

Book Reviews

RICHARD DEACON, *Matthew Hopkins; Witch Finder General*, London, Frederick Muller, 1976, 8vo, pp. 223, illus., £6.50.

The current interest in witchcraft and the occult continues unabated, and no doubt this book is intended for this insatiable appetite. In addition, however, the author, who is a professional writer, claims the relevance of historical witchcraft to similar practices today, which is one reason for this present-day fascination. In his book he pursues the tantalizing, yet elusive, self-styled Witch Finder General of the Civil War period and provides the first full-scale biography of him. He has investigated his topic thoroughly, and it is, therefore, a pity that the documentation which he provides for the text is so rudimentary that many of the references are untraceable; the illustrations are likewise mostly anonymous. The account given here of the periods before the seventeenth century will eventually have to take into account Professor Norman Cohn's very recent and widely accepted thesis that until the sixteenth century there was no concept of witchcraft corresponding to the seventeenth-century model (*Europe's inner demons*, Sussex University Press, 1975; reviewed in *Med Hist.*, 1976, 26: 346–347).

Little is known of Hopkins before or after his three years of activity in East Anglia, but the details of his crusade and the sinister methods he employed during this brief period are carefully surveyed. His techniques, as Mr. Deacon points out, are not only of interest from the purely historical point of view, but also coincide closely to those employed recently, in Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and by McCarthy, the Chinese and even by British militant shop stewards, and in the Watergate affair. Here is another explanation for modern concern with seventeenth-century witchcraft.

This book, therefore, will appeal to a variety of readers: those concerned with seventeenth-century history, both general and medical; those interested in the history of witchcraft and occultism; and the reader seeking the historical background to modern behaviour and practices which involve applied psychology.

GEORGE ANDREWS and DAVID SOLOMON (editors), *The coca leaf and cocaine papers*, New York and London, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975, 8vo, pp. ix, 372, £4.25.

Cocaine is a hard drug which is gaining in popularity among addicts. This anthology provides a series of articles which deal with the history of its use in South American Indians, "the divine plant of the Incas" (pp. 50–242), its pharmaceutical aspects, its introduction to the world beyond the Andes, descriptions of its effects, both mental and nasal, and with the recent cocaine addiction scene.

The selection of the essays may seem a little odd, but the editors' intention is to publicize the drug as an addictive agent, hinting that its use should perhaps be legalized, for it is no worse in its effects than alcohol. The opinions cited, however, are mostly out of date and the editors, on the whole, do not present adequate evidence in favour of their unwelcome suggestion. Moreover, the usefulness of the selections is diminished by the fact that comments on them are much too brief, and no accurate references are given. The book, therefore, must be used with caution and its value to medical historians is limited; in any case more than half of it can be found in W. G. Mortimer's *Peru. History of coca* published in 1901, a monumental classic.