

environmental catastrophe ('Lake Nyos gas explosion in Cameroon' from the University of Younde), straws in the economic and political wind ('New trends in nuclear power reactor technology' from the Atomic Energy Commissariat of Zaïre) or even culture ('On mathematical elements in the Tchokwe *Sona* drawing tradition' from Mozambique). How it will fare as an outlet for original research depends on how many African scientists choose to publish their best work there, rather than looking northwards. We should raise a glass of pineapple wine to its success. □

Walter Gratzner is in the MRC Muscle and Cell Motility Unit, Kings College London, 26-29 Drury Lane, London WC2B 5LR, UK.

East and West

Lucio Luzzatto

Biomedical Science. Editors Rem V. Petrov and Bernard T. Donovan. *Academy of Sciences of the USSR/Turpin Transactions/Pion.* 6/yr. Prices on application.

THIS is an unusual journal, because it identifies itself not by focusing on a specialized topic, but rather by being a Russian journal published in English. On page 1 of volume 1, G. I. Marchuk, president of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and Sir George Porter, then president of the Royal Society of Great Britain, wished well to the new journal: their parallel statements give the impression that this is mainly a Soviet-British venture, although the editorial board is flanked by an international advisory board consisting of members from seven countries. The stated aim of the journal is "to present the best of Soviet science as applicable to health and medicine to a world audience". It seems that a two-tier reviewing system has been adopted, whereby manuscripts are first assessed by a Soviet panel, and then by international referees.

To what extent is the aim achieved? Judging from the most recent issue I have seen, papers are of a high standard, and they range widely from basic molecular biology, to classical physiology and biochemistry, to clinically oriented studies (such as two papers on lymphoid cells in patients with primary immune deficiency and in the synovial fluid of patients with rheumatoid arthritis). One subject conspicuous by its scarcity is genetics (a late side-effect of the Lysenko era?); the single exception is an excellent review on "problems in the control of genetic disorders", by A.M. Kuliev (formerly in charge of the Human Genetics Unit of the World

Health Organisation) and Bernadette Modell: this is also the only article that has a non-Soviet author.

Although *Biomedical Science* has not yet achieved the East-West dialogue that it intended perhaps to promote (there is no correspondence section), I would regard it as successful in terms of giving an image of ongoing biological research in the Soviet Union. Although I was unable to obtain absolute figures on circulation, I learnt that 30 per cent of subscribers are in the United States (as against 5-10 per cent in the Soviet Union). At the same time one wonders about two specific issues. First, for the journal to be effective one would wish to be sure that it is generally accessible to Soviet scientists both as authors and as readers: a statistically nonrepresentative sample of three that I recently asked did not know of its existence.

The other point is perhaps more important. There is no doubt that the West ought to take active steps to encourage a more prominent view of Soviet science on the international scene. There is no doubt that, with a few exceptions, the vast scientific potential of the Soviet Union is at the moment severely under-expressed (some of the Eastern European countries have actually done better). But, to continue with current jargon, is the limiting factor for expression pre-transcriptional (the training of scientists), shortage of transcription factors (funding of research), or the presence of transacting repressors (bureaucracy), or is the main limitation at the translation level (the use of English)? I think the correct, if noncommittal answer, must be "all of the above".

Biomedical Science can at least remove the last hurdle, and to this extent it is a praiseworthy venture. If individual Western countries or the European Economic Communities now took the progressive step of earmarking funds for East-West collaborative projects, this journal could be a good forum for publishing results. In the long run, of course, one expects that the output of Soviet research should be reflected in 'regular' international journals, rather than in an 'ad hoc' publication. Those of us who have had an opportunity to know Soviet scientists in person have no doubt that this is what they desire and deserve. *Note added in proof:* So much has happened in the Eastern Republic in the past few weeks that this review sounds almost incongruous. But I have no doubt that the goal of more East-West dialogue in biology and medicine will now become even more important. □

Lucio Luzzatto is in the Department of Haematology, Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital, Du Cane Road, London W12 0NN, UK.

Risqué business

Roy Porter

Journal of the History of Sexuality. Editor John C. Fout. *University of Chicago Press.* 4/yr. *US and Canada \$58, elsewhere \$61 (institutional); US \$29, elsewhere \$32 (personal).*

SO LONG as sex itself remained a taboo subject, studies of the history of sex were mainly given over to veiled pornography (the history of the lash, and all that genre) or to dry-as-dust Germanic tomes on infibulation practices among obscure Amazonian tribes. The advent



Ueaiptus — myth or complex?

of sexual liberalization from the 1960s has at last brought the history of sexuality out of the closet. For the first time, for instance, we have a first-rate unexpurgated edition of Samuel Pepys's diary (R. Latham and W. Matthews (eds), *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 11 vols, Bell & Hyman, 1970-83), and the erotic preferences of James I or Catherine the Great can, at long last, be analysed without censorship or embarrassment.

The emergence of this new field of inquiry also owes much to the astonishing growth of social history over the last generation. Until recently, most professors focused on 'big history' (kings and battles). Now study of marriage and the family, of childhood and adolescence, of work and leisure, are all high on the agenda. Private lives as well as public events are given their due, and any study of private lives will necessarily give a central place to sex lives. Above all, the establishment, since the 1970s, of women's studies has inevitably drawn attention to matters sexual, because in patriarchal societies women were so often defined in exclusively sexual terms: madonna, whore, 'the sex'. Private and public fuse in the feminist study of