

able developments in the clinical sciences, especially pathology and biochemistry is well documented by their liberating impact of women's reproductive health, and this is the major achievement of this study. Whether other hospitals will follow this example and commission histories which involve the patient experience remains to be seen, but this study of women's health and a women's hospital sets a high standard for those who follow after.

Gwynedd Hunter-Payne
Melbourne

Bricks or Spirit? The Queen Victoria Hospital Melbourne. By Emma Russell. Australian Scholarly Publishing 1997. Pp. vii + 139. \$24.95 paper.

What makes a hospital — bricks or spirit? This important question receives an equivocal answer in Emma Russell's analysis of the foundation and fate of the Queen Victoria Hospital in Melbourne. Dame Mabel Brookes, President of the Hospital from 1924 to 1970, asserted that 'no-one minded what one did for it'. However, the story of the final decades of the Hospital reveals that others did not mind that what they did eroded the aim of the founders to provide a 'safe' medical environment for women where they were treated by women and spared the ordeal of the prying eyes of male medical students. These days few of the bricks of the Hospital survive, and in the wake of the move to a new building in Clayton, and a new identity as the Monash Medical Centre, its spirit appears to be a fading memory, alive mainly among those who worked there when it was still the Queen Vic, as it was affectionately known.

What was the aim of those who commissioned this history as part of the centenary celebrations of the Hospital in 1996? Did they want it to be a memorial to the women who founded the Hospital and the men who supported them? Did they want a record of the achievements of the Hospital and its staff? Did they want to explain why or how the Queen Vic ceased to exist? Those who commissioned the history have obtained a good, clear overview of the Hospital's foundation and demise, with some details about the decades in between. The final impression is that they wanted a justification of the Hospital, a

reassurance that the once proud spirit of the founders continue. This aim is rather narrow, but Emma Russell has fulfilled it more than adequately in this slender book.

The early years of the Hospital are dealt with clearly, if briefly. The story then skips two decades to focus on Dame Mabel Brookes, and the work of the Hospital and its staff fades into the background. The major break with the founders — the introduction of male patients and medical practitioners — and the final amalgamation that led to the creation of the Monash Medical Centre in 1987 completes the book. This is followed by an afterword discussing the fate of the city site of the Hospital. Overall, this means the book deals with some of the significant people in the Hospital's history and the economic climate in which modern hospitals function. The final impression is that the Hospital enjoyed a glorious heyday in its early years, which does not help the reader fully understand why the women who worked there in later decades continue to feel such a strong loyalty to it.

The female ethos of the Hospital which was central to its foundation, determined its character and ultimately contributed to its demise, is raised but not explored. There is a certain irony in this. Feminist ideology lay behind the foundation of the Queen Vic which was modelled on similar hospitals in America and Britain. The Hospital quickly distanced itself from the feminist movement, but continued to maintain an uneasy balance between adherence to feminist ideals coupled with the need to survive in a world more concerned with other political and economic matters. Emma Russell indicates that she would like to examine the significance of the Queen Vic and its fate from this perspective, and it is a shame that those who commissioned this history chose not to follow that path for that would be an interesting discussion. Furthermore, since the Hospital was founded to provide treatment for women by women, a service women embraced immediately, and continued to demand, the meaning of the Hospital to the women who supported it and who sought treatment there also needs to be examined. That this is not done is a surprising omission given that it was central to the 'spirit' of the Hospital.

As it stands, this account needs to be read in conjunction with other secondary and primary material since it introduces more than it explores. However, it does make that task easier for it gives an overview of the major events in the Hospital and provides a detailed timeline of *highlights in its development*. Russell has written a history that will interest the general reader. At the same time, the many interesting

and complex medical and feminist issues she raises lift her analysis above the superficial, giving a glimpse of what this history of the Hospital could have been. The book is also well supplied with photographs which, in themselves, chronicle the shift from a focus on individuals with a commitment to the aims and daily work of the Hospital to more impersonal generic images of what goes on in hospitals. A comprehensive history of the Queen Vic and its significance is still to be written, probably by an independent writer since the judgements about why it ceased to maintain an independent identity are likely to be harsh.

Monika Wells
University of Melbourne

A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac. By Edward Shorter. John Wiley & Sons 1997. Pp. xii + 427. \$35.00 paper.

This history of psychiatry covers the period from the French Revolution until the end of the twentieth century. It is an excellent history, well laid out, very readable with a well-balanced overview of the history of the psychiatry in the western hemisphere. The rise of psychiatry in the United States and in Western Europe are the main areas of interest. This book does not discuss the evolution of psychiatry in Asia or India or Latin America.

The book relates in considerable detail the phases of psychiatric development. The subject is examined from all viewpoints: sociological, epidemiological and medical. The chapters are: The Birth of Psychiatry; The Asylum Era; The First Biological Psychiatry; Nerves; The Psychoanalytic Hiatus; Alternatives; The Second Biological Psychiatry; and From Freud to Prozac. There is an excellent bibliography with detailed referencing to each chapter. The index is comprehensive, logical and very useful.

Each chapter is very comprehensive, but also readable in isolation. Some of the great personalities of psychiatry are very well dealt with and would form core information on the subject. The author does not assume prior medical knowledge and medical concepts are well ex-