

## Book Reviews

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ELISABETH ROUDINESCO, *Madness and revolution: the lives and legends of Théroigne de Méricourt*, transl. Martin Thom, London and New York, Verso, 1992, pp. xi, 284, illus., £12.95 (paperback 0-86091-597-2).

Anne-Josèphe Terwagne, from Marcourt in Belgium, gained notoriety during the French Revolution as Théroigne de Méricourt and ended her life confined in La Salpêtrière. Her “madness”, integrated with her eventful life-story before and during the revolution, and with the views of contemporaries and historians—the observers observed—pervades Elisabeth Roudinesco’s book. Its relevance for medical historians extends beyond the description of asylum conditions and the role of Etienne Esquirol, the doctor in charge, to embrace gender issues, revolutionary politics, treatment of the insane, and the manufacture of “legends”. One theme is that the sensationalized persona, like the name—creations of the hostile royalist press—took over the woman herself. The image remains powerful: Simon Schama’s *Citizens* (1989) featured the romantic Théroigne and made her his concluding symbol.

The development of the subject’s mental illness is analysed in detail. There was a crucial event (p. 101): “We know that Théroigne went mad a year after an episode in the course of which she really was whipped in the public square”, but melancholia, ennui, depression, the humiliations inflicted on women, and the asylum experience itself are all seen to have played their part in a protracted and complex aetiology—plural madneses as well as lives and legends. The author has written a history of psycho-analysis in France, and her interpretations can appear Freudian and reductionist, emphasizing personal rather than social or crowd psychology: the wearing of a riding-habit is “clearly a fetish” (p. 98); the National Assembly is characterized as a “maternal pole”, and interest in keeping archives and writing reports ascribed to a “double dream of procreation” (p. 73); self-neglect is associated with mourning for the lost ideal object of the revolution. Such analyses are at least applied to men as well as women: for Jules Michelet, the drinking of milk apparently worked wonders: “the feminine fluid had led to his regeneration” (p. 187).

Occasional awkwardness of expression may be compounded by the translation, not always smooth or convincing. An ability to read through to the French helps when a historian is quoted as writing that our heroine was “in no sense a girl” (p. 190), as does previous knowledge of the period when some key terms (*enragés, illuministes*) are left untranslated. Nevertheless, the chronology, index, and notes—including descriptions of manuscript, archival and printed sources (unfortunately there is no bibliography)—are useful, and eight pages of illustrations round out the picture. This is more than biography, a fascinating contribution to several aspects of historical study.

Elizabeth Willis, London

RICHARD LOVELL, *Churchill’s doctor: a biography of Lord Moran*, London, Royal Society of Medicine Services Ltd, 1992, pp. xiv, 457, illus., £25.00 (1-85315-183-1).

Lord Moran made large contributions to life in three capacities—as Dean of St Mary’s, doctor to Winston Churchill, and President of the Royal College of Physicians. Each might be regarded as a reward for the ambition of any one man.

He was a great dean. He converted St Mary’s from a down-at-heel medical school into a leading teaching, research, social, and athletic institution. He prided himself on his nose for character—one of the signs of character he valued was skill at rugby. The St Mary’s team before the war always contained some internationals, if not the whole England three-quarter line. Rugger-playing students were induced to come to St Mary’s by various means so that their opponents were cheered by the crowd at matches with other medical schools: “Come on, the amateurs”. One ex-student says that he was asked only one question by Moran at his entrance interview: “What is your time for the 100 yards?” He was admitted, and as he later became a professor of medicine, a knight, and a Fellow of the Royal Society, who is to say that Moran’s choice was not a good one?