

Book Reviews

of the original works cited are made in each case. The selected pieces are connected by Professor Altschule's useful commentaries. Unfortunately his general knowledge of the earlier historical periods is defective, and, throughout, the background to medical events is mostly lacking. No attempt is made to identify or comment on the authors selected, and citation of secondary sources is virtually absent. The index, so vital in a work of this sort, is completely inadequate, and the price of the book is high.

As a reference work to the history of psychiatric disorders this book will be useful, but those referring to it should be aware of its shortcomings.

SYDNEY ANGLO (editor), *The damned art. Essays in the literature of witchcraft*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977, 8vo, pp. viii, 258, £8.50.

The editor has gathered together ten independent essays, two of them and an epilogue by himself, written by historians of ideas, literary scholars, and others with sociological or anthropological inclinations. They are concerned with the literary record of witchcraft, which is a refreshing change from the more usual book attempting once again to elucidate the phenomenon by using much the same basic data and by broaching insoluble problems of human psychology. Thus we have here the contemporary theories of the author of *The malleus maleficarum*, Gianfrancesco Pico, Johannes Weyer, Jean Bodin, Reginald Scot, George Gifford, King James I, Pierre de Lancre, Cotton Mather, and of the Scottish witchcraft tracts of 1697 and 1705. These authors had different aims and used their writings to justify, refute, or persecute, so that together the essays on them present a valuable spectrum of popular concern. Each contribution places the chosen writer and his text in his intellectual context and analyses both style and content.

The detailed consideration of the literary remains of witchcraft is clearly of the greatest value in helping us to understand it, and it is curious that no-one has attempted this approach before. Dr. Anglo's and his contributors' scholarly essays are therefore most welcome, and they stand out in excellence amongst the current plethora of books on witchcraft and similar occult practices.

J. J. COBBEN, *Jan Wier, devils, witches and magic*, translated by S. A. Prins, Philadelphia, Dorrance, 1976, 8vo, pp. viii, 218, illus., \$8.95.

In 1960 Dr. Cobben prepared a doctoral thesis on Johannes Wier (1515–1588) and this is an accurate translation of it. There is an introduction, a biography of Wier, and a chapter on 'Medicine and ideas of the sixteenth century'. There follows a survey of Wier's main work *De praestigiis demonum* (1563) and of his other writings. A final chapter is entitled 'Wier's place in history'. There are altogether 578 references grouped at the end, but there is no index.

Wier waged ceaseless war against witchcraft and was able to formulate explanations and remedies which were only put into practice more than two centuries later. In several other ways he was ahead of his contemporaries, who on this account could not understand him.

This is a significant contribution to current scholarship on the occult and will allow many who could not have read the original Latin to appreciate Wier's important concepts and role.