

Book Reviews

“assist us in understanding the present position of our discipline”. This is a tall order and it is clear that this book would not pass the test were it to be judged by its announced standards.

But there is no need to do so. Like Kraepelin’s, *A century of psychiatry* is an idiosyncratic book. It is also ahistorical in that nowhere in it is there an explanatory hypothesis to be found. It is, nonetheless, as Richard Hunter’s work always was, a mine of information. In nine short and well-ordered sections, Professor Pichot packs a great deal. His personal acquaintance with the protagonists of the story (or with those who knew them) fills his work with the scent of fresh gossip, the very stuff with which good history can be written. This fact, however, creates some informational imbalance in the architecture of the book. For example, no attempt is made to counterpoise the long section on the details of how Ball and Magnan fought it out for the Chair of Mental Disease at Sainte Anne with an analysis of how this event contributed to the development of the discipline. There is, again, no attempt to separate the history of descriptive psychopathology before 1900 from that of psychiatric taxonomy or management. This makes it very difficult for the author to explain, for example, why Zilboorg’s and Lewis’s accounts of nineteenth-century British psychiatry differ so much.

The great absent ones from this history must also be mentioned: Wernicke is not dealt with in any detail, although it is becoming clear that during the so-called early kraepelinean era he offered a real conceptual alternative and was, as the late Norman Geschwind showed, far more influential than he has been given credit for. Chaslin is only mentioned on few occasions by name, although his 1912 contribution to descriptive psychopathology (when compared with Jaspers’) may well turn out to be important when the definitive work in this area is produced.

After chapter 3, the book ceases to be “historical” as personages and events become uncomfortably close to the present. Pichot’s views on the gradual rise of biological psychiatry, the decline and fall of the antipsychiatry movement, and the “remedicalization” of the discipline are right and balanced and should be read with attention by all non-medical historians who want to use this book as an introduction to the history of psychiatry.

Professor Pichot is, as it befits a man of his renown, coy about the role he himself has played in the tale he tells. It is a reassuring thought to those who feel that psychiatry is no longer the natural home of the polymath that a neuroscientist like him should be able to write with panache on the history of his profession. It is also a tough reminder to the new breed of psychiatrists that they must not expect to succeed men of the stature of Slater, Hamilton, Shepherd, Ey, Baruk, or Pichot unless they are prepared assiduously to toil in broader fields than those of medicine.

G. E. Berrios
Department of Psychiatry
University of Cambridge

RENATE SIMPSON, *How the PhD came to Britain. A century of struggle for postgraduate education*, Guildford, Society for Research into Higher Education, 1983, 8vo, pp.204, £9.75 (paperback).

Those of us with PhDs have all experienced the social situation of meeting a general practitioner who defers exclaiming “Ah! a *real* doctor!” In fact, technically, the British PhD is a “lower doctorate”, which has only been awarded for postgraduate research since 1917. Before then, as Simpson shows in this interesting survey of university and government archives and regulations, the higher examined, or by thesis, doctorates (DLitt, DSc) that existed were either only available to graduates of a particular university or, if offered to graduates from other universities (including overseas), were surrounded by off-putting and expense-making regulations. British students in search of research experience therefore tended to go to German universities, as did Americans, where their efforts were rewarded by the PhD. (Simpson does not discuss the usually limited and often purely honorary nature of the German degree or that its candidates were mainly foreigners.) Not surprisingly, research degrees on the German model were strongly advocated by members of the British scientific community who gave evidence to educational inquiries, and who obtained institutional positions after the

Book Reviews

1860s. However, for reasons that Simpson examines in detail, progress was reluctant and gradual. In the event, it was the economic and political necessity of colonial cohesion created by the First World War, the Foreign Office's concern to wean American students from German contamination, and the establishment of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research which prompted the universities to introduce the degree. What the medical profession thought of the advent of "real doctors" is unfortunately not examined in what is, otherwise, a valuable contribution to educational history.

W. H. Brock
Victorian Studies Centre
University of Leicester

DEAN KEITH SIMONTON, *Genius, creativity, and leadership. Historiometric inquiries*, Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1984, 8vo, pp. ix, 231, £16.00.

Historiometry is "the method of testing nomothetic hypotheses concerning human behavior by applying quantitative analyses to data abstracted from historical populations" (p. 3; all page references are to *Genius, creativity, and leadership*). In other words, it is the attempt to discover general laws both of psychology (about individual and group behaviour) and of history (about patterns of change and stability across nations and cultures), through the statistical analysis of historical data. The aims of historiometry are ambitious, the scope is vast, the precursors are suspect. On the one hand, Simonton's enterprise looks back to Galton's attempt to show that genius must be hereditary since it runs in families, and to Cox's attempt to measure the IQs of da Vinci, Napoleon, and 299 other eminent historical personages. On the other, it looks back to the attempts of Spengler, Toynbee, and others to formulate sweeping laws of historical development that encompass whole nations, cultures, and epochs. Neither kind of effort commands much allegiance today.

Still, while the enterprise must attract scepticism, Simonton's analyses are interesting and thought-provoking. In a study of Western civilization from 700 BC to AD 1839, he finds that the number of distinct nation-states in each twenty-year period was significantly related to the number of well-known creative individuals in the same period; political fragmentation, as he calls it, seems to encourage the emergence of creative individuals, imperial consolidation to discourage it. In another study of 2012 European philosophers, he finds that the most eminent of them tended to reflect the prevailing views, not of their own generation, but of one generation before; rather than being ahead of their times, they were very slightly behind. In a third, he finds that the "presidential greatness" of American presidents, as assessed by a large sample of American historians, could be very well predicted by only four variables: the occurrence of major scandals during the president's administration, the occurrence of unsuccessful assassination attempts, the total number of years spent in office, and the number of those years in which the country was at war. Only the first predictor, the occurrence of major scandals, was negatively related to assessed greatness.

From "great man" vs. "zeitgeist" interpretations of the fame of kings and generals, through the changing (but predictable) fashions in "melodic originality" in classical music from Josquin des Pres to Shostakovich, to the incidence of simultaneous discovery in the sciences, Simonton uses his sophisticated statistical techniques to marshal the historical records in a way that is often both entertaining and insightful. The gravest errors in his analyses come, oddly enough (since he is a psychologist), when he abandons broad historical trends and focuses on outstandingly creative individuals. In one case, he addresses the question of why "creativity in various disciplines may require different grades of intellect" (p. 76). He notes that students who enter physics have higher average IQs than those who enter the social sciences, and infers, "Thus, it is not utterly preposterous to suggest that Einstein and Oppenheimer may have been equally bright and that both were the intellectual superiors of Freud. Both Einstein and Freud were revolutionaries, but Freud revolutionized a field that requires less intrinsic intelligence" (p. 76). It may not be utterly preposterous to suggest that Einstein was brighter than Freud (whatever exactly that may mean), but it is certainly preposterous to suggest it on these