

Book Reviews

This volume is part of an Arno Press collection entitled 'Perspectives in Psychological Research'. Other authors represented in the collection include Alfred Russel Wallace, F. W. H. Myers, and Hans Driesch.

RÜDIGER ROBERT BEER, *Unicorn. Myth and reality*, translated by Charles M. Stern, New York and London, Ash & Grant, 1977, 8vo, pp. 215, illus., £7.95.

The original versions of this book were published in German. It now appears in an elegant volume with a multitude of illustrations taken from a wide variety of sources, including tapestries, mosaics, and carvings, as well as manuscripts and printed books. In addition to the fascinating text, there is also a 'Commentary on the illustrations', a bibliography, and a meagre index.

For thousands of years the mythical unicorn has been of great interest and it continues to be so. This lengthy story is traced by the author, from Ancient India to twentieth-century poetry. Its varying image, its symbolism and supposed physical form, the legends associated with it, and the therapeutic value of its horn, are all dealt with in a scholarly manner.

The books in English on the unicorn are few, so that this one is a valuable addition to the literature on fabled beasts.

MICHAEL FLINN (editor), *Scottish population history from the seventeenth century to the 1930s*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, 8vo, pp. xxv, 547, £19.50.

A group of seven scholars have produced this excellent book. They first of all give a general survey, and then discuss sources and methods. Thereafter three parts deal with population in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A final section considers population movements.

Their work is unique, for little detailed study has been carried out in this area. They base it entirely on original sources, using computer-aided techniques to handle their material. But this is not just a collection of data, for the authors have provided searching interpretations of them and they have integrated their findings with their wide and deep knowledge of Scottish social and economic history. Bills of mortality, famine, bubonic plague, smallpox, causes of death, and the demographic influence of the potato are the main medical matters under consideration.

Professor Flinn and his colleagues should be congratulated on producing a book which will be much in demand. It will become a classic of its kind, and it is to be hoped that it will stimulate other groups to produce similar regional demographic histories. It is a pity, therefore, that the price is so high and the paper and format so poor.

PETER LASLETT, *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, 8vo, pp. [vi], 270, £15.00.

Mr. Laslett is Director of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, and he believes that of the various approaches to the increasingly popular topic, the history of the family, the quantitative is the most valuable. To illustrate this he has collected together seven essays, most of which are based on papers published elsewhere or presented at conferences. From masses of data collected

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by the Group a recognizable pattern of the pre-industrial western European family can be detected. Mr. Laslett's classic paper on the villages of Clayworth and Cogenhoe, where this was first revealed, is here, as is one on long-term trends in bastardy. There are others on parental deprivation, the history of aging and the aged, age of sexual maturity in Europe since the Middle Ages, and the household and family on U.S. slave plantations. Although these articles deal entirely with people, the individuals do not appear through the statistics, and the conclusions are average and impersonal. Nevertheless, this building material will no doubt be fleshed out as historical sociology develops, and in the meantime it should, in addition, be, as Mr. Laslett maintains, useful in the tackling of present-day population problems.

ANGUS McLAREN, *Birth control in nineteenth-century England*, London, Croom Helm, 1977, 8vo, pp. 263, £8.95.

Dr. McLaren's purpose is to define the social and political background to birth control in the nineteenth century. In his deep and scholarly analysis, he first of all discusses the eighteenth-century background to the birth control debate; next, the problem of contraception and the class struggle; third, neo-Malthusianism and its late nineteenth-century critics; and finally the theory and practice of birth control up to 1914.

He declares that throughout the discussion of birth control in the nineteenth century the main problem was "the reproductive behaviour of the working classes in general and women in particular". His book is therefore "a social history of this issue both from above and below".

In all, his excellent study is an outstanding contribution to an issue that today is of central social significance. It can be warmly recommended to a wide audience of experts and lay people.

ANTHONY S. WOHL, *The eternal slum. Housing and social policy in Victorian London*, London, Edward Arnold, 1977, 8vo, pp. xxiv, 386, illus., £15.50.

The publishers claim this book to be "the first full-length study of working-class housing in a British town". The latter is Victorian and Edwardian London, which typifies other British cities, and the evils of urban overcrowding form the central theme. It is a scholarly book, well illustrated with contemporary photographs and drawings, and it represents an important contribution to the social and political history of housing. The author displays wide knowledge of his field and its background, and draws upon a great deal of primary source-material, especially vestry reports. His book provides an excellent account of the appalling conditions under which individuals in the nineteenth century lived, knowledge of which is essential for anyone investigating the medical or social history of British cities. It can be strongly recommended.

JENNI CALDER, *The Victorian home*, London, Batsford, 1977, 4to, pp. 238, illus., £5.50.

The author, a professional writer, gives an excellent account of all aspects of the Victorian home. For many it was a place of peace, order, harmony, and comfort,