

Book Reviews

The way ahead is shown by the last essay in the book, Karl Figlio's meaty piece of social history, 'How does illness mediate social relations? Workmen's compensation and medico-legal practice, 1890–1940'. The title is spot-on, and highlights the paper's concerns and approaches. Taking the eye malfunction, nystagmus, Figlio shows that late nineteenth-century medical interest in its exact specification, symptoms, aetiology, duration, and severity arose specifically because it was one of the compensatable industrial diseases under the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897. Moreover, the vast ensuing controversy concerning the reality and discovery of malingering amongst miners then helped to constitute the socio-scientific framework within which the very field of psychosomatic and psychiatric medicine could be defined in the twentieth century (shell-shock treatment after World War I is a parallel example). Figlio's social-historical skill in tracing the dialectic of the construction of knowledge forms, their social use, the emergence of new problems, and the negotiation of matching new intellectual formulations, scores a last-minute winner for the social constructionist approach, and vindicates the project of the book.

If the Edinburgh University Press must charge £12.00 for a paperback, they should take more care over the proof-reading (e.g. *Michael Foucault* crops up disconcertingly often).

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FRANCIS SCHILLER, *A Möbius strip. Fin-de-siècle neuropsychiatry and Paul Möbius*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, University of California Press, 1982, 8vo, pp. [viii], 134, front., £12.00.

This charming little book introduces Paul Möbius (1853–1907) to an English-speaking audience. Grandson of the inventor of the one-sided surface (hence the book's title), Paul Möbius achieved some fame in his life, particularly for the series of "pathographies" – an early form of psychohistory – he wrote on Rousseau, Goethe, Nietzsche, and other historical figures. He also published widely on neurological and psychiatric disorders, including hysteria, on the relative merits of physical and psychological therapies, on degenerationism, alcoholism, sexuality, and women. His work touched many strands of late nineteenth-century neuropsychiatry, a fact which makes Schiller's monograph much more than a simple biography. Rather, he uses these core concerns of Möbius as an entrée into the rich world of nervous diseases and neurological ideas in the period. He is particularly enlightening about the historical relationships between neurology and psychiatry, and the impact of philosophical traditions on German neuroscience. An occasional discursiveness adds to the book's interest: for instance, a brief discussion (pp. 17–18) on the use of the word "surgery" to describe the place where the doctor sees his patients, or the etymological analysis of "asylum". Schiller's humour is also evident: "To this day the neurotic patient visits his analyst the way he would go to a weekly lesson with his piano teacher; by contrast, his visits to the cardiologist or dentist yield far less insight or opportunity for self-expression." (p. 21). Indeed, so gentle is Schiller's humour that the assumption must be that slips such as attributing non-restraint to William Tuke (p. 63), or calling Philippe Pinel "P. Quince" (p. 116) were put there to keep the reader alert.

Möbius was more a reflector than a creator of the neuro-psychiatric thought of his time. As such, he is the ideal surface for Schiller's historical torch, which illuminates Möbius and much else besides.

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La médecine hospitalière française au XVIII^e siècle, (Colloque de l'Institut d'Histoire de la Médecine et de la Pharmacie de l'Université René Descartes, Paris, 5 octobre 1977), Strasbourg, Université Louis Pasteur, 1980, 4to, pp. [iv], 213, [no price stated].

On the eve of the Revolution, French hospitals appeared to Jacques Tenon, the leading authority on the subject, as vast "healing machines" poised to release their potential for the benefit of mankind once the medical profession could occupy and transform the premises in the name of the clinical enterprise. Historians of medicine have generally followed Tenon's vision.

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The Revolutionary period did (after some hesitation by those who dreamed of a society without hospitals) bring about the conversion of the main houses of Christian care for the sick poor in the large urban centres (*Hôtels-Dieu*, *Charités*, and *Hôpitaux Généraux*) to medical institutions concerned with the study and treatment of disease. The process of medicalization of Paris hospitals has been well documented by Michel Foucault, Erwin Ackerknecht, and others.

The medical revolution has tended to overshadow the "medical old regime". As a result of this perspective (as well as the destruction of many of the relevant archives at Paris), our knowledge of hospital medicine in eighteenth-century France, as it was lived by patients, religious, medical and administrative personnel, and perceived by the rest of society, remains obscure.

Unfortunately, the present collection of eleven papers does not present any new insights or interpretations. The proceedings of a colloquium, the collection is poorly organized, repetitive, and palpably in need of editorial attention. This is especially evident in the prolix introduction by Pierre Huard and M.-J. Imbault-Huart, and, to a lesser extent, in three other papers by the same team. Their discussion of the hospice of the Paris Royal College of Surgery, for example, dwells on previously published material while missing an opportunity to consider patients or diseases. They accuse "American authors", singling out this reviewer, of mistaking the small hospice for "la grande école chirurgicale parisienne". Suffice it to say that I never made such a claim. (Ironically, it is the French authors who grossly mistake the scope of the small model surgical hospital by stating that it received ten times as many patients as it in fact did.)

Vincent Comiti's brief discussion of the distribution of patients and disease categories is the only paper to address these central questions. Pierre Niaussat (French naval hospitals) and Marcel Baudot (archival sources) provide facts, lists, and hints for further research. Adrien Carré's sketch of English naval hospitals argues for their inferiority to French counterparts. Jean Filliozat reproduces an eyewitness description of Paris medical institutions left by a Swedish visitor in 1770–71. Jean-Pierre Kerneis's 'J.-B. Cassard and the birth of hospital medicine at Nantes in 1717' is the only piece of research based on hospital records in this disappointing collection.

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JOHN S. HALLER jr., *American medicine in transition 1840–1910*, Urbana, Chicago, and London, University of Illinois Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. xii, 457, illus., \$17.50.

John Haller is one of a growing group of American historians who have turned their attention to medical developments. Following in the footsteps of the late Richard H. Shryock, they have with ever-increasing sophistication analysed and described both the evolution of medical ideas and medical practices as well as the culture in which they took place. Haller, for instance, has written some informative articles on therapeutic practices such as bleeding and on the use of calomel. These now find their way into this book.

Although the book is long and does contain some informative sections, it does not deserve a long review. It is, unfortunately, very disappointing, because I hoped that a good synthesis of American medicine had finally appeared. This is not the case. Professor Haller is not on very secure ground in many parts of the book, though his range of references will be useful. He has relied on secondary works to some extent and on the medical journal literature extensively.

The most telling fault of Haller's book is a conceptual void. How can one come to grips with the transformation of medicine by virtually totally ignoring the role, and developments of hospitals and those doctors who did so much to make the hospital the centre of twentieth-century medicine, the surgeons?

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WAYLAND D. HAND (editor), *American folk medicine*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, University of California Press, 1981, 8vo, pp. viii, 347, £3.50 (paperback).

WAYLAND D. HAND, *Magical medicine. The folkloric component of medicine in the folk*