

Book Reviews

wider culture. The narcissism seen in Jung expands to Freud and Jung, to other modern psychologies, to the young people of the late 1960s and 1970s “doing their own thing”, to almost anyone involved in their own psychological analysis. The narcissistic process tends to be seen everywhere, in the same sense that hysteria had been seen as the typical mental disorder of the late nineteenth century, and schizophrenia that of the twentieth century. Slowly, one becomes suspicious of the narcissism that is being seen, whether it is really the narcissism of Jung, or the narcissism possessing the vision of the author who is attempting to observe Jung.

Two points of merit. First, scattered about in the book are several insightful summary statements about the development of Jung’s religious views. Second, the author’s chapter on ‘How to read Jung’ is useful for those uninitiated into the editions and dating brambles created by the editors of Jung’s *Collected works*, or for those unable to unravel it for themselves in the *Bibliography* volume of the *Collected works*.

In the end, though, it is disappointing to realize that we had learned more about Kohut and Marthe Robert than we did about Jung. This is largely the fault of Professor Homans’s methodology, which may be suitable for professors (and therefore students) at the University of Chicago, but is hardly adequate for readers seeking a clearer insight into the historical contexts of Jung and Jungian psychology. Had Professor Homans put as much work into understanding Jung as he has into understanding his imported perspectives, his contribution to Jung studies could have been more useful to those readers primarily interested in Jung and his place in history.

James Donat
Wellcome Institute

Herculine Barbin. Being the recently discovered memoirs of a nineteenth-century hermaphrodite, introduced by Michel Foucault, translated by Richard McDougall, Brighton, Sussex, Harvester Press, 1980, 8vo, pp. xvii, 199, £7.95.

Adélaïde Herculine Barbin, commonly known as Alexina, was born in France in 1838 and designated female. An hermaphrodite orphan, she was raised in Catholic convents where she fell in and out of love with her female classmates and female teachers. In 1860, now twenty-one, Alexina was reclassified by the state as a male and was called Abel Barbin. During the year of sudden sexual transformation, 1860, newspapers in and out of Paris carried reports of Alexina’s reclassification, calling her one of the preternatural monsters of the age. Eight years later, in February 1868, Alexina committed suicide in the Théâtre de l’Odéon, a seedy Parisian quarter, leaving behind only a manuscript diary commemorating her suffering. Dr. Regnier immediately reported her death and performed an autopsy; he also rescued the diary and gave it to Auguste Ambroise Tardieu (1818–1879), a physician and prolific author of psychiatric books who was especially interested in the aberrations of sexual organs. Tardieu believed that the diary was sufficiently important to publish and included verbatim excerpts in his *Question médico-légale de l’identité dans ses rapports avec les vices de conformation des organes sexuels* (Paris, 1874), which cover the period from Alexina’s birth to her reclassification in 1860. The published diary breaks off abruptly after 1860, and nothing except the suicide is known about Alexina after this year. Tardieu’s disposal of the manuscript diary after 1874 is also enigmatic; it is not even

Book Reviews

clear whether the manuscript survives. Nevertheless, beginning in 1870, references to Alexina regularly appear in European legal and medical literature, as well as in Armand Dubarry's medical fantasy-novel *L'hermaphrodite* (1899) and, even more explicitly, in a novel entitled *A scandal at the convent* (1893) by the German playwright Oscar Panizzi. After 1900 Alexina, now dead for a quarter of a century, continued to claim the attention of writers such as F. L. von Neugebauer who discusses her in his inventory of hermaphrodites in history (1908). Alexina's diary is not a work of literary art but deserves to stand beside second-rank novels of the late nineteenth century. It is impossible to improve on the jacket description which summarizes the diary as follows: "With an eye for the sensual bloom of young schoolgirls, and the torrid style of the romantic novels of her own day, Barbin tells the story of her life as an hermaphrodite." Alexina herself has captured the diary's significance this way: "I have to speak of things that, for a number of people, will be nothing but incredible nonsense because, in fact, they go beyond the limits of what is possible" (p. xv). The diary, now admirably translated into English for the first time, may be compared with English accounts of the same period in order to learn what were the pathetic confessions of those "other Victorians" who, like Alexina, were sexual underdogs of their day. If such diaries continue to be published, psychiatrists as well as medical and literary historians will eventually possess a new archive from which to formulate hypotheses about sexual otherness in history.

From another vantage, Alexina and her diary are less significant than the author of this book: by now Michel Foucault has established himself as a thinker of international, if controversial, significance. The very fact that he should choose to introduce and discuss this diary in particular is far more crucial than any intrinsic merit or medical-historical value the diary possesses. Foucault's multi-volume *History of sexuality* notwithstanding, even his last book introduced the case history of extraordinary sexual otherness: *Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother . . .* (1975). The pattern Foucault adopts is clear: Pierre, Alexina, these types are the protagonists of the forthcoming volumes in the history of sexuality, and this is why Foucault notes in the present book (p. 119) that "the question of strange destinies like her [Barbin's] own, which have raised so many problems for medicine and law, especially since the sixteenth century, will be dealt with in the volume of *The history of sexuality* that will be devoted to hermaphrodites." Foucault has charted his own road through the country of sex; it covers not only the untrodden land between medicine and the law but also retrieves the still lonely voices of those with intense religiosity and remarkable sexual histories from the past.

G. S. Rousseau

Department of English, University of California, Los Angeles

JOHN T. ALEXANDER, *Bubonic Plague in early modern Russia: public health and urban disaster*, Baltimore, Md., and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, 8vo, pp. xvii, 385, illus., £15.50.

The Moscow plague epidemic of 1771 may have caused the death of 60,000 citizens of a total population of the city of some 250,000. It was the last major plague epidemic to ravage a European metropolis, yet this study by John T. Alexander, Professor of