

Book Notices

GUISEPPE MAGGIONI and ANTONIO CORVI (eds.), *Le piante medicinali e il loro impiego in farmacia nel corso dei secoli, Acta of the International Congress for the History of Pharmacy, 23–25 September 1988, Piacenza, Italy*, Piacenza, Accademia Italiana di Storia della Farmacia, 1989, 4to, pp. 309, illus., (paperback).

It is hard to take seriously a volume of conference proceedings that lacks a list of contributions, let alone an index of names, plants, or drugs. A simple and solitary index of authors may appeal to their friends, but hardly enlightens a wider audience. Students of early Italian and Spanish pharmacology may here find much to their taste, but few will have the patience to read everything. Hence the final paper, Dr Teresella's valuable interim report on his project to catalogue medieval illustrated herbals, seems destined for undeserved obscurity, and his pleas for constructive assistance are likely to go unanswered.

LAURENT JOUBERT, *Popular errors*, transl. and ann. Gregory David de Rocher, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. xxvi, 348, £38.95, (dist. Eurospan).

Often read as a quaint compilation of medical folk-lore, the *Erreurs populaires* of the sixteenth-century French Protestant physician, Laurent Joubert, is in reality a far more historically revealing treatise, as Gregory David de Rocher makes clear in his excellent scholarly edition. It is, for one thing, a concerted attempt to "reform" conceptions of the body itself, dismissing popular animism and magic and instating the laws of regular physiological action, in such fields as the engendering of children. It is, moreover, an attempt to seize for the medical profession the right to police moral and religious matters concerning organic being. And, above all, it amounts to the most forcible appropriation of health exclusively for the regular medical profession—especially the physicians—in an era of contested cognitive jurisdictions. Quite different in tone from Sir Thomas Browne's writings on vulgar errors, Joubert presents the aggressive face of early modern medical professionalization. The editor is to be congratulated upon making such a signal and influential text readily available once more to an English-speaking readership.

MANFRED WENZEL and others, *Samuel Thomas Soemmerring: Naturforscher der Goethezeit in Kassel*, Kassel, Weber & Weidemeyer, 1988, 8vo, pp. 131, illus.

This is an attractive book, as elegant in its layout as it is in the choice of subjects for the essays. Jutte Schuchard's essay on Kassel's Anatomy Theatre, designed by Simon Louis du Ry, one of the great house architects of the German lands in the eighteenth century, is a solid contribution to this building type's history, which has hardly been advanced since Gottfried Richter's book of 1936. Ulrike Enke explains how it was to work within the greater project that was the Carolinum. Balloon excursions; 'On the beauty of antique childrens' busts'; Freemasons and Rosicrucians; 'On the physical differences between Moors and Europeans'; Friedrich II's elephant: carefully documented, strikingly illustrated, it is a collection to remind one why it was more fun to be enlightened than modern.

SELWYN TAYLOR, *Robert Graves: the golden years of Irish medicine*, Eponymists in Medicine, London, Royal Society of Medicine Services, 1989, 8vo, pp. x, 160, illus., £12.95, £7.95 (paperback).

The decision of the Royal Society of Medicine to publish monographs on the history of medicine is generally to be welcomed, and a series on "Eponymists in Medicine" is not a bad idea. Unfortunately, Selwyn Taylor's biography of Robert Graves is amateurish in the worst

Book Notices

sense of the word. It is riddled with countless mistakes and sloppy presentation. The reference to the "Wellcome Foundation for the History of Medicine" does not inspire confidence, nor does the fact that each of Taylor's three citations of C. A. von Basedow's classic paper on exophthalmic goitre is incorrect in different ways. This is a shame, since Graves is a good subject, but one still best approached through William Stokes's life of his friend and colleague, published in 1863.

OWEN TULLY STRATTON, *Medicine man*, ed. Owen S. Stratton, Norman and London, University of Oklahoma Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. xx, 251, illus., £13.95 (dist. Eurospan).

A failed professional gambler, Owen Tully Stratton abandoned poker for pharmacy, and set up a medicine show in the Pacific coast states of America late in the nineteenth century. Though a licensed doctor, Stratton's real talent lay in "grafting", hiring the best comic performers, keeping sober when other medicine men wasted all their takings on whisky, perfecting his *spiel*, developing such money-spinning stunts as the tapeworm trick, and vending "Quaker Herbals". In his prime, he could reckon on taking around \$800 a week. Eventually he settled down as a country doc, a less lucrative but more respectable trade (though performed in much the same manner), crowning his career by political quackery by becoming a state senator for Idaho. Late in life, Stratton wrote his memoirs, here admirably edited by his son. Told with a salty wit, they offer a wonderfully entertaining insight into the sick trade of a frontier society.

BARBARA SPACKMAN, *Decadent genealogies: the rhetoric of sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. xv, 220, \$29.95.

Barbara Spackman's clever book offers sustained meditations on the ambivalences of the language of health and sickness in the last *fin de siècle*: decadents are shown to become the doubles of their medical psychiatric critics, merging and exchanging identities. The denunciation of degenerates by such polemicists as Nordau is revealed to be itself a decadent trait; while the embracing of illness, enervation and effeteness by Baudelaire, Huysmans, and D'Annunzio proves sources of strength and creativity. In particular, the liminal states of effeminization and convalescence, wounding and healing, prove to be crucial to the decadent perception of artistic fecundity.

In all these developments, Nietzsche serves as the pivotal figure, with his subtle appreciation of the "profits of sickness" and the "advantages that my fickle health gives me over robust folks". Not least, Spackman offers generous appreciation of the decadent exploitation of the "talking body"—a vision reductively lost with Freud's blunt privileging of the unconscious and his notion of hysterical conversion. This is one of those rare works of literary analysis that should prove genuinely illuminating to medical historians confronted with the polysemic vocabulary and concepts of medical texts themselves.

JEFF GOLDBERG, *Anatomy of a scientific discovery: the race to discover the secret of human pain and pleasure*, paperback ed., New York, Bantam Books, 1989, 8vo, pp. vii, 228, \$8.95.

Popular accounts of scientific discoveries are not new, but future historians of science will have to consider the contribution of vulgar psychoanalytic theory when studying those written in the last 40 years. The history of the race to isolate and analyse the endorphins nicely lends itself to models of Oedipal struggle and sibling rivalry. Editorial languor aside—the "Max Plank" Institute makes one appearance, and Aberdeen's "Marishal" College dozens—this is a competent treatment of a complex subject. However, Goldberg's description of his variously "gnome-like", "quietly sensitive", and grey-haired "cut by a barber, not a stylist" protagonists, while reiterating the excitement of what they were up to, manages to throw away real excitement in a line or two. If foetal blood were needed for endorphin analysis, pregnant pharmacologists had the edge.

Book Notices

SUSAN SONTAG, *AIDS and its metaphors*, London, Penguin Books, 1990, 8vo, pp. 95, £3.99 (paperback).

With *Illness as metaphor*, Sontag set out to strip “cancer” (among others) of metaphorical accretions that, not least, wickedly enlarge the burden of those who have the disease. Thirty years ago, René Dubos’ *Mirage of health* reminded us that the “multiplication of a virulent microorganism in the body rarely expresses itself in the manifestation of disease”; perhaps the most important point made in *AIDS and its metaphors* is that “infected-but-healthy” is once again becoming an oxymoron. But the *real* consequences of the AIDS metaphors for sufferers, especially those who are HIV-positive but display no symptoms, are still unclear. The clichés have not yet solidified. The one that Sontag, finally, produces to greatest effect—AIDS as global doom, a “perfect repository for people’s most general fears about the future”—is too vague and impersonal, even on the dissection-table, to allow this book the rigour and heat of its predecessor.

WILLIAM S. FIELDS and NOREEN A. LEMAK, *A history of stroke: its recognition and treatment*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. vii, 211, illus., £30.00.

Stroke, the authors tell us in a volume which is often useful, sometimes sloppy, and never adventurous, is on the decline. Perhaps, they suggest, “mysterious powers govern the ebb and flow of some noninfectious diseases” (p. 171). Apart from this slightly unsettling pronouncement the authors’ approach to their subject is conventional and comprehensive except, curiously, they give no account of the origins and use of the word “stroke” to describe paralytic attacks. They deal with the early history, arteriography, cerebrovascular surgery, management, non-invasive investigation, and epidemiology of stroke and round off with a chapter, ‘Well-known persons who have suffered strokes’. The early history is poorly done, being taken from secondary sources which are often inaccurate. At times, their description is frankly careless. The first paragraph tells us the “Greeks . . . recognised the importance of these great vessels [the carotids] in supplying blood to the brain” followed immediately by “Hippocrates . . . believed that the arteries were filled with air.” (p. 3). By the time the authors reach the twentieth century, however, they begin to demonstrate where their expertise lies and the book becomes a valuable bibliographical guide to essential sources for a history of the medical view of stroke.

BENGT LJUNGGREN, *Great men with sick brains and other essays*, Park Ridge, American Association of Neurological Surgeons, 1990, 8vo, pp. 130, illus., paperback, \$35.00 prepaid payable to AANS from The American Association of Neurological Surgeons, 22 South Washington Street, Suite 100, Park Ridge IL 60068, USA.

A fascination with the byways of the development of neurophysiology and of brain surgery is the thread uniting Professor Ljunggren’s collection of essays, which range from biographical studies of such pioneer Scandinavian surgeons as Olof af Acrel and Edvard Bull, Henrik Ibsen’s physician, to a brief history of murder through the technique of driving nails into the cranium. In his several pieces devoted to the brain diseases of the great, Professor Ljunggren avoids the hoary topic of the supposed madness of genius. He points, rather, to the difficulty of correct diagnosis in instances of neurological disorders caused by progressive brain disease—difficulties compounded, for instance, in the case of George Gershwin by the psychoanalytic fad for psychogenic explanations. Gershwin’s acute stomach problems, nausea, and headaches were long interpreted as neurotic protests against the artificial world of Hollywood. Not least, he draws attention to the frequency with which those holding positions of power have been unfit to serve on account of incapacitating physical disease. A devastating clinical history of Admiral Sir Dudley Pound demonstrates that, during the early years of World War II, his brain was rapidly failing (he died in 1943 from a glioma), though he was allowed to remain in office to perpetrate some of the most disastrous naval actions of the War.

Book Notices

YOSIO KAWAKITA, SHIZU SAKAI, and YASUO OTSUKA (eds.), *History of hospitals: the evolution of health care facilities. Proceedings of the 11th International Symposium on the Comparative History of Medicine, East and West, 31 August–6 September 1986, Susono-shi, Shizuoka, Japan*, Tokyo, Division of Medical History, The Taniguchi Foundation, 1989, 8vo, pp. vii, 219, illus.

As M. Maurice Rochaux writes in his history of French hospitals here, “when you reduce to what is essential you tend to . . . get rid of details that might lead you to the truth”. His and four other essays in these symposium proceedings, by Eduard Seidler (medieval European hospitals), Ehsan-ul-Haq (Islamic), Morris J. Vogel (American), and Lindsay Granshaw (British hospitals since 1700) are necessarily the results of long distillations, although not untruthful. The last two are particularly brisk and comprehensive, and will encourage newcomers to this venerable but immature historical genre. The other contributions, including A. P. M. Langeveld’s very solid history of military hospitals in The Netherlands, have narrower subjects. Although four, by Toshihiko Hasegawa, Atsuaki Gunji, Kimio Moriyama, and Junko Kusakari, illustrate aspects of Japanese hospitals, with the emphasis on the post-war period, the reader is left wanting to know more about them, for the sake of what is exotic, to the Westerner, and what is familiar. Little apartment house-hospitals used to be built around physicians’ homes; as of 1986, the heads of the non-profit “medical corporations”, which in 1984 owned nearly half a million Japanese hospital beds, must be physicians. Such details make us think again about the Western tradition, and maybe even nudge us closer toward the truth.

ALVIN E. RODIN and JACK D. KEY (eds.), *Medicine, literature & eponyms: an encyclopedia of medical eponyms derived from literary characters*, Malabar, Fl., Robert E. Krieger, 1989, 4to, pp. xxii, 345, illus., \$39.50.

If the history of medicine is the history of its language, a fine book is there for the writing on medical eponyms. Many diseases are, of course, named for their “discoverer”. But, from early times, anatomical parts, syndromes, disorders, and therapies have often been called after celebrities, sometimes historical but chiefly fictitious (Adam’s Apple, the Oedipus Complex, Onanism); and analysis of such namings could tell us much about the cultural aspirations, unconscious prejudices, and, not least, ingrained sexism of the medical profession (e.g. the radiologist’s “Playboy Bunny Sign”). Unfortunately, this is not that book, its aims reaching little beyond the presentation of information in a light-hearted, entertaining manner. At this level, it succeeds, and it is good to be reminded of the origins of “panic”, “sphincter”, and “syphilis” (Syphilis is the shepherd hero of Fracastoro’s poem). Misprints and elementary errors (*The anatomy of melancholy* written by Richard Burton, etc.) reach, however, an almost pathological level, tempting the reviewer to suggest the need for yet another eponym: the “Rodin and Key Syndrome”.

WOLF WINKLER (ed.), *A spectacle of spectacles*, exh. cat., Carl-Zeiss-Stiftung Jena, Edition Leipzig, 1988, 8vo, pp. 178, illus., £11.99 + £1.50 p&p from Wilma Henderson, National Museum of Scotland, Chambers St., Edinburgh EH1 1JF.

A visit to the exhibition of the same name quickly turned into a game, familiar to myopics, of hunt-the-spectacles. Easy enough with the lithographic portrait of Benjamin Franklin; in Jan Collart’s engraving *Spectacle Vendor* (1582); and even in Hendrik Goltzius’ engraved *Circumcision of Christ* (1594), where they rest on the predictable nose, and Hieronymus Cock’s engraving (1556) after Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s *Temptation of St Anthony*, where they are stuck through an unpredictable nose. But some close peering was required to find them in Cornelis Cord’s engraving of the *Academy of Art* (1578; an elderly gentlemen cuts into a suspended cadaver) and Dürer’s woodcut, *Joachim rejected by the High Priest* (1502/4; another elder checks for precedents in a large book). Great art acquires new interest in this iconographic context: Rembrandt’s etching of *St Jerome at the Willow Trunk* (1648) takes on an even sweeter

Book Notices

poignancy. And real spectacles, reading glasses, scissors-glasses, quizzing glasses, and lorgnettes from the sixteenth century and after also feature in a catalogue that does justice to the exhibition, and to the extraordinary Zeiss collection from which it was formed.

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.)

ROBERT A. DAY, *How to write and publish a scientific paper*, 3rd ed., Cambridge University press, 1989, 8vo, pp. xi, 211, illus., £7.95 (paperback).

GERHARD FICHTNER, *Index wissenschaftshistorischer Dissertationen (IWD), Verzeichnis abgeschlossener Dissertationen auf dem Gebiet der Geschichte der Medizin, der Pharmazie, der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik*, 2, 1981–6; *Laufende Wissenschaftshistorische Dissertationen (LWD), Verzeichnis in Bearbeitung befindlicher Dissertation auf dem Gebiet der Geschichte der Medizin, der Pharmazie, der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik*, Tübingen, Institut für Geschichte der Medizin, 1987, 8vo, pp. 388, (paperback).

JOHN FRY, *General practice and primary health care 1940s–1980s*, London, Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust, [3 Prince Albert Rd, London NW1 7SP], 1988, 8vo, pp. xii, 116, £8.00 (incl. p.&p.).

PENNY A. HOLLINGHAM, *Care for the elderly*, Penguin Nursing Revision Notes, ed. P. A. Downie, London, Penguin Books, 1990, 8vo, pp. vii, 71, £3.99 (paperback).

ALFONS LABISCH and REINHARD SPREE (eds.), *Medizinische Deutungsmacht in sozialen Wandel des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*, Bonn, Psychiatrie-Verlag, 1989, 8vo, pp. 239, DM 29.80, (paperback).

S. M. McCANN (editor), *Endocrinology: people and ideas*, Bethesda MD, American Physiological Society, 1988, 8vo, pp. x, 471, illus.

AXEL HINRICH MURKEN (ed.), *Medicina in nummis*, exh. cat., Leverkusen, Sammlung des Bayer-Archivs, 1988, 8vo, pp. 31, illus., (paperback).

JOACHIM HANS SCHAWALDER, *Der Physiologe Ludimar Hermann (1838–1914): Berlin–Zürich–Königsberg*, Zürcher medizingeschichtliche Abhandlungen 210, Zurich, Juris, 1990, 8vo, pp. 94, SFr. 24.00 (paperback).

PETER TOWNSEND and NICK DAVIDSON (eds.), *The Black Report*, and MARGARET WHITEHEAD, *The health divide*, in *Inequalities in health*, London, Penguin Books, 1988, 8vo, pp. xiii, 399, £4.95 (paperback).