# Book Reviews

MICHAEL HUNTER and SIMON SCHAFFER (eds), *Robert Hooke: new studies*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, Boydell Press, 1989, 8vo, pp. x, 310, illus., £39.50.

The studies under review are new in that they come from a conference on Hooke that took place in 1987. Recency does not guarantee freshness, however, and, with a few exceptions, the studies only, though competently, add epicycles to the known world of Restoration science. Thus we have J. A. Bennett on Hooke's instruments for astronomy and navigation; A. D. C. Simpson on Hooke's relations with opticians; Patri J. Pugliese on Hooke's ideas on the dynamics of gravitating bodies; David R. Oldroyd on the dispute between Hooke and Wallis over Earth physics; and Lucinda McCray Beier on Hooke's hypochondria. Of this group of studies, Beier's will be the most useful for readers of this journal. Hooke swallowed quantities of drugs made fashionable by hearsay ("Mr Moor . . . told me of a Woman in the Tower cured divers of the vertigo by stone horse dung") and employed his body often as a pharmaceutical testing apparatus.

Of the remaining four studies, one deserves special mention for its richness of detail. Michael Wright, an Assistant Keeper at the Science Museum, London, analyses and reconstructs Hooke's longitude timekeeper on the basis of a brief manuscript that he gives in full. Wright's many clear illustrations make it possible for diligent readers unpractised in chronometry to admire Hooke's mechanical skill and inventiveness, which, however, no more solved the practical problem he set himself than did his thirty ways of flying.

We are left with three studies of interest for their wider perspectives: John T. Harwood on the *Micrographia*; John Henry on "magical" elements in Hooke's thought; and Steven Shapin on Hooke's several social and anti-social roles. Harwood considers the *Micrographia* as a companion piece to Thomas Sprat's history of the Royal Society. Both were apologetic works; where Sprat told, Hooke showed. The Fellows acted as a communal check on Hooke's accuracy of observation and rendering; they understood that the *Micrographia* could be a most effective advertisement of their group labours; and they were right. Shapin continues the discussion of the role of Fellows as witnesses by reference to books of etiquette and the ideal of the gentleman. He shows that the seventeenth century reckoned trustworthiness as proportional to social status; hence the witness of the gentlemanly and aristocratic Fellows of the Royal Society had greater weight than that of curators and mechanics. Fellows felt as little uncomfortable in presuming to correct Hooke's discourses and demonstrations as they did in ordering him to do them. Shapin contrasts the productive mechanic Hooke with the cross between a gentleman and a Christian virtuoso that made up the complete and ideal natural philosopher as incarnated in Robert Boyle. And, stressing that the same label scarcely fits both men, Shapin advises us to apply "scientist" gingerly to seventeenth-century people. Indeed, the application should be prohibited altogether.

John Henry worries whether the mechanic Hooke can be said to have been a mechanist, observing that Hooke invoked occult active causes, especially in explanation of the phenomena of light and gravity, which were also the two great divisions of Newtonian philosophy, and, further, that Hooke had in the concept of "congruity" the functional equivalent of Newton's "sociability". So far so good. But Henry insists on deriving these active occult qualities from "the magical tradition". That is nonsense, unless all peripatetic philosophy is to be counted as magical. The confusion arises from placing "natural magic" as a bridge between "magic" and "experimental philosophy". Hooke was most certainly a natural magician—so are Dupont and General Electric—but that did not make him a magus. He says so himself, in a passage Henry quotes. The passage is a defence of John Dee's writings about his discussions with angels, certainly a most magical and mystical business if taken literally; but Hooke interprets Dee's registers as cryptographic reports of straightforward and effective natural-magical experiments.

An active cause may be mechanical or non-mechanical, depending on definition. An occult cause is neither the one nor the other, but an *asylum ignorantiae*, or a reservation of judgment. Newton tried to distinguish the cause of gravity, which he declined to specify, from an occult one.



https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025727300053850 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As Fontenelle observed in his *éloge* of Newton, the great man had not only not made his case, but had said of the unknown cause of gravity and its manifest effects precisely what the peripatetics said of occult qualities.

These comments are offered as a gesture against the fad that ascribes to "magic" or "the magical tradition" whatever in the natural philosophy of the scientific revolution is not strictly mechanical in the Cartesian sense. Also, they are a plea that we historians use words with the meaning or meanings they had for the people in whose mouths we put them. Francesco Lana-Terzi, an elder contemporary of Hooke's and one of the great natural magicians of the seventeenth century, attacked those who ruined the good name of his speciality by working off as natural magic the nonsense, superstitions, and trivia of the ages. He had in mind among others Giambattista della Porta, a man of the sixteenth century, whom Henry takes as an examplar of the natural magician. In tying Hooke to the "natural-magical tradition", does Henry intend the doctrine according to Lana, or, closer to home, Bishop Wilkins? The distinction matters. Without it, one slides easily from engineering to conjuring.

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W. F. BYNUM, ROY PORTER, and MICHAEL SHEPHERD (eds), *The anatomy of madness: essays in the history of psychiatry*, vol. 3, *The asylum and its psychiatry*, London and New York, Routledge, 1988, pp. xi, 353, illus., £35.00 (0–415–00859–X).

Though rightly resisting the temptation to see the history of psychiatry and the history of the asylum "as coterminous, indeed synonymous, with each other", (p. 1), the editors of this volume acknowledge that one cannot avoid recognizing the defining role played by the asylum in the rise of the psychiatric profession. This is, of course, especially true for the nineteenth century, the period attended to almost exclusively here, and the book's subtitle thus accurately reflects its contents. In fact, the boundaries are narrower than even this suggests: the papers gathered together here focus not so much on the impact on the profession and on society at large of the early nineteenth century image of the asylum as utopia, the panacea capable of banishing the scourge of madness; but rather on the implications of the collapse over the next half century of its pretensions to cure, and the associated rise of the barracks-asylum. Like the two preceding volumes in the series, the collection consists of hitherto unpublished work by some of the leading younger contributors to the field; and, again like its predecessors, despite some attention to developments elsewhere (Christine Stevenson on Danish responses to insanity; Waltraud Ernst on the treatment of the European insane in British India; Patrizia Guarnieri on Morselli and late nineteenth-century Italian psychiatry; and Ann Harrington on hypnosis and neo-mesmerism in fin-de-siècle French psychiatry), most of the essays focus closely on British materials.

Not all the essays are of an equally high standard: James Donat's essay on the physical and mental disorders accompanying the Ulster Revival of 1859 attempts, with little success, to rescue and lend significance to a now-obscure controversy over the psychiatric casualties of a period of religious excitement in the provinces. Margaret Thompson provides a confused and confusing discussion (one cannot dignify it with the term analysis) of Thomas Clouston's practice at the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, Morningside. And Richard Russell, in a slightly more satisfactory paper, still sheds only a limited amount of light on the place of the asylum in the making of psychiatric careers and the provision of care for its patient population.

Elsewhere, however, there is a good deal to interest both the specialist and the more general reader. Trevor Turner, demonstrating that psychiatrists can indeed contribute to a less Whiggish history of their profession, takes on the doyen of late Victorian psychiatry, Henry Maudsley. Steering a judicious course between the hagiography of an Aubrey Lewis and the more polemical sketch recently offered by Elaine Showalter, he skilfully dissects Maudsley's ideas in relation to his career, revealing much about an arch cynic and pessimist who did his best to hamper his biographers' task. In the process, he clarifies considerably some of the factors leading to the decline of British psychiatry in the last third of the century.



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