

connected with “Christian esoteric tradition of symbolism relating to the significance of alpha and omega”. Both of these meanings – Aries as well as omega – have their historical basis in Dee’s text “Arietis nota mystica ex duobus semicirculis in communi puncto connexis constituta” are Dee’s words to describe the sigil (fol.13v, in C. H. Josten’s edition and translation, *Ambix*, 1964, 12: 103, 161). Elsewhere (ed. Josten, p. 192) it is called the figure “mystically” inverted – Aries standing on its head. Aries – the ram – has its “hermetic” significance, for it is traditionally and constantly depicted as the the companion of Hermes. There is also a connexion with fire – together with Leo and Sagittarius, Aries forms a “fiery triplicity” (Josten, p. 103) and fire is the basic driving-force in alchemistic and hence Dee’s own practice. Equally, the omega fits as “small vessel full of mysteries” into Dee’s scheme (Josten, pp. 103, 197). Finally, there is the connexion of omega with immortal Adam (p. 198) and the symbol as a whole with the number eight (octonary, ogdoas, p. 156) – it recalls the Eightness of Adam, the Gnostic tradition which made Adam to consist of eight parts (W. Pagel and M. Winder, ‘The higher elements and prime matter in Renaissance naturalism and in Paracelsus’, *Ambix*, 1974, 21: 120; and ‘Eightness of Adam’, *ibid.*, 1969, 14: 119–139). Our detailed story may serve as witness of the thoroughness and skill of the author in covering all its points in the narrow compass of dictionary entries.

Obviously, then, we are dealing with a major work of reference indispensable for scholars in many fields, notably including the student of early chemiatic-medical texts. It falls into two main parts, first the Lexicon proper with its 1500 subject-entries and pictographs in alphabetical order, and second an index of sigils for their identification by counting strokes (1–5) and recognizing curvings and additional circles. This task of identification is at least time-consuming, in view of overwhelming numbers of sigils here listed – the answer can in many cases be elicited with much greater ease by consulting shorter lists such as those of Gessmann, W. Schneider (1962), and Luedy (1928), or even the tables appended to Blancard’s *Lexicon medicum*, or the second volume of Partington’s *History of chemistry*, or G. Testi, *Dizionario di alchimie e di chimica antiquaria* (Rome, 1950; see also D. Cavanna and S. Rocchietta, ‘The language of chemical symbols’, *Panminerva medica*, 1961, 3: 28–32). Moreover, the counting of strokes and circles is not always unequivocal. Part 1 and 2 are separated by the bibliography; there are several appendices. The book is a bulky quarto with the text reproduced in small typescript – obviously to keep it in manageable proportions and available at a price reasonable in view of its magnitude, significance, and exhaustiveness. It remains to say a word of admiration for the devotion and singleness of purpose with which the author, a historian of esoteric art and graphics, has so successfully achieved the codification and historical presentation of nine thousand graphic symbols of the hermetic, astrological, alchemical, and chemiatic tradition from the ancient Chinese, Greek, and Arabic lore up to quite modern times.

Walter Pagel

STEPHEN SKINNER, *Terrestrial astrology: divination by geomancy*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, 8vo, pp. xiii, 293, illus., £15.00.

This book is concerned with divinatory geomancy, a technique using sixteen figures composed of dots to foretell the future. This was originally done by marking the earth (*geo-*), usually sand, at random with a stick, or throwing pebbles, nuts, or seeds haphazardly, and later by writing lines of dots on to paper. The greater part of the book deals with the history of this art, and there are notes and a bibliography. About seventy pages explain the practice which is based on principles similar to those of the Chinese I Ching. The Greek sources mean by “geomancy” observing cracks in the earth rather than creating chance patterns oneself. Dismissing Persia, India, and Palestine with good reasons as the country of origin, the author concludes that the Arabs were the first to practise the art. From Arabia it spread through North Africa to the Sahara; second, via the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean to Madagascar; third, via Muslim Spain to the rest of Europe. As each of the sixteen figures, apart from a life circumstance like loss, good fortune, or prison, refers also to a part of the body, geomantic talismans against diseases

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can be found in Arabic manuscripts. Robert Fludd called geomancy “terrestrial astrology” and, accordingly, some authors fit geomantic charts into astrological patterns, thereby deliberately abandoning some of the traditional correspondencies in astrology. The appendix gives the attributions by various authors, and even more importantly, the names and significations of the sixteen figures in Arabic traditions, Kordofan (Sudan), Greek (derived from Arabic), Latin such as the twelfth-century Hugh of Santafalla, Hebrew, Berber, three Madagascar regions, and six West African regions.

The chief merit of this book is that it has brought together versions of geomancy described in various eastern and western cultures, studied separately but never compared before. It is a pity that the Wellcome manuscripts 10 (Gerard of Cremona’s ‘Geomantiae astronomicae’ in Agrippa von Nettesheim’s works), 394 (Phillippus von Schlammersdorf Knodius), and 531 (‘Geomantia edita a magistro Gerardo Cremonensi’) have not been used and are not listed. All in all, this is a very informative book on a little-known subject.

Marianne Winder
Wellcome Institute

K.-D. FISCHER (editor), *Pelagonius, Ars Veterinaria*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1980, 8vo, pp. xlv, 203, M60.00.

Pelagonius the horse-doctor is not the most approachable of ancient medical authors, but Dr. Fischer, by his excellent edition with its full indexes and commentary, has made his remedies more accessible and comprehensible. The text, which is based on a single MS., supplemented by fragments in Latin and (a rare honour for a Latin writer) Greek, is full of strange spellings, and the editor has rightly refrained from precipitate classicizing emendation. The commentary, written in a clearer and wittier Latin, is particularly good on the identification of drugs and diseases. Printing errors are almost non-existent: one strangely occurs in the inserted *corrigenda* slip.

I subjoin a few points of doubt and criticism. § 5, 6: more is needed on these high officials of the late fourth century A.D. with a passion for horses (and also on Falerius, Festianus, and Emeritus the mule-doctor). § 77, 460: read “viatorium”, despite the note, for § 461 “*aliud viatorium*” needs a precedent. § 118: delete “*faciliorque . . . asperseris*” as a gloss? § 121ff.: a long list of chants and charms: with this folk medicine, cf. also the occasional specification of marble mortars (e.g. § 71). § 134: add after “est”, from the alternative version preserved in the MS. at § 138 “[*hos carachtheres facies in*] *cartha pura [et] combures*”. Two striking passages of more general interest need more comment: § 163: what are the “*curules equi*” (not in TTL)? and how are their chariots fixed and driven? by a collar strapped round the neck? § 397: “*lethe daemonis*” implies that the author sees some evil spirit at work in horses that behave wildly.

Vivian Nutton
Wellcome Institute

R. J. Ch. V. TER LAAGE, *Jacques Moleschott, een markante persoonlijkheid in de negentiende eeuwse fysiologie?* [with English summary: *Jacques Moleschott, a striking figure in nineteenth-century physiology?*], De Bilt, [the author], 1981, 8vo, pp. 363, illus., Dfl. 40.00 (paperback). (Available from the author, 55 Waterweg, De Bilt, The Netherlands.)

Jacques Moleschott (1822–1893) was one of the well-known materialistic physiologists in Germany between 1844 and 1856, especially popular for his *Kreislauf des Lebens* (1852). He wrote an autobiography for his friends which was published in 1883 and translated into Italian by his daughter Elza Patrizi in 1902. The Patrizi family gave Moleschott’s correspondence to the Archiginnasio in Bologna, but unfortunately the collection was damaged during the second world war. What was left was in considerable disorder. Miss ter Laage studied these papers and chose some letters, which she could identify for her publication. Then she prepared a study of Moleschott’s life and work mainly based on his autobiography.

The result is a very charming, well-illustrated booklet, rather more a portrait of Moleschott as scientist and philosopher than a scientific evaluation of his contributions to nineteenth-