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first published in 1657 by James Cooke (other editions in 1679 and 1683) under the title *Select observations on English bodies of eminent persons in desperate diseases*, Hall's posthumous casebook gives a rare glimpse into the social interrelations that helped constitute a country doctor's clientele. But more important, it provides a feel for the day-to-day practice of seventeenth-century humoral medicine.

Lane's identification of most of Hall's patients reveals the interlocking social and blood relations that knitted Hall's practice together. From these selective notes, which cover the years 1611–35, we learn that Hall's clients were primarily female gentry, although he counted among his patients numerous male aristocrats with extensive households, including Lord Northampton, Sir Thomas Puckering, and Baron Compton. His most famous patient, barring his wife Susanna (who was Shakespeare's eldest daughter), was the poet Michael Drayton, who required medical services when he was visiting the home of his patron and one of Hall's patients, Lady Anne Rainsford. Hall thus came upon Drayton in the way in which he came upon many of his patients—through their blood, marital, service, or neighbourly connections to established families of the aristocracy or gentry for whom he already provided medical services. When Hall treated lower-class patients they tended to be retainers of such households. Puritan in his sympathies, Hall did not discriminate on religious grounds, many of his patients being members of prominent Catholic families.

Hall's medical protocols of purging, humoral alteration, restoration, and sparing venesection are accompanied here by Melvin Earles's invaluable medical commentary and pharmaceutical glosses. Except in pregnant women, Hall usually started treatment with purging. The sheer number of medicaments, let alone their far-flung provenance, is at times dazzling, including Asiatic musk, rubies and emeralds, spider-webs and earthworms, sealed earth or clays from Armenia, East Indian resins, hartshorn, ambergris, frog-spawn, Celtic spikenard, and scorpion oil. But the dazzle wears off as these unfamiliar drugs are

prescribed repeatedly by Hall in accordance with particular medical regimens: hartshorn for fever, precious stones as cordials, sealed earth for leucorrhoea, frog-spawn for burns, and scurvy grass for scurvy.

Given the thoroughness of this edition, one cannot but help but wonder why the book's first editor, James Cooke, is only cursorily mentioned, for it is to Cooke that we must look for explanations as to why Hall's work was first published. As Lane reports, Cooke himself claimed merely that Hall meant for his notes to be published posthumously. However, Cooke published the work during a period of growth in vernacular medical publishing which Charles Webster attributes to reformers who were intent on spreading medical knowledge among those who could not afford medical services. We catch a glimpse of this reforming impulse in Cooke's preface to the second edition (included here) where he describes himself as a pharmaceutical advisor to Lord Brook and informs us that Brook charged him to offer the medical advice of Brook's own physicians to the Lord's sick neighbours. Cooke hopes that in publishing these prescriptions he is serving the public while doing "no wrong" to these well-paid physicians. In the spirit of the tradition of great households offering medical assistance to their poorer neighbours, Cooke offers up a literary analogue by translating and publishing the Latin prescriptions of the physicians of eminent persons for the benefit of the less fortunate. Except for this lack of attention to Cooke, Lane's edition of Hall's casebook is a fine addition to the libraries of historians of early modern medical practice.

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Stanton J Linden, *Darke hieroglyphicks: alchemy in English literature from Chaucer to the Restoration*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1996, pp. ix, 373, illus., \$45.00 (0-8131-1968-5).

The period between the late fourteenth and late seventeenth centuries marked the height of

interest in alchemy, and the occult and hermetic arts in England. It was also, as Stanton J Linden points out, the time when literature in the English language emerged from obscurity to become one of the most prolific and prominent in western Europe. The author employs this historical coincidence as the starting point of a comprehensive survey of allusions and references to alchemy in a range of literary works spanning the three centuries from Chaucer's *Canon's yeoman's tale* to Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*.

Darke hieroglyphicks traces the history of alchemy in English literature as a pendulum movement from disapprobation and satire in the early period, to its central importance in the metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century, and finally its return to disregard after the Restoration. The introductory chapter provides an admirably concise and clear overview of the vast material on the subject of ancient and medieval alchemy, and serves to set up some of the central theories, traditions and themes which influenced literary depictions throughout the time frame covered in the study.

The literary study then begins with the tradition of alchemical satire in Chaucer's *Canon's yeoman's tale*, Langland's *Piers Plowman* and Gower's *Confessio amantis*. It continues with Erasmus' *Ecomium moriae* and *Colloquies*, the pamphlets of Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, and Thomas Dekker, and poems of Joseph Hall and Thomas Lodge. Alchemical satire perpetuates certain motifs, such as the poverty, treachery, avarice, self-deception, moral depravity and intellectual perversion of both alchemists and their dupes. This nearly universal condemnation reaches its peak in the work of Ben Jonson, whose play *The alchemist* and masque *Mercury vindicated from the alchemists at court* demonstrate his considerable knowledge of and familiarity with alchemical concepts and techniques, and treat the moral debates around alchemy in a sophisticated manner.

A note of ambivalence and complexity enters early in the seventeenth century with Francis Bacon's writings on the subject of alchemy, a science which he condemned for its

improper foundation on belief and reliance on authority. Notwithstanding, however, Bacon held that with methodological reform and reform of the obscurantist language in which alchemists wrote their treatises, alchemy could become a valid science.

The central chapters of the book deal with the alchemical images and metaphors in the poetry of Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Milton, which strongly reflect the allegorical and eschatological tendencies in contemporary alchemical texts. In Donne's sonnets and verse letters, motifs of alchemical transmutation are employed to suggest spiritual growth, purification, and the regenerative powers of love, or of God's grace. Henry Vaughan, whose work was strongly influenced by his own and his brother Thomas's interests in the occult and in Paracelsianism, reveals a preoccupation with ideas of motion, flux and process, which are frequently expressed through use of images from hermeticism or alchemy. The much briefer sections on Herbert and Milton in these chapters reveal the lingering association of alchemy with falsity and artificiality, as well as its sublime connections to notions of transformation and divine immanence in all areas of creation.

Linden closes his history of alchemy in English literature by describing its denigration during the final decades of the seventeenth century. Alchemy, as other occult arts, was linked by proponents of the New Science to irrationality, enthusiasm and superstition. Its allegorical style, esoteric language and the closed, secretive mode of transmitting knowledge were unfavourably contrasted with the ideal of "open" communication in the exact sciences, which depended upon the collection, analysis and revision of knowledge passed through many people. Such views of alchemy are reflected in the satirical verses of Samuel Butler.

Throughout this book, Linden offers a rich range of material from medieval and Renaissance alchemical texts as a means of illuminating allusions to the art in the literature; he also succeeds to a great extent in contextualizing literary depictions of alchemy

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within the broader scientific, theological and philosophical debates around hermeticism, witchcraft, religion and chemical medicine in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Because of the range of literary works covered, the narrative tends at times—particularly in the chapter on the sixteenth century—to be simply descriptive rather than offering in-depth analysis of the texts. Literary examples are sometimes explicated by reference to the underlying alchemical theories, with less attention paid to the function of such passages in the larger aims of the work. Occasionally, as

in the sections dealing with Donne's treatment of alchemical themes, the style of analysis becomes overly schematic, employing categories or divisions which seem incongruous or laboured. And at several points, notably in the chapter on Vaughan, the author fails sufficiently to distinguish alchemical from hermetic or occult influences in the literature. This remains, however, a scholarly and informative study on a relatively little-explored theme in literary texts of this period.

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