

### Book Reviews

EDWARD DUDLEY and MAXIMILIAN E. NOVAK (editors), *The wild man within. An image in Western thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* [Pittsburgh], University of Pittsburgh, 1972, 8 vo., pp. xi, 333, illus., \$11.95.

The myth of the Wild Man began in antiquity and has existed ever since. He was thought to have been reared by animals and to have lived in isolation from man, having great physical strength and sexual potency, a covering of hair and aphasia. Individuals of this nature have occasionally been reported, such as that by Itard early in the nineteenth century, and no doubt the whole concept was based on reality. It was in fact Itard and others who demythologized the Wild Man, although vestigial remnants linger with us today in the form of the abominable snowman and King Kong.

When, in the sixteenth century primitive man from various parts of the world became better known, he was evaluated in terms of a complex set of attitudes that had grown up around the Wild Man concept and many conflicting feelings were thereby aroused. He was the ignoble savage on the one hand and on the other became the Noble Savage, serving as an ideal "of all that was admirable and uncorrupted in human nature", and upon which so-called civilized man should model himself. There is also the fascinating idea of the savage or beast within us, "the dog beneath the skin", which has been used to account even for varieties of skin sensation, although this aspect is not discussed here.

The Wild Man has played a role in politics, education, linguistics, anthropology, philosophy and literature, and the editors have prepared a diverse collection of essays to discuss these multifarious involvements. Each is a scholarly contribution, gracefully written and fully documented. For the historian of medicine, this is a fascinating topic of study, dealing with human nature, race and cultural attitudes. No one studying medicine or biology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can afford to be ignorant of it. Moreover the problems it raises are still with us, as evidenced by a recent polemic on the relationship between race and intelligence. This book is an excellent introduction to a problem which awaits further investigation from the medical, biological and anthropological viewpoints. It can be strongly recommended.

LUCIEN MALSON and JEAN ITARD, *Wolf children. The wild boy of Aveyron*, London, New Left Books, 1972, 8 vo., pp. 179, £2.50.

The object of this book is to present translations of two French contributions to the subject of wolf children. The first is an excellent and well-documented survey of the whole subject, with a consideration of the fifty-three genuine examples reported, from the fourteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. Professor Malson claims that the majority of those described were hoaxes, and that in the case of the genuine ones the children were often mentally defective usually as a result of their isolation from human society.

The second part is a study by Itard published in 1801, with a follow-up report of 1807, which deal with the Wild Boy of Aveyron, who had been found in the forests of Central France. Itard was in charge of an institution for deaf mutes and he attempted to rehabilitate the boy, Victor. He devised a variety of methods of educating him and some of his work qualifies to be judged the first attempt at experimental

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psychology. For five years he carefully observed, and with immense patience attempted to instruct. But he had eventually to admit that progress had been slight. When Victor died at forty, his mental age was about six years. Nevertheless, deriving from Itard's devoted labours arose new methods of handling and teaching the mentally defective. However, it seems likely that some at least of these wild children were autistic, and we know that the differentiation of this state from mental deficiency can be very difficult. It would be interesting to survey the reported cases again with this diagnosis in mind.

As this book offers the general and the particular approach it is a useful introduction to the subject and it complements the more scholarly treatise edited by Dudley and Novak and reviewed above. It too can be recommended without hesitation.

PIETER SMIT, *History of the life sciences. An annotated bibliography*, Amsterdam, A. Asher & Co. B.V., 1974, 4to., pp. xiv, 1071, D.fl.160.00.

There are available several bibliographies of books dealing with secondary sources in the history of the life sciences. Most of them, however, are mere book lists with little or no comment made by the compiler. Dr. Smit, who teaches history of biology at the University of Nijmegen, decided some years ago to extend that part of Sarton's useful *Guide to the history of science* which deals with the life sciences, and the results of his labours is an immensely valuable work. Each of the 4000-odd entries has an annotation averaging ninety words in length which obviously is of the greatest value to those beginning their studies in the history of medicine or biology because it is the bulk and diversity of the secondary sources that dismay the neophyte. On the other hand, the work will be likewise invaluable to many others at various stages of their careers in the history of the life sciences. The amateur too will be delighted to have a source-book of this quality and dimensions.

The material, which contains book titles only and no periodical literature, is grouped in three chapters: general references and tools; historiography of the life and medical sciences; selected lists of biographies, bibliographies, etc. Subjects include the history of general biology and its components, and the history of medicine divided by topic and speciality. In addition to this key to the contents provided by the list of contents, there is a name index too, so that entries can be readily traced. The selection is comprehensive, although it would have been useful to have included the bad books as well as the recommendable so that their inferior qualities could be made known to those who are not in a position to assess them adequately. Similarly with the annotations, most of them consist of excellent summaries of contents and references to further relevant literature, but the few critical comments are usually laudatory. One could argue that adverse assessments would not be encountered if only reputable items are selected for inclusion. However, there are some third-rate works included here, but with no warnings made. Concerning the layout of the book, the only criticisms would be that the headings dividing up the chapters are not distinctive enough and can be readily missed. The entries are not numbered, but perhaps those who would benefit mainly from numbering would be the booksellers. There are a few spelling errors, but we in this country should be honoured by the book's publication in English.