- 4 David Bevington, ed., *Medieval Drama* (Chicago, 1975).
- 5 See parish records of Horbling, Lincolnshire, noted by Edward Peacock in *English Church Furniture* (London, 1866), pp. 107-8.
- 6 Lumiansky and Mills, eds., *The Chester Mystery Cycle*.
- 7 Thomas Wright, ed., *The Chester Plays*. Shakespeare Society Publications, 1843 and 1847.
- 8 Hermann Deimling and Dr. Matthews, eds., *The Chester Plays*, EETS, ES 62 (1892) and ES 115 (1916).

Jan Adamczewski, in co-operation with Edward J. Piszek. *Nicolaus Copernicus and his Epoch*. Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.: Copernicus Society of America, n.d. Pp. 161. \$7.95.

This is neither a scholarly book nor a competent non-technical survey for the general reader. Rather it is a cross between a "boy's book" and a coffee-table book.

The ideal "boy's book" portrays a heroic (see pp. 80, 133), though humble (p. 156) figure who grows up in obscurity (the chapter on Copernicus' post-university years is entitled "In the Remotest Corner of the Earth"), who triumphs over adversity through pluck and diligence (p. 95), and who ends justified in the eyes of the world, his high and single-minded purpose ("beloved astronomy," p. 97) having been realized: "with his eyes fixed on the stars he changed the order of the world he had found and opened to it the way to the stars" (p. 161). A picture of this sort would be all right if the historical record justified it, but in Copernicus' case one cannot bring it off. Arthur Koestler's "timid canon" is closer to the truth (*The Sleepwalkers*, Part III).

Adamczewski's attempt to make Copernicus a paragon of every virtue leads him not only to misconceive Copernicus' character in general, but also to commit numerous errors in detail. Thus Copernicus would not have studied theology as an arts student at the University of Cracow, not because he "already had a renaissance view" of the ranking of the arts and sciences (p. 70), but because one did not study theology as an undergraduate. Further, contrary to what Adamczewski might prefer, Copernicus was not a great observational astronomer (pp. 116, 137-38, 144); he worked principally from Ptolemy's data. One more example: there is no reason to suppose that Copernicus was "skeptical" about Renaissance medicine, which he in fact practiced.

Easily the best feature of the book is its illustrative matter. There are reproductions of the principal portraits of Copernicus, of contemporary woodcuts depicting Torun, Cracow, and other scenes Copernicus would have known, of title pages of contemporary books (none, strangely, of *De Revolutionibus*), and of some of Copernicus' manuscript pages. These,

and the beautiful photographs of buildings and scenes with which Copernicus was familiar, make the book lovely to look at; this is why I have called it a coffee-table book. The illustrations, it is true, have sometimes been chosen by criteria more suitable for a guidebook than for a biography of Copernicus—for example, the courtyard of the d'Este palace in Ferrara (p. 96) is included, apparently, because the building "commands admiration to this day"—but their quality is high.

The level of historical writing is no higher than one would expect either of a boy's book or a coffee-table book. Adamczewski says of the Renaissance:

Among the artists who lived and created during that period were such geniuses as Leonardo da Vinci, Michaelangelo, Raphael Santi, and Ludovico Ariosto. The new, secular philosophy of the Renaissance was represented by such eminent scholars as Pico della Mirandola, Lorenzo della Valla, and Marsiglio Ficino. The Centre for Platonic Studies was in Venice, while that for Aristotelian studies was in Padua. (p. 85)

On Copernicus' relationship to classical astronomy we discover, "He read astronomical works such as Ptolemy's *Almagest*" (p. 140). Also, Adamczewski has an annoying habit of telling us what Copernicus "must" have admired, usually today's tourist attractions: St. John's in Torun, where "Nicolaus most likely stopped to admire that beautiful house of worship, just as we admire it today" (p. 41); the altar of St. Mary's in Cracow—"Nicolaus Copernicus no doubt on many occasions marvelled at this work of art, which in its realism heralded the approaching new epoch" (p. 54)—and others (pp. 39, 74, 95, 97, 121).

The Marxism which one might expect appears very perfunctorily. The dominant notes are positivism and nationalism. Copernicus does not here exemplify the cultural forces of incipient capitalism: rather he belongs to the small band of the unprejudiced who merely opened their eyes to truth. And, of course, Copernicus was a good Pole opposed to the Teutonic Knights.

Adamczewski says little about the controversial (and interesting) questions of Copernican scholarship: Copernicus' relationship to Renaissance Hermetism, his attitude towards the ideas in Oslander's preface to *De Revolutionibus*, the genesis of heliocentrism and its relation to classical ideas. There are no notes, no bibliography and no index.

STUART PIERSON, *Memorial University*