

## Book Reviews

in the arts and social sciences of the past. There is a rather abbreviated discussion of what exactly a metaphor is. David Leary's *Metaphors in the history of psychology* is cited but not discussed. Lacan's ideas about metaphor and metonymy in relation to neurosis are not mentioned. The chapter closes with the argument that the "disappearance" of hysteria after 1900 was due to over-extension of the term so that it "no longer performed the basic designative function of language" (p. 220). This seems an unnecessarily narrow view of language function to deploy in a chapter on metaphor.

In Chapter Four Micale shows his originality to the full, and has a chance to practise what he has preached, in a synchronic study of the operation of hysteria as a "cultural signifier" in late-nineteenth-century French medical and non-medical texts and lives. The methodological difficulties are knowingly left exposed rather than covered over by a welter of detail as in weaker historical writing. For example, while arguing that the DSM III concept of "histrionic personality disorder" has a Flaubertian origin, Micale simultaneously discusses a broader question about the direction of lines of influence between fiction and medical theory. The chapter closes with some comments on Sigmund Freud and Gustavé Flaubert as male hysterics and fascinating new material on the Lourdes-Salpêtrière axis.

**Andrew Hodgkiss**, Guy's Hospital

*The puzzle of pain*, transl. Fideline A Djité-Bruce, East Roseville, NSW, Gordon and Breach Arts International, 1994, pp. ix, 165, illus., £43.00, \$75.00 (976-8097-89-2).

This multi-author volume resulted from an exhibition on pain in Paris, organized by the Institute for International Scientific Co-operation in 1992. It looks like a coffee-table book and is lavishly illustrated, though some of the texts would make a demanding coffee break. The visual content includes photos of

puppets, full page colour reproductions of famous paintings and sculptures, specially commissioned computer graphics based on contemporary neuro-imaging techniques and diagrams from textbooks of pharmacology and neurosurgery.

The thirteen written contributions consider pain from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives. This supports the view expressed in the Foreword that pain is now a medical specialty and an object of interest for the human sciences in its own right. It is no longer a sign or marker of something else, something primary, be it sin or lesion. Pain, as a central dimension of human experience, is now taking its proper place in the clinic and academy. This can be seen as a victory for phenomenology, the study of lived experience, over both theology and the traditional clinical method of nineteenth-century "Paris medicine". The opening essays by Jean-Paul Natali and Jean-Didier Vincent freely mix discussion of Bergson and Merleau-Ponty with comments on opiate withdrawal and animal self-stimulation experiments. It is extraordinary for an Anglophone reader to find neurobiologists making comments like "behind the object—pain—there is necessarily a subject who suffers" (p. 7), or "No painful perception is pure and devoid of historical contingency" (p. 23).

Allan Basbaum, another medical scientist, points out that both placebos and hypnosis can be powerful analgesics but that they act by different mechanisms. Placebos seem to stimulate endogenous opiates while the mechanism of hypnotic analgesia remains obscure. We should have more respect for the role of the placebo in pain relief since placebos work and have measurable effects on the body. Stomach-churning descriptions of what people from various cultures can tolerate through trance, religious ecstasy and stoicism in Robert and Scott Anderson's excellent contribution on pain and anthropology support this point.

François Boureau offers an overview of multi-disciplinary pain clinics, which seem to have taken off more in the United States and France than in Britain. Marc Le Bot writes poetically about descriptions of pain in the history of art. His detailed consideration of Francis Bacon's

paintings, complemented by quotations of the artist, are a highlight of the book.

Patrick Lacoste's discussion of psychoanalytic approaches to pain is dense and difficult. He discusses three separate phenomena—psychogenic bodily pain, neurotic psychical pain and psychotic suffering. He depicts psychogenic pain as a defence, an avoidance of an encounter with something even more unbearable. His tantalizing definition of psychical pain as "half-way between anguish and mourning" (p. 160) is expanded in terms of the Freudian "lost object" and the Lacanian distinction between "lack" as motor of desire (in neurosis) and as a void (a hole in the Real to be "patched" by hallucination or delusion) in psychosis.

Readers of *Medical History* may be most interested by the two historical chapters—Georges Duby on physical pain in the Middle Ages and Roy Porter's overview of pain in the history of the western world. Duby argues that the almost total absence of pain in documents from 1000 to 1200 reflects a male-dominated, militaristic ideology that saw pain as feminine and weak. While women endured labour pain, men had to work. Pain was a sign of original sin, of God's punishment. By the thirteenth century there was increasing interest in empathizing with the bodily suffering of Christ's crucifixion, and hospitals and charitable institutions began to appear.

Porter explores the history of pain thematically. Beginning with a section on execution and torture by political and religious authorities he moves to a discussion on pain language and silence. Sufferers must tread a fine line between the silence of the traumatised, with a risk of going unnoticed, and the verbiage that attracts a diagnosis of hypochondria. The impact of Utilitarianism, Darwinism and Anti-vivisectionism on nineteenth-century attitudes to pain is briefly reviewed. The piece closes with the question of whether pain has changed over the centuries. Porter quite rightly dispatches this as an unanswerable matter.

**Andrew Hodgkiss**, Guy's Hospital

**Gabrielle Hatfield**, *Country remedies: traditional East Anglian plant remedies in the twentieth century*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1994, pp. xi, 148, £16.95 (0-85115-563-4).

Central to Hatfield's account is her annotated list of plant remedies employed for numerous ailments from ague to warts. She uses two sources of information. One is a compilation made by regional health officer Mark Taylor from 1920 to 1927. The second is from Hatfield's own investigations mostly from the late 1980s. The list is preceded by a chapter on 'Background to the plant remedies: social conditions in rural East Anglia seventy years ago', and is followed by discussions on data gathering, comparisons between the 1920s and the present, and current trends and future directions.

Much significant data exist in Hatfield's work, and it is churlish to request more commentary. However, in recent years the number of compilations and other writings covering plant remedies has multiplied considerably. The time is now ripe not only for analysis, but also for some synthesis and comparative study. Hatfield might have indicated this in a few places at least. A possible example includes a comment on her various references (seven) to "celandine", if only because of current scientific interest in the greater celandine (*Chelidonium majus*) as a resource for anti-tumour compounds. As another example, the intriguing reference to employing different sides of the leaf of "heal-all" justifies a note. After all, various traditional medical practices continue to specify usage of different sides of leaves. Such information, as esoteric as it may seem, is central to concerns that the examination of traditional practices by anthropologists, scientists and others ignores essential detail of the preparation and usage of herbs.

The introductory discussion, which focuses on widespread usage of plant remedies through such factors as economic considerations and remoteness from a doctor, might also have been more expansive. Hatfield does not, for instance, explore the use of home remedies in