

happened in France, where the peasant economy encouraged the retention of cautious and restrictive attitudes to establishing new economic units. Flandrin speculates interestingly to what extent this atmosphere led to extensive use of contraception (i.e. *coitus interruptus*) in France long before it became common in England.

Flandrin makes extensive use of Counter-Reformation conduct books to highlight how family behaviour was suffused with notions of hierarchy, control, and moral discipline (though he is well aware of the pitfalls of extrapolating from such books to actual behaviour). This provokes the important speculation that women in Catholic countries may have made use of priests and religious taboos to exercise some leverage against the dominion of their husbands, rather in the way in which Victorian ladies commandeered their physicians. Many other similar suggestions flow out of this lively written and well-translated book.

Roy Porter  
Wellcome Institute

JUDITH R. WALKOWITZ, *Prostitution and Victorian society: women, class, and state*, Cambridge University Press, 1980, 8vo, pp. ix, 347, £15.00.

Hard on the heels of Paul McHugh's monograph on the Contagious Diseases Acts (reviewed *Med. Hist.*, 1981, **25**: 98–99) comes Judith Walkowitz's own study of these same Acts. Do we really need two books on the same subject? The answer is Yes, for these books are genuinely complementary rather than repetitious. McHugh's primary focus was the organized Repeal Campaign, whereas Walkowitz concentrates on prostitution and its place in Victorian Society.

This monograph is divided into three parts. The first looks at prostitution before the Acts. Drawing on social surveys such as Mayhew's, on Parliamentary investigations, and on medical and philanthropic writings on the "Great Evil", Walkowitz pieces together a portrait of the common Victorian prostitute, relating her career to the class, economic, and emotional burdens carried by nineteenth-century women. She shows how prostitution was often a temporary alternative to employment as a domestic servant or factory worker, sandwiched between leaving home and the establishment of a more or less permanent relationship with a man. An interesting chapter summarizes medical knowledge of venereal diseases and provides a good deal of new material on lock hospitals and venereal disease wards.

Part II looks at the rationale, passage, and operation of the Acts, and at the development of the Repeal Campaign. Here, Walkowitz is less concerned with the wider political issues which became attached to Repeal than with the mentality of the Repealers and the variety of gender and class conflicts embodied in the Campaign. Part III elaborates many of the book's earlier themes through case studies of the Acts in operation in Portsmouth and Southampton. In particular, the author persuasively argues that the hospitals and wards financed under the Acts served both moral and medical functions, and that one consequence of the Acts was the further social isolation of the prostitute from mainstream Victorian society, making prostitution more of a "profession" than a temporary life stage for lower-class women. The success of the Repealers left the way open for the Moral Purity Movement of the late Victorian period.

## Book Reviews

This is a meticulously-researched and fluently-written monograph. It analyses exploitation, sexuality, and feminism without being ponderous, dogmatic, or heavy-handed. It achieves the demands of rigorous scholarship while reconstructing a fascinating facet of Victorian life.

W. F. Bynum  
Wellcome Institute

AUDREY LEATHARD, *The fight for family planning*, London, Macmillan, 1980, 8vo, pp. xviii, 293, illus., £15.00.

“The subject is obscene: no lady would dream of alluding to it in mixed society”, George Bernard Shaw told Marie Stopes after she had lost her libel action against Dr. Halliday Sutherland in the House of Lords. Fifty years later, in 1974, free birth control for all became available under the National Health Service.

Dr. Leathard sets out to document the changes which led from the attitudes of 1924 to the legislation of 1974, with particular reference to the contribution of the Family Planning Association. She contends that this was lessened by various internal factors: the FPA was originally a campaigning body but its energies became siphoned off into the provision of clinics and a pragmatic approach to the problems of birth control; during the 1930s it came increasingly to desire respectability and to shy away from controversial issues (epitomized by the change of name from National Birth Control Association) and it concentrated on propagating facilities for women only and providing one of the less popular forms of contraception. On the positive side, however, the FPA's achievements included the improvement of contraceptive technology, by its testing of the various products available (ignored by the British Pharmacopoeia) and the issue of an Approved List of the best. It also developed education in birth control methods.

The FPA's work was performed by numbers of dedicated individuals and much of its history consisted of small steps: the gradual spread of clinics and local government co-operation, the slow introduction of birth control education into medical schools, the evolution of public opinion. These are discussed in detail. It seems from this book that nearly all the really dramatic events described did not directly involve the FPA, which tended to work away discreetly in the background, following rather than leading public opinion, and eschewing controversy. It therefore lacked the more noticeable impact of a flamboyant individual campaigner such as Marie Stopes or a more militant body such as the Abortion Law Reform Association.

This book is thorough and well researched from primary sources and oral interviews with individuals involved: it is a pity that more of these first-hand experiences of family planners (of which there are a few tantalizing snippets) are not included. Maybe these would provide the basis for another book? This is not perhaps a book for the general reader, but is a useful and informative study, coherently bringing together a mass of detailed information.

Lesley Hall  
Contemporary Medical Archives Centre  
Wellcome Institute