of us both, we found hardly any. We would both have been pleased to have known then of this collection of nine essays by Christine Overall.

The essays cover the following areas: reproductive rights in Canada; conflicts between mother and fetus, and mother and state; selective reduction of pregnancy; killing the fetus following termination of pregnancy; parental rights over frozen embryos; the co-opting of feminist values by non-feminists working in the field; surrogate motherhood; access to IVF, and, keeping records, given the genetically and biologically complex relationships which reproductive technology facilitates. Each essay is short, clearly written and to the point. Although this volume will interest those researching in the area, individual chapters are presented in a way which will make them accessible and useful to students too.

One of the recurrent themes of the book is the way in which women are manipulated by the provision of reproductive technology but at the same time held to be entirely responsible for the decisions which they make as they try to cope with the personal implications. In this 'classic no-win situation' (page 51), women find that they are more blamed than admired for their decisions. Yet, the effects of such decisions upon women can be startling. Take this rather extreme example: '[O]ne woman's reproductive history includes three caesarean sections, a tubal ligation, a tuboplasty ... after which she remained infertile, IVF with subsequent implantation of four embryos, selective termination of two of the fetuses, revelation via ultrasound that one of the remaining twins had "severe oligohydramnios ... and no evidence of a bladder or kidneys", spontaneous miscarriage of the abnormal twin, and intrauterine death of the remaining fetus' (page 49). Another theme is Overall's belief that women are not sufficiently informed about the possible effects of their decisions before they consent to procedures. Her recurrent example here is that the success rate of IVF is consistently over-estimated.

Her approach to each subject can be admired on three levels. First, she is unashamedly feminist in her consideration of the issues. Second, she exhibits a high degree of philosophical rigour. Third, her compassion and concern are always in evidence (though I possibly shouldn't separate this from her feminist approach since it flows just as much from her feminist ideals, as it

is additional to them). One example of her caring ethos can be found in her treatment of access to IVF. After outlining the problems of both a rights and privilege approach to the question of who should have access to IVF, she critiques some feminist approaches, then goes on to give her own appraisal. Before doing so, though, she pauses to state that, whilst she hopes that in the face of truly informed consent, women will decline the offer of IVF, it is for each woman to decide for herself. She roundly rejects the proposition that IVF programmes should be halted by 'feminist maternalism that seeks to protect the best interests of the women affected by IVF' (page 150).

Perhaps the weakest contribution to the collection is the final essay, entitled 'Reproductive Engineering and Genealogy'. Although her overview of the difficulties of genealogy is complete and concise, Overall does not really make a case for keeping records in the first place. Although she gives arguments elsewhere supporting, for instance, the value of records for follow-up (which she regards as vital), the omission of such an argument in this essay is against the pattern of free-standing pieces elsewhere in the volume which makes it such a potentially valuable teaching tool.

The balance remains, however, firmly in favour of purchasing this book which, at £10.95, is certainly a cost-effective addition to personal collections as well as libraries.

HEATHER DRAPER
Department of Biomedical Ethics
University of Birmingham

Articulations: the body and illness in poetry

Edited by Jon Mukand, Iowa City,
University of Iowa Press, 1994, 426
pages, \$19.95

In many matters, including medical matters, Britain tends to lag some years behind the USA. For example, the current interest in medical ethics was well established in the USA before it became established in the UK. Even now it is by no means universally taught in anything other than a superficial manner in many medical schools at the moment. It may well be that the recent General Medical Council (GMC) paper on undergraduate medical education will ensure a more

intensive coverage of ethics. But just as this is happening in the UK there are some signs of a shift of emphasis in this aspect of medical education in the USA towards a broader 'medical humanities' approach. There is a case for this. In this country and in the USA it has been the philosophers who have made the running. But philosophers tend to move towards abstractions which do not always appeal to practically-orientated medical students and doctors. For such students the particularities of literature can sometimes be a humanising influence when philosophy cannot. Hence, in the USA there have grown up departments of the 'medical humanities' which may contain philosophers or 'ethicists' but will also contain historians or teachers of literature. Jon Mukand's anthology is one which could be used in a course on the 'medical humanities'.

John Mukand is a physician and poet who has already published, in 1987, *Sutured Words*, a volume of poems to help patients, their families and friends to come to terms with the complexities of healing, illness and death. In the present volume Mukand has added more than a hundred new poems, and he provides a few pages of introduction to the anthology. The poems are mainly by contemporary American poets and are divided into sections with titles such as 'The body: just where grace resides'; 'The medical environment: the hospital smell combs my nostrils', and 'Patients' views of illness: the darkness within me is growing'. There is a section with poems by care-givers, and sections with poems on most areas of medical concern. Just as not every student or doctor cares for philosophical argument, so not all will appreciate the complexity and intensity of contemporary poetry. But for those who do this is a worthwhile anthology and contribution to the 'medical humanities'.

R S DOWNIE
Professor of Philosophy,
University of Glasgow

Medical law: text with materials

I M Kennedy and A Grubb, London,
Butterworths, 1994, 1,423 pages,
£30.95 (sc)

This is the second edition of *Medical law: Text with Materials*. As the name suggests the book provides statutes, cases and articles along with extensive commentary. The text draws upon

materials both from this country and abroad. This edition reads better than its predecessor and benefits from tighter editing. Part one of the volume sets the scene for medical practice today. It examines how a doctor-patient relationship is established and the role of the NHS today. Part two considers consent to treatment, medical malpractice, professional discipline, and medical records and confidentiality. Part three, 'Medical law in action', is in three sections, the first of which 'The beginning of life', examines contraception, medically assisted reproduction, abortion, and negligence actions arising from events occurring before birth. The second, 'During life', considers research and organ transplantation. The final section, 'The ending of life', deals with withdrawal of treatment from competent and incompetent patients, and death.

The authors indicate that it was their intention to provide access to materials which might otherwise be unavailable to some readers. In this they have succeeded. Overall this book contains a stimulating and extensive collection.

Its depth and scope, with its widening comparative content, is likely to prove particularly attractive to the postgraduate student taking, for example, a taught masters degree in medical law. It is perhaps in its comparative element and in its value as a work of reference that the book's greatest strength lies. However, there are at present two main reasons why a tutor might hesitate before recommending this book to undergraduate students. First, the cost, which is on the steep side for an undergraduate text. Second, the sheer weight of materials, which may make the book less accessible to an undergraduate market, particularly in view of the changing approach to law-teaching in the light of the new modularised courses in English universities.

One further point is that perhaps in a text and materials book for students it is a little unfair to refer the reader back to materials in an earlier edition, as happens on page 1,217, particularly in view of the fact that the text is aimed at those who find access to materials difficult!

Nevertheless, overall this text provides extensive and incisive commentary and is an important work of scholarship in the medical law field.

J V McHALE
Lecturer in Law,
University of Manchester

Confrontations with the reaper: a philosophical study of the nature and value of death

Fred Feldman, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, 250 pages, £9.95 (pb)

Deathright: culture, medicine, politics and the right to die

James M Hoefler with Brian E Kamoie, Boulder, Westview Press, 1994, 291 pages, £40.95 (hb), £11.50 (pb)

When death is sought: assisted suicide and euthanasia in the medical context

The New York State Task Force on Life and the Law, May 1994, 218 pages (available for US\$15.00 including postage from Health Education Services, PO Box 7126, Albany NY 12224)

In *Confrontations with the Reaper*, Fred Feldman seeks to dispel what he regards as some common misconceptions about the nature and moral significance of death. Feldman's main targets are the Epicurean views that death is equivalent to the cessation of life, and that death cannot be an evil to the one who dies. Against the first of these views, Feldman argues that the life of a biological entity can come to an end without dying, through, for example, undergoing cryogenic freezing, fission, or fusion. Against the second of these views, Feldman defends a version of the well-known 'deprivation approach' proposed by philosophers such as Thomas Nagel (in his classic paper, 'Death', in *Mortal Questions*) (1), where the evil of death is understood in terms of the intrinsic goods it deprives one of.

In the preface of the book, Feldman explains how he was moved to think deeply about these issues by a personal tragedy – the death of his teenage daughter after a serious illness. Feldman spends considerable time

sorting out confusions which plague many discussions of the concepts of life and death, but he goes beyond a critique of other views, in his constant striving for improved analyses of these concepts. The issues are set out with exemplary clarity, and indeed, much of the book is a model of the analytic approach.

Feldman's discussion of the nature of death is the most successful and original part of the book. Instead of focusing as many writers do on what constitutes the death of a *person*, Feldman sets his sights more ambitiously on analysing 'a single concept of death that has application throughout the biological realm' (page 19). Feldman's critical review of various candidate analyses of 'life' and 'death' brings out well the heterogeneity of our concept of biological death, and his analysis of the process of *dying*, while containing certain obscurities, nevertheless serves to point the way towards a more adequate account of this process.

While Feldman admits that he finds the concepts of life and death ultimately rather mysterious, he does offer a sketch of what he takes to be a plausible materialist conception of death. According to this approach, we are all essentially material objects, and our death should be viewed as ceasing to have the important property of life: 'Death marks a profoundly important border in the history of any such subject. But ... it does not necessarily coincide with the border between existence and nonexistence. In typical cases ... formerly material objects go on existing as corpses for a while after their deaths' (page 106). Whatever philosophical merits this view might have, its moral implications are not explored in the rest of the book.

Feldman's account of the moral significance of death in Part II is, for the most part, put forward independently of his materialist approach to the nature of death, and so the book is perhaps less unified than it might have been. According to Feldman, death is evil insofar as it deprives the one who dies of the intrinsic goods he or she would otherwise have had. Feldman uses this view as the basis for his account of the morality of killing, which he develops through a critique of some popular – along with some rather bizarre – views about why killing is wrong. Feldman's 'justicized' act utilitarianism holds that killing is wrong when it decreases the extent to which individuals get the intrinsic goods they deserve. This view is then