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plague may have been due to a number of factors beside quarantine; the gradual spread of *Yersinia pseudo-tuberculosis* among the rodent population from the fourteenth century and its communication to human populations may have conferred immunity to *Yersinia pestis*.

The monograph suffers unavoidably from the relative lack of contemporary Ottoman sources. It appears that the restriction of this work to the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was made by the author because of his interest in the European aspect of the subject, for which he promises a separate publication. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that Panzac has not surveyed the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with regard to plague epidemics and population levels. The Ottoman sources, especially the census records, are far better for the height of the empire, and they afford significant data that are relative to the subsequent period. It is inexplicable why this information is not presented at the outset. Furthermore, the author does not discuss the prevalence of the pulmonary form of the disease despite its demographic importance. The discussion of medicine *per se* is superficial; there is no investigation of the contemporary medical literature with regard to plague. The bibliography is extensive, but the omission of a subject index seriously limits the usefulness of this major work of scholarship.

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ANNE DIGBY, *Madness, morality and medicine. A study of the York Retreat 1796–1914*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. xvi, 323, illus., £27.50.

The York Retreat necessarily occupies a central place in histories of Anglo-American psychiatry, whether conventional or revisionist. For the former, its existence and practices constitute the *locus classicus* of the new humanitarian outlook on lunacy and lunatics that prompted one of the most notable nineteenth-century reform movements. For the diverse, less sanguine historians, misleadingly lumped together under the revisionist banner, its iconography is distinctly different—in the case of Foucault and his followers almost reversed—just as the “reform” movement it spawned is viewed through much darker lenses, even, in some quarters, seen as little more than a “gigantic moral imprisonment”. Yet however vast their interpretive differences, both groups agree that this small institution, initially for the care of mad Quakers, exercised an extraordinary influence on educated opinion on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly in the early part of the nineteenth century, making an adequate understanding of its character and operations vital if we are to obtain a fully informed understanding of the history of nineteenth-century psychiatry.

A good part of the Retreat’s impact derived from the publication, in 1813, of an account of its operations by Samuel Tuke, the grandson of its founder. The younger Tuke felt that the success of his book had, as he put it, “proved the omnipotence of facts”. And it is the “facts” retailed in *A description of the Retreat* which subsequent generations of historians have been largely content to rely on, supplemented perhaps by some of Tuke’s occasional essays and by some of the newspaper and periodical accounts of the new moral treatment regimen.

Until the appearance of Anne Digby’s new book, therefore, our understanding of the York Retreat has rested upon quite slender and distinctly partial evidence. Based upon meticulous researches into what is clearly an enormously rich archive, her detailed and judicious portrait of its evolution through the whole of the long nineteenth century is thus most welcome. Along with Nancy Tomes’ recent book on the Pennsylvania Hospital, Ellen Dwyer’s forthcoming volume on the Utica and Willard Asylums in New York State, and a spate of recent doctoral dissertations devoted to the study of individual institutions, it gives us a far more detailed glimpse into the realities of nineteenth-century asylum life than an earlier generation of more global studies could hope to provide.

Digby’s study begins with a brief chapter sketching the changing perceptions of insanity in the years leading up to the foundation of the Retreat at the close of the eighteenth century. There is little here with which one can take issue, if also little that differs greatly from other recent discussions of these materials. Once the attention shifts to the Retreat, however, she provides a great deal of novel information. Digby rightly stresses the distinctively Quaker character of the Retreat in its early years, and the defects and virtues that flowed from this religious orientation.

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In particular, its reputation as “a moral reformatory” (p. 92) is shown to have a strong basis in fact, it being an establishment in which “religion was all-pervasive and not confined merely to particular times and functions.” (p. 99). Quakers were routinely chosen to head the institution, and for much of its existence, “the Retreat was dependent for its continued existence on substantial financial support from the Quaker community.” (p. 101). Nevertheless, as the century wore on, an increasing proportion of its patient population was drawn, not from the Society of Friends, but from the upper ranks of English society, prompting important changes in the character of the asylum, including the addition of such distinctly non-Quaker features as billiard rooms and Turkish baths. In substantial measure, the pressures to recruit more wealthy non-Quaker patients reflected an attempt to subsidize the costs of treating poorer Friends, though the paradoxical effect was to diminish its overall Quaker character. By the early twentieth century, up to two-thirds of the Retreat’s patients were non-Quakers, and “there were within one building effectively two asylums, each with a quite distinctive clientele.” (p. 186).

The Retreat had initially achieved fame based upon moral treatment, a non-medical therapeutics for madness. This lay character, too, while persisting for most of the first forty years of the Retreat’s existence, was gradually modified and eventually disappeared, a development coinciding, more or less precisely, with a deepening pessimism about the prospects for successfully treating the mentally afflicted. As occurred throughout Victorian asylums, moral treatment was increasingly assimilated into the medical realm, and in the process was steadily trivialized and transformed into little more than a management tool. Ultimately, like most of its fellow institutions, the Retreat became dominated by “an increasingly authoritarian medical regime” (p. 130).

Making use of the extensive surviving records, Digby presents us with useful and quite novel information about the work and attitudes of asylum attendants. In similar fashion, casebooks and other patient records are mined to give a detailed statistical portrait of the patient population. Subsequently, some attempt is made to reconstruct the day-to-day realities of the patient world, an only partially realized ambition. As Digby ruefully comments, even confining one’s attention to a small institution devoted to the care of the socially privileged, the records are often silent on this crucial issue: “It is perhaps a commentary on the asylum that while there is almost too much information on the first objective world of the patient, evidence on their subjectively felt experience was often absent.” (p. 171). Finally, while rightly cautioning against the temptation to “overburden fragile data with a disproportionate weight of interpretation”, Digby provides an extended discussion of how the Retreat’s physicians explained the presence of insanity (they increasingly emphasized physical causes); and how successful they were in treating the condition (increasingly less so as the century wore on).

It cannot be said that *Madness, morality and medicine* dramatically alters our perceptions of nineteenth-century psychiatry. Rather, it extends and solidifies our understanding of how such a small Quaker institution came to exercise such a disproportionate influence on social policy on both sides of the Atlantic, and provides an extremely detailed portrait of its changing fate and fortunes over the course of the nineteenth century. Unquestionably, this valuable book will constitute an important starting-point for anyone interested in the peculiar vicissitudes of our responses to mental disorder in the modern era.

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RUDOLF VIRCHOW, *Collected essays on public health and epidemiology*, edited and with a foreword by L. J. Rather, editing translator, Anne Gisemann, Canton, Mass., Science History Publications, 1985, 2 vols., 8vo, pp. xviii, 1232, \$50.00.

Few careers in medicine were more productive or diverse than that of Rudolf Virchow. A master pathologist and an outstanding teacher, he was also a leading anthropologist and the champion of a scientific and vigorous approach to matters of public health. In mid-career he republished (1879) his major contributions to the study of public health and it is these two volumes which now appear in English translation.