in the "index of botanical names", where the medieval Latin designations take you to the main dictionary, for example to the items *satirion* and *testiculus leporis*, under which the Middle English names are listed, in the case of *satirion* indiscriminately with other possible identifications, such as *Arum* and *Endymion*. Admittedly, the difficulties of identification are considerable—one reason being that the *synonyma* lists, unlike herbals, are most often devoid of descriptive data—but, in my view, Dr Hunt's stance is here too pessimistic and restrictive. The total knowledge available warrants at least some tentative lists of Middle English synonyms (cf. here lists as given by Bierbaumer, sub "Synonymenschlüssel", and in my book, *The English plant names in The Grete Herball,* 1984).

As mentioned above, the plant-name dictionary is filled with additions and antedatings for the *OED;* in some cases however, as with the antedatings of the sixteenth-century *croyt marine* and *remcope*, the sixteenth-century words are not continuations of the medieval forms. There are also notable post-datings, as with *glovewort* (for *Convallaria* and other plants) and *raven's leek* (an orchid name), both attested by Hunt as late as the fifteenth century (previous records only from Old and early Middle English).

Anyone working on the early modern period is fully aware of "the debt of the sixteenth-century English herbalists to their medieval predecessors" and of the fact that many of the plant names with "first" citations in the early printed herbals (or later) will prove to be of Middle English provenance. Dr Hunt's painstaking investigation is a good reminder of that (cf. also Rydén 1984, pp. 34 and 36 f.) and, on the whole, of the rich heritage of English plant names. But it is also obvious that relatively few of the Middle English names are represented in the early modern printed herbals. It is, however, a gross exaggeration to say (p. xlv) that this fact, together with our defective knowledge of Middle English plant names, has "led to a number of misapprehensions concerning the development of English plant nomenclature in more recent times". It has only occasioned "first" datings which later research, for example Dr Hunt's book, has antedated. More antedatings no doubt lie in wait for those with knowledge and time to seek them out.

Tony Hunt's book is chiefly a work of reference, based on a thorough inventory of the highly relevant MSS selected. As such it will prove indispensable for future research on the history of English plant names. It makes us realize the rich variety of Middle English vernacular plant names as well as the bewildering richness of the Latin nomenclature of the time. Dr Hunt has established a firm factual base for the further linguistic evaluation of the vast material collected, in terms of word provenance and word formation, motives of denomination (in intra- and inter-language perspectives), relative frequencies, currency (regional and social), etc.

This nicely produced book extends and solidifies our knowledge of a neglected theme of English-language scholarship. Undoubtedly, many English plant names remain buried in medieval documents, but those brought to light by Dr Hunt significantly add to our knowledge of a fascinating and important section of the word-hoard of the Middle Ages and of an age which "prepared for the work of the great herbalists of the sixteenth century".

Mats Rydén, University of Uppsala

JOHN SYM, *Lifes preservative against self-killing*, with an Introduction by Michael MacDonald, Tavistock Classics in the History of Psychiatry, London and New York, Routledge, 1988, 8vo, pp. liii, 326, £29.95.

Suicides in the early modern period faced a gory, if futile, retribution. A jury verdict of *felo de se* meant that a suicide's land and goods were forfeit to the Crown, his or her body was denied a Christian burial, and instead it was buried in unconsecrated ground, usually at a crossroads, with a stake thrust through it. As was usual in this period, the State and Church combined to enforce a moral position that drew strength from popular abhorrence of suicide. The reprinting, in facsimile, of John Sym's *Lifes preservative against self killing* (1637) allows the Puritan position on suicide to become more widely known. Sym, protected by the Earls of Warwick and installed by them as minister at Leigh-on-Sea in Essex, was a Scottish Calvinist

who used this, his only book not only to condemn suicide but also to emphasize how the godly life could help one to avoid it. Sym dealt with "difficult" conundrums such as, does the man condemned to death unjustly co-operate willingly with the executioner? (The answer was, yes, again illustrating the Puritans' deep conservatism.) Sym also discussed at length such psychological states as melancholy, which he noted were, like suicide, very widespread and also the temptations of and possession by the devil, that lead to suicide.

Sym's book will appeal to psychologists and historians of psychology (which is the aim of reprinting it in this series), but it will also interest general historians for its explication of a way of thinking that disappeared in the light of Enlightenment reason. Additionally, the work is greatly enhanced by Michael MacDonald's excellent introduction, which sets the context both for the history of suicide in general, and Sym's work in particular.

Andrew Wear, Wellcome Institute

MICHAEL HUNTER, *Establishing the new science: the experience of the early Royal Society*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, The Boydell Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. xiv, 382, illus., £45.00, $86.00.

This collection of nine essays (four of which have not previously been published) surveys the institutional career of the Royal Society from its founding to the early eighteenth century. It is good to have this material in book form. Only now can one properly appreciate Dr Hunter's immense industry in burrowing through the papers of the Society and its leading figures. New essays include a confident guide through the legal and proprietary maze of Sir John Cutler's endowment, a cautious analysis of the allegedly official status of Thomas Sprat's *History*, and a meticulous survey of the functions of committees in the early Royal Society. The highlights of already printed materials are studies of the Society's abortive plans for purpose-built quarters (written with P. B. Wood) and patterns of patronage in the support of Nehemiah Grew's botanical work.

No one knows more about the institutional history of Restoration science than Dr Hunter. From tracing the vagaries of testamentary law in connection with the Cutler affair to sorting out the exact number and provenance of stuffed humming-birds in the Society's Repository, Hunter is a master of his material. Indeed, detail and particularities are the key to Hunter's view of the Royal Society. The Society, he warns, "has already suffered greatly from over-schematized views of its origins and nature. It is essential that in studying institutions we do justice to their full historical complexity" (p. 353; cf. p. 41). Where other historians have allegedly erred in seeing coherence, solidarity of purpose, and effectiveness of action, Hunter displays the Royal Society as divided, hesitant and fumbling about what should be done, and inept in executing its plans. Its early history was, in Hunter's opinion, largely a history of "false trails" and failures: the Royal Society was "naive" in its attitude to linguistic reform, "naive" in its ambitions for a museum, "naive" in believing that the new science might be an anodyne to social disorder (pp. 36, 48, 56, 139, 151).

Where there is historical splitting to be done, Hunter goes at it with a will. Historians "will misunderstand the early Royal Society if [they] presume undue unanimity among its members" (p. 28). No text can be securely identified as expressing an official corporate view—not even Sprat's *History*, which, Hunter argues, was only loosely supervised by the Society. Nor can any shared sense of the particular religious and social uses of science be reliably attributed to the Society. Here too there was such a variety of views that no generalization can safely be made. Rather than taking any specific position on science and its political consequences, the Royal Society sought to "align the new science with as many consensus values as possible". There was "no undue degree of consensus" among its members on such issues. The political colour of the Society was that of a "chameleon". Far from using the new science to address the problem of social disorder, to push party politics or particular theologies, the Royal Society hoped to enjoy a quiet life and to "offend no one" (pp. 57, 60, 65).

The overall effect of all this splitting is at once salutary and depressing. No legitimate historical or sociological purpose can be served by a failure to engage with the "fullness of