

Robert Biggs, following a research stay at the British Museum in early fall of 1990, continued his work on texts studied there, specifically the Babylonian rituals and incantations to counteract sexual impotency. He has continued to work extensively on questions of Babylonian medicine, first in preparation for his presentation to the Oriental Institute symposium in November 1990, "Magic and Medicine: Healing Arts in the Ancient Near East." His detailed article on Mesopotamian medicine appeared during the course of the year in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*. He has prepared a less technical essay on Mesopotamian medicine entitled "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Mesopotamia" for the volume *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, to be published by Scribner's, to which a number of other Oriental Institute faculty and staff are also contributing. On a more specialized topic, he has been reading extensively in recent scientific literature on fungal toxins in cereal crops. Although the evidence is necessarily circumstantial, he believes he has found evidence in cuneiform texts to suggest that some of the epidemics reported in ancient Mesopotamia can be attributed to poisoning by fungi in stored grain crops rather than to infectious or contagious diseases. Ergotism and other mycotoxicoses also affect livestock, particularly cattle, and this he believes is also reflected in the cuneiform texts. An article on this subject will appear in a volume dedicated to Miguel Civil of the Oriental Institute. On a quite different subject, he has returned to the study of Babylonian prophecy texts in preparation for a lecture at a symposium in Toronto in early fall.
