

Book Reviews

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Gender and Medicine in Ireland, 1700–1950. Edited by Margaret H. Preston and Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh (344pp.; ISBN: 978-0-8156-3271-9). Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, New York, 2012.

This collection of essays explores themes of gender, medicine, history and politics in Ireland between 1700 and 1950. A broad variety of topics are covered, ranging from James Kelly's exploration of 'dental medical practice in eighteenth-century Ireland' to Susannah Riordan's essay on 'the limitations of venereal disease policy, 1943–1951', from Greta Jones's consideration of 'women and tuberculosis in Ireland' to Sandra McAvoy's chapter on 'women, fertility control, the Irish State, and the 1935 ban on contraceptives'.

This diversity of topics is greatly to be welcomed: the themes of gender and medicine are complex and important, necessitating broad-based considerations that often cut across the histories of gender, medicine and broader Irish society. This collection succeeds admirably in reflecting the intrinsically cross-disciplinary nature of the subject at hand.

From the perspective of psychiatry, there is much to enjoy here. There is, for example, a fascinating essay on the 'therapeutic philosophy at the Connaught District Lunatic Asylum' written by Oonagh Walsh, professor at Glasgow Caledonian University and author of *Anglican Women in Dublin: Philanthropy, Politics and Education in the Early Twentieth Century* (2005). Professor Walsh's contribution highlights several important themes relating to asylum practices in 19th century Ireland and pays welcome attention to the role of nurses, who are often somewhat ignored in histories of this period.

It is especially interesting to read Professor Walsh's accounts of treatment in the Ballinasloe asylum, and her observation that 'the efforts made to restore the mentally ill came down largely to a modified form of moral therapy, especially in relation to cheerful and constant occupation' (p. 85). She notes that efforts to engage patients in activities such as sports and games was 'a way of persuading patients back into a social world from which they had been cast, involuntarily or otherwise, and of creating a bridge between the secluded world of the institution and the world beyond its walls' (p. 85). Overall, it is apparent that St Brigid's in Ballinasloe was an extremely interesting institution for any number of reasons, and Professor Walsh's forthcoming monograph, *The Connaught District Lunatic Asylum: Land, Power and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, is greatly to be anticipated.

From a psychiatry point of view, this book also contains fascinating contributions from Pauline Prior on 'gender and criminal lunacy in nineteenth-century Ireland' and Elizabeth Malcolm on 'inebriate women and reformatories in Ireland, 1899–1919'. From a broader social perspective, there is an excellent chapter on 'Lady Dudley's District Nursing Scheme and the Congested Districts Board, 1903–1923' written by Ciara Breathnach, who lectures in history at the University of Limerick and whose previous publications include *A History of the Congested Districts Board of Ireland, 1891–1923: Poverty and Development in the West of Ireland* (2005). Chapters such as hers place the themes of gender and medicine in their proper social settings, contextualising and deepening considerations of more specific topics relating to these themes.

The editors of this volume, Margaret H. Preston and Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, are very well placed to assemble a collection such as this. Margaret H. Preston is an associate professor in the Department of History at Augustana College in South Dakota, and author of *Charitable Words: Women, Philanthropy, and the Language of Charity in Nineteenth-Century Dublin* and *A Journey of Faith, a Destination of Excellence: Avera McKennan Hospital's First Century of Caring*. Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh is a visiting scholar at Harvard University and a fellow of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland. Her books include *Quiet Revolutionaries: Irish Women in Education, Medicine and Sport, 1861–1964* and the especially fascinating *Kathleen Lynn: Irishwoman, Patriot, Doctor*.

Overall, this volume provides a rounded and considered view of the role of gender in the history of Irish medicine. It's considerations of psychiatry are engaging, insightful and well worth reading. The book as a whole benefits from its excellent thematic focus, careful author selection, judicious editing and plenty of high-level scholarship.

BRENDAN D. KELLY

Department of Adult Psychiatry, University College Dublin,
Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Dublin, Ireland
(Email: brendankelly35@gmail.com)

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Harm Reduction in Substance Use and High Risk Behaviour: International Policy and Practice. Richard Pates and Diane Riley (472.; ISBN: 978-1-4051-8297-3). Blackwell Publishing Ltd: UK, 2012.

Harm reduction in substance misuse is a well-established practice in USA, Australia and most