

Book Reviews

Even when he ploughs such deep furrows as the Schreber case or Freud's own 'Autobiographical Study', he has new lessons to teach us. It is salutary to be reminded, too, that Freud "attributed [Emma Eckstein's] neurosis to masturbation and, following Fliess's 'reflex nasal neurosis' theory, saw the nose as the source of her masturbatory activity". The treatment, as Porter aptly puts it, was "anti-masturbatory nasal surgery". Since then the therapeutic armamentarium of psychiatry has progressed to insulin coma, electroshock, lobotomy, and psychotropic drugs.

"This book", summarizes Porter, "has argued that there is a 'story from below' which needs telling." There is, indeed, and he has told it eloquently. And to what end? Herein, perhaps, lies the greatest strength of this fine book which, concludes Porter, "has not pleaded a cause; neither has it had any palpable design upon its readers." Although it may not have been Porter's aim to plead a cause, one cannot write a book on so emotion-laden a subject as madness without, at least tacitly, doing so. If, then, the Whig interpretation of the history of psychiatry pleads the cause of uninterrupted medical progress in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, what cause does the Tory interpretation plead? That we must never stop pondering the dilemmas of human existence; and that the social-psychiatric engineering we undertake ought to be peaceful and piecemeal, as Karl Popper has urged, and not violent and revolutionary, as the much-ballyhooed "reforms" of psychiatry have been, especially in this, our own violent and revolutionary century.

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JAN GOLDSTEIN, *Console and classify: the French psychiatric profession in the nineteenth century*, Cambridge, etc., Cambridge University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. xiii, 414, illus., £30.00, \$49.50.

Jan Goldstein's *Console and classify* is a persuasive and brilliantly researched account of the relationship between psychiatric theory and the professional history of mental medicine in nineteenth-century France. It is the most thoroughly documented effort to reconstruct the history of French psychiatry from the Revolution to the *belle époque*. Goldstein argues that the professionalization of French psychiatry was inseparable from such wider cultural currents as secularization and bureaucratization. She contends that the major success of psychiatrists—or alienists—lay in their ability to devise diagnostic labels which enjoyed widespread popularity within liberal and anticlerical circles. Alienist terms such as "monomania" and hysteria had the professional advantage, Goldstein maintains, of disguising the fact that asylum physicians in France could do little for their incarcerated patients except comfort and "console" them. The irony was that alienists had largely appropriated this form of "moral treatment" from the Catholic religious orders during their campaign to eradicate clerical involvement in the institutional care of the insane. Thus alienists relied on their prowess at labelling patients to convince the state that they deserved to be the only experts in the diagnosis and treatment of madness when all the evidence suggested otherwise. The trouble for psychiatry was that this strategy did not fool everyone. For most of the century, alienists had to parry criticism and outright attempts to restrict psychiatric power and authority. Goldstein's account of this drama therefore qualifies Michel Foucault's over-simplified analysis of the power/knowledge relationship found in his *Discipline and punish* without necessarily disproving his thesis that a "discipline" like psychiatry was an integral ally of the modern state in its attempt to control deviance.

Console and classify is especially strong in its exhaustive coverage of the 1815–1848 period, when physicians made great strides towards establishing themselves as the sole authorities in the administrative, managerial, and therapeutic functions of public asylums. Her book abounds in important insights into the practice of nineteenth-century asylum psychiatry in France: for example, she argues that the patronage dispensed by charismatic and influential physicians proved to be more professionally consequential than the process of psychiatric organization into associations for the promotion of professional interests. She also shows skilfully how the

concept of “monomania”—the name psychiatrists used to denote an otherwise rational mind which was obsessively preoccupied with a single idea—captured the imagination of the liberal press during the 1815–1848 period.

However, the book is not without problems. In accounting for the decline of monomania in the early 1850s, Goldstein contends that the greater professional security French psychiatrists felt by mid-century enabled them to be more self-critical and finally drop a concept whose many flaws had been recognized for years. Yet this explanation overlooks the fact that alienists felt far from secure at mid-century. Overcrowding of the profession and the reluctance of departmental Prefects to build more public asylums and employ more alienists were worrying for psychiatrists in the 1840s. They were also highly disenchanted with the decentralized system of asylum governance during the Second Empire (1852–1870), which they felt failed to serve their material self-interests as state employees. Finally, the profession was rent with serious divergences of opinion over a wide variety of matters, hardly a sign of a “secure” profession. A more likely explanation, and one which fits Goldstein’s own data, would identify monomania’s fate with that of phrenology, an equally liberal and anticlerical concept which had lost even its most stubborn adherents by the clericalist reaction of the early Second Empire. For psychiatrists to have dropped the theory of monomania at a time when liberal ideas were anathema would merely corroborate what Robert A. Nye and other scholars have noted about nineteenth-century French psychiatry, that is, its acute sensitivity to cultural, political, and philosophic trends.

In addition, Goldstein has made a questionable assumption by equating Jean-Martin Charcot’s Salpêtrière “School” with asylum psychiatry. Although ties undoubtedly existed between Charcot’s school of neuropathology and the psychiatric wards at Salpêtrière and Bicêtre, there were as well important features which distinguished the two branches of medicine, the most obvious being the differences in the kinds of illness encountered by alienists and neurologists. Professional differences may also have been matched by political dissimilarities. Désiré-Magloire Bourneville, an alienist and follower of Charcot, was indeed a rabid republican and positivist, but Goldstein has not shown that his opinions were shared by other alienists. She has written a brilliant political account of the Charcot School’s anticlericalism during the early Third Republic yet she has not extended her analysis convincingly to the psychiatric mainstream.

Nonetheless, Goldstein’s book is a vital contribution to the growing historiographic literature on psychiatry. Methodical in her critical estimation of customary historical assumptions, she has produced a book which will inform future scholarly discussions of nineteenth-century asylum medicine.

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VINCENT QUINN and JOHN PREST (editors), *Dear Miss Nightingale*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987, 8vo, pp. xxxvii, 359, £35.00.

This selection contains about three-fifths of the 700 or so letters from Benjamin Jowett to Florence Nightingale and nearly 50 of the surviving drafts of her letters to him. The book is meticulously edited with a lucid, if non-committal, introduction and helpful brief annotations. Altogether it is a model of how such materials should be presented.

The correspondence began when Florence Nightingale took to her bed in about 1860. She sought to enlist Jowett as a compliant reader of her ‘Stuff’, her three-volume rambles on theodicy and life. He, like the other eminent persons she canvassed, backed away from the ‘Stuff’ but the exchange inaugurated twenty years of coy conspiracy between these self-contained, sharp celibates bent on advancing themselves and the public good. He was resolved to elevate Balliol and Oxford, she was intent on raising the moral and sanitary condition of the British Army. Both wanted sanitary and taxation reforms in India. Nightingale used Jowett to capture such notables for the cause as Lord Dufferin, the future Viceroy, and to plant propaganda in *The*