

effeminacy, is the only other author to use medical history prominently.

For the Second World War, Miranda Pollard investigates the various competing forms of masculinity after the French defeat in 1940 represented by Pétain, De Gaulle and the Resistance. Three much more specific topics represent the post-war period: the *roman noir*, masculine stardom and a discussion of the writer Serge Doubrovsky. André Rauch's final chapter on recent violence in the suburbs focuses on the women who are abused and controlled by the disaffected immigrant youths, as much as on the men themselves. Rauch's piece is the most powerful, but also the most problematic. He jumps from topic to topic, not distinguishing between the Muslim youths whose sisters wear veils, and immigrant and French youth from other religious backgrounds.

In the Afterword, Robert Nye, one of the leading historians on the topic, points to the continued vision of France as hyper-civilized and thus feminized, especially by Americans post-9/11. France has gone from a great nation to a declining one, both militarily and demographically. French (elite) men have had 200 years of failing to live up to the iconic masculinities created by the Revolution and Napoleon, while hanging on to the Old Regime vision of the civilized, intellectual gentleman.

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Thomas Söderqvist (ed.), *The history and poetics of scientific biography*, Science, Technology and Culture, 1700–1945 series, Aldershot and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2007, pp. xv, 270, illus., £55.00, (hardback 978-0-7546-5181-9).

This volume of collected essays, the product of a conference held in 2002, is an enthusiastic defence of scientific biography and the possibilities it presents to historians. The first three essays look at how biographical

writing constructs identity, and its purposes. Liba Taub's opening chapter on ancient *bioi* of Pythagoras concludes that such works contributed to the history of a philosophical tradition and also served as guides on how to live. Stephen Gaukroger examines the ways in which Bacon and Descartes constructed a new identity for the philosopher through the manner in which they presented their own intellectual personae. David Aubin and Charlotte Bigg discuss the self-fashioning as exceptional scientists of Norman Lockyer and Jules Janssen, using parallel biography to re-engage with ideas of genius and context in a manner that avoids placing these in binary opposition.

In chapter four, Patricia Fara is also interested in self-presentation but through the visual medium, analysing the ways in which scientific subjects like Newton interacted with their portrait painters to fashion themselves as role models, arguing that the triangular relationship between sitter, painter and viewer can be analysed to produce biographical insights.

Chapters five and six each take an unorthodox angle. Thomas L Hankins' chapter compares rewards in science with patents, pointing to the fact that biographies often rely, as do patents, on the idea of individual genius. This conceit allows a fresh approach to the question of the importance of context in an examination of a scientific life and its achievements. Christopher Chilvers in chapter six, however, fails to convince in a discussion of the life of the Russian physicist Boris Hessen (or Gessen, the author seems unable to decide on one spelling) in terms of Aristotelian tragedy.

Chapters seven, eight and nine all trace the biographical histories of particular subjects, Helge Kragh of Tycho Brahe, Signe Lindskov Hansen of Niels Stensen, and Rebekah Higgitt of Newton. Each of these demonstrates ways in which it is biographers and their own agendas that determine the presentation of the past, as is true of all historical authors.

The next four chapters are all personal reflections by biographers on the particular

problems and possibilities of the genre. In chapter ten, Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent presents biography as bridging the gap between cultural memory and history. Next, Jacalyn Duffin's engaging essay describes her reasons for writing biography, her struggles to be published, and her belief in the value of biography as a complement to theoretical and social history. Rena Selya reflects upon the particular problems of biographical work on a subject who has actively participated in the construction of his own myth, especially by producing an autobiography. This highlights the tension between biographical constructions with different purposes, an issue that is also raised by Vassiliki Betty Smocovitis who discusses in chapter thirteen the peculiar pros and cons of her relationship with her living subject.

Finally, Beth Linker and Thomas Söderqvist contribute two chapters on the historical relations of biography with history of medicine and history of science. Linker gives a US-centric analysis of the fall of medical biography, yet to be rehabilitated, with the advent of social historical approaches in the 1970s. Söderqvist tells of the changing fortunes of scientific biography, certain forms of which have remained a respected mode of scholarship. Both these essays are reminders of the role that fashion plays in shaping our approaches to historical material.

This volume is evidence that those historians who write in a biographical vein are convinced of its worth. They have found good scholarly reasons, as well as personal ones, for adopting this approach. Biographies, perhaps precisely by engaging with the question of the importance of context, are capable of producing subtle and intelligent history. And ultimately, the trend for or against biography is no different from the shifting vogues to which all historical methodologies are subject.

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Mark Borisovich Mirsky,
*Мирский М.Б. Медицина России
X–XX веков: Очерки истории*
(Medicine in Russia from the Tenth to the
Twentieth Centuries: Essays on History),
Moscow, ROSSPEN, 2005, pp. 632, illus., no
price given (hardback 5-8243-0603-6).

Professor Mark Mirsky is a well-known historian of Russian medicine and surgery, and a prolific writer. He is head of the Department of History of Medicine and Public Health of the National Research Institute for Public Health (formerly the Semashko Institute for Social Hygiene and Healthcare Organization), Moscow.

In 1996 Mirsky published *Meditsina Rossii XVI–XIX vekov* [Медицина России XVI–XIX, ВЕКОВ] a history of medicine in Russia from the sixteenth to nineteenth century. The book reviewed here is an enlarged version of this and according to the publisher's blurb it is "a modern interpretation of the history of Russian medicine as an integral part of world culture".

The book is a collection of nineteen essays beginning with medicine in Old Russia (tenth to thirteenth centuries) and ending with a history of surgery in the twentieth century. Russian medicine is divided into two periods: "pre-scientific" (tenth to sixteenth centuries) and "scientific" (sixteenth century onwards). The watershed is the organization in the second half of the sixteenth century of the *Aptekarsky prikaz* (Apothecaries' department), which dealt with the health care of the tsar and his court. According to Mirsky, from then on medicine and health care in Russia was developed by the state. The state character of medical service is "a great advantage" and represents "the most progressive form of organization". "This should be borne in mind today, when differing opinions on the present and future of Russian medicine are expressed, but often its historical experience is not taken into consideration" (p.7).

Almost half the book deals with the twentieth century. It includes essays on the