

Book Reviews

MOLLY LEFEBURE, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: a bondage of opium*, London, Gollancz, 1974, 8vo, pp. 537, illus., £6.00.

Coleridge's opium addiction is well known, as is that of several of his contemporaries. It has not so far, however, been examined in the detail that Miss Lefebure provides in this excellent study. Having had first-hand experience of drug addicts and having been the secretary of a professor of forensic medicine, she brings to her work an acute awareness of Coleridge's involvement, and can show that in the past it has been consistently underestimated in its effect and influence on the man and on his writings.

On the whole, however, her knowledge of drug addiction provides her with perhaps too much insight and she finds references to it in statements and situations which are, in fact, innocent of association. Moreover, she provides a somewhat distorted picture of Coleridge, and one does not gain an impression of the multi-directional genius which he certainly was, in spite of his total drug reliance as described here. What he could have been without this bondage, however, is a fascinating speculation. On the other hand, many of the author's conclusions, derived from a careful examination of all the material now available to the Coleridge scholar, are convincing. For example, the accusation of plagiarism often levelled at Coleridge, and for which there is incontestible evidence, can be explained by his opium-taking and the consequent decay of truth.

As well as a significant contribution to literature and biography, although it is by no means a complete account of Coleridge's life and it ends in 1816 when he begins serious treatment for his addiction, Miss Lefebure's book is of considerable importance in the history of medicine. It is an example of a work that highlights the medical aspects of an outstanding individual which, although of vital significance for the total comprehension of him, are usually either ignored or but mentioned in passing by non-medically orientated authors. There are many such instances and several new biographies are needed to redress this curious situation of neglect and resultant distortion. Kenneth Dewhurst has done just this for John Locke and is currently subjecting Schiller to a similar close medical analysis, and is revealing interpretations and information previously unknown or neglected. It can, of course, be argued that the medical historian is unlikely to have the detailed and critical knowledge of the biographer, his work and his times, as in the present instance. The solution, therefore, is collaboration and in his study on Schiller, Dewhurst is working with a scholar of eighteenth-century German literature.

VERNON W. LIPPARD and ELIZABETH F. PURCELL (editors), *Case histories of ten new medical schools*, New York, The Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, 1972, 8vo, pp. ix, 419, illus., (no price stated).

Dr. Lippard, sometime Dean of Yale University School of Medicine, and his co-author have gathered together accounts of ten of the twenty-two American medical schools founded between 1961 and 1971. They have been written by the deans of these schools, and together they portray for us the many and varied local and national problems attending the establishment of such institutions. A knowledge of each type