

## Book Reviews

**Robert Bud, Bernard Finn, Helmuth Trischler** (eds), *Manifesting medicine: bodies and machines*, series: *Artefacts: Studies in the History of Science and Technology*, Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999, pp. xviii, 180, illus., £29.00, \$46.00 (hardback 90-5702-408-X), £13.99, \$24.00 (paperback 90-5702-430-6).

This book results from collaboration between three of the world's great museums: the Science Museum, London; the Smithsonian, Washington; and the Deutsches Museum, Munich. Five object-based studies explore particular episodes in the history of medicine. Two final papers reflect on the changing role of museums, reviewing institutions, collections and exhibitions associated with the history of medicine.

The subjects covered are diverse: an early nineteenth-century attempt to develop blood transfusion apparatus; the use of a plastic human replica in various museum displays from the 1920s; the use of the Geiger counter in wider debates about the safety of radioactivity; the development of new equipment for open-heart surgery; the introduction of compliance-packaging in the pharmaceutical industry from the 1960s. All are successful in their demonstration of objects as rich sources of information.

Packaging is not an obvious area of historical research. However, Patricia Peck Gossel's paper, describing the development of the "Dialpak", issued in 1963 with one of the first oral contraceptives, rewards careful study. The idea for the packaging originated with a husband's concern to ensure that his wife comply with the cycle of pill-taking required by a newly introduced oral contraceptive. The paper goes on to describe his successful struggle with a number of large pharmaceutical companies to enforce the patent he took out to protect his idea. This type of "compliance packaging" has been given the role of "explainer", removing the need for the pharmacist or doctor to explain to the patient how and when to take their

medicine, thus changing the nature of important clinical and personal relationships.

Both Ghislaine Lawrence's paper on Charles Drew's profound hypothermia apparatus for cardiac surgery and Kim Pelis's paper on James Blundell's blood transfusion equipment suggest broad questions about the reception and rejection of particular forms of medical technology by doctors and other health workers. Both studies would merit more extensive analysis.

In the final paper of the book, Ken Arnold reviews the various forms museums of medicine have taken over the centuries. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the term museum was applied to that physical space where the medical profession gathered to dissect bodies, discuss papers and marvel over curiosities. Later, most learned societies gathered some form of teaching collection. During the twentieth century, museums became tools for public education in health, sanitation and hygiene. One example is described in an earlier paper by Klaus Vogel on 'The transparent man', an exhibit developed for a new museum of hygiene in Dresden in the 1920s. Vogel relates the symbolism of the figure as man, the perfectly constructed machine striving for perfection through science, with German politics of the interwar period. Arnold goes on to note the "virtual explosion" in museums devoted to the history of medicine over the twentieth century which occurred in parallel to the development of an academic discipline of the history of medicine within universities. This excellent publication indicates how much could be gained if the links between these two sectors, which have developed only relatively recently, could be strengthened further. Museum collections embrace many diverse forms of primary research material providing links to other academic disciplines including the history of technology and the history of art and design. In turn, exhibitions provide opportunities to present

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issues and themes, suggested by academic historians, to a wide general audience.

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**Ludmilla Jordanova, *Defining features: scientific and medical portraits 1660–2000*,** London, Reaktion Books in association with the National Portrait Gallery, 2000, pp. 192, illus., £14.95 (paperback 1-86189-059-1).

Ludmilla Jordanova set herself a daunting task in writing this book. She has endeavoured to blend three distinct elements or disciplines into a single product. First, modern approaches to science and medicine which look at these disciplines not only as forms of knowledge but also as forms of work. Such approaches also look to the changing social place of doctors and scientists and to the extent to which they have sought to present themselves as, say, scholars or gentlemen or experts or even craftsmen or more than one of these simultaneously. Second Jordanova has drawn on modern scholarly approaches to portraiture. She has tried to look at the ways representations might have been read, wittingly or unwittingly, what the viewers might have understood about the sitter (and perhaps the sitter's profession) from numberless overt and covert clues in a picture. Only recently have scholars begun to bring this approach to scientific and medical portraiture, and *Defining features* does this both over time and over a range of scientific and medical areas. It also deals with a variety of media (oils, bronzes, photographs, for example) and with high art and key rings. This is ambitious enough, but Jordanova attempts (indeed is obliged) to draw on a third "discipline": her vehicle for this book is

popular writing on scholarly themes. The book is also a catalogue of an exhibition of the same name put on by Jordanova at the National Portrait Gallery, London, between April and September 2000.

Perforce she has had to write for an imagined audience of National Portrait Gallery visitors.

To say it is also a catalogue is hardly fair to the book's conventional narrative style interspersed with illustrations. Jordanova first introduces portraiture, then in a chapter on 'Boundaries' she looks at professions and work, 'Gender and scientific heroism' is self-explanatory, and 'Portraiture in practice' looks at the relation of artist and sitter. The range of material presented here is impressive. Medically, Jenner and the Hunters get a lot of space. The twentieth century is far from neglected, however. Nor does Jordanova confine her notion of portraiture to the face. A bronze cast of the right hand of Harvey Cushing and representations of the hands of Dorothy Hodgkin get analysed.

Only some of the many questions addressed by this book can be indicated here. How are scientific and medical heroes made and portrayed? What is the relation between a hero and a celebrity? How important is gentility to scientific and medical credibility? What is the relation between science and femininity in pictures? How can portraiture discredit scientific claims? Jordanova leads the reader through these and many other questions with authority and at times self-admitted tentativeness in the face of new territory. Because I was familiar with much of the material and the approaches used here I knew (I think) what Jordanova was up to. Indeed her need to spell questions out made me impatient to push on at times. Whether, on the other hand, she spells out matters in enough detail for the imagined gallery visitor only a pollster could tell (or perhaps a bookseller). None the less, this is an