

Book Reviews

52 letters demonstrating, in chronological order, five thematic focal points: Goethe's studies in comparative osteology, especially his (re-)discovery of the *Os intermaxillare* in human beings, the development of his doctrine on colours, Soemmerring's discovery of the *Macula lutea* in the human retina, the latter's controversial treatise *Über das Organ der Seele*, and finally palaeontology, particularly Soemmerring's study of *Ornithocephalus*. The correspondence provides valuable background information about contemporary research. For instance, Soemmerring's influence in directing Goethe from a physical to a physiological conception of his *Farbenlehre* is revealed. Vice versa, Soemmerring's thesis that the liquor in the cerebral ventricles formed the *sensorium commune* provoked severe criticism by Goethe, who pointed out that it resulted from an inadmissible mixture of physiology with philosophy.

Several of the issues figuring in this correspondence have been discussed in context in the first and third volume of the Soemmerring-Forschungen, partly by Wenzel himself, and the present edition can be seen as a welcome supplement. Apart from this, students of science in the *Goethezeit* will doubtless benefit from a perusal of this correspondence. Wenzel's detailed and competent comments, short biographies of persons mentioned, and index of names, places, works and subjects make it an extremely accessible source.

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MAYA BORKOWSKY, *Krankheit Schwangerschaft? Schwangerschaft, Geburt und Wochenbett aus ärztlicher Sicht seit 1800*, Zurich, Chronos, 1988, 8vo, pp. 336, illus., SFr. 36.00, (paperback); *idem, Ärztliche Vorschriften zur Schwangerschaftshygiene im 19. Jahrhundert, unter Berücksichtigung einiger Aspekte der Diätetik für Gebärende, Wöchnerinnen und Stillende*, Zurich, Chronos, 1988, 8vo, pp. iv., 383, SFr. 58.00, (paperback).

Although these appear to be complementary volumes, the one a swift overview of medical views of pregnancy, birth, and the puerperium from 1800 until today, the other a cross-sectional study of medical writing on pregnancy in Central Europe in the nineteenth century, the former volume is not what the title announces, and represents just a distillation of the second, Borkowsky's doctoral dissertation, for the grand public. Thus really one volume is to be assessed, the dissertation on "Schwangerschaftshygiene", which does not mean hygiene in a strict sense but medical advice on the conduct of pregnancy. On delivery and the puerperium she has almost nothing to say. Unlike the thesis—a photographic reproduction of the original typescript with corrections in pen—the popular version is professionally typeset and contains several interesting illustrations.

That Borkowsky has been overpowered by her material is evident just from the scholarly apparatus, some 2,272 literature citations and another 317 end notes: all in a volume of 286 pages of text. This enormous scaffolding of learning does not support a magnificent research effort but just an appraisal of the standard gynaecological and obstetrics textbooks of Central Europe in the nineteenth century. They are assessed not from the somewhat detached view of a scholar but from that of a writer on the front lines. The author, now a child psychiatrist practising in a small town in western Switzerland, explains that some of the material she read gave her pleasure, other books made her angry, and that the whole enterprise stretched out over a period of ten years during which she gave birth to and nursed her own three children.

Her research technique seems to have entailed noting each remark each professor made in his textbook about the management of pregnancy, sorting these notes in 21 separate piles, and writing the book by moving each of the piles from one side of the typewriter to the other. It would be otherwise hard to account for the 21 sections in which the main part of the book is divided. A brief introduction to "theoretical assumptions"—in which humoral theories receive one and a half pages—and a conclusion on the presumed clientele of the more popular guides, are tacked on at the ends. Still, as a research technique, Borkowsky's can produce dividends, for nowhere else have I seen such finely-grained accounts of what, for example, various authorities had to say about douching the vagina during pregnancy or the care of the breasts.

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Interested scholars, occupied with these matters in their own research, will want to read Borkowsky's tidy summaries.

But more general readers may give the book a pass. The 2,272 utterances of authorities simply do not add up to a thoughtful account placing doctors and their patients in relationship to each other or in the context of their times. It is the kind of book a punch-card sorter might have produced: so that if seven authorities had something to say about subject X, there will be seven cards in the X slot, and seven literature citations in the text. So the text itself is a riot of numbers, one set for the authorities, a second set in brackets for the end notes. As a given page might easily have 15 or so numbers, the reader is much distracted by the flipping back and forth.

Predictably, the author is shocked at the chauvinistic statements to be found in nineteenth-century gynaecology textbooks, but her understanding goes little beyond a kind of slack-jawed amazement, on the one hand, at how different they were from us, and a kind of mournful headshaking, on the other, that maybe things have not changed that much. Borkowsky writes as though she were the first researcher to discover that nineteenth-century doctors thought women different from men. She has so little knowledge of the huge secondary literature on the history of sex roles that she treats Deirdre English and Barbara Ehrenreich, journalistic writers who produced a slim tract on the subject, as authorities, and seems not to know of the magisterial volume of Jacques Gélis on childbirth in France. It is a nasty trick of the publisher to offer this ill-digested account to the public as a comprehensive history of pregnancy and childbirth.

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ANTHONY BRUNDAGE, *England's "Prussian Minister": Edwin Chadwick and the politics of government growth, 1832–1854*, University Park and London, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. 208, £18.00.

In the light of two excellent biographies of Edwin Chadwick by S. E. Finer and R. A. Lewis, can another, admittedly published after an interval of 37 years, be justified? Anthony Brundage believes it can, for he claims to have written "a substantially revisionist account that sheds new light on the relationship between the theory and practice of governmental reform" (p.3). Such revisionism as Brundage establishes, however, merely tips his characterization of Chadwick away from Finer's generally sympathetic approach, in which Chadwick's "benevolence" is often highlighted, towards a "repressive" interpretation, as the use of the phrase "Prussian Minister" in the title indicates. Brundage sees Chadwick primarily as a man obsessed with a desire for bureaucratic tidiness and efficiency, with little or no understanding of, or sympathy for, the historical roots of Britain's institutions. His Chadwick is a humourless, unattractive, thwarted autocrat, whose arrogant confidence in the correctness of his own (or Benthamite) ideas and belief in social engineering would have made him a perfect agitator for today's anti-smoking lobby.

Writing in an era when the dogmas of centralization have been discredited, it is perhaps understandable that Brundage is generally critical of his subject. This is not to say, however, that his interpretation is unbalanced, or that he fails to put forward some interesting findings. His account of the Towns Improvement Company and his chapter on Chadwick's involvement in the movement to reform the civil service certainly add to our knowledge. In particular, the latter chapter should be essential reading for anyone interested in the motivations of those who accepted the need for bureaucratic reform yet at the same time were anxious to ensure that "aristocratically institutions" were preserved. Chadwick, the classic nineteenth-century example of a man of talents who rose without access to the normal channels of patronage, was always to be a confounded nuisance to those who sought incremental reform within the traditional limits. One concludes Brundage's book grateful that Edwin Chadwick was generally unsuccessful in his endeavours, even if his legacy included the germs of what has been called "the nanny state".

As a rather bland, functional, monochromatic account of Chadwick's career and the role of Benthamism in the period 1828 to 1854, Anthony Brundage's book can be recommended. It