

Book Reviews

the kind of serious and sustained scholarly apparatus that makes Hunter and MacAlpine's *Three hundred years of psychiatry* such an extraordinary accomplishment and a continuing source of pleasure and insight over the years. Rather, the intent seems to be to bring together a number of sometimes touching, sometimes disturbing, sometimes amusing vignettes for the casual reader, a book to be dipped into and sampled, rather than a volume one might treat as an important scholarly resource or something one might want to read through in any systematic fashion.

Porter is an extraordinarily industrious, indeed apparently indefatigable historian with a broad knowledge of the territory he is here attempting to survey. Though certain sources are mined perhaps a trifle too frequently, overall he has chosen wisely and well, mixing the familiar and the obscure in judicious proportions. Provided one does not expect much more than this, *The Faber book of madness* can be recommended as a modestly useful compilation, of interest primarily to a non-specialist audience.

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GERMAN E. BERRIOS and HUGH FREEMAN (eds), *150 years of British psychiatry 1841–1991*, London, Gaskell for the Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1991, pp. xv, 464, illus., £15.00 (0–902241–36–2).

Celebratory volumes are often eminently forgettable—a mixture of hagiography, meandering reminiscences about the good old days, and uncritical self-congratulation. Berrios and Freeman are to be congratulated for avoiding these pitfalls for the most part, and for assembling a volume containing a number of papers which make a genuine contribution to the history of psychiatry. The collection does not begin particularly promisingly, with an editors' introduction marred by considerable animus towards much of the recent work in the field written by non-psychiatrists (including, it should be noted, this reviewer). But the papers themselves are drawn from a eclectic mix of scholars, including a substantial number of professional historians (e.g., Roger Smith, Mark Finnane, Kathleen Jones, and William Bynum), and they range widely over the relevant territory.

The 28 individual chapters are assigned into three broad sections—Institutions, Ideas and People—a division which works tolerably well even though the categories obviously overlap. Not all the contributions are of an equally high standard. Some lapse into antiquarianism; others (such as Freeman and Tantam's paper on Samuel Gaskell, the asylum superintendent and lunacy commissioner whose name was appropriated by the Royal College of Psychiatrists for its publications) are disappointingly thin and insubstantial. But there is plenty of solid empirical research here. I particularly enjoyed Trevor Turner's trenchant piece on the Medico-Psychological Association in the years before World War I; Roger Smith's review of 'Legal Frameworks for Psychiatry', which provides a sophisticated and historically informed perspective on some very controversial issues; William Bynum's assessment of the state of psychiatry at the turn of the century, as revealed in the pages of Tuke's *Dictionary of psychological medicine*; and John Todd and Lawrence Ashworth's lengthy discussion of James Crichton-Browne's tenure as superintendent of the West Riding Asylum. Other papers deal with such topics as the history of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychiatry in Britain; shell shock; the relationship between the Association and the study and treatment of mental handicap; psychiatry in the Celtic fringe; and the anti-psychiatry movement (as viewed by a psychiatrist). Biographical essays on Maudsley, Clouston, and Stengel, together with an attempt to assess Adolf Meyer's influence on British psychiatry, are on the whole rather less satisfactory, but even these essays contain interesting observations and information. Taken as a whole, and particularly in light of the fact that it is available in hardback for only £15, this book is a bargain, and should be on the bookshelves of anyone interested in the history of psychiatry.

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