

photographic record of Charcot's hysterics, who are also discussed by Jonathan Marshall using Butlerian notions of the performative. Gabrielle Houbre discusses changing perceptions of intersex conditions.

Part II discusses 'Symptoms and problems'. Peter Cryle considers 'The aesthetics of the spasm'. Heike Bauer examines the rather slippery usage of female sexuality in non-western societies within discourses of "civilisation" and "degeneration". Michael Wilson looks at the depiction of same-sex desire in popular (French) novels of the turn of the century, with some examination of the handling by popular medical texts of the same topic.

Part II takes as its theme 'Decentering sexuality', with essays by Alison Moore and Christopher E Forth on other bodily functions which influenced emotions about and attitudes towards sexuality: excretion and eating, and Carolyn Dean's exploration of the formulation of homosexuality as "an open secret" cognate with Jewishness, and the distinction between toleration and acceptance.

The 'Afterword' by Vernon Rosario, demonstrates from his clinical practice the extent to which what might be considered long superseded concepts of sexuality and gender identity "persist in deep ways in medicine" as well as in popular and governmental mindsets.

The majority of the essays, though not all, deal fairly specifically with the French context and the extent to which the arguments made might be extended to other areas of Europe or North America and how culturally specific some of them were is thus somewhat problematic. We might also ask how particular to the *fin de siècle* was the confusion and blurring of categories which this volume examines, or whether something similar might be found at any particular historical epoch, with competing paradigms always in play. Rosario, indeed, draws specific attention to the persistence of attempts to establish a biological basis for "sexual deviancy" and the deployment of whatever is the privileged science of the period to make essentially similar cases for "born that way". The volume,

therefore, raises a number of interesting questions for further exploration.

Lesley A Hall,
Wellcome Library, London

Christopher E Forth, *Masculinity in the modern west: gender, civilization and the body*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. xi, 285, £17.99 (paperback 978-1-4039-1241-1).

Claims that masculinity is "in crisis" have been a favoured trope of modernity and, in post-modernity, the rhetoric of crisis might even be part of an attempt to incite a sense of emergency. Women have been chipping away at male privileges. They curse men with impotence; they threaten to feminize them. The fragility of the male body is manifested everywhere.

Christopher Forth, a brilliant young historian from the University of Kansas, sets out to tell us how men came to be in this position. His book is a cultural history of the male body in the west since 1700. Although Forth does not pay enough attention to differences between western nations, his passionately argued prose and meticulous presentation of evidence are compelling.

Forth's central argument is that modern civilization promotes the interests of men while simultaneously "eroding the corporeal foundations of male privilege". He makes this argument by focusing on a vast array of themes, including the meaning of civilization, class, diet, degeneration, consumption, disease and health, violence, work and leisure—all refracted through the body-corporeal.

Masculinity in the modern west is a carefully structured book. It moves from the self-controlled yet deeply anxious gentleman of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century to the commercialization of primitiveness in the late twentieth century, which has created a generation of men with "body image problems". Forth reminds us that, since the

Book Reviews

1970s, the male centrefolds in *Playgirl* have gained 27 pounds worth of muscle. The “bulking up” of men, combined with the relentless attention to powerful performance (even if aided by drugs like Viagra), points to the insecurity at the heart of masculine identities.

Since 1700, the idea that civilization and masculinity are somehow in tension has been repeated. Warfare is one example of this tension. On the one hand, war was portrayed as a descent into barbarism, leading to the dismemberment of man and nation. On the other hand, it provided men with the opportunity to display true male bravery and honour, and was productive of strong bodies. The civilizing process also constructed and deconstructed national identities, based on a model drawn from representations of the male body. Just as the body-corporeal had to be defended against forces that threatened it, so too the body-politic had to be defended from “soft” and “corrupting” foreign cultures. In both cases, military-like drill and other processes of “hardening” could construct the body in a way that reinforced differences between male and female, national and foreign. As Forth convincingly shows, true men were “civilized”, but they simultaneously needed to be protected against the effeminizing qualities of that civilization.

Masculinity in the modern west is not an optimistic book. Forth is broadly sympathetic to the view that dominant forms of masculinity can be challenged, even completely deconstructed. However, Forth reminds readers not to underestimate the “entrenched and durable nature of certain dominant images of manhood in Western culture”. Traditional warrior-codes and conservative gendered identities are still loudly and powerfully articulated in twenty-first-century western cultures. Fears of women—with their allegedly “softening” and unmaning tendencies—still make many men and women nervous. Modernity seems to threaten men with literal extinction: industrial chemicals diminish sperm counts and girls are thriving in schools. Forth’s

book is a fascinating meditation on the diverse ways that predictions about the collapse of masculinity have been narrated in the past.

Joanna Bourke,
Birkbeck College

Dan Healey, *Bolshevik sexual forensics: diagnosing disorder in the clinic and courtroom, 1917–1939*, DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 2009, pp. x, 252, \$40.00 (hardback 978-0-87580-405-7).

There was a dream, and for some a nightmare, that the Russian Revolution would usher in sexual liberation. The reality, emphatically by the 1930s though embedded long before, was a State defining sex as a biological function, reinforcing stereotypes of gender, and seeking to eliminate the subjective and psychological dimensions of desire in order to claim the person for collective goals. A generation of social, medical and cultural historians, going to the archives, is now looking at this in considerable detail. Though marriage was secularized, and divorce made considerably more accessible, there was no radical “sexual revolution”, to be reversed by the Stalinists. Yet something significant happened with the reconstruction of medical administration and the new opportunities and responsibilities given to doctors. Dan Healey has pioneered the study of homosexuality in the Soviet Union, and he now turns his attention to the medico-legal record. His central interest remains sexual and gender identity, and this is especially evident in his inclusion of a chapter (‘Bodies in search of a sex’) on the sexual determination of hermaphrodites or intersexuals. There are difficulties both with handling the unsystematically preserved and not easy to access sources and with conceptualizing clear theses. Healey responds by weaving together two bodies of records, from