

Book Reviews

his excellent *Life of Harvey* in the revised bibliography, particularly as it illuminates the notes of provenance. Both Severino and Peiresc, who appear in the Appendix, seem to have owned and annotated copies of *De motu cordis*.

Keynes's *Life* updates and sometimes contradicts previous statements in the bibliography, so that rewriting the bibliographical prefaces (a task shared by both editors, it should be noted) with the minimum of alteration to the original text at times becomes a tortuous exercise in unspeak. It is a pity that more of the evidence about ownership of Harvey's works could not have been incorporated. Indeed, this compromise on the part of the publisher between a reprint and a revision is dissatisfying: the quality of recent Harvey scholarship deserves a bibliography to match. One is tempted to misquote Harvey himself: "Not to praise or dispraise, for all did well, as beholden to those who concluded erroneously for they missed opportunity."

Katy Hooper, Wellcome Institute

ANDREAS-HOLGER MAEHLE, *Johann Jakob Wepfer (1620–1695) als Toxikologe: die Fallstudien und Tierexperimente aus seiner Abhandlung über den Wasserschierling (1679)*, Veröffentlichungen der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften, Aarau, Sauerländer, 1987, 8vo, pp. 222, illus., SFr. 42.00/DM 48.00.

The Swiss physician and researcher Johann Jakob Wepfer headed the so-called Schaffhausen Medical School in the late seventeenth century, cultivating an active circle of pupils and co-workers despite a heavy burden of public offices.

Andreas-Holger Maehle, physician and medical historian, has compiled a detailed account of Wepfer's clinical-toxicological treatise on water hemlock (*Cicuta aquatica* Gesner) poisoning, which included supporting studies on such other "warm" or "hot" plants as spotted hemlock (*Conium maculatum* L.), Indian berry (*Menispermum cocculus* L.), nux vomica (*Strychnos nux vomica* L.), bitter almond (*Prunus amygdalus* Batsch. var. *amara* Focke), aconite (*Aconitum napellus* L.), white hellebore (*Veratrum album* L.), and jalap (*Exogonium purga* Benth.), the mineral poisons antimony and mercury, and an expert opinion on a case of arsenic poisoning.

Wepfer's interest in water hemlock toxicity was prompted by a village poisoning tragedy but his observations did not easily fit the classical Galenical ideas of his time. Therefore he developed his own individual theory of the poisoning mechanism, which recognized current iatrophysical, vitalistic, and chemical concepts.

The author has carefully analysed and commented on Wepfer's work, reproducing the original Latin texts together with relevant German reports and communications. Appropriate annotations and references illuminate Wepfer's experimental plan, viz. careful description of animal technique, doses, times, and symptoms together with accurate recording of the poisoning sequence, intensity, and duration. Although Wepfer performed no comparative quantitative work such as minimum lethal dose estimation, he clearly separated precise observation from interpretation and developed vivisection methods. Consequently he also found it necessary to defend the ethics of his work.

Maehle's book is a scholarly insight into the scientific approach of a pioneer who laid the foundations of modern toxicological testing at a time when science itself was undergoing considerable changes. This volume will continue to be worthy of detailed study.

W. E. Court, Mold, Clwyd

JOHN HUXHAM, *An essay on fevers*, with an introduction by Saul Jarcho, Resources in Medical History, Canton, MA, Science History Publications USA, 1989, 8vo, pp. xxxi, 191, \$15.95 (North America)/\$19.95.

Shortly after he attended Hermann Boerhaave's medical lectures at Leiden and received his MD degree at Rheims in 1717 at the age of 25, John Huxham began medical practice at