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The Physician in Shakespeare and Jonson

Eleanor W. Kahn

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THE PHYSICIAN IN SHAKESPEARE AND JONSON

by

Eleanor Wolf Kahn

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

English Department

Division of Graduate Instruction
Butler University
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1940
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTIONS REFLECTED IN</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAKESPEARE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CARICATURES OF PHYSICIANS</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. EDEMUS, A PORTRAIT BY JONSON</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SHAKESPEARE'S PORTRAITS OF PHYSICIANS</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The science of medicine is probably linked more closely to the daily life of man than any other science. The sheer necessity of healing brought forth the first remedies, and whether the art of healing was practiced by the wise-woman, the priest, or the medicine man, the practitioners of this art were undoubtedly a very important factor in the lives of their contemporaries. It is therefore very interesting to note the differences in the attitudes of men towards the medical practitioner at given periods in his history. Today, the physician is not only respected, but there is somewhat of a tendency to glorify the profession. But the physician has travelled a long, hard, path in order to earn this respect.

It is my endeavor to turn back the pages of history to the period of the Renaissance in England and thus partially reconstruct the attitudes of society towards the medical man of that day. In doing this I shall not
concern myself to a great extent with medical histories, but with some of the popular literature of the period. This choice is made because medicine is composed of two sources of knowledge: the accumulated scientific information, which is the heritage of the physician, and the popular medical lore which has been handed down, chiefly by word of mouth, from generation to generation to the layman. There is necessarily an intermingling of the two streams of thought, and it is the province of the literary man to mingle science with apocrypha, and give us, more clearly than we get from historical facts, a picture of medicine in relation to the times.

Elizabethan England offers an excellent opportunity for social study, particularly from the drama of the age because the Elizabethan audience delighted in seeing itself portrayed on the stage, and thus the theatre served not only as an artistic outlet for the dramatist, but as a mirror which reflected the customs, interests, and attitudes of the period. Thus the dramatist wrote in an idiom which was familiar to his audience, and while it is true that the finest literature transcends its particular period and locale, rising to a universality which explains its duration, it is also true that to appreciate and understand the dramatist more fully, it is important to under-
stand the age in which he wrote.

In 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by the Turk, Christianity mourned the fall of the Roman Empire in the East. But the fleeing and scattering Greek scholars disseminated throughout the Western world the original texts of the classics, as well as the ancient culture. The dissemination of that culture and those texts was the cultural factor which served as an impetus for the Renaissance. Similarly, after the sack of Mainz, in 1462, the German printers took with them the knowledge of Gutenberg's press, which was of inestimable value in aiding the re-birth of culture and science.

Throughout the Middle Ages the ancients had been obscured by too many translators of translators of translators, and the commentators further aided the translators in leaving clarity behind. Arabism, which had briefly aroused Europe from a stupor, in the 12th century, had fallen into a stupor itself. In the early Renaissance there was a rebellion against Arabism. Galen, who had furnished a synthesis of Greek medical tradition, had been orientalized. The great Avicenna, the Arab philosopher and physician, was still defended by the conservatives against the radicals who fought for Galen in the newly discovered original texts, rather than the oriental version.
The Greeks won out and the Renaissance passion for the classics has rich results. But in medicine the victory of the ancients brought harm as well as good. The struggle between the Greek and the Oriental was replaced by the struggle between the ancient and the modern. The interest in Aristotle and Galen became a rock of conservatism on which medical orthodoxy stood. The Galenical system had been modified throughout the middle ages, embellished with the confusion of the long era, re-discovered in a form of clarity by the Renaissance, and after so many centuries the strength of this tradition amounted almost to a religious force. To disagree was heresy.

But the Renaissance was destined to go beyond the ancients on which it fed. Medievalism, with its ascetic negation of the human body, had made anatomical investigation impossible. The reaction away from asceticism towards materialism was necessary before medical progress was possible. It is interesting to note that the diverse fields of art and medicine both felt the great impact of scientific anatomical study, as it changed the methods of the artists inasmuch as anatomy became a tool, and had a salutary effect on the medical thought of the time. While the conservatives were worshipping Galen, who represented the traditional in medicine, other more daring souls were beginning to question
the tradition. Leonardo da Vinci and Vesalius refused to accept the acknowledged authorities and turned to the scalpel to learn from nature instead of from books. In their infinite contributions to anatomical study they were the great pioneers on the border that separated medievalism and modern science.

The entire age was one of contradictions. Alongside the searching spirit which characterized the age one finds the stultifying vestiges of medievalism. The popular literature of the day reflects the mixture of ancient and modern opinion. The multitude of medical references show the widespread interest in medicine at that time. But the ancient opinion often has the advantage of having arrived first, and is fortified by the very fact of its age. Thus we find the critical spirit questioning the authority of the ancients, and the credulous spirit criticizing the opinion of the moderns.
CHAPTER II

PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTIONS REFLECTED IN SHAKESPEARE

The plays of Shakespeare reflect to a very great extent the popular conceptions of medicine and the closely related pseudo-sciences. Many of the ideas found in the plays are to be found more fully developed in Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, and an examination of this work is therefore pertinent. Although Burton's book did not appear until five years after the death of Shakespeare, it is of inestimable value in the understanding of Shakespeare's era as it is an excellent expression of the medieval notions which were the heritage of the Renaissance. Robert Burton was not a physician and this fact lends emphasis to his importance in this study. Not being of the medical profession, he goes only as far as a layman's understanding of the subject of physiology will permit. Even a superficial perusal of his work is convincing that his information on the subject is vast. In his attempt to anatomize melancholy, he gives much information about physiology and medicine, and we have in this work a popular codification of the medical concepts of his day.
The fact that a layman could write this tome of physiological and medical information suggests that the general knowledge of medicine was more widely disseminated in that period than in the present. And when we realize that Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* was a best seller, the hypothesis is strengthened. This pseudo-scientific work went through six editions during the author's life, which would indicate a remarkably large audience. The Advertisement to the edition of 1651 states, concerning its popularity,

...At the time of its original publication it obtained a great celebrity, which continued more than half a century. During that period few books were more read, or more deservedly applauded. It was the delight of the learned, the solace of the indolent, and the refuge of the uninformed. It passed through at least eight editions, by which the bookseller, as Wood records, got an estate; and, notwithstanding the objection sometimes opposed against it, of a quaint style, and too great an accumulation of authorities, the fascination of its wit, fancy, and sterling sense, have borne down all censures, and extorted praise from the first writers in the English language ... 1

The *Anatomy of Melancholy* appeared in 1621 under the pseudonym of Democritus Junior. The name was derived from a character of Hippocrates, who was a melancholy hermit, well versed in medicine. In addition to the study of

1. The *Anatomy of Melancholy*, by Democritus Jr., J.W. Moore, 1856, (IV)
melancholy, which was a subject of importance in the author's day, and ranged from temporary unhappiness to madness, Burton discusses religion, astrology, diet, witches and devils, beauty, love, diseases and their cures, and what is very important in Elizabethan physiology, the humours. A humour, in the physiological sense is "a liquid or fluent part of the body."¹ The humours are analogous to the prima materia of Aristotle, blood being analogous to air, phlegm to water, choler to fire, and melancholy to earth. The disposition of man, in its physical, mental and spiritual aspects, was supposedly determined chiefly by the balance of the humours. Illnesses arose from improper proportions of the various humours, for which there were many cures, many of them dietary.

Burton includes the spirits in the humours and says of them, "...of these spirits there be three kinds, according to the three principal parts, brain, heart, liver; natural vital, animal...."² The brain was considered the seat of the animal spirits, from where they were diffused by the nerves and gave sense and motion to the sub-

¹ Ibid., Partition I, Section I, Member 2, subsection 2
² Ibid., Partition I, Section I, Member 2, subsection 2
ordinate members: the vital spirits were believed to be transported from the heart by the arteries to all other parts, and "...the natural are begotten in the liver and thence dispersed through the veins, to perform those natural actions...."\(^1\) The liver was also considered the blood-forming organ.

Thus Burton expresses the physiological concepts which were current in his day, and which were based upon the Galenic tradition in medicine. In turning from the pseudo-scientific to the literary expression we find that Shakespeare frequently reflects the same physiological ideas, based upon ancient, rather than modern medical science. He places emphasis, as does Burton, upon the three organs of the body which were considered of primary importance in his time. In \textit{Twelfth Night} he refers to the "...liver, brain and heart, these sovereign thrones...."\(^2\), and in \textit{Cymbeline}, when complimenting the courage of three men, he calls them, "...The liver, heart, and brain of Britain, by whom I grant she lives...."\(^3\) The foundation of the figure of speech is again recognized in "...The kingly-crowned heads.... the counsellor heart,..."\(^4\)

1. Ibid., Part 1, Sec. 1, Mem. 2, Subs. 2.
2. \textit{Twelfth Night}, Act 1, Scene 1
3. \textit{Cymbeline}, Act V, Scene 5
4. \textit{Coriolanus}, Act 1, Scene 1
Many Shakespearean critics have a tendency to endow Shakespeare not only with genius, but with an almost prophetic knowledge where medicine is concerned. Many of the exuberances seem to come from the interpretation of Shakespeare's comments on the movement of the blood, and some critics believe that he anticipated Harvey's discovery of the blood circulation. Although Harvey was a contemporary of Shakespeare, it was not until shortly before Shakespeare's death that Harvey gave the course of lectures in which he first mentioned his discovery of the circulation of the blood. The results of this discovery were not made public until twelve years later. Thus, The Anatomy of Melancholy was published before Harvey's discovery was publicized, and it accordingly shows the ideas based upon the ancients, as does Shakespeare. Galen had described the motion of the blood as dilating and contracting, thus giving the blood an ebb and flow movement, rather than a circulation. Even the 16th century anatomist Vesalius taught that the veins expanded and contracted, causing an ebb and tide movement. Shakespeare expresses the current, and not the Harveian idea of the action of the blood when he says,

1. On the Natural Faculties, Galen, Chapter 15, Book III.
The tide of blood in me,
Hath proudly flowed in vanity till now.
Now doth it burn and ebb back to the sea.

Another Elizabethan idea which was derived from Galen was that the venous blood entered the left ventricle of the heart, directly and drop by drop, rather than in a flow. Shakespeare reiterates this idea when Brutus says,

You are my true and honourable wife,
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart.

Dr. Herman Pomeranz says in his recent book concerning medicine in the Shakespearean plays, "Shakespeare, before any scientist of his day, realized that the blood stream also carried nutriments to the organs of the body." As illustrative of this he quotes,

Angelo.  O heavens!
Why does my blood thus muster to my heart,
Making both it unable for itself
And dispossession all my other parts
Of necessary fitness?

How does Dr. Pomeranz explain this quotation from Burton?

1. King Henry IV, Part II, Act V, Scene 2
2. Julius Caesar, Act II, Scene 1
3. Medicine in the Shakespearean Plays and Dickens' Doctors by Herman Pomeranz, 1936, p. 203.
"Blood is a hot, sweet, temperate, red humour... whose office it is to nourish the whole body...."¹ I grant Dr. Pomeranz that this work of Burton's was published five years after the death of Shakespeare, but Burton can surely be considered "of his day". And Robert Burton was not even a scientist.

Shakespeare uses blood imagery very frequently and while he was obviously well versed in the science of his day, it should be emphasized that it was merely the science of his day, and not prophetic of later science. Shakespeare does refer to the flow of blood, which coincides with modern medical beliefs, and upon this fact rests some of the belief that Shakespeare anticipated the circulatory discovery. However, Shakespeare merely gives an excellent picture of Elizabethan physiology in the analogy of Menenius, when he has the belly answer,

"...True is it, my incorporate friends,"quoth he "That I receive the general food at first Which you do live upon; and fit it is, Because I am the storehouse and the shop Of the whole body. But if you do remember I send it through the rivers of your blood Even to the court, the heart, to th' seat o' th' brain, And, through the cranks and offices of man, The strongest nerves and small inferior veins

¹ The Anatomy of Melancholy, Part II, Sec.1, Mem.2, Subs.2.
From me receive that natural competency
Whereby they live...".

In the above passage we see the current ideas of the time concerning the function of the heart and the activity of the blood, except for the reference to "the rivers of your blood." Shakespeare voices the Elizabethan idea more truly when he refers to the ruddy drops which visit the heart. However, the expression "rivers of your blood" should not warrant the assumption that Shakespeare anticipated Harvey's discovery, and to assume as much, is to mistake poesy for science. This expression is one of the many metaphorical usages which should be understood as poetry, rather than explained as science. Moreover, some of Shakespeare's contemporaries have used similar expressions without being endowed with unusual scientific acumen.

In Shakespeare's day the liver was considered the seat of courage and cowardice since it was believed to be the blood-forming organ. Thus in King Henry V, the boy says of Bardolph, "... he is white-livered and red-faced;

1. Coriolanus, Act. 1, Scene 1
2. Dekker refers to "...all those rivers that fed her veins with warm and crimson streams..." The Honest Whore, Act 1, Scene 1. In The Faithful Shepherdess, Act 1, Scene 3, by Beaumont and Fletcher "Of lusty bloods I should pick out these things, Whose veins, like a dull river,..."
by the means whereof 'a faces it out, but fights not.'¹

The Elizabethans also connected the liver with love, as is reflected in Much Ado About Nothing when the friar says of Claudio, "....Then shall he mourn (if ever love had interest in his liver.)² Since the liver was the heat generating organ, it was often considered the source of love.

Among the vestiges of the middle ages which were carried over into the Renaissance to retard medical science, one of the most important is the emphasis placed upon astrology. Belief in the connection of the heavenly bodies and the life of man is very important in the history of mankind. Judicial astrology occupies itself with the influence of the heavenly bodies on human destiny. During the middle ages the scope of astrology was enlarged to include connections with all the sciences. Plants, drugs, animal life, and even colours were associated with the planets and placed under their sphere of influence. The study of the fate of the individual as determined by the heavens led to the association of certain parts of the human body with certain planets. Thus diseases and organic

disturbances were ascribed to the influence of the heavenly bodies and this belief was sufficiently widespread to necessitate the inclusion of the study of astrology in the curriculum of the physician. Although the importance of the subject was on the wane by the time of the Renaissance, it was still of sufficient magnitude to impede medical progress.

Richard Harvey, in telling what to consider in phlebotomy, writes,

We must next note which of the four stages of life the man occupies; for the blood of a youth must be let between the change and the first quarter of the moon, that of a "manly or middle" aged man from the first quarter to the full... the moon in Taurus, Gemini, Leo, Virgo, or Capricorn, for example, is a very bad time for our purpose; so likewise, is the time when the sun, moon, or lord of the horoscope is in the sign which rules the diseased member...¹

According to Robert Burton, even Paracelsus, the great iconoclast of medical tradition in the Renaissance, adhered to the belief in judicial astrology.

Paracelsus is of the opinion "that a physician without the knowledge of stars can neither understand the cause or cure of any disease, either of this or gout, not so much as toothache; except

he see the peculiar geniture and scheme of the party effected." And for this proper malady, he will have the principal and primary cause of it proceed from the heaven, ascribing more to stars than humours.... He gives instance in lunatic persons, that are deprived of their wits by the moon's motion; and in another place refers all to the ascendant, and will have the true and chief cause of it to be sought from the stars. Neither is it his opinion only, but of many Galenists and philosophers....

This Paracelsus was a paradox symbolic of the age. After the renown of his famous cures he was made a professor at Basle. He forsook Galen and Avicenna, turning to the observation of nature for his learning. His insistence upon cleanliness in the care of wounds was revolutionary in his time. He advanced the understanding of syphilis, he was the first to show the connection between the cretinous offspring and goitre of the parent, and was considered the father of modern chemistry. Yet this man accepted the super-natural phenomena of the 16th century, with its mysticism, magic, and witchcraft.

Shakespeare furnishes us many literary reflections of the consideration of astrology in medicine.

...Let's purge this choler without letting blood. This we prescribe, though no physician; Deep malice makes too deep incision.

1. The Anatomy of Melancholy, Part 1, Sec. 2, Mem. 1, Subs. 4.
Forget, forgive; conclude and be agreed; 1
Our doctors say this is no month to bleed....

As Burton points out, another conception derived
from astrology was the idea that the moon was a cause of
insanity. Among other causes which Shakespeare mentions
we find this belief reflected.

Othello. It is the very error of the moon,
She comes more near the earth than she was wont
And makes men mad.2

Since the causes of conditions are so important in
the discovery of the cures it is comprehensible that the
obscuring effect of judicial astrology was a hindrance to
medical progress.

However, the greatest obstacle in the advancement of
medicine was the persistence of the belief in witches in
the 16th century. The church was the chief bearer of this
particular tradition of superstitions and the papal edicts
of the time, urging the persecution of witches, sorcerers,
devils, and other such demonology, illustrate to what ex­
tent such beliefs were current at that time.

Sir Thomas Browne, the educated, scholarly physician

1. King Richard II, Act 1, Scene 1.
2. Othello, Act V, Scene 2.
and author, was another symbol of this paradoxical age. In his book, *Vulgar Errors*, he tried to prove the value of exact knowledge and he was one of the staunchest advocates of experimental research. Yet his man was one of the contributing forces in the continuance of the belief in witchcraft. In the *Religio Medici*, he states,

> Againe, I believe that all the sorceries, incantations, and spells, are not witches, or as we term them, Magicians. I conceive there is a traditionall Magicke, not bound immediately from the Devill, but at second hand from his Schollers; who having once the secret betrayed, are able, and doe empirically practice without his advice, they both proceeding upon the principles of nature: where actives aptly conjoined to disposed passives, will under any Master produce their effects....

Moreover, there is evidence that Sir Thomas Browne's belief in witches was shared by other eminent physicians of the century, in spite of the fact that the medical man was beginning to look askance at this phenomenon. Even the great Ambroise Pare, the father of modern surgery, stated that the devil could assume any guise he pleased. In *Les Oeuvres de Paré* several chapters are devoted to the subject of demons and witches. He says of them,

Il y a des sorciers, empoisonneurs, venéreux, meschans, rusez, trompeurs, lesquels font leur sort par la pacton qu'ils ont faite avec les Demons, qui leur sont esclaves & vassaux.

Concerning their activities and their ability to transform themselves, he says,

Or icoex Demons peuvent en beaucoup de manières & façons, tromper nostre terrienne lourdesse, a raison de la subtilité de leur essence, & malice de leur volonté, car ils obscurcissent les yeux des hommes, avec espesses mées qui brouillent nostre esprit fantastiquement, & nous trompent par impostures sataniques... & pour le dire en un mot, ils ont un incomparable artifice de tromperies, car ils se transmutent mille façons, & enfasse au corps des personnes vivantes, mille choses estranges....

In The Anatomy of Melancholy, Burton tells us,

You have heard what the devil can do of himself, now you shall hear what he can perform by his instruments, who are many times worse (if it be possible) than he himself, and to satisfy their revenge and lust cause more mischief....

Among other abilities of the witch, Burton has heard that they can hurt and infect corn, cattle, plants, and

1. Les Oeuvres d'Ambroise Pare, 8th ed. Nicolas Buon, 1628, Chap. XXV
2. Ibid., Chap. XXVIII.
3. The Anatomy of Melancholy, Part 1, Sec. 2, Mem. 1, Subs. 3.
animals, make women barren or abortive, make men impotent, and change themselves into any form at their pleasure.

Burton reflects an amusing fact of the ethics of the age when, assuming that the witch can cure as well as harm, he brings up the question of whether it is right to accept their aid.

Hoc posito, they can effect such cures, the main question is, whether it be lawful in a desperate case to crave their help, or ask wizard's advice. "Tis a common practice of some men to go first to a witch, and then to a physician, if one cannot the other shall,... "It matters not," saith Paracelsus, "whether it be God or the devil, angels, or unclean spirits cure him, so that he be eased." If a man fall into a ditch, as he prosecutes it, what matter is it whether a friend or an enemy help him out? and if I be troubled with such a malady, what care I whether the devil himself, or any of his ministers by God's permission, redeem me?¹

But if the witch furnished competition for the medical profession, she also furnished alibis. Many medical cases were abandoned as "possessed". When the doctor could not cure he said that the illness was not natural. When the medication aggravated the condition, the doctor claimed that the patient was "possessed", and

¹ Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy, Part 11, Sec.1, Mem. 1, Subs. 1.
when the patient died, he had been "possessed". Sir Thomas Browne, when rendering his professional opinion of fits suffered by certain children, said that they were heightened by the cooperation of the devil and witches. This opinion helped to send two women accused of witchcraft to their deaths.

It is comprehensible that such credulity lessened the benefits of medicine in the treatment of any disease, but it is almost inconceivable how much misery it promulgated in cases of mental disorder. Medieval cruelty was predominant in the treatment of the insane. Generally explained as due to the influence of Satan, the dangerously insane were locked in prison dungeons and maltreated. The first lunatic asylum under municipal control was established in 1547, but it was more of a prison than a haven for the afflicted. The insane were often whipped as many believed that the evil spirits could thus be driven out. Shakespeare indicated something of the treatment in Romeo's answer to Benvolio.

Benvolio. Why Romeo, art thou mad?  
Romeo. Not mad, but bound more than a madman is;  
Shut up in prison, kept without my food,  
Whipp'd and torment'd....

1. Romeo and Juliet, Act 1, Scene 2.
The idea is reiterated in *As You Like It*, when Rosalind says, "Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; ...."¹

The use of the prison dungeon disposed of the violently insane, but the mildly insane, and those who were considered cured, were permitted to wander about and were licensed to beg. Shakespeare gives us a description of this type of mentally afflicted person in *King Lear*.

> Edgar... The country gives me proof and percedent Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices, Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary; And with this horrible object, from low farms, Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills, Sometime with lunatic bang, sometime with prayers, Enforce their charity....²

Thus we see that the attribution of many ills to the devil and his cohorts furnished an impasse which the medical science of the day was unable to surmount. From a brief glance at the medical beliefs and superstitions which were prevalent in this age, it can be readily seen that medicine was in an embryonic state, in spite of the great

¹. *As You Like It*, Act III, Scene 2  
advances which were made during the Renaissance. An understanding of the state in which medicine existed at this time is important in understanding the attitudes towards the doctor. The best of the profession was furnished only with the knowledge which was possible for the times, and the physician often shared the general credulity of the age.
CHAPTER III
CARICATURES OF THE PHYSICIAN

Ben Jonson portrays the follies of his age with a realism born out of objectivity. His element is common reality and he presents it from its tangible side with historical fidelity. In the prologue of The Staple of News he clearly expresses his intention.

Wherein although our title, sir, be News,
We yet adventure here to tell you none,
But shew the common follies, and so known,
That though they are not truths, the innocent Muse,
Hath made so like, as phant’sy could them state,
Or poetry, without scandal, imitate.1

Jonson’s purpose was to combat folly by exposing it, and he exhibits his characters from a particular point of view, rather than as complete individuals, in order to highlight their faults. Each of his characters shows a definite humour, or predominating characteristic, habit, or tendency, and he holds up for ridicule the bad examples of his age. His purpose is to instruct, and he

pours out the force of his wit upon the vestiges of medievalism, as well as the superficialities of his period.

The medical man receives his share of Jonson's criticism, and Jonson, in exposing his follies, reveals many facets of the medical practice of the Elizabethans.

In The Staple of News, Jonson inveighs against those who are not a credit to their class or profession. The doctor is included in the group of superficial would-be wits, whom he styles "jeerers". He criticises these persons who detract from their professions by representing them so poorly. Upbraiding his son because of the company he keeps, Pennyboy Canter expresses Jonson's point of view.

...If thou hadst sought out good and virtuous persons of these professions, I had loved thee and them:
For these shall never have that plea against me,
Or colour of advantage, that I hate
Their callings, but their manners and their vices...

In the portrayal of Dr. Almanac, Jonson chiefly criticises the physician's preoccupation with astrology, but also casts reflections on some of the general practices in medicine. The miser Pennyboy says to Dr. Almanac, ".... I loved you when you did hold your practice, and and kill tripe wives, and kept you to your urinal;....".

1. The Staple of News, Act IV, Scene 1
2. Ibid., Act II, Scene 1.
Pennyboy is here referring to one of the most prevalent forms of quackery in the medicine of the time, the practise of water-casting, or uroscopy. This was the diagnosing of the disease from a visual examination of the urine, often without ever having seen the patient. This was based upon the old humoural pathology, according to which the excremental humours formed in the process of a disease, appeared in the urine. The physicians were not the only ones who practised uroscopy, for we find reference to this pretence to science on the part of the wise woman, the mountebank, and the apothecary. The variety of information discovered through uroscopy increased as the knowledge of the uroscopist decreased. In Bartholomew Fair we find that water-casting furnished information which was comparable to that derived from palm reading.

Pennyboy Miser considered uroscopy within the just province of the physician, but he objected to the doctor's study of astrology.

Pennyboy.... but since your thumbs
Have greased the Ephemerides, casting figures,

1. Mrs. Littlewit. Sir, my mother has had her nativity-water cast by the cunning-men in Cow Lane, and they have told her her fortune .... Bartholomew Fair, Act 1, Scene 1
And turning over for your candle-rents,
And your twelve houses in the zodiac,
With your almutens, alma-cantaras,
Troth you shall cant alone for Pennyboy.  

Jonson gives an excellent picture of the superficial
doctor in the following passage, attacking his pedantry,
as well as his astrology.

Pennyboy Canter. The doctor here; I will pro­
ceed with the learned.
When he discourseth of dissection,
Or any point of anatomy; that he tells you
Of vena cava, and of vena porta,
The meseraics, and the mesenterium:
What does he else but cant? or if he run
To his judicial astrology,
And trowl the Trine, the Quartile, and the Sextile,
Platic aspect, and Partile, with his Hylag,
Of Alchochoden, Cuspes, and Horoscope;
Does not he cant? who here does understand him?

During this period in England the poor were deprived
of the necessary medical attentions, people died by the
hundreds of the recurrent plagues, important medical
needs were seen everywhere, and some of the physicians
occupied themselves with such trivialities as "my great
madam's monkey". It is to be expected that a critic
like Jonson would pour out his invective against such
superficiality.

2. Ibid., Act IV, Scene 1
Thus Jonson forestalls any accusation that he has any prejudice against the medical profession, and at the same time flays those physicians who lower the standards of the profession.

In The Magnetick Lady, Jonson gives us another example of the ridiculous doctor in his characterization of Dr. Rut, who is thus introduced,

...Rut is a young Physician to the family; That, letting God alone, ascribes to nature More than her share; licentious in discourse, And in his life a profest Voluptuary; The slave of money, a Buffon in manners; Obscene in language; which he vents for wit; Is saucy in his Logicks, and disputing, Is any thing but civil, or a man.

The character of Dr. Almanac was given chiefly through the comments concerning him, by other characters in the comedy. But here we have a chance to see a bungling pedant in action, and he lives up to Jonson's

2. The Magnetick Lady, Act 1, Scene 2.
character of him. When diagnosing the ailment of Placentia, he commits himself to nothing and only succeeds in mystifying her attendants. Jonson here again strikes at the pedantry of the profession.

Rut...It is a Tympanites she is troubled with; There are three kinds: The first is Ana-sarca Under the flesh, a Tumor: that's not hers. The second is Ascites, or Aquosus, A watry humour: that's not hers neither....

Having diagnosed the particular type of Tympanites, he further confuses by saying,

Rut. Thence, 'tis call'd a Dropsie. The Tympanites is one spice of it; A toy, a thing of nothing, a meere vapour: Ile blow't away.2 (sic)

The audience gets the full impact of Jonson's satire of Dr. Rut, when after his wordy analysis of the patient's condition, it turns out that Placentia is suffering from quite an ordinary condition, that of pregnancy.

The hypocrisy of Dr. Rut is shown, as well as his inadequacy, when he pretends to effect a rare cure upon Needles, who has conspired with Item to feign an illness so that "The Doctor may have ground, to raise a cure

1. The Magnetick Lady, Act II, Scene 3
2. Ibid.
From the following passage one may gather that Jonson felt that the traditional medicine of medieval and ancient books was found wanting.

Lad... He has discredited my house,... and endanger'd my niece's health (by drawing of his weapon)
God know how farre; for Mr. Doctor doth not. Compsasse. The Doctor is an asse then, if hee say so, And cannot with his conjuring names, Hippocrates, Galen or Rasis, Avicen, Averroses,
Cure a poore wenches falling in a swoone:...

The mention of these names of medieval and ancient medical authorities would indicate that they were among the familiar medical traditional authorities and that they still carried a certain weight of authority in the Elizabethan period.

The role of the physician as a go-between in intrigues is also reflected by Jonson. Since among the wealthy, the physician was retained not only in the capacity of a medical advisor, but also as a sort of beauty expert and cosmetician, he was often very close to his lady clients. Since this was an age when science was mixed with magic, and philtres were employed to incite love, as to kill or cure, the versatility of the doctor was such

1. The Magnetick Lady, Act V, Scene 1.
2. Ibid., Act III, Scene 3.
as would make him an important accessory to the beaus and ladies of the Elizabethan beau monde. In *Epicene*, when Truewit is advising Clerimont on the method of conquest of a lady, he says, "Admire her tires; like her in all fashions; ...and make the physician your pensioner...."¹

Later in the same scene Truewit says, ".....Thou wouldst think it strange if I should make 'em all in love with thee afore night!" And Dauphine replies, "I would say thou hadst the best philtre in the world, and couldest do more than Madam Medea, or Doctor Forman."²

In *Volpone* Jonson gives us the greatest English satire upon the medical practices of the time in England. Although the scene is laid in Venice, it is England which Jonson reflects, and we have here a vivid picture of some of the medical aspects of the time. He shows the physician to be ignorant, unscrupulous and mercenary, and reveals some of the medical practices in a sharp and witty satire. The contempt in which the physician was often held is reflected through Mosca's comments concerning the

1. *Epicene*, Act IV
2. Ibid., Act IV. The Dr. Forman referred to was an intriguer who was connected with the infamous Countess of Essex and Mrs. Turner in the famous murder of Sir Thomas Overbury.
profession.

Mosca. He has no faith in physic; he does think
Most of your doctors are the greater danger,
And worse disease t'escape....

Dr. Gideon Harvey, later in the century, gives us
a physician's criticism of physicians in The Conclave
of Physicians, and reiterates this idea of Jonson's. In
describing a case he tells us that "the hazard of the
Disease was much less than the Remedies prescribed by
the dictates of a ... deceived Doctor." 2

Attacking the mercenary aspect of the doctor of
the day, and the fatality of his errors, Jonson thus con­
tinues to blast the physician.

Mosca. No, sir, not their fees
He cannot brook; he says they flay a man
Before they kill him.

And then, they do it by experiment;
For which the law not only doth absolve 'em,
But gives them great reward; and he is loath
To hire his death so.
Corbaccio. It is true, they kill
With as much licence as a judge.
Mosca. Nay, more;
For he but kills, sir, where the law condemns,
And these can kill him too. 3

2. The Conclave of Physicians, by Gideon Harvey, M.D.
   Physician in Ordinary to his Majesty. 1683. p. 16.
The physician Harvey corroborates Jonson's opinion and there is an interesting similarity in their ideas of the doctor who kills "with license". Even Dr. Harvey's sympathy is with the patient when he says of him, "...He is falsely convicted of this or that felony on himself, and most commonly, if his Crime or Disease be great, is sentenced to die, and to be executed by tying a Halter about his arm and, afterward to be stabbed in it with a Lancet, to draw so much blood, until he be Herring-dead."¹

Dr. Harvey is here referring to phlebotomy, which together with purging and water-casting, seem to have constituted the chief methods of diagnosis and cures of the period, if we are to judge by its popular literature.

Through the portrayal of Lady Wouldbe, Jonson makes an interesting reflection on the study of medicine on the part of the layman. She is a caricature of the "femme savante" and it is interesting to note that medicine was included in her varied accomplishments. She says, "I have a little studied physic; but now I'm all for music, save i' the forenoons, an hour or two for painting...."²

Her study of physic has enabled her to recommend a most

2. Volpone, Act III, Scene 2.
extraordinary prescription for Volpone.

Lady Wouldbe....Seed-pearl were good now,
boiled with syrup of apples,
Tincture of gold, and coral, citron pills,
Your elecampane root, myrobalanes--
....Some English saffron, - half a dram would
serve -
Your sixteen cloves, a little musk, dried mints,
Bugloss, and barley-meal--

One might think that the above prescription is completely fantastic, but it is no more so than the actual usages of the period, which Jonson wished to satirize. For he lived in an age when philtres and incantations were believed to cure disease. Among the remedies of the time we find scorpion oil, the powder of mummies, the entrails of animals, spring water drunk from the skull of a murdered man, and other such unsanitary concoctions.

During Jonson's time there were few licensed physicians practicing in London as a license was obtainable only after eight years of study and the passing of an examination before a board of regents, and life was shorter in Jonson's period than in the present. Consequently there was a great number of apothecaries, wise women, and charlatans who practised medicine without a license and did a

flourishing business.

In Elizabethan England there was no organization of the medical profession to set up certain definite criteria, and quackery was rampant. Distinguishing the physician from the charlatan was often very difficult since both sometimes shared the same ideas concerning medicine. However, the charlatans were so predominant that because of their very ubiquity, the populace was inclined to confuse them with the doctors, and the medical profession was blamed for many of the faults of the charlatan.

The mountebank was a type of quack doctor who was especially noticeable during this period. In many public gatherings he drew a crowd about him, and began to cry his wares before, for the most part, a receptive audience. It throws an interesting light upon Renaissance medicine when we note the types of people who patronized him.¹ Jonson gives an excellent picture of this type, and by using the indirect method of Volpone's disguise, he makes the most of an excellent opportunity for satire of the mountebank, some medical practices of the time, and the

¹. Shakespeare frequently mentions the mountebank. Hamlet was certainly not gullible and yet we find that he has patronized the mountebank. "I brought an unction of a mountebank." Hamlet, Act, Scene 7.
gullibility of his audience who listen to his prating.

Peregrine voices the popular conception of the mountebank when he states what he has heard of them.

Peregrine. They are quacksalvers, follows that live by venting oils and drugs.
... And, I have heard they are most lewd imposters, made all of terms and shreds; no less beliers of great men's favors, than their own vile medicines; which they will utter, upon monstrous oaths, selling that drug for twopence, ere they part, which they have valued at twelve crowns before.

Volpone has disguised himself as Scoto Mantuono, a famous mountebank, and in his introduction he denies the accusations of his competitors and libels his detractors. He refers to them as,

... the rabble of these ground ciarlatini, that spread their cloaks on the pavement as if they meant to do feats of activity, rogues, with one poor greatworth of unprepared antimony, able to kill their twenty a week, and play. Yet, these meagre, starved spirits, who have half stopped the organs of their minds with earthly oppilations, want not their favourers among your shrivelled, salad-eating artisans, who are overjoyed that they may have their half-pe'rrth of physic; though it purge 'em into another world, 't makes no matter.

Having villified his competitors and their patrons,

2. Ibid.
he puts the audience off guard by saying that he has nothing, or little, to sell; that he cannot produce his remedy fast enough to fill the needs of those who use it, and then he proceeds to sell his medicine, with a variety of claims which would put modern advertising to shame.

...O health, health! the blessing of the rich! the riches of the poor! who can buy thee at too dear a rate, since there is no enjoying this world without thee? Be not then so sparing of your purses, honourable gentlemen, as to abridge the natural course of life...For when a humid flux, or catarrh, by the mutability of air, falls from your head into a arm, or shoulder, or any other part, take you a ducat, or your sequine of gold, and apply to the place affected; see what good effect it can work. No, no, 'tis this blessed unguento, this rare extraction, that hath only power to disperse all malignant humours, that proceed either of hot, cold, moist, or windy causes,...

Volpone continues his prating with an excellent catalogue of prevalent maladies of the time, all of which he claims to cure or prevent by the use of his unguent. The mountebank's song, offered as part of his sales talk, reflects some of the medical belief of the age.

Had old Hippocrates or Galen,
That to their books put medicines all in,
But known this secret, they had never-
Of which they will be guilty ever-

1. Volpone, Act II, Scene 1
When considering that his audience was a street crowd of the Elizabethan period, we must realize that the mountebank was speaking to a cross section of his contemporaries. Taking for granted the astuteness of the character, we assume that his words were intended to have a popular appeal and interest for his hearers, and it follows that he mentions things and persons which were familiar to them.

We have already seen that Hippocrates and Galen were the great accepted traditions of Renaissance medicine, which endured long after in a state of primary importance. Dr. Harvey, writing in 1683 tells us, in ridiculing the doctor, that when they do not recognize the disease, they invent a name for it, such as "....the New Disease: a denomination so idle that every Novice in Physick might well suspect that they had never read Hippocrates or Galen...."²

The herbs mentioned by Volpone are among the hundreds

2. The Conclave of Physicians, Chap. 1.
which were supposed to have had a medicinal value at that time. Raymond Lully was a scholastic philosopher of the 13th and early 14th centuries, and the mention of his elixir is another vestige of medievalism in the period. "Paracelsus, with his long-sword," refers to one of the strangest remedies of the Renaissance. The weapon salve of Paracelsus, when applied to the sword which inflicted the injury, was supposed to heal the victim who received the wound.

The importance of drugs from the point of view of Cosmesis, is also illustrated by Volpone in his mountebank disguise. In praising his miraculous remedy which is the panacea for all organic ills, he tells us that "...it is the powder that made Venus a goddess,...that kept her perpetually young, cleared her wrinkles, firmed her gums, filled her skin, coloured her hair;..."¹ He explains that some of that same powder, "...remains with me; extracted to a quintessence, so that, wherever it but touches, in youth it perpetually preserves, in age restores the complexion; seats your teeth, did they dance like virginal jacks, firm as a wall; makes them white as ivory...."²

¹. Volpone, Act II, Scene 1.
². Ibid.
Thus, in Volpone's disguise as a mountebank, we have an excellent document inasmuch as it reveals so much pertaining to the medicine of Jonson's period. The use of the disguise furnishes an excellent vehicle for satire of the medical beliefs and practices of the age, and fore­shadows Moliere's method. Jonson's characterization of the mountebank is forceful, amusing, and convincing to the extent that we can see his descendants in our own age. Volpone, as Scoto Mantuono, seems to be a composite picture of a Barnum barker, our almost extinct medicine man, and our shady contemporary, Dr. Brinkley of the goat gland fame.

Shakespeare has given us only one satiric portrayal of the physician. Dr. Caius, who appears in The Merry Wives of Windsor, has only a secondary role, and for the purposes of the comedy, he might just as well have had another, or no profession. Here we have a descendant of the Commedia del Arte figure and Shakespeare has given us a genre picture, somewhat in the manner of Moliere or Jonson.

Dr. Caius is vain, ridiculous, and a braggart. He exhibits the pedantry of the Commedia del Arte doctor in

1. Moliere makes use of a disguise of a peasant as a physician in "Le Médecin Malgré Lui."
his irrelevant use of Latin, and he is the comical would-be lover. He shows his gullibility when the Host pokes fun at him and his profession by calling him "Castalion-King-Urinal" and "Mounseur Mock-water". But he is characterized chiefly as a fool, rather than a physician. Dame Quickly says of him, "...Will you cast away your child on a fool, and a physician?..." The wording indicates that "physician" is in itself a derogatory as "fool".

Whereas Dr. Caius reveals little of interest as far as the medical practice of his time is concerned, the fact that this characterization of a fool, is labelled a doctor, reflects something of the attitudes of the time.

1. The Merry Wives of Windsor, Act II, Scene 3.
2. Ibid., Act III, Scene 5.
CHAPTER V
EUDEMUS, A PORTRAIT BY JONSON

The fact that Jonson's tragedy Sejanus, was drawn from Roman characters and times, does not alter the significance of the implications concerning the life and times of Jonson's England. The exaltation and confidence of the Renaissance were giving way to a sense of depression and disillusionment and it is comprehensible that Jonson should have seen the changes in the national aspect in the light of the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire.

The portrayal of the physician, Eudemus, thus reflects upon the English physician, although he is represented as a Roman court physician. In the comedy Epicene, the role of the physician as an intriguer is only suggested, but in Sejanus, we have an expose of the physician in this guise. Eudemus is the physician to Livia, the wife of Drusus, the prince. In this characterization we have Jonson's only serious portrayal of the physician, but it coincides with the implications of the physician who is satirically portrayed. However, the first impression of
Eudemus is complimentary.

Sejanus...Know you this same Eudemus? Is he learned? 
Satrius. Reputed so, my lord, and of deep practice.1

Upon meeting Eudemus, Sejanus says, "Report, sir, hath spoke out your art and learning...." Later, when Sejanus is trying to learn the secrets of the patients of Eudemus, the physician replies in a manner worthy of respect.

Eudemus. But, good my lord, if I should thus betray The counsels of my patient, and lady's Of her high place and worth, what might your lordship, Who presently are to trust me with your own, Judge of my faith? 2

Thus Eudemus gives the impression of being learned, serious, scrupulous, and honest. But it is this same physician who is an important intriguer in spite of his apparent ethics, and we see him as a plotter and poisoner, taking advantage of his position to commit murder. Eudemus arranges meetings between Sejanus and Livia, who after having been corrupted by Sejanus, contrives to murder her husband. Here we find the three of them plotting, and the physician's importance in the intrigue is shown.

1. Sejanus, Act 1
2. Ibid.
Sejanus. Physician, thou art worthy of a province,
For the great favours done unto our loves;
And, but that greatest Livia bears a part
In the requital of thy services,
I should alone despair of aught, like means,
To give them worthy satisfaction.
Livia. Eudemus, I will see it, shall receive
A fit and full reward for his large merit.
But for this potion we intend to Drusus,
No more our husband now, whom shall we choose
As the apt and able instrument
To minister it to him?
Eudemus. I say Lygdus.
Sejanus. Lygdus? what's he?
Livia. An eunuch Drusus loves.
Eudemus. Ay, and his cup-bearer.
Sejanus. Name not a second.
If Drusus loves him, and he have that place,
We cannot think a fitter.
Eudemus. True, my lord,
For free access and trust are two main aids.
Sejanus. Skillful physician.

Eudemus proves that he knows very well the advantage of
the aids of free access and trust. Here we see the
physician not only in the role of pander and tool of a
superior’s ambitions and lusts, but in the position of
a fellow conspirator. He is not a mere subject for
ridicule, to be laughed at, but a shrewd conniver to be
reckoned with. Jonson also shows him to be clever in
the use of drugs and he adequately follows the directions
of Sejanus.

Sejanus. ... And wise physician, so prepare the poison,
As you may lay the subtle operation
Upon some natural disease of his. 1

In addition to the physician in the role of intriguer,
this play shows clearly another facet of the doctor's position in the Elizabethan Age. A lady's beauty, as well as her health was often the superficial responsibility of the doctor, and Jonson shows him in the role of a cosmetician, with the concomitant position of confidant.

Sejanus. I hear you are
Physician to Livia, the Princess.
Eudemus. I minister unto her, my good lord.
Sejanus. You minister to a royal lady, then.
Eudemus. She is, my lord, and fair.
Sejanus. That's understood
Of all their sex, who are or would be so.
And those that would be, physic soon can make 'em. 2

Sejanus then questions the physician concerning his lady clients.

Sejanus. And all these tell you the particulars
Of every several grief? how first it grew,
And then increased; what action caused that,
What passion that; and answer to each point
That you will put 'em?

2. Ibid., Act 1.
Eudemus. Else, my lord, we know not
How to prescribe the remedies.
Sejanus. Go to,
You are a subtle nation, you physicians!
And grown the only cabinets in court,
To ladies' privacies.

The superficiality of the physician's function is illustrated in the scene between Livia and Eudemus in the doctor's gardens.

Livia..... How do I look today?
Eudemus. Excellent clear, believe it. This same fucus
Was well laid on.
Livia. Methinks 'tis here not white.
Eudemus. Lend me your scarlet, lady; 'Tis the sun,
Hath giv'n some little taint unto the ceruse.
You should have used of the white oil I gave you.
Sejanus for your love! his very name Commandeth above Cupid or his shafts --
Livia. Nay, now you've made it worse.
Eudemus. I'll help it straight--
And but pronounced, is a sufficient charm
Against all rumour, and of absolute power
To satisfy for any lady's honour.
Livia. What do you now, Eudemus?
Eudemus. Make a light focus
To touch you o'er withal....

Thus we see the physician in the act of helping a lady repair her make-up while intermingling beauty hints with

2. Ibid., Act II, Scene 1.
advice to the lovelorn. That he considers a knowledge of Cosmesis an important part of his professional knowledge is thus indicated.

Eudemus. I like this study to preserve the love of such a man, that comes not every hour to greet the world. "Tis now well, lady, you should use of the dentifrice I prescribed you, too, to smooth your teeth, and the prepared pomatum, to smooth the skin. A lady cannot be too curious of her form, that still would hold the heart of such a person....

The life-like quality of the scene of Livia and her confidant-physician suggest that Jonson's observations are drawn from life, rather than from history. In Eudemus, Jonson has drawn a portrait of a physician who is learned, intelligent, and experienced in his profession, but who uses those forces for good, in doing evil. The triviality of some of Eudemus' pursuits throws an interesting reflection on the activities of the physician in Jonson's era.

1. Sejanus, Act II, Scene 1
"...Trust not the physician; his antidotes are poison, and he slays more than you rob...."1

Here Shakespeare shows an attitude towards the physician which was characteristic of his time. If the doctors were not usually presented in a complimentary light in the literature of the day, the writers were merely following tradition in making him appear ignoble rather than noble. In spite of the fact that great advances had been made in medicine during the Renaissance, and certain individuals had acquired and merited renown in the profession, the physicians as a class were not respected. The social foundation of the medical profession had not been established, and the snobbishness shown the physician, was in turn shown by the physician towards the surgeon.2 The

1. Timon of Athens, Act IV, Scene 3.
2. In the 16th century the physicians and surgeons were not blended into the medical profession, in spite of the fact that physicians and surgeons were united by an act of Parliament in 1540. As Miss Petersen points out, The Doctor in French Drama, Chapter IV, the surgeon was impeded by the prejudice against manual labor, and the abhorrence of any contact with corpses...
social position of the doctor is reflected in its superficial sense, by the refusal of Bertram to marry Helena, against whom the only charge was that her social level was not sufficiently great. The woman in question was beautiful, intelligent, and well bred, but the young Count Bertram says of her, "A poor physician's daughter my wife? Disdain rather corrupt me ever!"¹ That Helena's father had been a physician of fame and distinction, did not seem to alter the question for Bertram. The king emphasizes the social distinction on the part of Bertram by saying, "...A poor physician's daughter--thou dislik'st of virtue for the name...."²

Shakespeare gives many examples of the distrust and disrespect shown the physician, but in the treatment of the physicians who appear as characters in his plays, he or the component parts of the human body. The barber was employed for certain minor operations, and the surgeon had difficulty in distinguishing himself from the barber-surgeon. Army surgeons were often required to shave the officers. In the making of anatomies, it was the surgeon who usually performed the dissection under the direction of the physician. The physician, far from being considered the equal of the gentleman, was jealous of his own position, and rigidly observed the class distinction which separated him from the surgeon.

1. All's Well That Ends Well, Act II, Scene 3.
2. Ibid.
is not uncomplimentary, except for Dr. Caius. This apparent contradiction in Shakespeare's attitude towards the doctor, is revealing in itself, as it reflects the contradictions which were so characteristic of the medical science of his day. Shakespeare is gay and full of variety, on the one hand comically satirizing the ridiculous Dr. Caius, and on the other hand delving into psychology with an intuition and sympathy which transcends his times, as in the treatment of King Lear.

With the exception of Dr. Caius, the doctors in Shakespeare's plays appear in serious dramas and Shakespeare presents them in a complimentary light. While he makes no effort to praise them, neither does he show them disrespect, and this amounts almost to a triumph for the physician, considering how they usually appeared in Elizabethan literature. However, there is controversy concerning Shakespeare's attitude towards the English doctor in Macbeth. It has been pointed out that Shakespeare is derogatory to him by making him appear credulous.¹

Malcolm. Well, more anon. Comes the King forth, I pray you?

Doctor. Ay, sir. There are a crew of wretched souls

¹ Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge with Particular Reference to his Delineation of Madness, by Dr. Irving Edgar, 1934, Vol. 6, p. 155.
That stay his cure. Their malady convinces
The great assay of art; but at his touch,
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,
They presently amend.
Malcolm. I thank you, doctor.
Macduff. What's the disease he means?
Malcolm. 'Tis call’d the evil:
A most miraculous work in this good king,
Which often since my here-remain in England
I have seen him do..."

This is the extent of the role of the English Doctor
and I find no evidence of derogation on the part of
Shakespeare in spite of the fact that the doctor was
credulous. Shakespeare shows Malcolm to share the
credulity in the text immediately following, and in re­
vealing the belief in the miraculous cure, he is here
again merely presenting a facet of the age. The touch
of the sovereign was supposed to be efficacious in cur­
ing the King's Evil, or Scrofula. With such eminent per­
sons as Sir Thomas Browne and Ambroise Paré evincing
beliefs in witchcraft, and various other credulities, it
is not likely that Shakespeare intended to show disrespect
for the physician in this particular instance.

As for the Scotch doctor in Macbeth, Shakespeare
portrays him as a man of sympathy, insight and intelligence.

1. Macbeth, Act IV, Scene 3.
2. The persistence of this belief is indicated by the fact
   that in the 18th Century Samuel Johnson was touched
   for the King's evil.
Doctor. Mark, she speaks! I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy the remembrance the more strongly.

Lady Macbeth. Out damned spot! Out, I say! One; two. Why then 'tis time to do it. Hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afraid? what need we fear who knows it, when none can call our pow'r to accompt? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

Doctor. Do you mark that?

Lady Macbeth. The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now? What, will these hands ne'er be clean? no more o' that, my lord, no more o' that! You mar all with this starting.

Doctor. Go to, go to! You have known what you should not.

... 

Doctor. What a sigh is there! the heart is sorely charged.

The physician here appears to be awed by the tragedy with which he is confronted. He is conscious of the magnitude of the crime which has been committed, but at the same time he has sympathy for the patient and he is humble in the realization of his own limitations.

Doctor. Foul whisperings are abroad. Unnatural deeds Do breed unnatural troubles. Infected minds To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets. More needs she the divine than the physician. God, God forgive us all... ²

From these words we see that the physician is capable of intelligent observation as well as humility. In the fol-

1. Macbeth, Act V, Scene 1.
2. Ibid.
lowing scene, when he makes a diagnosis, we have further evidence of his intelligence.

Macbeth....How does your patient, doctor?
Doctor. Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick coming fancies
That keep her from her rest.
Macbeth. Cure her of that!
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain?
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?
Doctor. Therein the patient
Must minister to himself.¹

The only words spoken by this physician which could be interpreted in an uncomplimentary light are the following.

Doctor. Were I from Dunsinane away and clear
Profit again should hardly draw me here.²

Although this coincides with the accusation that the physician was mercenary, it is doubtful if Shakespeare intended an unflattering reflection here as it would be inconsistent with his portrayal of this physician. It should be remembered that medicine was as much a business as a profession at this time, and the doctor practiced

1. Macbeth, Act V, Scene 1.
2. Ibid.
quite obviously for gain. This was the age in which the invention of obstetrical forceps was kept secret for generations in the family of William Chamberlen, the inventor. Humanitarianism and medical ethics had not yet supplanted monopoly. Consequently, these lines may be interpreted simply as a 16th century facet.

The doctor in *King Lear* is also intelligent and kindly. He prescribes repose, and patience and gentleness on the part of those attending the patient. It is interesting to note the use of music in an effort to calm the rage of King Lear, and he employs a sedative to make him sleep.

Cordelia. .... What can man's wisdom
In the restoring his bereaved sense?
He that helps him take all my outward worth.
Doctor. There is means, madam.
Our foster nurse of nature is repose,
The which he lacks. That to provoke in him
Are many simples operative, whose power
Will close the eyes of anguish.

Whether or not the treatment prescribed by the physician is acceptable in terms of modern medicine or psychiatry, is beside the point in this study. What is important is that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of the

doctor his own ideas of treatment for the mentally deranged, and allows him to reflect his sympathy. It is obvious that the subject of mental defectives had a great fascination for Shakespeare,¹ and his chances for observation in this field were infinite. It is difficult for one in the present to imagine how frequent and varied the contacts with the mentally deranged could be in that time. There were no havens for the victims of such afflictions, and we have seen that the asylums were not asylums in the true sense of the word, but more closely resembled prisons. Since methods of giving refuge to the deranged were inadequate, there were many mentally afflicted persons wandering about, separated from normal persons only by attitudes, rather than by walls. While the subject of melancholy held a serious interest for the people of the age, the related subject of madness was often treated comically. The insane were actually exhibited to the public as an amusement, and viewed as an entertainment as were cock fights.

In view of the customary attitudes of the period, we realize that Shakespeare is above and beyond his times.

¹. Approximately two thirds of Shakespeare's plays deal with madness, in some of its forms, either real or assumed.
in the sympathy and understanding which he had for the mentally afflicted, and his ideas concerning the treatment of such maladies is remarkably humane for his century. In King Lear, Shakespeare has allowed the physician to reflect his ideas and his understanding, and we have here a brief glimpse of the physician which compels respect.

Dr. Cornelius, in Cymbeline, has only a slight value in reflecting the attitude towards the physician. However, as a character in the plot he is lined up with the forces for good, rather than evil. He is intelligent in his judgment of the queen, and he acts according to his intelligence in withholding from her an instrument of evil. He has concocted a poison which the queen requests, but he substitutes another drug which is harmless. Referring to the queen, he says,

Cornelius. I do not like her. She does think she has Strange ling'ring poisons. I do know her spirit
And will not trust one with her malice with
A drug of such damn'd nature. Those she has
Will stupefy and dull the sense awhile;
Which first, perchance, she'll prove on cats and dogs,
Then afterward up higher; but there is
No danger in what show of death it makes
More than the locking up the spirits a time,
To be more fresh, reviving. She is fooled
With a false effect; and I the truer
So to be false with her.

1. Cymbeline, Act 1, Scene 5.
We have already seen that the physician was frequently connected with poisonous drugs and strange mixtures in the Renaissance. This was true partly because the disparagers of the profession found it logical to connect the doctor with the supposed Machiavellian practice of poisoning by drugs, and also, perhaps because the use of chemical remedies in medicine had just been introduced in the 16th century by Paracelsus, and the newness of the idea may have been appealing to the imagination. It cannot be determined from the text if the drug in question was a chemical compound, but it is reminiscent of the drug used in Romeo and Juliet, which was given to Juliet by Friar Laurence. In spite of the reflection of the doctor’s connection with poisons, Cornelius as a character is worthy of respect, and it is a point in favor of the physician that he is thus portrayed.

Dr. Butts, in King Henry the Eighth, has no medical role and reflects no particular attitude towards the physician. There was actually a Dr. Butts who was a physician to Henry VIII, and this accounts for the slight role and the name which Shakespeare has given him.

1. Romeo and Juliet, Act IV, Scene 1
This is the extent of the appearance of the physician in the roles of Shakespeare's plays. Of the six doctors, only Dr. Caius reveals an unflattering facet of the profession. In spite of the fact that Shakespeare reflects the doubtful phases of medical practice, and casts derogatory reflections on the physician in general, he portrays the four physicians who appear in Macbeth, King Lear, and Cymbeline, as characters who are worthy of respect, and who do not misuse their profession. It has been suggested that Shakespeare was influenced in his tolerance of the medical profession, by the fact that his son-in-law, Dr. John Hall, was a physician. However, his interest in medicine was great, and it is likely that his vision was sufficiently wide to preclude prejudice, and include both sides of the question.

It is noticeable in the Shakespearean plays, that the greatest part of the medical beliefs and practices are voiced by the lay characters, rather than by the physicians. This emphasizes the fact that medicine was of greater general interest in Shakespeare's day than in the present. Cerimon, who appears in Pericles, is sometimes classified as a physician, but he is actually a nobleman who has studied the art of healing out of a love of humanity. While his activities approximate those of
the physician, he is not a member of the medical profession, and he is really an example of the lay doctor.

Gentleman. But I much marvel that your lordship, having, 
Rich tire about you, should at these early hours 
Shake off the golden slumber of repose
'Tis most strange
Nature should be so conversant with pain,
Being thereto not compelled.

Cerimon. I hold it ever
Virtue and cunning were endowments greater
Than nobleness and riches. Careless heirs
May the two latter darken and expend;
But immortality attends the former,
Making a man a god. 'Tis known, I ever
Have studied physic, through which secret art,
By turning o'er authorities, I have,
Together with my practice, made familiar
To me and to my aid the blest infusions
That dwell in vegetives, in metals, stones;
And I can speak of the disturbances
That nature works, and of her cures; which doth give me
A more content in course of true delight
Than to be thirsty after tottering honour,
Or tie my treasure up in silken bags,
To please the fool and death.

In the gentleman's reply to these words, we have a testimonial of Cerimon's success in the practice of medicine.

Second Gentleman. Your honour has through Ephesus
pour'd forth
Your charity, and hundreds call themselves
Your creatures, who by you have been restor'd;....

1. *Pericles*, Act III, Scene II
In his mention of "the blest infusions that dwell in vegetives, metals, stones, ..." Cerimon's art of healing smacks of alchemy, as his restoration of the dead suggests magic. However, this was not unusual in his period, and in Cerimon we have an excellent picture of the humanitarian doctor, capable of self-negation, scorning material rewards, and doing good for the sake of humanity.

In All's Well That Ends Well, Shakespeare gives us another representation of the lay doctor. Lafeu says of Helena,

Lafeu. ... I have spoke
With one that, in her sex, her years, profession,
Wisdom and constancy, hath amazed me more
Than I dare blame my weakness.

Helena's father had been a famous physician, and she had inherited from him certain remedial information, some of which was applicable to the king's malady. He hesitates to allow her to try her cure upon him but finally succumbs to persuasion and she succeeds in curing him, as he says,

...When our most learned doctors leave us, and

1. All's Well That Ends Well, Act II, Scene 1.
The congregated college have concluded
That labouring art can never ransom nature
From her unaidable estate... "1"

The situation of Helena, a gentlewoman, practicing
the art of healing, was not unusual in Shakespeare's age.
She says of her father, "...On's bed of death many
receipts he gave me..." A knowledge of medicinal herbs
and remedies was considered by many to be part of a woman's
education, and remedies were frequently passed on and
handed down from generation to generation, not being con­
sidered exclusively within the province of the medical
profession. Queen Elizabeth was not only interested in
medicine, but dabbled in the study of it to the extent
that she often prescribed for herself. It is therefore
not surprising that many of the women of the aristocracy
studied the medical books of the time, and were of ser­
vice in caring for the sick. The three daughters of
Sir Thomas More included the study of medicine in their
educational pursuits, and one of them, Margaret Roper,
was noted for her skill and knowledge of medicine in the
treatment of the sick. The four daughters of Sir Anthony
Cook were well known for their education, and one of them,

1. All's Well That Ends Well, Act II, Scene 1.
the mother of Sir Francis Bacon, was particularly admired for her skill in medicine and her humanitarianism in the care of the poor and the sick.

In the present day, most of us leave our physical fate to nature and the medical profession. But in the Renaissance, the exponents of the medical profession were found wanting, both in number, and in qualification. Therefore medical administrations fell within the offices of many who were not of the profession. The non-professional doctors were not limited to the apothecaries, barbers, and quacks, for many others practiced medicine out of a need and love of humanity, as well as out of interest in the subject.

King Henry VIII had studied pharmacy and mixed medicines as a pastime. Noblemen such as Cerimon often studied and practiced the art of healing. In addition to these, there was the vast number of nuns, friars and priests, who administered medical relief to the multitudes of sick and poor.

Thus, Shakespeare, in showing the lay character to be versed in the medicine of the day, reveals an interesting side of the medical practice of his age.
Dr. Daniel Le Clerc, of the 17th century, thus quotes a maxim of Hippocrates, "Physick is the noblest of all the Arts, but the ignorance of those that Practice it, and those that judge rashly of it, make it the least respected." Referring to medicine in the time of Hippocrates he says, "...Physick was even then expos'd to detraction and calumny, as well as since." Having seen this detraction and some of the reasons for it, it is well to evaluate the critics.

In choosing the popular drama of the Elizabethan age from which any aspect of the times could be best reconstructed, the choice falls on Shakespeare and Jonson, as they complement each other in furnishing a picture of their period. In analyzing Jonson's representation of the doctor, the consistency of his attitude might suggest that he was motivated by a prejudice against the

1. The History of Physick, 1699. Chapter XXVI, Part 1, Book 3 by Daniel Le Clerc, M. D.
medical profession. But as he himself states, in The Staple of News, this is not the case.

Jonson always has an ethical purpose, and since he desires to instruct by the exposition of follies, he chooses the follies of the physician as the target of his ridicule. For he is a critic as well as an artist, and his method results in portrayals which lie somewhere between the photographic likeness, and the caricature. With his capacity for analysis and his critical understanding, he attacks vice and folly by representing them in their most superficial and ridiculous aspects. Thus we see the medicine of the day through the astrological Dr. Almanac, the ignorant and pedantic Dr. Rut; and the medical quackery through Volpone. The more vicious aspects of the physician are reflected by Eudemus. Jonson also exposes to ridicule, many of the medical beliefs and practices of his time, and we find him poking fun at excessive blood-letting, purging, water-casting, as well as the ineffectual remedies derived from folk-lore and medieval credulity.

There is great strength in Jonson's one-sidedness, and in his talent for opposition of the forces he criticises. But if we are to stop with the impression which Jonson gives of the physician of his time, we shall have defeated
truth for the sake of actuality. For Jonson gives only a part of the greater picture in the sense that a historian states isolated facts and statistics.

Shakespeare and Jonson do not contradict, but supplement each other. Lacking Jonson's great and forceful bias, Shakespeare's reflections are more revealing of the doctor and his profession. He reveals the practices and beliefs of the medicine of his day in all of its manifestations, but while Jonson attacks and assails, Shakespeare absorbs and assimilates. Through Jonson we see the physician from the objective point of view of one who is in the age, but not of it, as he is consciously intellectual and above the viewpoint of his century. Through Shakespeare we see the physician as he is seen by the age, for Shakespeare is a poet rather than a critic, and instead of exhibiting characteristics in themselves, he merges them into a greater picture, which is comparable to the artistry of a portrait, rather than a photographic representation.

Shakespeare is instinctively creative rather than consciously artistic and in spite, or perhaps because, of apparent irregularities and contradictions concerning the physician of the time, he has the imagination to comprehend the whole, and in so doing, gives us a true conception of the physician of his times.
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