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**Book Review: Mental Health Care in Modern England:
The Norfolk Lunatic Asylum / St Andrew's Hospital c
.1810–1998**

Leonard D. Smith

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Freud spoke excellent English (and AJL spoke German), an encounter between the two might have been a memorable one. However, Anna Freud is said to have been 'active and sensible' in work with children. Stengel – who was later to join AJL at the Maudsley – is described as practically the only analyst still working at the university clinic. Lewis's shrewd summing up was that analysts there 'treat character disturbances very much more than actual neurotic illness' and that consequently 'they are not much interested in therapy and practical problems of the out-patient department'. Some of AJL's critics would later say similar things about him, however.

Altogether, the state of European psychiatry – specifically in its postgraduate and scientific aspects – was not found to be encouraging. It was partly a problem of boundaries. Nearly everywhere, the relationship with neurology was a barrier to the emergence of psychiatry as a respectable and independent discipline. In Britain, those doctors dealing with mental health who were of higher status emphasized their role in the Royal Colleges of Physicians, and so had an identity crisis about being psychiatrists. Mapother urged trainees to obtain the MRCP, although the pass rate was then under 10%. In most countries, neurology was firmly in the ascendant in academic centres. The second boundary was with mental hospitals, and it was mostly an impermeable one, so that clinical case material in academic centres was limited – as was trainees' experience. There were a few outstanding exceptions, such as Gjessing's research at a mental hospital outside Oslo.

This volume is a rich historical seam. It was written at a time when physical treatment methods were beginning to emerge and so end the long night of therapeutic nihilism that had separated psychiatry from more hopeful aspects of medicine. Sakel's first account of insulin coma had just been published, but was not yet widely known. ECT was to come in two years' time. Revisiting this time-sample, with its detailed information and accompanying commentaries, is a significant step in the historical understanding of modern psychiatry. The editors are to be congratulated on bringing it to us.

HUGH FREEMAN
Green College, Oxford

Steven Cherry. **Mental Health Care in Modern England: The Norfolk Lunatic Asylum / St Andrew's Hospital c.1810–1998.** *Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003. Pp. xi + 335. ISBN 0 85115920 6. £45.*

The Norfolk Lunatic Asylum, or St Andrew's Hospital as it later became, was relatively unique in its longevity. Established following the permissive legislation of 1808 and opened in 1814, it was one of the pioneer county lunatic asylums. It was also one of the last of the great nineteenth-century asylums to be abandoned, at the end of the twentieth century. As Steven

Cherry sets out to demonstrate, its history serves as a virtual microcosm of the rise and fall of institutional psychiatry over the last two centuries.

Some histories of a single institution have tended to become over-parochial and excessively celebratory, particularly when written by former members of medical or other staff. This is a trap that Cherry, as a medical historian, largely avoids, although his researches have clearly led him to adopt a sympathetic but not uncritical approach towards the institution and those who have played a part in its unfolding story. He has been careful to set the narrative within both the national and the regional context, while highlighting the local elements that distinguished this from other comparable asylums. In particular, he demonstrates how the character of the asylum, as determined by patients and staff, has tended to reflect the predominantly rural culture of the county of Norfolk.

The book is laid out chronologically, with the chapters on the nineteenth century phased according to particular management eras and those on the twentieth divided by war and peace, the inauguration of the NHS, and the development of community care. Within each period, Cherry considers the key determinants of the asylum experience – the physical fabric of the building; the rising numbers of patients and consequent overcrowding; changing approaches to therapeutics and patient management; and the doctors, managers and attendants or nurses who created and maintained the regime. A considerable amount of detail is provided, perhaps a little too much when it comes to some of the minutiae of administrative and financial management.

Some distinct themes emerge. From the outset, the asylum was bedevilled by the county justices' insistence on rigid financial economy in its management, an approach that recurred in various guises right to the end. This had a deleterious effect on staffing levels, on dietary provision and on the nature and quality of medical input provided. Nevertheless, there was one area where the Norfolk Asylum appears to have been ahead of most contemporaries; it was an early successful proponent of probationary leave for patients, and remained at the forefront of promoting discharge on trial.

The penultimate two chapters, which examine the gradual demise of the hospital in the context of the development of community care, are of particular interest. The information gathered from official sources is supplemented by oral testimony from former staff and, where possible, patients. The predominating impression is one of regret for what has been lost. The reader, however, is left bewildered by the evident picture of administrative chaos arising from successive organizational upheavals and associated policy shifts, and one can only be amazed that any sort of cohesive mental health service has emerged at all in the wake of hospital closure.

Cherry's overall approach is very much in the post-Scull mode, which in some quarters might be construed as 'revisionist'. He adopts a pragmatic stance, defending the Norfolk Asylum against perceived critics (including

this reviewer), while at the same time objectively analysing its deficiencies at different stages of its development. Although the story of the institution largely follows the now-familiar pattern, this in no way detracts from its historical value. On the contrary, it is only through the assembly of such particular histories that a true picture of the birth, growth and death of the asylum can be assembled.

LEONARD D. SMITH

*Centre for the History of Medicine
University of Birmingham*

Martin Halliwell. **Images of Idiocy: The Idiot Figure in Modern Fiction and Film.** Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. x + 270. ISBN 0-7546-0265-6. £47.50.

In recent years, historical interest in idiocy has been seeping surreptitiously through the veins of Anglo-American historians of medicine. Since the early 1990s in particular, a flowing stream of doctoral dissertations, journal articles, edited volumes and monographs has been effectively charting shifting medical and educational models of intellectual disability, the establishment of novel institutional provisions, changing legislative responses to the perceived social and economic problems posed by those nowadays referred to as people with learning difficulties, and the emergence of increasingly vocal agitation for greater receptivity to the stories and arguments of self-advocates. In some instances, people with learning difficulties have themselves been instrumental in raising awareness of the political and historical dimensions of past efforts to care for and control those previously labelled 'idiotic'.

Dominated by historians of medicine, recent literature on idiocy, imbecility and feeble-mindedness has focused predominantly on medical and legislative approaches and has not pursued broader cultural representations of mental deficiency in sufficient depth. Martin Halliwell's *Images of Idiocy* attempts to redress that imbalance by focusing almost exclusively, and with great originality, on the treatment of 'idiots' in both fiction and films throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After a temperate introduction setting out the methodological framework for reading literary and cinematic images and a brief outline of the longer history of idiocy from the cognitive aspirations of the Enlightenment to the romantic visions of the Victorian period, the book proceeds to tackle the representation and meaning of idiot figures in a range of literature, from Flaubert's Charles Bovary through Dostoevsky's Myshkin to Rohinton Mistry's Tehmul. In each case, close analysis of the literary texts is complemented by careful discussion of the gaps between literary images and subsequent film adaptations.

There are perhaps two central theses running through *Images of Idiocy*,