

Book Reviews

producing “whole” men, and always remained true in spirit to his original Franciscan vocation to communicate truth in a joyous and jocular style.

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ENID RHODES PESCHEL (editor), *Medicine and literature*, New York, Neale Watson Academic Publications, 1980, 8vo, pp. xix, 204, \$15.00.

This collection of essays by American academics ranges widely over European and American literature of the first and second ranks from the Renaissance to the present day, touching on most conceivable connexions between medicine and literature; the doctor as author and as character; medicine as a tool of the biographer and the literary critic; the use of medical metaphors and symbols to convey sociological, psychological, and metaphysical insights or messages; even the role of literature in medical education. There are probably few totally original contributions to literary criticism, and one or two essays may appear naïve or pretentiously abstract, but they have the merit of being comprehensible without first-hand knowledge of the authors discussed, and together they form a stimulating exercise in thematic comparative literature. The only medico-literary phenomena left largely untreated are the doctor as a figure of fun or sensational horror: the examples chosen invariably show him in a pathetic, tragic, or heroic light, and the emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reinforces the tendency for doctors to appear in a quasi-sacerdotal role in relation to the new creed of social humanism, with harsh judgement passed on the inadequate or renegade. The same pervasive earnestness is evident in the collection's propagandist undertone, its call for literary studies to humanize clinical practice, and for medical men to turn to creative writing not only to establish human contact between their profession and the laity but also to rescue literature from incipient verbal nihilism with a dose of reality. This vision of literature as an extension of or substitute for medical practice has a distinguished sponsor as far back as Rabelais, but like the non-evaluative approach of most essays, it raises, without answering them, questions about the interrelationships of creativity and experience, of artistic and scientific truth, of conviction and communication.

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LUTZ RICHTER-BERNBURG, *Persian medical manuscripts at the University of California, Los Angeles. A descriptive catalogue*, Malibu, Calif., 1978, 4to, pp. xxii, 297, [no price stated].

The medical manuscript collection of University of California, Los Angeles, consisting of 132 Persian and two Arabic titles, although rather small, is of a remarkable quality which should appeal to anyone interested in the history of Persian medicine. Its historical value is due to the fact that the collection covers almost all the classical period during which the Persian language was used to write on medical subjects (beginning of the fifth to the end of the thirteenth century A.H.), and includes the