

Book Reviews

ROGER MANVELL, *The trial of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh*, London, Elek, 1976, 8vo, pp. xi, 182, £5.95.

One of the celebrated nineteenth-century trials was *The Queen v. Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant* in 1876. As free-thinkers they had re-published a forty-year-old pamphlet advocating contraception within marriage and were indicted the following year for having issued an "obscene libel".

Much has been written on this episode and the main participants, but Mr. Manvell, a professional biographer, concentrates on the verbatim transcript of the trial (pp. 61–156), which was published in 1877. He uses the episode as a barometer of Victorian opinion regarding contraception and other matters of sex, and accurately sets the scene leading up to it and the aftermath. The moral conventions and susceptibilities of the time are well portrayed, and, as the author suggests, the whole event is reminiscent of the 1960 hearing of the prosecution of the publishers of *Lady Chatterley's lover*. In each case the legal proceedings helped to unfetter the British press.

This book is a useful addition to the elucidation of a facet of Victorian society, as well as a further consideration of a fascinating reformer, Annie Besant (1847–1933).

MARIE BAROVIC ROSENBERG and LEN V. BERGSTROM (compilers), *Women and society. A critical review of the literature with a selected annotated bibliography*, Beverly Hills and London, Sage Publications, 1975, 8vo, pp. [3. 11], 354, £11.00.

The editors recognize the inadequacies of their bibliography, and these are especially revealing in the section on 'Women in medicine and health' (pp. 191–197). The selection of titles is very curious for they range from Packard's *History of medicine in the U.S.* (1931) to equally antiquated articles on menstruation and reproductive physiology, such as 'The hormonal causes of premenstrual tension' (1931) and 'The relations of pelvic and nervous diseases' (1898). There is a preponderance of psychiatry and psychoanalysis, although there is another section longer than this one (pp. 232–239) on 'Women in psychology'. Paradoxically enough, the items are almost all in English and from American sources, despite the fact that at least one of the editors is said to have outstanding linguistic prowess, for ". . . he speaks five languages fluently, including Chinese and Japanese". The brief annotations are by no means "critical" as the book's title would suggest and the list of "Errata" does not inspire confidence in the book's accuracy.

To whom this section is directed is not at all clear, but in any case its value is very limited. Other parts may be better, but again there is a high proportion of American sources, and there is little of value to those concerned with the medical aspects of women and feminism.

MARY CATHCART BORER, *Willingly to school. A history of women's education*, Guildford and London, Lutterworth, 1976, 8vo, pp. 319, illus., £5.95.

In view of the utter liberation of women now upon us, it is of considerable interest to have a book which traces the provision, or lack of provision, for their education from Anglo-Saxon England of the seventh century A.D. to the present day. The essential questions asked over the centuries have been, should girls as well as boys receive