

## Book Reviews

**Jeremy Taylor**, *The rebirth of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital 1874–1883: an architectural exploration*, Research Publications No. 1, Norwich, Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, University of East Anglia, 2000, pp. vi, 70, ill., £4.99 (+ 50p p&p) (paperback 0-9538349-0-5). Orders to: Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ. E-mail: wellcome@uea.ac.uk.

In early February 1877, a *Norfolk Mercury* leader considered the options for enlarging the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, which included the complete replacement of the existing building (opened in 1772). Ten weeks earlier, the hospital's patron the Prince of Wales had publicly spoken on behalf of an appeal for funds to extend the building with two pavilion-ward blocks, a scheme recognized as a compromise, though a satisfactory one; now the *Mercury* asked its readers to "Suppose . . . that the old Hospital is retained, and that £20,000 is spent on additions, and *after* this pyaemia should break out again, not only in the old parts but in the new! *What then?*" In the event, the hospital was built new between 1879 and 1884 (it incorporated one wing of the previous building), but not, of course, before further public discussion. The Prince agreed that new-building was the best solution, even as the *British Medical Journal* (as quoted in the *Mercury*) grumbled that some among the Norwich's governors had evidently fallen sway to the London surgeon John Erichsen's jeremiads about the critical importance of hospitals' design—as opposed to Listerian procedures—to their mortality rates.

This account of T H Wyatt and Edward Boardman's new hospital is the most detailed and best-illustrated study of a nineteenth-century English hospital's planning and construction that we have. As such, this modestly-priced small book represents a bit of a luxury by current standards of academic publishing. Why

should non-specialists indulge in it, even granted that Taylor, the leading authority in the field, shows the new Norfolk and Norwich's place in wider institutional developments? For this reader, the reason is, simply, because the world in which local newspapers, and even Princes of Wales, feel free to assess the relative merits of plan types is the world we have lost. Thanks to outbreaks of pyaemia and the other hospital diseases, hospital planning achieved a glamour and a prominence in the British public's mind during the 1860s and 1870s that it has never enjoyed before or since. To understand that national prominence, we need scholarship like this, prepared to invest in the local, and the particular.

**Christine Stevenson**,  
University of Reading

**Chandak Sengoopta**, *Otto Weininger: sex, science, and self in imperial Vienna*, Chicago series on Sexuality, History, and Society, University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. x, 239, £20.50, \$29.00 (hardback 0-226-74867-7).

Otto Weininger, the homosexual, 23-year-old, self-hating Jewish suicide and author of *Geschlecht und Charakter: Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung* (*Sex and Character: an investigation of principles*, 1903), has been the focus of much historical writing. Feminists have chided him, Freudians have shown how he caused the break-up between Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Fliess, philosophers have demonstrated the influence Weininger had on Ludwig Wittgenstein, historians of sexuality have used him as an easy way into medical ideas of bisexuality. What these studies have failed to do, however, is place Weininger's work in its multiple historical contexts of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese philosophy, science, medicine, religion, and culture. This has been finally achieved by Chandak

Sengoopta in this important and scholarly work.

Weininger was very widely read in the early part of the twentieth century. He elicited responses from many of the important thinkers of his day, such as Freud, Havelock Ellis and Robert Musil. His ideas on women, on Jewishness, on homosexuality, and on biology make him of immense interest to historians of sexuality and historians of medicine alike. Weininger's text is properly read as an influential anti-feminist, anti-Semitic tract which drew heavily on biological reasoning. Humans were placed on a scale between the masculine man and the feminine woman. All people had some traits of each archetype, and all were thus bisexual at some level. Couplings between people were done on the basis of creating a balance. For example, a man who was 75 per cent masculine would balance with a woman who was 25 per cent masculine. Homosexual relationships were explained by the same logic.

Weininger did not hold women in high esteem. He suggested that they were irrational and purely sexual; they were capable only of feelings, and were unable to distinguish between feelings and thought. Women had two archetypal female role-models, of which they were all partially blended intermediate forms: the mother and the prostitute, both sexual to the core, and prone to become neurotic. The prostitute was interested in any man who could give her erotic pleasure, the mother in any man who could give her a child. Utopia would be reached, Weininger believed, when women overcame their sexuality, although he denied that they would ever be capable of rationality. Sex got in the way of rational thinking. Jews came in for a similar splenetic attack from Weininger, who noted that "The Jewish race is pervasively feminine. This femininity comprises those qualities that I have shown to be in total opposition to masculinity" (p. 62). Jews were more sexual and less rational,

according to Weininger, than Aryan men, who most closely approximated the ideal (asexual) man.

The important achievement of Sengoopta's book is the way that these tricky ideas are placed in the multiple contexts from whence they derived: it is not enough for the historian merely to show that Weininger was sexist and racist. Understanding Weininger's wide reading is essential to reconstruct the discursive context for *Geschlecht und Charakter*, a task which has been very well executed by the author. Sengoopta's study of Weininger stresses the importance of German rather than Austrian sources, and argues for placing Weininger in his broader Viennese culture. Weininger became Protestant rather than Catholic (the dominant religion in Austria); he was a neo-Kantian; he moved away from the "anti-self" ideas of his former professor, Ernst Mach; he rejected the folk psychology of Wilhelm Wundt (an area of this study which could have benefited from reference to the recent work of Martin Kusch). Weininger also used many of the latest embryological and hormonal arguments as evidence for his theories of universal bisexuality. Sengoopta makes a very strong case for the importance of reading Weininger's work through these multiple lenses. Central to his argument is the focus on gender, which is the crucial *raison d'être* of *Geschlecht und Charakter*. The result of such eclecticism is that Weininger is not always coherent, but understanding the different strains and tensions between these multiple discursive fields which sit so strangely in one text are essential if one is to understand his work.

Sengoopta's text, then, is an interesting guide to *fin-de-siècle* Viennese intellectual culture through the work of one of the most enigmatic characters in the history of sexuality. It is impeccably documented (with 70 pages of notes to 156 pages of text). The historiographical premises on which the work rests—that a wider contextual reading must be taken, and that the different

## Book Reviews

discursive fields in which a text can be placed and from whence it stems must be considered; ideas which derive from Michel Foucault—are sound and to be highly commended. It deserves to become a standard reference work when considering the fantastic life and work of Otto Weininger.

**Ivan Crozier,**  
The Wellcome Trust Centre for the  
History of Medicine at UCL

**Robert Richardson,** *Larrey: surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard*, revised edition, London, Quiller Press, 2000 (first published 1974), pp. x, 269, illus., £16.95 (hardback 1-899163-60-3).

Dominique Jean Larrey (1766–1842) was the chief surgeon in Napoleon's Imperial Guard, a dedicated doctor and soldier, a loyal subject in awe of his nation at the most ambitious moment in its imperialistic history, a devoted husband and father, and—to the end of his life—a sworn devotee of his emperor, Napoleon. If Larrey was not particularly distinguished for surgical invention or theoretical medical writing, he nevertheless served his country as loyally as any other doctor in France's history. Especially in the great Russian military campaigns he continually placed his own life on the line. He is remembered as a soldier in the service of other soldiers, for his healing treatment through daily reliability, flying ambulances and other types of inventive make-shift hospitals. His treks through the snow across northern Europe, and the letters he wrote from outposts to his beloved wife Charlotte, document a dominant theme about East European wasteland based on the frozen tundra around Eylau, south of the Vistula in Poland. Larrey's military memoirs are no dramatic pieces of writing (he was no Tolstoy in miniature), but they provide a

sense of the soldier's life on the battlefield, the plagues and conditions to which he was exposed in appalling conditions removed from his family and region. Larrey knew well that most soldiers never return home; that the memory of love in the battlefield is one of the few sustaining emotions in the face of constant death.

Robert Richardson's biography, revised here, was first published in 1974 and has now been augmented. Even in 1974 Richardson, a medical practitioner with a flair for writing medical history pitched for the layman, had the use of the French biographer André Soubiran's more thorough analysis of 1966. But Soubiran had not seen the Larrey Collection in the Wellcome Library: a manuscript archive of unpublished material comprising Larrey's letters to his family and campaign journals, which Richardson has incorporated in this revised edition. The Wellcome Collection of Larrey, together with the significantly larger companion archive in the Bibliothèque Nationale, forms the largest repository of extant unpublished Larreyana. It constitutes a significant research tool for French military health and imperial history in the first half of the nineteenth century. If Richardson's revised life attracts students to consult the Wellcome Collection's rich and mostly untapped French archive, it will have served a second useful purpose.

**G S Rousseau,**  
De Montfort University

**David A Gerber** (ed.), *Disabled veterans in history*, Corporealities: Discourses of Disability, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2000, pp. viii, 348, £31.00, \$49.50 (hardback 0-472-11033-0).

A good deal has been written recently about the pity of war, but its victims have seldom figured prominently in historical scholarship. There are, of course, some