

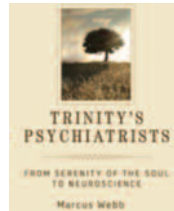
Trinity's Psychiatrists: From Serenity of the Soul to Neuroscience

Marcus Webb

Trinity College Dublin. 2011 (141pp), ISBN: 9781871408614

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Social historians castigate doctors for writing about their historical peers without taking the social and political contexts in which they practiced into account. This book, published as part of the tercentenary celebrations of the TCD School of Medicine, may escape some of these criticisms. It has been authored by Marcus Webb, retired Professor of Psychiatry at that College and ranges over the history of mental disorder and the responses to it (medical and social) from the 17th century onwards and the TCD medical graduates who played a part in this, as well as some who graduated elsewhere.



Inevitably we re-encounter the ubiquitous Swift and notice how churchmen contributed in siring sons who, instead of following their father's footsteps in making souls serene, pursued the closely allied art (or was it science?) of succouring the mind disabled. These included Connolly Norman, Drapes, Rambaut and Moore, all sons of the manse, and some such as Bennet and McCracken dually anointed clergymen and psychiatrists. Religion came to the fore again in the founding by the Quakers of Bloomfield in 1812 where the influence of moral treatment as practised at the York Retreat was adopted. And it was at Bloomfield that the Eustace dynasty was established when John Eustace was appointed superintendent in 1813. Leaving Bloomfield in 1825 he and two others opened Hampstead in Glasnevin as a private enterprise and the rest is history.

While many of those prominent in this book were not Trinity graduates neither were some of them psychiatrists. Cheyne, of Cheyne-Stokes, for instance, was neither Irish, TCD graduate nor psychiatrist but nevertheless was much pre-occupied by mental disorder as quotations from his reflections on the topic testify, particularly his prescient recognition of what we now call bipolar disorder.

Those post-graduates hoping to pursue a career in psychiatry in the 1950s had the choice of Diplomas of Psychological Medicine awarded by each of the three Dublin medical schools with Trinity being in the van having introduced this qualification as early as 1926. Nonetheless there was no formal lecture or instruction course in those days and aspirants were left to muddle on as best they could with Henderson and Gillespie's textbook as their bible. Not surprisingly neither US nor British reviewers of the Irish medical educational scene of the 1950s were impressed by what they saw on visits here. It is surprising therefore to learn that, in contradistinction to the postgraduate scene, TCD had initiated undergraduate study of mental disease as far back as 1893 which the General Medical Council was later to make compulsory for Irish medical schools. These were initiated by Dr John Molony, Superintendent of St Patrick's, later deposed when he married one of his former patients. A shadowy figure of whom I had heard little until I read this book was James Duncan who followed his father as chatelain of the private Farnham House in Finglas. A physician

to the Adelaide, he was President of the Royal College of Physicians, and on resigning from that hospital to devote himself full time to Farnham, became president of the Medico-Psychological Association (MPA) in 1875.

That Trinity psychiatrists contributed to the public asylum service is evident by the roles of Connolly Norman in Grangegorman, Drapes in Enniscorthy and Woods in Cork. All three had served as presidents of the MPA and the first two in particular had made substantial contributions to the science of their speciality. Drapes has always struck me as not quite receiving due credit for his scholarship and the work he did in interpreting research work in France and Germany in his reviews as Editor in Chief of the Association's Journal. Despite their extensive enquiries they and other contemporaries portrayed frustration in their searches for understanding the origins of mental disorder. W R Dawson, another TCD graduate and lunacy inspector, who had worked at the aforementioned Farnham House, was also a keen researcher with interests in the epidemiological field who, following 1922, became Chief Medical Officer in Northern Ireland. And then there was the energetic (he played rugby for Ireland) Daniel Rambaut organising concerts, drama and cricket at fin de siècle Grangegorman before departing for St Andrew's, Northampton, and presidency of the MPA in 1934. In contrast to the 19th century, of the 95 medical officers employed in district mental hospitals in 1963 only one was a Trinity graduate

Having qualified at RCSI, Richard Leeper came to the rescue of St Patrick's in 1899 bringing it back to respectability from the chaos into which it had descended in the later years of the previous century. He, too, became yet another Irishman to preside the MPA in 1931/32. More within recent memory is the role of Norman Moore in extending and further modernising that hospital and establishing a link with the St James Psychiatric Unit of which the author was clinical director until his retirement. Although the first professorship of psychiatry had been established by UCD in 1950 the TCD equivalent did not follow until Peter Beckett was appointed in 1969. Fresh from the US he brought enthusiasm and openness to a scene that had become inward looking and became Dean of TCD Medical School but died very soon afterwards. Following a brief interregnum he was followed in the Professorship by our author

In subsequent chapters this book outlines the development of the TCD Department of Psychiatry. There follows a dramatis personae of those involved. Irish psychiatrists may boast of, or wonder at, the plurality of academic posts in Irish psychiatry per head of population in no less than six medical schools (surely something of a world record, including an ex-officio professorship with Medical Directorship of St Patrick's). And Trinity psychiatrists abroad are not forgotten.

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The Language of Mental Health: A Glossary of Psychiatric Terms

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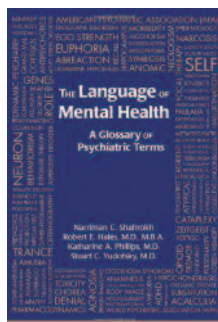
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This book is a recent publication from American Psychiatric Publishing. In the preface, the authors hope that this glossary will be 'a resource for anyone who needs concise but thorough explanations of terms that have pertinence to the practise and study of mental health'. Not only is it aiming to be used by and useful to mental health professionals but also to patients and their families, mental health advocacy organisations and attorneys amongst others. On reading this the target audience may appear broad yet all of the glossary's entries, while some aimed at one mental health group more than another, merited inclusion. So here you will find specialised terms sitting alongside more general ones. For example, sympathomimetic and sympathy. In all cases, the authors focus on a term's essential salient points to convey the meaning to as wide an audience as possible. However there is never a sense that explanations or descriptions are being dumbed down in the mass appeal. The entries are extensively cross-referenced and lead the reader on to other related terms which helps add to the user's knowledge.

As a glossary its scope is wide. It includes terms that provide insight into the historical, biological, pharmacological, psychological and medico-legal aspects of psychiatry amongst many others. What I really liked was its well stocked bank of transcultural psychiatry terms, many of which I had not heard of before (Grisi siknis, anyone?). It uses an alphabetical system to move through terms, so each subsequent entry in its description may be unrelated to what came previously, from alien hand syndrome to alienist unless they have a common root.

I approached the book as a 3rd year BST trainee in the final throes prior to the MRCPsych CASC exam. As a trainee, there are certain terms that can create confusion particularly early in training e.g. circumstantiality/tangentiality, catalepsy/cataplexy. This book deals with examples such as these well and references other relevant terms, clarifying the distinguishing characteristics. It may seem pedantic to talk about what has been left out when so much has been put it but there were some terms such as reflex hallucination/synesthesia, delusional mood and delusional perception, of which I would have welcomed a clear explanation. These terms



also have the annoying habit of appearing in exams. But omissions were the exception rather than the rule. Another bug bear of mine with this book was that on some occasions when describing a particular neurological sign, e.g. abulia, it did not contain the relevant location of the insult, whereas for other terms such as prosopagnosia, it did. Consistency here would be desirable.

Descriptions of major mental disorders are explained succinctly and focus on the core features of the illness.

While the DSM-IV is referenced, the explanations do not become overly engrossed in the complete diagnostic criteria. Again this reflects the author's wish to allow readers to 'grasp the meanings more easily' and it works. Following the glossary, there is a section listing abbreviations used in psychiatry. Next, a section on medications used in Psychiatry which classifies medication on the basis of its therapeutic effect. The pharmacology of each medication has already been described in the glossary itself which nicely compiles relevant tests under different psychiatric diagnoses headings for your consideration following the assessment of a patient. Next there is a section on legal terms which would be useful in the preparation of court reports or in giving evidence. Finally there is a section listing support organisations and websites, all of which are based in the United States and perhaps not as relevant to clinicians or service users in Ireland.

In summary, this book would be a welcome addition to any library or your own bookshelf. It comprehensively deals with a wide variety of psychiatric terms and explains them clearly and simply. Apart from its use as a reference text, it is a useful book to dip into and discover different psychiatric terms that you may need to brush up on. I would certainly recommend this book to others working in mental health especially trainees new to the grade.

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This is a potpourri of a book which would have benefitted from a modicum of structural control and the shedding of some of the oft-repeated general historical background. Nonetheless it contains a quantum of information not available elsewhere and for that alone, coupled with the author's diligence in mining sources, it has been a worthwhile exercise. Finally, unlike many publications of its type, it provides an index and short glossary of technical terms.

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