

primary care research into psychiatric epidemiology is not acknowledged, which is surprising given that this contributed in part to the new assessment of psychiatric morbidity described in the volume. These are, however, very minor quibbles in what is an extremely thoughtful and impressive piece of work.

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**Jérôme Pedroletti,** *La formation des infirmiers en psychiatrie: histoire de l'École Cantonale Vaudoise d'Infirmières et d'Infirmiers en Psychiatrie, 1961–1996 (ECVIP)*, Bibliothèque d'Histoire de la Médecine et de la Santé, Geneva, Georg Editeur, 2004, pp. viii, 232, €24.00 (paperback 2-8257-0884-4).

The introduction to this book indicates that it is not quite the work of an historian. This is true. Nevertheless, the author has produced a history of a subject barely explored by historians, at least French speaking ones—nurses and their training—and this is its first merit. Pedroletti, a nurse himself, has had access to many archives, which made it possible for him to embark on an historical investigation. The result is a book which contrasts sharply with those mostly based on published testimonies. This is its second merit.

The study relates the history of a Swiss cantonal nursing school near Lausanne. It investigates how training for psychiatric nurses was thought through and subsequently managed. The school was founded in 1961. From the start, debates revolved around the question of a specially designed curriculum for psychiatric nurses as opposed to a common syllabus for all nurses. These debates caused some discord and the institution experienced three major crises in 1967, 1978, 1991, each leading to the resignation of the director and failing to produce any permanent solution. The reader gets the feeling of an institution constantly questioning and not immune to commotion within psychiatry itself. The author concentrates on the conflicts inside

the school, but it is not clear whether these are conflicts of personalities or diverging conceptions of what a nurse should be.

The author claims that working on this subject involves going back to the conception of the organization of care in hospitals and the definition of psychiatry. Indeed, the backdrop of the debates around the psychiatric nurse is the larger debate on the specificity of psychiatry within medicine and therefore the specificity of psychiatric cures in comparison to other types of cure. In other words, the discussions on the relationship between the mental and the moral form the setting for the discussions concerning the need for psychiatric nurses.

Pedroletti has done his work thoroughly. Although at least partly involved in this history, he has abstained from any comment too closely linked to his own professional experience. The interest and the benefit of this study lie in the author's good knowledge of scientific material and his use of largely unpublished documents. However, he does not always make the best use of these, and facts are delivered without the analysis which would enlighten the reader. Nevertheless, a chronology and a sociological presentation of the nursing profession usefully complete the book, thus offering an exhaustive illustration of the Swiss situation. The author's approach can be explained by his desire to differentiate the role of the historian from that of the practitioner. Who could see anything wrong with such careful forethought?

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**David F Smith and H Lesley Diack with T Hugh Pennington and Elizabeth M Russell,** *Food poisoning, policy and politics: corned beef and typhoid in Britain in the 1960s*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2005, pp. xiv, 334, illus., £50.00, \$90.00 (hardback 1-84383-138-4).

This handsome book—admirably including bottom-of-the-page footnotes rather than chapter endnotes—is the major published outcome of a Wellcome Trust-funded project on the Aberdeen