Book Notices

BRYAN S. TURNER, *The body and society,* Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984, 8vo, pp. viii, 272, £16.00.

Bryan Turner has attempted to erect an entire building—a sociology of the body—on the scaffolding of theoretical and empirical work bearing in any way on the social construction of health and disease, and the political role of medicine. It is hard, however, to identify exactly what his thesis is. His debts to Marx and Foucault, which he acknowledges, are large indeed, and his elucidation of an extremely broad range of philosophical literature will probably introduce most readers to a great deal of interesting material. Yet his interpretation of the medical past leaves cause for doubt about his exegetical skills in other areas. In identifying two elements in Western medical thought, rational or orthodox and empirical or lay, he writes, "the important difference between empiricism and rationalism was that the former treated each disease as a problem of the individual in the context of the patient's total life while the latter dealt with causes of disease rather than individual cases." (p. 72). A generous interpretation of this might be that there has been a transposition of terms here, but context proves this suggestion wrong.

WILLIAM RAY ARNEY and BERNARD J. BERGEN, *Medicine and the management of living. Taming the last great beast,* Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. x, 202, £18.25.

This attractively written book opens on a most promising note: an exploration of the deep ambivalences of our medical system in which for a couple of centuries medicine has essentially silenced the patient, but is now wanting to hear his voice within the patient/doctor encounter, yet on medicine's terms. But this irony is not followed through with the same energy as Foucault and Armstrong have addressed the problem, and the book settles into being essentially a competent student survey of the personal, social, and ethical problems of modern medicine, considered against a historical background—highly recommendable for course use but hardly breaking fresh ground.

ALVIN E. RODIN and JACK D. KEY, *Medical casebook of Doctor Arthur Conan Doyle,* Malabar, Florida, Krieger, 1984, 8vo, pp. xxi, 473, illus., [no price stated].

Paralleling Owen Dudley Edwards' recent study of Conan Doyle's student days in Edinburgh, this present labour of love chronicles Conan Doyle's entire medical career, from Edinburgh University to general practice in Southsea, and examines in detail his medical writings, especially his MD thesis on tabes dorsalis. The place of medical knowledge in Conan Doyle's fiction is analysed at length.

DONALD GOELLNICHT, *The poet-physician. Keats and medical science,* University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984, 8vo pp. xii, 291, $26.95.

How John Keats's medical training—largely at Guy's Hospital—influenced his poetry has been a rather neglected topic till Goellnicht's thorough if rather laboured monograph. In it he offers a useful survey of Keats's life as a medical student, and then combs Keats's writings searching for allusions and borrowings of a chemical, botanical, physiological, and medical nature and tracing these back to the medical science of the day. Sometimes the effect is rather pedantic (surely it is not necessary to read medical significance into Keats's use of everyday terms like "evaporate" and "distil"), but Goellnicht is successful in dispelling the myth that Keats was hostile to natural knowledge. Keats's letters in particular are shown to be brimful of concern with health and the facets of bodily life.

D. G. CHARLTON, *New images of the natural in France. A study in European cultural history 1750–1800,* Cambridge University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. x, 254, £25.00. (8.50 paperback).

Professor Charlton offers an admirable survey of French thought in the later Enlightenment, taking in such areas as aesthetics, the history of science, pedagogics, the novel, and moral philosophy. He shows how in many fields of thought the "natural" came to be championed above the artificial, the man-made, the traditional, the rational, the classical, drawing upon such figures as Diderot, Rousseau, and Rétif de la Bretonne. Familiar territory (such as Rousseau's revolt against civilization) is ably summarized, and Professor Charlton is alert to new meanings of the "natural" in areas of thought only recently examined by historians, in particular gender relations and the history of the family. Many of the trends surveyed were of a Europe-wide nature, but some of them appear particularly French (e.g., the extremely tardy acceptance in France of the vogue for the seaside and for rugged mountain scenery).

J. B. LYONS, *An assembly of Irish surgeons,* Dublin, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, 1984, 8vo, pp. xiii, 210, illus., [no price stated].

It is neither disrespect nor adverse criticism to refer to this book as a series of aperitifs stimulating both the layman and the doctor to indulge more freely in that rich feast which Irish medical history can provide. Professor Lyons has himself already provided some of the entreés, main courses, and sweets with never a hint of stodgy pudding. *An assembly of Irish surgeons* covers from 1901 to the present day, and is divided into four sections coinciding with definable changes in the Irish medical scene. For each of these, the stage is set by a summary of appropriate medical and political events which are often vital to understanding the actions and decisions of the RCSI Presidents and Councils. There follow brief but adequate biographies of each President. Professor Lyons does not fall into the trap of fulsome eulogy and depicts them with all the personal foibles, which even the highest office-bearer may possess — sometimes unknown to himself.

A bibliography adds greatly to the value of this compact, well produced book. The author showed great sensitivity in dedicating it to the memory of Peter Ashe, FRCSI, his colleague in St Michael's Hospital, whose premature death deprived so many doctors of his friendship, valued opinion, and surgical skill.

J. T. AITKEN, H.W.C. FULLER, and D. JOHNSON (editors), *The influence of Christians in medicine,* London, Christian Medical Fellowship, 1984, 8vo, pp. ix, 186, £3.95 (paperback).

In this book a group of Christian doctors set out to put on record the contributions which Christians have made to medicine. This leads them into a résumé of the history of western medicine from the fourth century onwards, for Christianity, after all, was more or less universal in Europe from that time until almost the present day. Not that everything is included. The authors present the positive aspects of Christianity's contribution to what is termed "the march of medicine". Here then, we can learn how Christians promoted the scientific revolution, without encountering any reference to Galileo or Bruno. Or we can find doctors presented historically as dedicated Christian idealists, with no suggestion that medicine may equally have been, like law, a means of earning a living and of pursuing wealth and status. The result is not history but propaganda, accompanied by all the inaccuracies and anachronisms which can be culled from stale general histories of medicine along with their Whig viewpoint. The historical relationship between Christianity and medicine, presented here as "natural allies", is more complex, and more interesting, than this book suggests.

JULIO L. RUFFINI (editor), *Advances in medical social science,* vol.2, New York and London, Gordon & Breach, 1984, 8vo, pp. xii, 402, [no price stated].

Most of the essays in this volume deal almost exclusively with present-day North American issues, but three contributions have some interest for the medical historian. Virginia Ann

Guess's 'Comparative medical systems: an anthropological perspective' is a helpful survey of attempts to view disease and health in the context of the social totality; H. R. Kermos's 'The industrialization of medicine' usefully focuses attention on the ambiguous interface between medicine, professionalization, and an industrial economy; and Philip Singer's 'Traditional healing: a dilemma for medicine and religion' shows how orthodox religion has traditionally been no less hostile to quackery than has professional medicine.

MARK POSTER, *Foucault, Marxism and history. Modes of production versus modes of information,* Oxford, Polity Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. x, 173, £16.60 (£5.95 paperback).

This volume represents less a dispassionate evaluation of Foucault's work, and more a piece of advocacy for certain aspects of Foucaultian theory. Poster champions Foucault's stress on "discourse" (i.e., the primacy of information) as a stick with which to beat Marxist materialist reductionism. The book is perhaps at its most helpful in its accounts of the relations between Foucault's fundamental concepts and the empirical research which they have stimulated.

HAROLD ELLIS, *Famous operations,* Media, Penna., Harwal Publishing Co.; Beckenham, Kent, Meridien Medical Publications, 1984, 4to, pp. xiv, 134, illus., £11.95.

In this elegantly produced text Professor Ellis recounts five "firsts" in surgery, four "innovations" (including antisepsis and general anaesthesia), and eight "famous patients". In the latter group, all but Nelson are royals, from Queen Caroline and onwards. Most of the cases have already been well recorded, but the anecdotal account of George VI's pneumonectomy will provide material for future historians. Otherwise, Ellis does not add much that is new, but his descriptions are vivid and most readable. The reference lists are sparse. Some errors are perpetuated. For example, the statements concerning Lister are misleading. Chassaignac introduced the tube drain for abscesses in 1859. When Lister operated on Queen Victoria in 1881, he cut a piece of tubing from the apparatus used to apply a local anaesthetic, so improvising an effective drain. Lister agreed very reluctantly with Treves that Edward VII's appendix abscess should be drained: preferring to persist with fomentations. The classic illustration of Liston's amputation under ether is reproduced, but the caption should indicate that this was painted long after the event. Lister and Spencer Wells are shown as spectators: Lister, in 1846, was a young student but he is portrayed in his maturity; Wells, then a young naval doctor, is shown as an elderly gentleman. The evidence that Lister was present is incomplete; Wells was in Malta at the time.

This "small volume of vignettes and cameos" is recommended as a bedside book for doctors, as a present for a house-surgeon, or to be put before the medical student to stimulate an interest in medical history.

KONRAD GOEHL (editor and translator), *Guido d'Arezzo der Jüngere und sein 'Liber mitis'* (Würzburger medizinhistorische Forschungen, Band 32), Pattensen, Horst Wellm Verlag, 1984, 2 vols., 8vo, pp. 520, 530 [no price stated].

This massive edition of a late-twelfth century-tract on purgation makes readily accessible material of considerable interest for the understanding of Arabism in medieval medicine. Guido, who was a member of the Arts faculty rather than a practising physician or surgeon, is apparently the earliest author to make use of the Latin version of Avicenna's canon, and he compared his own achievement with what he considered the now outdated habits of Salerno. In Guido, Avicenna is cited more often than either Galen or Hippocrates, and even Johannitius is dismissed as "arid". The second part of this dissertation contains an *index verborum,* together with brief identifications and discussion of the drugs and herbs mentioned by Guido.