

Book Reviews

Kovanov attended medical school in the late 1920s and early 1930s and was therefore imbued with the revolutionary spirit and dreams of Soviet power. His record of these early days is therefore valuable, as is his account of the German invasion of Russia. There is a great deal about the practice of surgery and also research, with occasional references to American published work. As a record of contemporary Soviet surgery this book by the Vice-President of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Medical Sciences can be warmly recommended. Readers are asked to send their impressions to the publishers, which must be a unique request.

ARNOLD TOYNBEE, ARTHUR KOESTLER, *et al.*, *Life after death*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1976, 8vo, pp. vi, 272, £4.95.

An increasing desire to discuss and ponder on the hereafter arises perhaps from current concern with extrasensory perception and with death itself. Fourteen essays, by fifteen authors, are collected together here and deal with many aspects of the problem, those concerned with theology, medicine, anthropology, mysticism, secular culture and extra-sensory perception being represented. The traditional approaches, however, are overshadowed by the non-traditional, in particular Rosalind Heywood's own experiences of contact with the dead.

There is a good deal of historical data throughout the book, especially in the late Professor Toynbee's 'Man's concern with the life after death' and in chapters on primitive societies and Africa, civilizations of pre-Columbian America, religions of the East, and Near Eastern and Islamic societies. It would have been useful also to have had reports from those who have "died" but have been revived and now belong to a club which must be one of the most exclusive in the world.

ERIC TRUDGILL, *Madonnas and magdalens. The origins and development of Victorian sexual attitudes*, London, Heinemann, 1976, 8vo, pp. xii, 336, illus., £6.50.

One of the several paradoxical aspects of the Victorians was their attitude to sex. On the surface they denounced all excesses and perversions, but at the same time encouraged clandestine indulgence. The "madonna" is the eulogized Victorian female of literature, and the "magdalen" is the prostitute, the excessive numbers of them being due to the Victorian male's creation of the immaculate purity of their womenfolk.

Mr. Trudgill describes the origins of Victorian sexual attitudes, showing how some anteceded their era, and then discusses their development. He also attempts to explain the contradictions and complex views held, and the confusion resulting from them. He deals skilfully with the overall social scene and introduces a wealth of detail, especially concerning individuals. It is a pity, therefore, that his references are limited to 340, mostly single-line entries, and the bibliography to eleven unannotated book titles; the index is also rudimentary.

Despite this the author presents an important work and all those studying the social aspects of Victorian medicine will have to consult it. The next project for Mr. Trudgill or others will be to examine contemporary Continental and American attitudes and carry out a comparative study of them.