

## Book Reviews

Emma, Freud's famous patient, and it sheds some more light on his relationship with her. (Kiell gives the correct reference—*Arbeiter-Zeitung* XII, no. 289, dated 21 October 1900—but omits the pages (1–3). It remains unclear what he means by “IV, 711, 20 III” (p. 717). The article is signed “Emma Eckstein”.) Nevertheless, Kiell's book is a valuable instrument for any scholar interested in the reception of psychoanalysis. A German edition, perhaps brought up to date and slightly modified in its bibliographical presentation, would be highly welcome.

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JOHN M. MacGREGOR, *The discovery of the art of the insane*, Princeton University Press, 1989, 4to, pp. xix, 390, illus., \$49.50.

Vincent van Gogh writes to his mother from the hospital at St Rémy. “A French writer says that all painters are more or less crazy . . . Whatever the truth of it may be, I imagine that here, where I don't have to worry about anything, etc., the quality of my work is progressing.”

We needed a history of psychiatry that evaluates its practitioners as *patrons*, who facilitate artistic expression, in the widest sense, by freeing the artist from “worry about anything”. Most asylum doctors dismissed the art as meaningless, at best, or obscene and offensive. But some, like those at Charenton during Charles Meryon's stays there (1858–59, and 1866–8), evidently let the institution provide not only food and shelter, but space, materials, and above all the peace in which the insane could work out, through their art, an accommodation to a fate that was often terrifying, and unalterable.

MacGregor's subject is, not so much the art of the insane itself, but the changing psychiatric, psychoanalytic, and art-historical response to it. By “the insane” he means people who are clearly diagnosed as psychotic, and whose art, spontaneously produced, is the expression of prolonged illnesses, and institutionalizations. Edvard Munch and August Strindberg, for example, are mentioned only because they might have paved the way for German Expressionist interest in the art of Ernst Josephson, who was in 1910, unlike the other two Scandinavians, clearly understood to have been insane. MacGregor is suspicious of retrospective diagnoses; despises drawing-room pathography, especially in the hands of art historians; and loathes the “pernicious” genius-as-madman model, as old as Plato and codified by Cesare Lombroso. Van Gogh appears, not as a psychotic artist, but as an eloquent witness to the artist's life in an asylum, and an inspiration for twentieth-century artists like Antonin Artaud, whose wonderful, and mad, elucidation of the *Wheatfield with Crows* is quoted.

The first half of the book surveys the relationship between psychiatry and art until the twentieth century. The “art” is that produced in or about the asylum, first, by such sane artists as William Hogarth, Francesco Goya, and Théodore Géricault. There were insane artists, like Richard Dadd and James Tilly Matthews: not the only architect never to have produced a real building, Matthews was taught technical drawing in Bethlem. MacGregor has some suggestive things to say about the ways in which diagramming buildings and machines help lunatics in their struggle to maintain some order in the world and I wish he had expanded on this, perhaps at the expense of the more familiar material about the sane artists. Finally, the insane “non-professionals”, like Benjamin Rush's patient Richard Nisbett, Bethlem's Jonathan Martin, and Gérard de Nerval increasingly dominate the story as it moves forward chronologically. Like the entire book, this is all well illustrated and documented. But compared to MacGregor's account of Hans Prinzhorn, whose *Bildneri des Geisteskranken* was published in 1922, and what follows in the second half of this book, it is over-written and lifeless. MacGregor is a very good historian of twentieth-century art; with the modern period he can, moreover, finally ditch the psychiatrists. In his opinion, psychiatry *per se*, as opposed to visually cultured psychiatrist-patrons, never had much to contribute to our understanding of psychotic art, still less to the big questions opened by the recognition of that category to the philosophy of art. In any case, psychiatry became less interested in spontaneous art than in art therapy, (which according to the author has little to do with art, or therapy); and in psychological tests that require a patient to

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copy, complete or interpret drawings. (Both innovations reflect a new appreciation for visual communication, but their use cannot leave intact the innocence of the compulsion to draw or construct: the art of the insane may be headed for extinction.) The field of "discovery" was left clear for expressionistically-oriented psychoanalysts, and artists. MacGregor makes a good case for psychotic art's importance to the history of twentieth-century "insider" art, especially that of the German Expressionists, and the Surrealist painters (the "God-aren't-we-crazy" Dadaists get short shrift here).

This is a long and rather angry book, one filled with radical, and refreshing, conclusions. Historians of institutional psychiatry, and of twentieth-century art and aesthetics will, in future, all have to address the discovery of the art of the insane.

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DEREK A. DOW and KENNETH C. CALMAN (eds.), *The Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society of Glasgow: a history, 1814–1989*, Glasgow, The Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society of Glasgow, 1989, 8vo, pp. vi, 153, £12.00 (correspondence to The Secretary, The Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society of Glasgow, c/o The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, 234–242 St Vincent St, Glasgow G2 5RJ).

S. D. SLATER and D. A. DOW (eds.), *The Victoria Infirmary of Glasgow 1890–1990: a centenary history*, Glasgow, Victoria Infirmary Centenary Committee, 1990, 4to, pp. xvii, 325, illus., £14.40 (plus £3.00 p&p UK; £4.50 p&p overseas from Dr S. D. Slater, Medical Division, Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow G42 9TY: cheques payable to "Victoria Infirmary Centenary Book Fund").

The first volume is a commemorative history written in anticipation of the 175th anniversary of the Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society of Glasgow. It is divided into two parts and has three appendices. The first eight chapters are by Derek Dow and deal with the history of the Society from its inception in 1814, when it was known as the Glasgow Medical Society, to 1956, the year when it launched the *Scottish Medical Journal*. In the second part, one chapter by Stuart McAlpine brings us up to date and there are a further seven contributors, most of whom discuss the role of the Society within the context of current issues facing the National Health Service. The appendices consist of lists of past and present members. In keeping with other local medical societies founded in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the original aim of the Glasgow Society was a bold one: medical improvement. The early members clearly believed their efforts could actually *add* something to medical science and practice. The vestiges of this confidence are still evident in a restatement of the Society's goals at the inception of the NHS: "to extend medical knowledge by occasional lectures from speakers of authority; and, perhaps of even more importance, to enable members of the Society to report and discuss clinical and pathological investigations carried out by themselves" (p. 77). However, faced with the Leviathan of modern medicine, today's members, understandably, have endorsed more modest aims. McAlpine summarizes them as follows: "to further postgraduate medical education, to promote friendship and good relations between the various medical disciplines, and to support and supervise the publication of the *Scottish Medical Journal*" (p. 111).

The history of the Victoria Infirmary of Glasgow is a well-illustrated and rather handsome volume. Although it is a centenary commemoration, the editors claim to have avoided the pitfalls usually associated with such productions. In particular, they aim to encourage a general and historically sensitive perspective in which the achievements of the past will also be set within the changing context of the present. All together, there are 14 chapters by 21 different contributors. Four deal with how the Victoria was founded and narrate its subsequent history to date. There are also historical cameos of the satellite and speciality hospitals which, over time, have become associated with it. Other chapters are devoted to medical and nursing developments, ancillary staffing, general practice, and the wider relationship between the hospital and the Glasgow South-side community it serves.