

doi:10.1017/mdh.2015.17

Patrick Singy, *L'Usage du sexe: Lettres au docteur Tissot, auteur de l'Onanisme (1760)*, Essai historiographique et texte transcrit par Patrick Singy (Lausanne: Éditions BHMS, 2014), pp. 276, €39, paperback, ISBN: 978-2-9700640-8-4.

In the series 'sources in perspective' Éditions BHMS publishes text anthologies, preceded by a historiographic introduction and a critical apparatus. This volume edited by Patrick Singy, philosopher and historian, gathers together ninety-eight letters or extracts of letters sent to Dr Tissot, an introduction on the history of sexuality, a glossary and a bibliography. This anthology should be put into the context of the project conducted by S. Pilloud, M. Louis-Courvoisier and V. Barras which provided to the general public, as scans available online, the entire corpus of medical letters (1436) sent to the great Swiss doctor and conserved in the cantonal library and University of Lausanne.

The choice made by Patrick Singy in this corpus focuses on letters where the disease which motivates consultation involves the sexuality of the patient, directly or indirectly. Certain letters are reproduced in full, others are only quoted for a few lines. All are preceded with a note providing, when available, information on the date, location, author, patient, Tissot's reaction (diagnosis, comments) and the letter's location in the Tissot archives collection.

The letters collected here illustrate the thesis that Patrick Singy develops in the introduction. According to him, the historiography of sexuality suffers from a recurrent defect: it postulates the idea of a 'natural' sexuality, un-historical, only the control and expression of which would be subjects of history. This postulate (also found in the history of emotions) places the historian in the position of 'defender of sexual liberation', devoted to denouncing medicine, which is seen as oppressive. Even Foucault, who showed the shift from a theological discourse on the flesh to a medical discourse on sex, only unravels a new social and cultural 'encoding' of a pre-existing object.

Patrick Singy proposes to distinguish in the history of sexuality three discourses, more or less porous and successive, which correspond to both concepts and practices: the discourse on the flesh, relying on the confession; the discourse on semen, relying on the medical consultation, and the discourse on sexuality, relying on the psychoanalytic cure.

The discourse on the flesh, essentially Christian, is based on a sexual norm, conjugal and reproductive heterosexuality. Its main objective is to determine the degree of culpability of sexual acts that deviate from this norm and the role played by willingness. It is a question of sin. In this discourse, for example, involuntary nocturnal pollution is relativized.

The discourse on sexuality, which appears during the mid-nineteenth century (and which invents the word) is based on the notion of instinct in approaching different sexual practices. Instincts determine sexual identities: homosexuals, masochists, etc. The practitioner, such as Krafft-Ebing, is interested in the deep roots of this identity, in contrast to the confessor who is uninterested in its origins.

The peak of the discourse on semen takes place between these two discourses, during the eighteenth century. Tissot illustrates it perfectly. Based on a natural morality, he approaches the subject of sexual practices from the perspective of their effects on the body. It is a question of energy and hydraulics: excessive loss of semen disturbs the organism, whatever may be the cause, even if Tissot struggles to justify the reason why masturbation is more noxious than frantic coitus.

The letters sent to Tissot are indicative of the penetration of this discourse within society. They show in particular that the sexual question is merely one medical problem among others, that it is just one of the numerous manifestations of excess and indulgence (drink,

food, exercise, passions . . .) that worry patients. This excess is furthermore relative: the norm referred to, in contrast to the two other discourses, is strictly quantitative and determined ad hoc, depending on the patient. This results in a perception of sexual practices as ‘aetiological factors’ and nothing more. A further consequence is the therapist’s lack of interest in the links between these practices and the patient’s imaginary, desires and even pleasures. This also results in, for example, the new denunciation of involuntary nocturnal pollutions. In fact, following Patrick Singy, Tissot’s patients do not have a sexuality strictly speaking, at least as we understand it today.

Patrick Singy’s overview is seducing and effective: for example, it measures the distance separating *Onania* from Tissot’s book. The author wisely insists on the necessity of thinking of these discourses as permeable to each other, and not as monolithic blocs. Two regrets, however: certain letter extracts are very short, and hence, of limited interest; perhaps the selective approach should have been extended as expected in any anthology. Also, it is surprising to notice the absence in the bibliography of major references, such as by Alain Corbin’s *L’Harmonie des plaisirs* (2008) or *Les Origines de la sexologie* by Sylvie Chaperon (2012). These regrets are nevertheless minor in the face of the extremely stimulating nature of the analysis delivered by Patrick Singy and the avenues he opens for the history of sexuality.

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doi:10.1017/mdh.2015.18

Marius Turda, *Eugenics and Nation in Early 20th Century Hungary*, Science, Technology and Medicine in Modern History series, ed. John V. Pickstone, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. x, 343, £70.00, hardback and eBook, ISBN: 9781137293527.

Marius Turda’s *Eugenics and Nation in Early 20th Century Hungary* charts the history of Hungarian eugenics in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Based primarily on journal articles, debates and lectures, Turda delivers a well-researched monograph with detailed description of hitherto unexplored sources. The narrative is framed by Hungarian eugenicists’ engagement with their peers abroad. Turda opens the book with sociologist Oszkár Jászi’s letter to Francis Galton from 1907 and ends with Pál Teleki’s plea for support against the partitioning in a letter to Leonard Darwin, delivered with the help of the Swedish Pontus Fahlbeck and published in *The Eugenics Review* in 1919. In-between the two letters, Turda closely tracks the intellectual conversation grappling with the manifold meanings and practices of eugenics, the formation of societies and eugenicists’ attempts at social reform.

Turda enumerates a long list of intellectuals, who, in diverse ways and to various degrees, engaged with eugenic theories or invoked eugenic concepts in their attempts towards social reform preceding and during the First World War. Furthermore, he explores the roots of the connection between eugenics and nationalism, an important relationship to understand in the light of the social and political effects of the country’s traumatic partitioning in 1920. Finally, he depicts Hungarian eugenics as part of a more broad, primarily European movement. Through the Hungarian case, Turda aims to address ‘the biological transformation of the modern state’ (p. 5) and places Hungarian eugenics in an international, particularly German and British, context.