

Book Notices

DANIELLE JACQUART and CLAUDE THOMASSET, *Sexualité et savoir médical au moyen âge*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1985, 8vo, pp. 269, Fr.135.00 (paperback).

In this scholarly and well-researched survey of published and manuscript materials, the authors offer the fullest account to date of how medieval philosophers and medical men interpreted human sexuality. Successive chapters discuss the variety of theories on offer, from Isidore to the late scholastics, on such topics as gender and genital difference, fertility and fecundation, sexual diseases, erotic stimulation, and so forth. Unsurprisingly, it is shown that learned medieval discourse on such subjects essentially consisted of rehashes of Classical medicine, interspersed with a certain amount of Islamic commentary (the issue of how Islamic eroticism related to medical theory is raised but not resolved). The authors do not particularly venture into the fields of sexual practice, sexuality and the law, or the changing role of the Church (a matter recently dealt with by J.-L. Flandrin); nor is there much on popular sexual attitudes. Despite a certain narrowness, this work is valuable for demonstrating a continuity of naturalistic sexual discussion throughout the Middle Ages, and for showing the medieval sources of so many later popular medico-sexual texts.

JEAN TOWLER and JOAN BRAMALL, *Midwives in history and society*, London, Croom Helm, 1986, 8vo, pp. xii, 316, illus., £14.95 (paperback).

This nicely-illustrated and unpretentious volume constitutes the best survey currently available of the history of midwifery. The first four chapters offer a slightly breakneck account of developments from the Stone Age to Tudor times; but developments since then are more carefully considered (although—despite the title—it is only the growth of the profession in England, up through the state certified midwife, which is covered). Each chapter weaves together a certain amount of general social background with specific developments in the fields of midwifery, obstetrics, surgery, etc., and with discussion of medical politics. Major texts in the story, such as Jane Sharp's *The midwives' book*, are discussed in some detail. Overall, the interpretation is sympathetic to midwifery, while avoiding some of the more strident claims of recent feminist authors. One welcome aspect of the book is that it takes the story beyond the 1902 Midwives' Act up to the present. Skilfully integrating recent scholarship and their own researches in primary sources, the authors have produced a readable and useful work which would serve as a reliable and illuminating introduction to the history of the profession.

PAUL MORAUX, *Galien de Pergame. Souvenirs d'un médecin*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1985, 8vo, pp 197, illus., [no price stated].

This French translation of selections from Galen can be warmly welcomed for many reasons. It makes accessible to the French reader most of the important autobiographical statements by Galen; it offers a succinct and penetrating commentary; and it is preceded by a judicious introduction from an acknowledged expert. The addenda of suggested modern diagnoses may be more controversial, and not all of the identifications can be easily accepted. We regret only that the author did not live to see his labour of love in print.

PAUL CARRICK, *Medical ethics in Antiquity. Philosophical perspectives on abortion and euthanasia*, Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster, D. Reidel 1985, 8vo, pp. xxvi, 242, illus., £27.95.

It is hard to take seriously a book on this topic written by a man who knows only English and who believes Cnidos to be an island. Even in English much relevant literature is left out, and it is not always easy to see the purpose of the pedestrian summaries of others' arguments. For all their faults, Edelstein's essays in his *On ancient medicine* offer the Greekless non-specialist a more exciting introduction than this book's pompous banalities.

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HIPPOCRATES, *La consultation*, Paris, Hermann, 1986, 8vo, pp. xviii, 278, Fr.98.00 (paperback).

This selection from Littré's translation of Hippocrates is annotated by Armelle Debru and introduced by Jacques Jouanna. His preface aims to reawaken French interest in Hippocrates, whose life is sketched in a manner reminiscent of Littré and his predecessors. The lament for the absence of French-born editors since 1861 does less than justice to some of the intervening French interpreters of Hippocrates and neglects entirely the still valuable *Chirurgie d'Hippocrate* of M. Pétrequin of Lyons, 1877-8.

EDWARD G. JONES, *The thalamus*, New York, Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1985.

This volume contains a thirty-seven-page fully-referenced and attractively illustrated introductory chapter entitled 'The history of the thalamus'. It contains material not previously considered in the interpretation of the development of ideas concerning this part of the brain. Photographs of some of the individuals mentioned are published here for the first time.

Exploring Local History, edited by Michael Gardener, No. 9, May 1986 (annual subscription – 12 issues – £12.50).

We welcome the reappearance of this journal after an unavoidable break in publication. Articles of interest to medical historians in the current issue include 'Evidence of early man in a Welsh parish' by Dora Seed-Knowles and 'In search of Guthrum. Evidence of a ninth-century royal burial in Hadleigh' by S. P. Andrews. The journal is produced and distributed by Elmcrest Publishing Ltd, 13 Redcross Street, Old Market, Bristol BS2 0BA.

BOOKS ALSO RECEIVED

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

R. ALVAREZ PELAEZ, *Sir Francis Galton, padre de la eugenesia*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios históricos, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1985, 8vo, pp. 174, illus., [no price stated] (paperback).

Bibliography of the History of Medicine, no. 20, 1980–84, Bethesda, Md., National Library of Medicine, 1986, 4to, pp. xi, 1300, [no price stated].

BRANKO BOKUN, *Humour therapy in cancer, psychosomatic diseases, mental disorders, crime, interpersonal and sexual relationships*, London, Vita Books, 1986, 8vo, pp. 221, £5.00 (paperback).

LUIS S. GRANJEL, *Medicina española contemporánea*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1986, 4to, pp. 246, illus., [no price stated] (paperback).

HARMON L. SMITH and LARRY R. CHURCHILL, *Professional ethics and primary care medicine. Beyond dilemmas and decorum*, Durham, NC, and London, Duke University Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. viii, 117, £25.00 (£9.95 paperback).