

Book Reviews

very shaky foundations. Professor Oppenheimer is not only a rigorously scholarly historian of fact, but is also one of the most astute and penetrating interpreters of the history of philosophical biology alive today. It is splendid to have her major articles, hitherto scattered as contributions to books and learned journals, brought together in such a handsome format.

The writing spans nearly a quarter of a century, starting with the masterly 1940 *Quarterly Review of Biology* essay on 'The Non-Specificity of the Germ-Layers', and ending with a 1964 lecture to the International Congress of Biology on 'Questions Posed by Classical Descriptive and Experimental Embryology'. Her special period is the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and there is no doubt that her patient record of its achievements, hopes and disappointments, will form a permanent monument to that most ingenious and industrious age. But on occasion she brings her skills to bear on earlier periods, and the arrangements of the book allows us to progress backwards from 'John and William Hunter and Some Eighteenth Century Scientific Moods', to 'John Hunter, Sir Thomas Browne and the Experimental Method', then on to 'William Harvey and Historical Change', to bring us finally to the sixteenth century with 'William Gilbert: Plant Grafting and the Grand Analogy'.

People and ideas are the stuff of history. One is grateful for these brilliant expositions of so many of both.

BERNARD TOWERS

Magie, Médecine et Possession à Gondar, by MAXIME RODINSON, Paris, Mouton, 1967, pp. 203, Fr.25.

Traditional Ethiopian medicine is of considerable interest, in part because of the existence of written medical texts in Gees, which date back to late medieval times and have created a significant element of continuity, and in part on account of the country's great differences in altitude, and hence in climate, which have resulted in a remarkably wide range of flora, thus enabling the emergence of a particularly rich herbal pharmacopoeia.

Professor Rodinson, a distinguished French linguist and Ethiopicist, has rendered a signal service by providing us with an annotated translation, as well as the text, of a fairly detailed survey of the traditional magico-medical practitioners of Gondar written in Amharic for the Mission Dakar-Djibouti of 1932. This hitherto unpublished document gives the names, places of residence, disease or diseases for which such practitioners were renowned, their methods of treatment, and the amount the patients were expected to pay, and reveals, by implication, the degree to which they employed either medical or magical cures or a combination of the two.

Of no less interest Professor Rodinson has appended to this work a very useful and scholarly account of the principal features of traditional medicine and medical magic in Ethiopia, and a discussion on the traditional practitioners, their pharmacopoeia and nosology, as well as a very extensive bibliography on these subjects.

RICHARD PANKHURST