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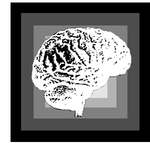

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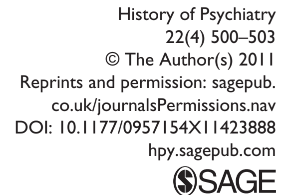

Book Reviews

Roderick D. Buchanan, *Playing with Fire: The Controversial Career of Hans J. Eysenck*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2010; ix + 475 pp.; 9780198566885, £34.95 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Ben Harris, *University of New Hampshire, USA*

In *Playing with Fire,* Roderick Buchanan offers the definitive biography of Hans Eysenck, one of the most prominent psychologists of the later twentieth century. Within the field of psychiatry, Eysenck is notable for the provocative stance he took on clinical and scientific questions, such as racial differences in IQ. He was also an empire builder who shaped the field of clinical psychology in Britain after World War II. He was theoretician and field-marshal for the behavioural therapy movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and helped to negotiate its place within psychology and psychiatry.

This biography is definitive, because Eysenck's wife destroyed his personal and professional papers after his death, so no cache of revealing primary sources is likely to emerge. To construct this account of Eysenck's public career, Buchanan has mined all relevant and available sources, including confidential records that courts have required tobacco companies to reveal. He has also interviewed former colleagues and participants in various controversies.

The author is generous with detail, helpful with technical subjects, and he engagingly describes Eysenck's provocative, stubborn and often wrong-headed clinical and scientific ideas. Always even-handed, Buchanan suggests: 'Here was a good scientist who was incisive and fearless, well-intentioned and kind and, conversely, here was a bad scientist who was dishonest and destructive, dogmatic and vain' (p. 4).

Readers interested in the mind sciences will be most interested in the chapters on Eysenck's anti-psychotherapeutic polemics of the 1950s and his propagandizing about tobacco and public health in the 1980s. Eysenck, who spent his career at the Institute of Psychiatry (IoP) in London, opposed the scientist-practitioner model of clinical psychology that emerged in post-WWII America. Its inclusion of psychotherapy, he warned, took psychology away from its scientific roots and aligned it with Freudian metaphysics. Attacking his perceived opponents, Eysenck first demanded that psychotherapists prove their methods superior to taking no action, leaving a patient to recover with time. Next, he promoted a Pavlovian view of the neuroses and championed Joseph Wolpe's desensitization therapy.

Founding the journal *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, Eysenck led the British behaviour therapy movement, although he never saw a single patient. Typical of Eysenck's campaigns, he refused to admit defeat when cognitive modifications undermined his extreme position. By the 1970s, his use of medical concepts – symptom, relapse, cure – seemed archaic and irrelevant to clinicians treating the worried well and those with personality disorders. That said, Eysenck deserves partial credit for the creation of therapeutic outcome research in the 1960s and 1970s.

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The other chapter directly relevant to psychiatry is ‘Smoking, cancer and the final frontier’. In it, Buchanan tells of Eysenck’s contrarian proclamations about the causes of chronic illnesses, most notably cancer. To the delight of tobacco companies in the USA and the UK, Eysenck challenged epidemiologists’ belief that cigarette smoke was a major risk factor for cancer. This remained to be proven, he claimed. Furthermore, both smoking and cancer could be caused by a certain type of personality that could be measured by one of the trait tests that Eysenck had developed. He also claimed that cigarette smoking was not addictive. As Buchanan documents, Eysenck was paid approximately £800,000 by cigarette companies (in today’s equivalent), delivered via a scientific front group and a secret fund created to avoid disclosure when lawsuits ensued. That is why Eysenck’s lab – recreated and on display at the Science Museum in London – was full of the most up-to-date equipment.

One of the most troubling parts of Eysenck’s career was his alliance with a Yugoslavian named Ronald Grossarth-Maticek, who lacked training in any of the subjects which he claimed to research. Sporting a mysterious work history, Grossarth-Maticek withdrew his *Habilitation* thesis at the University of Heidelberg in 1977 when the Psychology faculty was poised to reject it for presenting data that seemed dishonest. Using a 1965 sample of Yugoslavians, Grossarth-Maticek claimed that a psychological questionnaire he developed predicted 100 per cent of cancer deaths among the 1353 people he studied. Championed by Eysenck, Grossarth-Maticek also claimed that his ‘creative novation behaviour therapy’ dramatically improved life expectancy in people whose personalities predisposed them to cancer and heart disease. The nature of that therapy, and who delivered it, were two of the many questions that were never answered when controversy erupted, following the publicizing of these tobacco-friendly results by Eysenck and his new colleague.

As suits its subject, *Playing with Fire* is also a study of how individuals and institutional settings combine to create scientific discovery and productivity. Buchanan does a masterful job of analysing the dynamic interaction of Eysenck’s personality, social relations, intellectual style and niche at the IoP. He shows how they combined to produce 85 books and over 1000 articles, as well as loyal students and the accusation that he offered a mix of ‘sophistry and tendentious scholarship’ (Lykken, 1959: 379).

Reference

Lykken DT (1959) Turbulent complication. *Contemporary Psychology* 4: 377–379.

Maureen Park, *Art in Madness. Dr W.A.F. Browne’s Collection of Patient Art at Crichton Royal Institution, Dumfries*, Dumfries and Galloway Health Board: Dumfries, 2010; 268 pp.: 9781699316694, £25 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Allan Beveridge, *Queen Margaret Hospital, Dunfermline*

This lavishly produced book by the art historian Maureen Park provides the first serious study of the collection of patient art amassed by the nineteenth-century Scottish alienist Dr W.A.F. Browne, Physician Superintendent of the Crichton Royal Institution in Dumfries and author of the highly influential tract *What Asylums Were, Are, and Ought to Be* (1837). The book reproduces in colour the entire collection of over 100 pictures, as well as associated works from other archives. The images are of a generous size and are reproduced on high-quality paper. Until recently, the collection was housed in the museum at the Crichton Royal and much of the work was on display. Sadly the museum has been closed and the collection now resides in the town’s Archive Centre. In the light of such developments, this book makes a welcome appearance and one that goes some way to

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keeping Browne's collection of patient art in the public eye. With the help of the former Crichton Royal archivist, Morag Williams, who was responsible for rediscovering much of the work, Park has also been able to identify practically all the patient-artists in the collection. In addition, with help from the Lothian Health Board archivist Mike Barfoot, she has explored the work of Royal Edinburgh Asylum patients whose art was featured in Browne's collection.

W.A.F. Browne took up his post at the Crichton in 1839 and from the outset he was determined to implement his programme of moral treatment based on the principles he had outlined in his manifesto, *What Asylums Were, Are, and Ought to Be*. The programme involved a whole range of activities designed to divert the mind from morbid thoughts and to keep the patient occupied: concerts, dances, theatre, lectures and art classes were all provided at the Crichton. Park contends that Browne was a pioneer of moral treatment, particularly in his advocacy of the value of artistic activity. Some 40 years before the Italian alienist Cesare Lombroso began to collect patient art, Browne had already initiated his own collection; in addition, he had set up art classes for the asylum residents and provided teachers and materials.

However, it comes as something of a surprise to learn that of all the Crichton patients, only 3.6 per cent, or 46 individuals, were actually involved in producing art and of these only 10 were women and 5 were from the pauper class. Art was almost exclusively reserved for the 'educated' classes. Furthermore, when one views the collection from a purely aesthetic perspective, one is struck by how unremarkable most of the work is. As Park observes, both the subject matter – predominantly landscapes, seascapes and narrative scenes – and the medium chosen – mainly watercolours, and pen and ink washes – were typical of the work produced by amateur artists in Victorian Britain. There is little about the Crichton collection to indicate that it was created by the inmates of a lunatic asylum. Why should this be? After all, since the appearance in 1922 of Hans Prinzhorn's *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, a book which featured the work of patients drawn from asylums throughout Europe and which greatly influenced the Surrealists and Expressionists, there has been a tendency to conceive of the artistic productions of the mad as representing a decisive break with the bourgeois conventions of the Art Academy. These patient-artists have been hailed as visionary explorers of new artistic landscapes, inaccessible to the sane. In his ground-breaking *The Discovery of the Art of the Insane*, the art historian John MacGregor demonstrated how work by asylum inmates which had hitherto been accorded no aesthetic value was 'discovered' and subsequently championed by artists and sympathetic psychiatrists, who deemed it to possess great artistic merit. Prinzhorn, who was both a psychiatrist and an art historian, went so far as to describe some of the patients in his book as 'schizophrenic masters'.

How does the Crichton collection relate to such a conceptualization of the art of the mentally ill? As Maureen Park makes clear, Browne set about collecting patient work with the firm aim of illustrating his thesis that the mad could produce work that was perfectly 'sane' in appearance. He therefore carefully selected work that confirmed his viewpoint and discarded work that appeared disturbed or deranged. Park observes that the case notes reveal that when Browne considered a patient's work to be 'grotesque, degrading or unintelligible', it was simply not collected. Further support for the notion of Browne's selective approach to patient art comes from his last Asylum Report of 1857 in which he discussed the 'degraded' nature of many insane inmates. He recorded: 'Outlines of high artistic pretensions have been painted in excrement; poetry has been written in blood, or more revolting media … Patients … daub and drench the walls as hideously as their disturbed fancy suggests' (quoted in Scull, MacKenzie and Hervey, 1996: 117–18). We know that the patients who featured in the Prinzhorn collection often used unconventional media and that their work was not created in polite art classes but in isolation. Indeed, later in the twentieth century, the Austrian psychiatrist Leo Navratil contended that formal art classes served to stifle creativity, and

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he set up the Artists' House in the grounds of the psychiatric hospital at Gugging where patients could produce work, untroubled by therapists or teachers.

Despite Browne's selective approach, his collection nevertheless contains some patients who produced images of an arresting nature: Joseph Askew's eerie townscapes and William Bannerman's fey Highland scenes are particularly evocative. However, the most original artist is undoubtedly William Bartholomew, a hatter, engraver and sometime drunkard from Edinburgh, who produced work in a variety of styles. He kept notebooks with crowded, imaginative drawings featuring animals, maps and people, and he was commissioned by Browne to create portraits of his fellow inmates. These large and striking works were used by Browne in his lectures on mental disease. Park plausibly suggests that Browne was influenced by the examples of Esquirol and Alexander Morison, who had each commissioned portraits of asylum patients. Browne was unique, however, in seeking out a *patient* to fulfil the commission rather than asking a professional artist.

Maureen Park has produced a meticulously researched and beautifully illustrated book which does full justice to Browne's collection of patient art and which reflects how cultural notions of what constitutes 'art' have shifted over time.

Reference

Scull A, MacKenzie C and Hervey N (1996) *Masters of Bedlam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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