

Book Reviews

and the special positions of Jews, Muslims and women in the field of medical care. From their special knowledge of the archives, they are able to present new details on the demographic distribution of medical practitioners throughout the Kingdom of Valencia during the fourteenth century.

McVaugh, Garcia Ballester and Rubio Vela are at their most speculative when attempting to explain the increasing pressure for medical supervision. They see it, first, as a “Christianization” of Valencian society and medicine: they interpret it, broadly speaking, as part of a process in which the Church tried to define the system of education most appropriate for medical practitioners. They also stress the royal interest in medical regulation. They point to Jaume II’s personal preoccupation with matters medical, and to the political interests of the crown in asserting the royal prerogative. They also point to Valencia’s particular reputation for excellence in medical learning and practice.

While this study deals primarily with medical licensing in Valencia, the authors make frequent illuminating comparisons with Sicily, Montpellier, Barcelona and the Kingdom of Aragon. Indeed, as they are aware, their findings may be more generally true for much of Western Europe at this time. However, a good deal of research in the northern archives would be required to substantiate this fascinating suggestion.

On closing this book the reader is left with a series of tantalizing questions to ponder. For instance, what was the precise nature of a medical examination? Did anybody ever fail? What did it mean to “pass” such a test? Also, if—as the authors claim (p. 34)—licensing was not a necessary prerequisite to practise medicine, then what were the specific circumstances within which licences were granted? But no matter: the excellence and interest of the scholarship presented here is such as we have come to expect from its authors. Nobody will be disappointed with this suggestive and provoking piece of research.

Cornelius O’Boyle, University of Notre Dame

MARINA BENJAMIN (ed.), *Science and sensibility: gender and scientific enquiry, 1780–1945*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1991, pp. x, 295, £35.00 (0–631–16649–1).

The current application of humanist methodologies to the histories of science and medicine has re-situated science as a cultural activity; “science as both practice and body of knowledge”, argues Lynda Birke in *Science and sensibility*, “incorporates and epitomizes the values of the larger society” (p. 257). Feminism, though already strong in its criticism of the larger society, has turned more belatedly to science, precisely because science has seemed so predominantly a male preserve. This valuable collection of essays on such topics as women sanitary reformers, sexuality in the plant kingdom, hermaphroditism, biological determinism and military science demonstrates that there are numerous junctions between gender and scientific enquiry.

In her broad-ranging introduction, Marina Benjamin surveys the state of the art in feminist studies, distinguishing two focal points: first, the more obvious subject of “science’s role in the licensing of gender stereotyping”, and second, a more challenging problem not fully tackled by this book, that of the relationship between science and patriarchy at the fundamental level of epistemology (p. 14). While divided into three sections—women practitioners of science, gender representation in science, and science and feminism—what these essays share is a theory that professional, positivistic science provided an “objective” foundation for the doctrine of “separate spheres” of activity for men and women. Some of the contributors, such as Birke and A. D. Morrison-Low, aim to provide a conspectus and aspire to full knowledge of their subject, however, most of these essays are very detailed case studies.

The historically specific and inter-disciplinary method of the case study is representative of the current state of feminist thinking which resists all tendencies to universalize. However, though claiming to avoid universals, much feminist theory is as attached to monumental dichotomies (like male/female, or nature/nurture) as was the doctrine of separate spheres. In his excellent essay on Jean-Martin Charcot’s work on the seemingly oxymoronic “virile hysteria”, Mark Micale argues that “we should guard against a tendency to fetishize the concept of difference/*différence* at the expense of other analytic categories” (p. 214).

Book Reviews

A collection like this is bound to be mixed in quality and range; the best, most testing essays here scrutinize particular case histories to expose the complexities of intersections between science and gender. Ornella Moscucci's study of hermaphroditism "as an attempt to reconcile the concept of sexual difference with the idea of human nature" (p. 178), or Roger Cooter's fascinating essay on the paradoxes inherent in Harriet Martineau's espousal of mesmerism and positivism, for example, are faithful to the contradictions in their material and judicious in their claims about what can be proved on the evidence of one case. The "Woman Question" is still being asked—and rephrased. A single narrative of the history of gender and scientific enquiry is not possible; but between universality and *différence*, the *via media* of the case study is one way forward for more comparative and comprehensive gender studies.

Judith Hawley, London

DIETRICH VON ENGELHARDT (ed.), *Diabetes: its medical and cultural history: outlines, texts, bibliography*, Berlin, Springer-Verlag, 1989, 8vo, pp. x, 493, illus., DM 156.00.

What a disappointment! What an embarrassment! I leaped at the opportunity to review a 1989 book on the medical and cultural history of diabetes. Surely it would contain a wealth of new historical information—the most recent research, new analyses and interpretations, new methods as developed by our new generation of medical historians, new questions stemming from our changing scientific and social understanding of diabetes and insulin. At last, a really historical book on diabetes would be in the mail.

Alas, *Diabetes: its medical and cultural history* turns out to be a bad anthology of old articles. There is little if anything in the collection that will be new to serious students of the history of diabetes, little if anything of value to curious laymen. The book contains some 35 articles, most reflecting the antiquarian, whiggish interests of an older generation of medical historians. Page after page of fact-laden priority-tracing, philological exegesis, literature-searching and gradgrind biography, bracketed by some silly poetry and badly-presented illustrations.

The serious personal embarrassment is to have to criticize an anthology for not taking account of one's own work. The most recent article included in *Diabetes: its medical and cultural history* was published in 1978. Yes, historical scholarship moves slowly, but this is ridiculous. It was in 1982 that I published a 300-page history of the discovery of insulin, based on a cornucopia of hitherto unexamined sources. The extent and excellence of my sources, ranging from the Banting, Collip, Macleod, and Best papers to the Nobel archive in Stockholm and interviews with first-hand observers of the discovery, means that all earlier accounts of the discovery of insulin, virtually all references to the discoverers (and, I believe, to the precursors) cannot stand without some revision, if only to take account of the new data and/or to dispute my arguments.

Readers of *Diabetes: its medical and cultural history* would not know that *The discovery of insulin* exists—unless they find the single reference in the book's spotty, inaccurate bibliography. They would not know about any of the historiography produced about diabetes in the 1980s (admittedly a slim shelf), including my second book *Banting: A biography* published in 1984. They would not know, either, of any of the scientific developments of our time—the new typology of diabetes, the relationship of some forms of diabetes to immunological disorders, the recent emphases on education and compliance as central in the history of diabetes therapy, the fall from grace of lente insulins, the development of synthetic human insulin, and on and on and on. The new knowledge is important because it causes historians to ask new questions. The outlines of all sorts of new approaches to historical events in diabetes, on both sides of the discovery of insulin, are becoming apparent, but are completely absent from this book.

Diabetes: its medical and cultural history might have some useful value as an anthology if it had appeared in 1980. Now it has very little, except as a sometimes handy reference when you want to know more about the derivation of the word "diabetes" and the lives of some of the pioneers in diabetes research. It ought not to have been published, and it should embarrass not