

### Book Reviews

He uses the Bambara of Mali as his chief illustrative group, and owing to his close associations has been able to learn more about them than many other foreigners. Surgical practices, herbal remedies, the traditional medical practitioners, the powerful influence of Islam in this part of Africa, the relationship between primitive and modern medicine, and religious lore as it relates to disease, are all discussed authoritatively and sympathetically.

The medical historian studies contemporary primitive medicine in order to help him extrapolate into the unknown of prehistory. There are, of course, many books that will help him in this endeavour, but Dr. Imperato's is one of the best available. It also presents a wealth of information on disease in present-day Africa and the efforts being made to control it. Moreover, it is well produced and relatively modest in price.

HARLAN LANE, *The wild boy of Aveyron*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1977, 8vo, pp. [xiv], 351, illus., £6.95.

Yet another addition to the already extensive literature on this topic. The discovery of the ten- or eleven-year-old Victor in central France in 1799 instigated a debate that still continues: was he Rousseau's "noble savage", an imbecile, a deaf-mute, or an autistic child? In any case he was a creature to be studied carefully in order to elucidate human learning and social development. Dr. J. M. Itard spent five years trying to educate Victor with only partial success, but the methods he used were the forerunners of those employed today with deaf or mentally retarded children.

The author has discovered three missing papers by Itard and a report on Victor by Pinel, the famous French pioneer in psychiatry, and is thus able to provide the first full historical and psychological analysis of Itard's methods of education and speech therapy. From them have stemmed new answers to basic questions of speech acquisition.

Lane, a psychologist specializing in linguistics, has written a detailed account but with insufficient documentation, the system employed for the notes provided being curious and difficult to use; there is, however, a full bibliography of twenty-five pages. Nevertheless, this book is an important contribution to the wild-boy corpus, to the history of the teaching of the handicapped, to the continuing arguments on the effects of environment on mental and linguistic development, and to the ever-popular discussion concerning the nature of man.

E. M. THORNTON, *Hypnotism, hysteria and epilepsy. An historical synthesis*, London, Heinemann Medical Books, 1976, 8vo, pp. vii, 205, illus., £5.95.

It is quite likely that in the past certain curious attacks, bizarre behaviour, and other odd episodic activities which were given many interpretations were in fact epileptic in origin. Recent knowledge of temporal lobe and other types of seizures allow us to make this retrospective judgment. It is the author's opinion that mesmerism can be accounted for likewise. Thus the convulsive crisis, the deep coma, the convulsions, and other physical phenomena are all epileptic in origin when the early accounts of them are studied carefully. Hysteria is also closely involved with mesmerism and of like causation. Oddities such as Tremblers, Jumpers, Convulsionaires, the Jerkers,

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the Shakers, and the Holy Rollers can be similarly interpreted.

The author presents a large amount of disparate information in support of his thesis and he could be, at least in part, correct. It is a pity, however, than when putting forward an original and provocative view he has not documented his data accurately in order to substantiate his claims with authority. Moreover, his knowledge of the history of neurology and psychiatry is neither as extensive nor as accurate as one would expect, and his claim concerning the paucity of historical works on mesmerism is difficult to accept.

However, the book should stimulate others to re-evaluate inexplicable phenomena, with the possibility that in some cases epilepsy will be found to be the etiological agent.

CLARENCE MALONEY (editor), *The evil eye*, New York Columbia University Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. xix, 335, illus., \$18.75.

Spread throughout the world is the notion that a person can have harm done him or his property by another projecting it upon him. One of the methods is by evil forces directed from the eye, and this book brings together fifteen essays by anthropologists who are investigating the evil eye. The idea originated with the Ancient Egyptians, and today is found in many parts of the world which the authors here describe in topographical sequence: Italy, Greece, Tunisia, Arabia and Iran, Ethiopia, India, Philippines, Guatemala, Mexico, and America. It is fascinating to review the diversities of this variety of magic and myth and to see how it still flourishes in modern communities and seems to correlate with certain technologies, but not with others. Professor Maloney's book is one of the most detailed on an absorbing subject and will be warmly welcomed mainly by anthropologists. Historians of medicine will also be interested in the evil eye as a primitive agent in disease causation, and in the wide variety of methods used in prophylaxis and treatment.

E. WILLIAM MONTER, *Witchcraft in France and Switzerland. The borderlands during the Reformation*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1976, 8vo, pp. 232, illus., £12.00.

For a period of about two and a half centuries, beginning early in the fifteenth century, the French-Swiss border, like other parts of Europe including Britain, was the scene of many witchcraft trials. Professor Monter has selected this "Jura region" because of the different styles of witchcraft encountered and the rich source-material available. A comparative study is always of value, and he skilfully compares and contrasts the components of Jura witchcraft with those elsewhere in Europe. Phenomena witnessed in Germany, France, and Britain were not seen in the Jura. These differences, and the variations along the French-Swiss border, have a variety of explanations, not all of which were religious. Analysis of them demands a detailed knowledge of both local and general affairs, which the author clearly has. His book is an important scholarly contribution to witchcraft studies, upon which, it is to be hoped, future workers will base their studies. It is well written, the documentation is neither oppressive nor scanty, and it can be strongly recommended.