

Book Reviews

This edition also contains six new appendices. Three reproduce relevant passages from the 1911 Protection of Animals Act; from the Declaration of Helsinki (1964); and from the Delaney Amendment (1958). Further appendices provide a brief review of Albert Schweitzer and the ethics of his "reverence for life", and a discussion of the biblical tradition in shaping and defining relationships between man and animals. However, it is the first appendix that provides a particularly chilling comment on contemporary history, as Paton reviews the rise of terrorist animal liberation organizations and the use of violence in the name of animal rights.

The book ranges widely and provides a broad review of the use of animals in medical research, and the techniques employed to minimize distress. It concludes that the prospect of animal experiments involving no more suffering than that experienced by pets and other domestic animals, is a real possibility, one that would re-define the relationship between man and mouse as that of human trustee and animal companion.

E. M. Tansey, Wellcome Institute

ARNO SCHMITT and JEHOEDA SOFER (eds), *Sexuality and eroticism among males in Moslem societies*, New York and London, Haworth Press, 1992, pp. xvi, 201, £22.50 (1-56024-047-4).

Male sexuality and eroticism in Islamic lands comprise an important topic for which there is abundant source material for most periods in Islamic history, but sensitivities in some quarters concerning the subject itself, coupled with trends elsewhere to sensationalize it, have long obstructed serious and objective study in this area. The editors' contribution to what is therefore a limited corpus of literature consists of nineteen essays by various authors. Seven appear here for the first time; most of the others are reprinted from obscure periodicals unlikely to be found in most research libraries, and some are translated from such languages as Dutch, Italian, and Danish. The majority of the articles deal generally with conditions in specific countries (especially Morocco, Iran, and Turkey) and cities (Damascus, Tehran, Karachi), while others consider more closely defined topics, such as transvestites and transsexuals in Turkey, Muslim immigrants in Europe, and anti-sodomy legislation in Islamic states.

Two observations may serve to characterize the volume as a whole. The first is that by "sexuality and eroticism among males" the editors mean male-male sexual activity (eroticism is never discussed), largely with gay Westerners. These latter are responsible for most of the studies included here, and the volume is in part the outcome of discussions within the European gay community of attitudes toward Turkish and Arab immigrants and sex tourism in the Islamic countries. As it was felt that the attitude of European gays was coloured by prejudice and ignorance, these studies have been collected in order to provide accurate information about male-male sexuality in Islamic society.

The other observation has to do with the extraordinary diversity of the essays. Some of the authors are scholars engaged in the serious study of the Islamic world, while the qualification of others seems to be limited to more or less extensive male-male sexual experience in the area. Quite naturally, then, the book is very uneven: some articles offer cogent analysis, while others are largely anecdotal, offering little beyond personal reminiscences and advice to potential gay visitors to the Islamic world. Indeed, some passages read very much like gay erotic fiction (e.g. pp. 43-5, 63).

While there are some important contradictions (as the editors notice and seek to address), a general interpretive paradigm does emerge from the book. Muslim societies do not view male-male sexual activity in terms of what in the West is called "homosexuality": intimate personal relationships are seldom formed and rarely last, there is no notion of "homosexual" *per se*, and there is no exclusively homosexual behaviour or gay lifestyle. For a man to engage in same-sex activity is at least tacitly accepted, so long as he is the active partner, remains discreet, and confines his range of companions to "lesser" individuals: boys, effeminate men, or foreigners. In most cases he will eventually marry, but may continue sexual contacts with other males on an occasional or even regular basis. All this is pursued in a climate of profound tension, however, since to step beyond the unspoken and vaguely defined limits is to risk bringing ruinous disgrace down upon his family. Betrayed in this way, the family may then ostracize him and leave him in the intolerable position of absolute social outcast, derided by all and bereft of any source of succour or support.

Book Reviews

While some of these formulations are not particularly original, the efforts by several contributors to orient them within a broader social context are sometimes illuminating. The book's many explicit personal accounts provide valuable vignettes on a little-known aspect of the social scene in Islamic countries, and often in ways that the authors themselves seem not to have noticed. A "drag" dress-up party in Damascus (pp. 52–3), for example, is unlikely to have anything to do with an indigenous Syrian tradition, and (assuming that it is not to be dismissed as fictional) rather reflects the impact of Western influence.

If the perspective of the "insider", as it were, is in some ways a merit of the book, in others it is clearly problematic. The authors' often outspoken tenor, ubiquitous sexual slang, graphic exposition of sexual episodes, and stress upon exclusively male-male sexual behaviour all tend to mould their assessment of male-male sexuality in the Islamic world into patterns familiar in the West, despite repeated stress on the difference between the two cultures. More importantly, it may be asked whether those aspects of the Islamic male-male sexual world which are familiar and accessible to Western visitors are really representative of the whole. In important ways, one must suspect that they are not. The book stresses, for example, that men who have relations with other males routinely marry and enjoy fulfilling heterosexual relationships revolving around the creation and nurturing of their own nuclear families. But the important issues of socialization which thus arise are hardly adumbrated in the book. It is also curious that while ethnic stereotypes are repeatedly rejected in principle, they are often invoked in practice: "For North Africans and Southwest Asians it is self-evident that men like to penetrate all kinds of beings" (p. 5), "Since a Moroccan has a hard-on all the time . . ." (p. 29), thieving Iranians (p. 63), etc. Such deliverances convey the impression that the Muslim man, in so far as he is really the subject of this book, is here viewed as a mere object of sexual pursuit, and in only a secondary sense is regarded as an individual with personal sexual concerns and interests which need to be understood within the context of his own culture.

Discussion of specifically medical material or issues is almost non-existent in the book, and even AIDS appears only rarely and in an entirely peripheral fashion. This is unfortunate, since in Islamic countries sexual concerns are in fact routinely raised by men with their physicians, and the latter engage in considerable discussion of the causes and consequences of same-sex sexual activity. Again, however, this is an area to which the authors' personal experience and awareness does not seem to extend.

Overall, this work perhaps reveals more about the contemporary Western gay scene's encounter with Islamic culture than it does about the Islamic world itself. What the studies have to offer about the latter is often worth pursuing, but disentangling it from the agenda of the former is in itself no mean task.

Lawrence I. Conrad, Wellcome Institute

ANNE HARRINGTON (ed.), *So human a brain: knowledge and values in the neurosciences*, Basel, Boston and Berlin, Birkhäuser, 1992, pp. xxiii, 355, illus., SwFr 138.00 (hardback 0–8176–3540–8), (paperback 3–7643–3540–8).

In 1989, the then President and Congress of the United States of America decided that the 1990s were to be the "Decade of the Brain". This remarkable declaration seems to have provided the inspiration for the symposium on which this volume is based. The aim was to bring together scientists, philosophers, sociologists, and historians in an attempt to encourage a dialogue between these diverse and usually insulated groups on some of the cognitive and ethical issues raised by modern neuroscience.

The putative aims of this gathering are embodied in the rather twee title: to seek to establish what is distinctive about the human brain; and to attempt to bridge the void between the sciences which claim to discover the objective facts about the human organism and the disciplines which study the values and social structures which inform and channel human behaviour.

Some contributors give stolidly naturalistic answers to the question of human distinctiveness. The peculiarity of the human brain for Dentley W. Ploog, for example, lies in the unique relations that obtain between the limbic and neo-cortical regions in man compared to other primates. It is these