

## Book Reviews

development of the medical schools. From the 1960s, Dowling detects a shift in which hospitals are becoming leaders in health care for their communities.

Dowling has made careful use of a variety of secondary and printed primary sources. However, he has not used hospital papers and seems to have used only those primary materials to which secondary works have referred him. It is a pity, too, that he seems not to have drawn upon the expertise of Charles Rosenberg in the area. Despite these drawbacks, Dowling has made a useful contribution to this field.

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RICHARD PALMER, *The Studio of Venice and its graduates in the sixteenth century*, Trieste, Edizioni Lint, 1983, 8vo, pp. xi, 204, L.20,000 (paperback).

In the sixteenth century, Venice was one of the richest and most influential states of Europe. Likewise, the university that it fostered and then controlled, Padua, was probably the most prestigious. The splendour of Padua has meant that historians have tended to overlook the educational institutions within Venice itself. One of these was the Venetian College of Physicians, which had the privileges of a *Studio* – it was an examining and degree-giving body, but with few teaching posts and no group of students of its own. The College also undertook the traditional functions of a city College of Physicians and regulated the practice of medicine, advised the authorities on medical matters, and supervised the pharmacists.

A fire in 1800 which destroyed the records of the College, and the doubts of historians as to whether the College could award degrees helped to add to the obscurity in which the College has remained until now. However, Richard Palmer, using seventeenth- and eighteenth-century copies of the records and a sixteenth-century minute book of the College now in the possession of the Bishop of Hvar, has been able to show that the College was far more influential and prestigious than previously believed.

Palmer's book makes it clear that the Venetian College was a serious rival to the Paduan College of Physicians – both bodies offered to examine and award degrees to Venetians studying at Padua and other universities. Although the Paduan College had more graduates, the list of physicians awarded degrees by the Venetian College reads like a Who's Who of sixteenth-century medicine. A large number of the graduates of the College became university professors and many published books on medicine.

The opening essay introducing the College gives a valuable description, not only of the College's history, but also of its relations with the Venetian authorities, the universities, and students. The reader is also offered an insight into the structure of higher education in Venice. There follows a list of the graduates of the College with succinct accounts of their careers, where available. The biographical information, which uses a wide variety of sources, must have involved a lot of industry and will be a very useful source of information.

In method, Palmer's book is reminiscent of the painstaking researches of nineteenth-century historians of the universities and the very modern archive-based social histories of renaissance Italy. The combination is a fertile one in which we have the internal history of an institution put into its social and political setting.

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WILLIAM R. WOODWARD and MITCHELL G. ASH (editors), *The problematic science: psychology in nineteenth-century thought*, New York, Praeger, 1982, 8vo, pp. xvii, 394, illus., \$51.00.

This collection of essays, as its title suggests, opposes the once established view, given classic expression in E. G. Boring's *History of experimental psychology*, that psychology firmly emerged as a distinct science and discipline in late nineteenth-century Germany, particularly through the work of Wilhelm Wundt. The editors hope that their contributors, freed to write historically about the exceedingly diverse intellectual traditions, methodological commitments,

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institutional programmes, and social ideologies that constitute the “origins” of twentieth-century psychology, will provide an alternative historiography. The essays do not establish a connected alternative history to Boring’s; rather, they illustrate the sort of work which is emerging as historians accept that the development of a science is as “problematic” as any other form of social change. The collection is therefore an excellent indication of recent work (North American and European) in the history of psychology. The choice of the term “problematic”, perhaps deliberately, leaves the contributors free to work with quite different historiographic orientations.

The essays of most relevance to medical historians are probably Kurt Danziger on ‘Mid-nineteenth-century British psycho-physiology’ (embarrassingly enough for me, since my thesis was on the very topic, subtitled ‘a neglected chapter in the history of psychology’!), which brings out – though somewhat uncritically – the medical social setting; a summary restatement by Frank Sulloway of his argument linking Freud and biology; Alexandre Métraux on the ideology of French crowd psychology; and Siegfried Jaeger on William Preyer and the origins of child psychology. These last two essays illustrate extremely well the “problematic” quality of psychology as science, which the editors have sought to bring out in their own introduction and epilogue.

Unfortunately, some of the contributions are rushed and superficial: thus Robert Richards (‘Darwin and the biologising of moral behavior’) and Lorraine Daston (‘The theory of will versus the science of mind’ in late nineteenth-century British psychology) tackle important philosophical issues with a rather arbitrary deployment of historical material. (Throughout the book, citation and proof-reading have been rushed.) But the editors have done well to get a contribution from M. G. Yaroshevskii, restating in historical detail the Soviet view that I. M. Sechenov founded a distinctive school of psychology (treating “the organism as a whole in its interaction with the environment”) in contrast to western mechanist and functionalist schools. Another useful contrast comes in Helio Carpintero’s account of the resistance to modernism in Spain. There are, of course, also several essays on German psychology, notably R. Steven Turner’s on Helmholtz and disciplinary development.

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EDWARD SHORTER, *A history of women's bodies*, London, Allen Lane, 1983, 8vo, pp. xvi, 398, £14.95.

ROSALIND K. MARSHALL, *Virgins and viragos. A history of women in Scotland from 1080 to 1980*, London, Collins, 1983, 8vo, pp. 365, illus., £13.50.

It is their partially shared title *A history of women . . .*, that singles out these books for joint consideration. Few works, however, could be so different in method, style, and conclusion. Shorter’s book is, in one sense, unrepentently presentist. Armed with a biological definition of woman and the vocabulary of various scientific and medical specialities, principally bacteriology and obstetrics, he analyses in a pugilistic and angry style what he perceives to be the unique corporeal experiences of sexually active European women from the Renaissance to current “sexual liberation”. Shorter’s conclusion that, so to speak, women have never had it so good, will not go down well among feminist historians. Nor will his use of modern scientific categories as tools of historical analysis. The latter, however, is not a practice to which feminists themselves are immune. Shorter’s *biological* definition of women, in other words by their reproductive structures and role, is one shared by many feminist historians who, in different circumstances, gleefully expose a sexist ideology in science and medicine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A historical work that self-consciously adopts what has been called an *essentialist* view of woman is, Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin, *The nineteenth century woman*, London, Croom Helm, 1978. The essentialist position has been elegantly analysed and criticized by Penelope Brown and L. J. Jordanova in ‘Oppressive dichotomies: The nature/culture debate’, in Cambridge Women Studies Group, *Women in society*, London, Virago Press, 1981, pp. 225–241.