

next chapter gives an insight into the particular problems that hospital staff and patients had to contend with during the Troubles. Notably, Northern Irish hospitals, such as the Mater Infirmorum, which straddles 'one of the most fraught community interfaces in Belfast', witnessed a great deal of civil strife and violence during the Troubles (p. 43). The chapter also addresses the issues of staff and patient security in Northern Irish hospitals in the period, indicating how these factors 'complicated the lives of medical professionals and intruded directly on the delivery of medical care' (p. 63).

The final two chapters deal with the issue of medical care in prisons during the Troubles. The first of these is largely based on the allegations of prisoners and gives an insight into the effects of the Troubles on both prisoners and prison doctors during the period. The final chapter deals with the topic of 'Prison Protests', in particular, focusing on the 'Dirty Protest' and the strain it placed on medical services. This chapter was well balanced, and gave adequate focus to the experiences of prison medical staff, the stories of whom are often neglected in broader histories of the Troubles. Doctors working in prisons were targets for assassination on the outside, and the type of work they experienced resulted in consequences for their mental health, with one senior doctor, 'Dr P', who nursed most of the hunger strikers, representing a victim of this and committing suicide, arguably as a result of the pressures of his job (pp. 105-6).

This book is a significant contribution to the history of Northern Ireland, examining the history of the Troubles from the perspective of those delivering and receiving medical care. The oral history accounts which form the basis of the book will represent a valuable historical resource for future generations of historians.

Laura Kelly,

National University of Ireland, Galway

Katherine D. Watson, *Forensic Medicine in Western Society: A History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. vi + 214, £18.99, paperback, ISBN: 978-0-415-44772-0.

In recent years, forensic medicine and science has captured the public imagination. Dominated by new laboratory-based techniques, modern practitioners and the public they serve live in an apparent era of forensic infallibility, characterised by precision methodologies deemed capable not merely of solving the most intractable of contemporary criminal cases, but also of retrospectively assessing, and often correcting, conclusions derived from past investigations.

This trend has not gone unnoticed in the academic literature. Driven primarily by analyses grounded in the sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) and critical legal studies, scholars have sought to contextualise what many regard as the 'new paradigm' of DNA-driven forensic investigation. This work, which has largely focused on the challenges faced by practitioners in their efforts to secure it as credible, reliable, and practicable, has made DNA profiling (arguably) the best historicised forensic technique of all time. Historians of forensic medicine and science have also been busy, exploring earlier investigative methods on their own terms, examining how they operated, and their impact on how investigations were conducted and evidence judged. As Katherine Watson rightly points out in her accessible and instructive textbook, this historical literature has been largely confined to the Anglo-American context, and is for the most part driven by case studies – either of specific techniques and disciplines, or of specific cases in which these were deployed. Thus, while two decades-worth of such work has yielded much important information and, for those familiar with the literature, has developed a discernible research field, its fragmented quality has restricted its accessibility to students and scholars from outside.

In six short chapters, Watson attempts to rectify this situation by surveying the main

historical and historiographical themes in Western legal medicine from the mediaeval period to the present. The first two chapters focus on the emergence of forensic medicine as a response to particular needs of mediaeval law and governance. She deftly guides the reader through a maze of jurisdictions and legal systems (Roman, canon, barbarian, customary), and shows how differences in form impacted upon practice. Most important here is the distinct paths taken by the Continental and Anglo-American systems following the abolition of trials by 'ordeal' in the thirteenth century. The former developed an 'inquisitorial' trial model dominated by judges who acted as agents and protectors of the state, directly questioning witnesses and gathering and assessing evidence (including formal expert reports). The latter was 'accusatorial', driven by private rather than state prosecution, with fact-finding and the determination of proof squarely in the hands of a lay jury rather than with expert-assisted judges.

In Chapter Three, Watson eases the reader into the modern era, focusing on the emergence of a new conception of experts and expertise in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This entailed a shift from prior notions grounded in personal know-how, to one derived from intellectual competence, and was signalled by the gradual recognition of the expert's distinctive ability to deliver testimony based on opinion rather than on direct experience. She then provides six national case studies to demonstrate the ways that political and institutional contingencies shaped local meanings of expertise, before concluding with a discussion of one of the most publicly visible forms of medico-legal expertise in nineteenth century – toxicology.

Chapters Four and Five focus on forensic medicine as applied to questions of mind and behaviour. The former surveys debates over criminal responsibility and the insanity plea, showing how a nascent psychiatric profession attempted to use forensic psychiatry as a

means to move out of asylums and onto the public stage. Yet, would-be psychiatric experts' command of the courtroom was tenuous, constrained by the fact that criminal responsibility was ultimately a legal rather than a medical concept. The next chapter considers the ways in which forensic medicine, by laying claim to the adjudication of suicide, infanticide, impotence, and 'anomalous sexual practices', participated in what Watson calls the 'medicalization of deviance'.

Watson concludes her overview with a selection of five of the most innovative and significant medical, scientific and institutional advances in forensic medicine over the past century: the diagnosis of physical and sexual abuse in children; the development of laboratory-based forensic medicine and science; techniques for establishing individual identity and time since death in homicide cases; blood typing and DNA analysis; and offender profiling. Here, as elsewhere, it is possible to question the choice of topics covered, and to wish for a fuller discussion of others, but this is inevitable in any brief survey. Engagingly written and exuding enthusiasm for the subject and its potential, Watson's book offers a trustworthy guide to forensic medicine's past, and a warm invitation to its pursuit in future historical inquiry.

Ian Burney,
University of Manchester

Ian Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. xii + 251, £19.99/\$34.99, paperback, ISBN: 978-0-531-13001-1.

The linkage of mental illness and suicide is, for the most part, accepted uncritically within medicine and psychiatry, by healthcare agencies and the media. Ian Marsh's *Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth* attempts to