and profusely illustrated. Together they provide an important contribution to the history of psychiatry, in a period that is of great importance, yet exceedingly complex and difficult to handle adequately. This book can be warmly recommended.

HERBERT STANLEY MATSEN, *Alessandro Achillini (1463–1512) and his doctrine of 'Universals' and 'Transcendentals'. A study in Renaissance Ockhamism*, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, (London, Associated University Presses), 1974, 8vo, pp. 332, £11.00 (\$27.50).

Achillini of Bologna and Padua was both philosopher and physician, and concerning the former he was an interpreter and transmitter of Aristotelian learning, using the medieval technique of analysing philosophical problems in isolation from each other as in the academic disputation. He was mainly responsible for a revival of interest in William of Ockham at Bologna, and is considered to have played a significant role in the transition from medieval to modern thought.

This excellent book is the author's doctoral dissertation, prepared under Professor Paul Kristeller and now revised. Essentially, it adds to the growing number of studies on Renaissance Aristotelianism, and two problems from Achillini's writings, "universals" and "transcendentals", are selected for treatment. Its value derives from its handling of broad implications for the history of thought as well as providing detailed and reliable information on its specific subject. There is a chapter on Achillini's life and works, and it is to be noted that his status in the medical profession was high. Brief reference is made to his medical writings, but the author is not fully aware of the relevant literature. The next task will be to relate Achillini's medicine to his philosophy and to Renaissance thought in general.

RICHARD CAVENDISH, *A history of magic*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977, 4to, pp. [vi], 180, illus., £4.95.

The interest of the public in the occult continues unabated and this book is geared to serve it. The author is a leading authority on magic and has published widely on

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it. He now provides a comprehensive survey of it in the West, from prehistory up to the present. Its close associations with religion, art, medicine, science, folklore, astrology, and daily life make this a complex but fascinating study. In addition to the contemporary concern with magic and its associates, the early Christian era and the Renaissance were also periods of deep commitment. The factors and individuals influencing the development of magic are exceedingly diverse, and for an adequate analysis of them the writer must have wide learning and an unbiased approach. Mr. Cavendish certainly has researched his subject carefully, but seems to have relied wholly on sources in English. Moreover, his deep involvement with magic does not allow for an entirely objective view of it. Nor can the publishers' statement that he is ". . . providing for the first time a clear, accurate account of a complex and fascinating subject . . ." be wholly accepted.

JEAN GIMPEL, *The medieval machine. The Industrial Revolution of the Middle Ages*, London, Gollancz, 1977, 8vo, pp. xi, 274, illus., £7.50.

The sub-title of this book may seem to some to be contradictory in view of the belief that the Middle Ages saw little or no advancement in technology and certainly no revolution. The author, however, claims that there was a technological boom in Western Europe between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Inventions brought about an agricultural revolution, new mining techniques uncovered the mineral wealth of Europe, machines, including the mechanical clock, and building projects changed the life of communities. In keeping with the experiences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there were deleterious effects such as pollution, an increasing population, and other social problems. However, this period of dynamism declined and led eventually to the more traditionally accepted appearances and activities of the Middle Ages.

This thesis is by no means new or "a challenging theme" as the dust-jacket proclaims, and Haskins' Renaissance of the twelfth century is well known; however, more evidence supporting it is presented here. The text is well written and illustrated and there is a certain amount of documentation. It is of course essential to avoid inflicting modern interpretations on historical material and some may claim that the present author is guilty of faulty historiography.

The Anglo-Dutch contribution to the civilization of early modern society. An Anglo-Netherlands Symposium, London, 27 and 28 June 1974, London, Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1976, 4to, pp. 72, illus., £2.75 (paperback).

Two of the four essays presented here deal with the history of science: R. Hooykaas on 'The reception of Copernicanism in England and the Netherlands', and A. R. Hall on 'Huygens and Newton'. Both deal with the physical sciences, and are masterpieces which deserve a wide audience; the reader does not need any detailed scientific or mathematical knowledge to understand them. The medical connexions between Britain and Holland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were of great importance, but they should be seen in wide perspective, some of which will be provided by this book.