

Book Reviews

becoming a focus for nationalist and radical protest. Thirdly, there is the Costa Rican state. The book examines labour recruitment and controls, union organization and radicalization, the persistence of Jamaican cultural and religious traditions and the impact of racism and early Communist proselytization.

Readers of this journal, however, are most likely to be interested in the section addressing company paternalism in health care and worker resistance to it. Anxious both to protect white managers and technicians who were difficult to replace and to raise labour productivity and minimize turnover of black workers, the United Fruit Company invested in hospital provision and field dispensaries and then deducted 2 per cent of the salaries and wages of its employees to cover costs. By 1926 these measures were complemented by malaria controls. Whereas in the 1910s piecemeal efforts had been made to reduce malaria incidence, now a full programme of controls was maintained, including short-range sanitation near housing, mandatory treatment for ill workers and the use of insecticides. From the viewpoint of the enterprise this strategy had some success: welfare policies did help to entice workers to remain, and levels of output and productivity did rise. However, the annual reports of the company indicate considerable worker resistance, which took the forms, in particular, of refusing to take prescribed doses of plasmochin (introduced from Germany in the mid-1920s), and of not making the "right use" of screens around living quarters. West Indian workers wanted screens, but were hostile to regulations which forbade travel between plantations and unscreened villages. At times too physicians trained in the United States misinterpreted the preferences of black workers, partly because, in line with company policy, white doctors focused their attention on the disease rather than the patient. Many workers preferred tonic pills to quinine, for example, as treatment for leg ulcers, because, debilitated by an inadequate diet, hookworm or/and malaria, they found tonic pills valuable in building up their general

condition. The health strategy of the company failed in another important respect. Black workers often opted for treatment by approachable black healers in company field dispensaries rather than attention in the alien company hospital. Accustomed to racism but not to the formal segregationism of the colour bar, Jamaican workers were antagonized by a hospital pervaded by segregationist ideology and practices.

In spite of the limitations imposed by the persistent denial of United Fruit of access to its archives there is much in this work that is interesting and original. Yet this reviewer finds the book dissatisfying and premature. Too much time is spent in superfluous detail and in debating the secondary sources, and too little in examining the character and significance of the Costa Rican state. Its author is insufficiently aware of debates among Caribbeanists as to whether popular black traditions were "African" or shaped by a specifically Caribbean environment. But, most significantly, the scope and range of the book are too narrow. The topic is an excellent one; and it is a pity that the author did not make a more illuminating comparative study of two countries in the region.

Christopher Abel,
University College London

Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the male: men's bodies, Britain and the Great War*, Picturing History Series, London, Reaktion Books, 1996, pp. 336, illus., £19.95 (0-948462-82).

The iconic status of the First World War in British cultural history and contemporary life is related to a bifurcated view of the century. There was before 1914 and after. Never such innocence again, was the response of one poet who knew very little about innocence. And perhaps that was the point. The current consensus of historical study is that the shock of the 1914–18 war was so severe that it rendered every facet of pre-war cultural life redundant, ridiculous, or worse.

The problem is that this argument is wrong. The shock was monumental, but instead of impelling the twentieth century forward into our new modernist and later post-modernist poses, it put millions of people in a position where they grasped at the past in order to ascribe some meaning to the catastrophe. For every man or woman who saluted non-sense in the Dada movement, there were millions who clung to every kind of reinforcement of meaning in their reactions to the war. For this very reason, there was a flowering of religious, classical and romantic languages of commemoration, in poetry, in prose, in film, in the graphic arts, or in the architecture and ritual surrounding war memorials.

Joanna Bourke captures this moment brilliantly in her book, since she shows how central imagery of the male body is to all three traditions: the classical, from Greek and Roman sculpture to millions of vulgarizations; the romantic, with visions of the knight errant, the man who lays down his life for his mates, and achieves immortality in their masculine devotion (and revenge); and the religious, through a myriad of permutations of the Pietà and the pity of dismemberment and annihilation.

Could it have been otherwise? After all, the logic of industrial war is the deepening and reiteration of gender difference, precisely because so many men are torn to pieces. Families needed to be restored, and they needed men—fully-formed men—to do so. There are terrible stories of horribly mutilated men unable to start their lives again for a host of reasons, not least of which is the tendency for their wounds to scare the living daylights out of their own children. Little boys and girls remembered a father; what they welcomed home was something else.

In this context, masculine was everything these men were not. Of course, the opposite was the case. The men mutilated in the war faced things people shouldn't see and feel. But millions saw and felt for the rest of their lives. And were seen too. Here Bourke's book breaks new ground in linking the visual, the social, and the spiritual, albeit in some unusual forms.

The rumour that Lord Kitchener was not dead, drowned with everyone else aboard *HMS Hampshire* in 1916, was a denial that this symbol of manhood could be destroyed. Of course symbols cannot be destroyed just like that. They needed rehabilitation too, and people found a host of channels to do this. One was the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the most famous body in England. Others stand on market squares and in villages. War memorials are about masculinity, but in Britain, this masculinity is not aggressive, Olympian or vindictive. It is tired, weary and crest-fallen, full of the bitter taste as of ashes—the ashes of millions of men whose bodies had been smashed or simply obliterated. Here too Bourke breaks new ground. She shows deeply and movingly how closely linked notions of masculinity in the period surrounding the war were to two levels of understanding: on the political and industrial level, fitness and good physique were essential; on the social and existential level, it was their very fitness which cost the lives of about one million soldiers in the British and Dominion forces in the Great War. What price fitness indeed?

This is social and cultural history at its best, full of material from arcane and out of the way sources, analysed by a powerful and (at times) bemused intelligence. It is a work anyone interested in early twentieth-century British cultural history needs to ponder.

J M Winter, Pembroke College, Cambridge

Pauline M H Mazumdar, *Species and specificity: an interpretation of the history of immunology*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. xiii, 457, illus., £40.00, \$64.95 (0-521-43172-7).

Pauline Mazumdar's epic interpretation of the history of immunology might best be compared with a symphony. Its theme lies in the epistemological war waged between "lumpers" and "splitters"—or, in Mazumdar's more eloquent terms, "unitarians" and "pluralists"—as it defined classificatory and