

## 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).

Roy Porter  
Wellcome Institute

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.

W. F. Bynum  
Wellcome Institute

*La médecine hospitalière française au XVIII<sup>e</sup> 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.