

## Book Notices

**Lucinda McCray Beier**, *A matter of life and death: health, illness, and medicine in McLean County, 1830–1995*, Bloomington, McLean County Historical Society, 1996, pp. viii, 281, illus., \$15.00 (0-943788-09-9).

Although Lucinda McCray Beier is known for her research on sufferers and healers in early modern England, recently she has turned her attention toward the changing face of medicine in America. Her second book describes the central trends in the past two hundred years of U.S. medical history—the narrowing of the medical market and the professionalization of medicine, the rise of the public health movement, and the advent of hospital medicine—from the point of view of the inhabitants of McLean County Illinois. Yet *A matter of life and death* is not written solely as a medical history. Convinced that the perceptions of patients and practitioners in the past can “help us to identify what we value most highly in order to determine how the health care delivery system of the future should appear” (p. 9), Beier’s book is also a commentary on the current medical system and policies of the United States.

It is unlikely that readers will find much that is useful in her critique of contemporary medicine, however. Beier’s revelation that McLean County residents regret the passing of affordable health care and the deterioration of doctor-patient relations, for example, is hardly enlightening. Wearing the historian’s hat, Beier is more successful. By constructing her narrative upon the voices of the historical participants themselves (much of her material is culled from 31 oral history interviews), Beier supplies a valuable human dimension to the larger themes of American medical history. Indeed, the impressive and highly revelatory body of first-hand evidence Beier has collected renders her book a very useful addition to an undergraduate syllabus.

**Judith Walzer Leavitt**, *The healthiest city: Milwaukee and the politics of health reform*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, pp. xxiii, 294, illus., £18.00 (paperback 0-299-15164-6).

The reprinting of Leavitt’s now classic study of public health reform in Milwaukee appears—in part at least—to have been inspired by an outbreak of gastro-intestinal disorders due to cryptosporidium in the city’s water supply in 1993. The city authorities had not adequately monitored and up-dated the Victorian water systems because of the expense involved. In this sense, modern experience relates directly to nineteenth-century events and attitudes, when public health was also regularly compromised by cost-conscious city authorities. Politically, therefore, this re-issue is timely. Historiographically, however, and this despite the quality of Leavitt’s work which confers it classic status, it seems a touch old-fashioned. Leavitt’s straightforward acceptance of Thomas McKeown’s now controversial thesis that nutrition was more important than social intervention in bringing down death-rates in Western industrialized societies is especially notable in this regard. Even in 1982, the date of first publication, historians of public health and mortality were working towards a serious critique of McKeown. Since 1988, this has developed into a lively debate, and some recognition of this—perhaps in a postscript—would have rounded off this re-issue, and re-inforced its relevance not only for political and public health history, but for the historical demography and the history of epidemiology as well.

**Marco Beretta**, *Bibliotheca Lavoisieriana: the catalogue of the library of Antoine Laurent Lavoisier*, Biblioteca di Nunciatus, Studi e Testi 16, Florence, Leo S Olschki, 1995, pp. 361, no price given (88-222-4306-4).

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No comprehensive catalogue exists of Lavoisier's library, much of which was confiscated after his death by the Comité des Arts. This valiant attempt at a reconstruction of the library is based on various documents and on citations in Lavoisier's writings. It attests to the range of Lavoisier's interests. Chemistry is of course the largest category but there are substantial holdings also in, for example, finance and trade, mineralogy, mathematics, natural history and medicine, as well as smaller but still significant representations of law and politics, agriculture and travel. The representation of literature and general subjects would be higher if books known to have belonged to Lavoisier's widow could be proved to have been previously owned by her husband. A select list of the most likely titles in this category is cautiously printed as an appendix, so that use of the index at the end of the volume is essential in addition to the alphabetical catalogue (and editors, translators, etc. are not indexed). The largest surviving remnant of the collection is the 300 books now at Cornell. At a late stage in the production of the present volume another cache of 69 books was discovered at the University of Bordeaux. It is a little disconcerting for the present exercise that 15 of these (21 per cent) were previously unsuspected titles. The introduction includes a discussion of a selection of eighteenth-century scientific book-collectors and their libraries, with special reference to chemistry.

**Andy Boddington, et al.,** *Raunds Furnells: the Anglo-Saxon church and churchyard: Raunds area project*, English Heritage Archaeological Report, new series 7, London, English Heritage, 1996, pp. xiii, 133, illus., £35.00 (1-85074-520-X). Personal and mail order buyers should contact: English Heritage, PO Box 229, Northampton NN6 9QY; trade customers: Bailey Distribution, Learoyd Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8XU.

The report describes the church and churchyard of a settlement established in the early sixth century AD. This cemetery site (its

boundaries delineated by ditches) is important as, unusually, it has been completely excavated with human remains dating from the settlement's foundation to a suggested twelfth century end date. Detailed pieces are included on the ceramic evidence, small finds, and the church's constituent components. Importantly for readers of *Medical History* the publication includes a very thorough human skeletal remains report. Noteworthy is the significant proportion of the adult population who suffered from osteoarthritis, and the presence of one or two leprosy individuals. The only criticism of this report is that there is no complete catalogue of surviving bones and the relegation of 111 pages of osteological data to microfiche might make accessing data problematic.

**Guido Giglioli,** *Latin manuscripts of Francis Glisson (1): philosophical papers. Materials related to 'De natura substantiae energetica' (On the energetic nature of substance), 1672*, Cambridge Wellcome Texts and Documents, No. 5, Cambridge, Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, 1996, pp. viii, 208, £15.00 (UK), £16.00 (elsewhere in Europe), £18.00 (elsewhere in the world) (0-9516693-7-0).

The Cambridge Wellcome Unit has begun a project to edit all the unpublished writings of Francis Glisson, Regius Professor of Physic at Cambridge between 1636 and 1677. This is the first volume of his Latin manuscripts in the British Library. Written some time after his *Anatomia hepatis* (1654), the texts reproduced here all relate to, and predate the publication of, the *De natura substantiae energetica* (1672). The most substantial of them are two philosophical treatises: one on the human intellect (*Tractatus de inadaequatis rerum conceptibus*), and the other on the first divisions of being, or "entity" (*Disquisitiones metaphysicae*). This material is prefaced by Glisson's own English version of the dedicatory epistle to the *De natura substantiae energetica*, and followed by several drafts for the work's title page. English summaries of

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each chapter of the Latin are provided, together with an index of concepts. However, the editor assumes that readers will be familiar with the philosophical issues under discussion, as well as fluent in Latin. Of course Glisson himself was expected to be conversant with logic and metaphysics (the “first philosophy” of Aristotle) in order to write authoritatively on aspects of physic. This edition will appeal to scholars who do not have easy access to the original sources, and it could be used as a specialist teaching text. A new study of Glisson which fully contextualizes this material is eagerly awaited.

**Louise C Youtie**, *Michigan Papyri XVII: The Michigan Medical Codex (P.Mich. 758=P.Mich. inv. 21)*, American Studies in Papyrology, vol. 35, Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1996, pp. xxv, 87, illus., \$39.95 (0-7885-0276-X).

P.Mich 758, written in the fourth century AD, contains large sections of an ancient Greek drug book that includes not only earlier recipes but also additions and comments by an (original?) owner. This volume reprints the series of articles from *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 1986–1987, in which Louise Youtie first published this long and complicated document, along with Ann Hanson’s brief introduction and preface. Its importance consists in its being a text outside the main tradition, practical in aim and format, and revealing of what ancient medical prescribing was like in Roman Egypt, although the editor carefully lists an abundance of parallels in Galen and Scribonius. Its publication in book form makes consultation more convenient, and the editor must be congratulated for making so difficult a document relatively easy to use.

**Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich** (eds), *Drugs and narcotics in history*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. xi, 227, £30.00 (hardback 0-521-43163), £12.95 (paperback 0-521-58597-X).

The hardback edition of this collection of essays was reviewed in *Medical History*, 1996, 40: 383–4. The paperback edition is now available.

### BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED

(The inclusion of a title does not preclude the possibility of subsequent review. Items received, other than those assigned for review, are ultimately incorporated into the collection of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.)

**Johann S Ach and Michael Quante** (eds), *Hirntod und Organverpflanzung. Ethische, medizinische, psychologische und rechtliche Aspekte der Transplantationsmedizin*, Medizin und Philosophie Beiträge aus der Forschung, Stuttgart, frommann-holzboog, 1997, pp. 416, DM 58.00 (3-7728-1723-8).

**Thomas F Baskett**, *On the shoulders of giants: eponyms and names in obstetrics and gynaecology*, London, RCOG Press, 1996, pp. xvi, 270, illus., £40.00 (0-902331-94-9).

**Robert Boyle**, *A free enquiry into the vulgarly received notion of nature*, edited by Edward B Davis and Michael Hunter, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. xxxvi, 171, £37.50, \$54.95 (hardback 0-521-56100-0); £13.95, \$18.95 (paperback 0-521-56796-3).

**Martin Dinges** (ed.), *Medizinkritische Bewegungen im Deutschen Reich (ca. 1870—ca. 1933)*, Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte, Beihefte 9, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 1996, pp. 206, DM/SFr 76.00 (3-515-06835-X).

**Frank Huisman and Catrien Santing** (eds), *Medische geschiedenis in regionaal perspectief: Groningen 1500-1900*, Rotterdam, Erasmus Publishing, 1997, pp. 184, illus., Hfl. 59.50 (90-5235-107-4).