

Book Reviews

VIRGINIA BERRIDGE, *The Society for the Study of Addiction 1884–1988*, special issue of *British Journal of Addiction*, August 1990, **85** (8): 983–1087, illus., £21.50 (ISSN 0952–1481).

Virginia Berridge notes that, “the history of institutions and organizations has, by and large, had a bad press.” Consequently, revisionist social historians have either given up writing about institutions or turned to writing chronicles of “total institutions”. Well aware of the hazards of the enterprise, Berridge has taken up the challenge of writing a balanced and judicious history of the Society for the Study of Addiction. She has succeeded masterfully.

Using manuscripts and interviews she presents a series of sketches focused on successive periods of the Society’s existence. In each she weaves together details about the day-to-day operation of the Society, biographical portraits of its leaders, and synopses of important articles in its journal. The Society, as Berridge portrays it, has been a loose grouping of individuals from many backgrounds, though generally including a large number of doctors. Throughout much of its history it has had large and poorly-focused ambitions. Characteristically its ambitions greatly exceeded its accomplishments, which have been quite modest. Indeed the Society was often so fragile that simply maintaining its existence was a considerable achievement. This was accomplished through the efforts of a succession of strong leaders, whose views tended to dominate the society’s agenda.

What gives this work its greatest value for the general reader is Berridge’s ability to draw on her thorough knowledge of the history of addiction in order to relate the history of the Society to changing attitudes and government policies. By showing how the society reacted to these trends and struggled (usually unsuccessfully) to influence them, Berridge has managed to give us not merely another institutional history but a social history of addiction from a particular angle of vision.

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STEVE WEBB, *From the watching of shadows: the origins of radiological tomography*, Bristol, Adam Hilger, 1990, 8vo, pp. xvii, 347, illus., £29.50.

This book starts off well. The contents list is interesting and along the lines of a Jules Verne novel—“Part I In which we discover. . .”. The Preface poses the many questions which enter one’s mind when one stops to think about the origins of tomography. But are they all truthfully answered in the book? Many of them are, but not all.

The early history from 1914 to 1940 is beautifully done and collected together and the interested reader will find this fascinating, with portraits of the really early pioneers, as well as diagrams showing their methods. Europe and Britain seem to be well reported here. The years of consolidation of classical tomography, 1940–1950, seem less well done: Watson of U.K. seems to be casually treated, relative to the accolade given to Takahashi of Japan, but the very tortuous commercial trade names for classical X-ray tomography of the 1950s and 60s are well sorted out.

The modern history of computed tomography begins on page 167 and it gives great pleasure to the reviewer to see the work of Oldendorf, with that of Kuhl and Edwards in particular, given prominence. These workers were “pioneers in the history of emission tomography”: they used an optical integrator to give “back projection” 9 years before X-ray tomography blazed onto the scene (p. 179). Kuhl should publish his account of this work (referred to here as Kuhl 1989, private communication—letter to S. Webb) to set the record straight. Also, the development of tomography for radioastronomy and electron microscopy before 1972 is highlighted (pp. 184–7). The conclusion on page 190 that “The award of the Nobel Prize, whilst justly acknowledging those who finally solved the practical difficulties, inevitably diminished the collective achievements of these other workers”—has a ring of truth about it.

The book is confusing to read around the critical period, because the author first deals with X-ray tomography in its entirety (including within this Kuhl’s work on emission tomography), and he does not begin the history of emission tomography until page 223. An historical