

## Book Reviews

supports her claim that it is impossible to “separate the biological from the social and political” in the history of Ecuador’s Indians under colonial rule (p. 3.) Although the study focuses on a small area and there is little attempt to relate it to work elsewhere, this is a study that deserves to be read as a model of its kind and offers an inviting basis for comparative discussion within the New World and beyond.

Despite some interesting and important individual contributions, the general standard of scholarship in *The great maritime discoveries and world health*, based on a conference held in Lisbon in 1990, is markedly inferior to that of the two previous works. The twenty-seven papers vary from wide-ranging studies of medicine in fifteenth-century Europe and inter-oceanic disease exchanges to more detailed accounts of specific diseases or the activities of individual medical practitioners and observers. One or two papers are of doubtful relevance to any theme the volume might lay claim to; others tediously cover the same ground as other contributions. The superficiality of many of the essays and the want of detailed, archive-based research—of the kind Alchon’s work keenly exemplifies—is the more to be regretted in that there is a great and urgent need for serious and in-depth research into the medical aspects of the “great maritime discoveries”. The approach of the Portuguese participants in particular is more celebratory than cerebral: there is little serious discussion of the epidemiological effects of Iberian conquests and the slave trade (or awareness of recent English-language scholarship). But some interesting facts do emerge and a way is at least opened for the more scholarly exploitation of the evidently rich Portuguese source materials. But as a commentary on disease and discovery fit for 1992 this is a disappointingly complacent contribution.

David Arnold, School of Oriental and African Studies, London

ROY PORTER (ed.), *The Faber book of madness*, London and Boston, Faber & Faber, 1991, pp. xix, 572, illus., £14.99 (0-571-14387-3).

Roy Porter has collected here a wide-ranging anthology of writings dealing with madness in its various manifestations. Quite deliberately, he has chosen to focus his attention on anything *but* the history of psychiatry—the profession, that is, and its particular and peculiar views of madness. He does, it is true, draw some of his extracts from texts written by psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, but only when the focus of their attention is the existential condition of their patients, or the state of mind of the psychiatrist her- or himself. For the most part, however, Porter has concentrated on more personal, often autobiographical sources: the writings of patients themselves in memoirs, polemics, or thin fictional disguise; the experiences of family members, friends, nurses, who have had to cope with and care for the insane; the speculations of theologians and philosophers about those who have taken leave of their senses; and the imaginative attempts of novelists, poets, and dramatists to comprehend and convey the existential reality of unreason.

Deliberately, too, Porter has cast his net widely, both geographically and temporally. While most of his selections are from British sources, he also includes many European and North American examples, as well as the occasional Antipodean case; and he resolutely avoids confining his attention to the age of the asylum and its aftermath, reaching back to the Renaissance and beyond for examples. Excerpts, which are mostly quite brief, are organized under a series of major headings—symptoms, treatments, types of disorder, the experiences of those entering and confined in asylums and madhouses, the psychoanalytic couch—and each of these is introduced by a few paragraphs of commentary by the editor.

The result is a rather curious volume. Individual extracts and authors are not placed in any larger context (generally being “introduced” with one or two lines that convey little of substance); and paragraphs from very different time periods are juxtaposed without any apparent rationale, save for their common focus on, for instance, patients suffering from delusions or the purported relationship between madness and genius. Moreover, the general introductions to each section are rather casually put together, contain little that is particularly novel or insightful, and are written in a breezy, almost chatty style. There is no attempt here at

## 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.

Andrew Scull, University of California, San Diego

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.

Andrew Scull, University of California, San Diego