

of his intended audience for this book, have any time or inclination for imaginative and analytical print-based material. Cawte tells how in his hospital classes he dropped his allusions to literature and engaged his students with visual images of mental distress. Despite his comments on the 'glum illiteracy of the majority of students', Cawte is determined to push home his argument that understanding mental distress and illness does not stop with reading or, indeed, writing 'academic reviews of neuroleptic drugs'. In the epilogue to this book Cawte commends Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1651, as an exemplar that did not confine its focus 'to the drug infatuations of its day'.

This book entertains the casual reader while it prompts those with more commitment to the subject to explore a range of both contemporary and historical material. It is to be hoped that Cawte is wrong and that many medical students and practitioners read and explore this personal and public history of psychiatry.

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Eugenics and the Welfare State: Sterilization Policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland. Edited by Gunnar Broberg & Nils Roll-Hansen. Michigan State University 1996. Pp. ix + 272. c. \$100 cloth.

In the introduction to this collection of essays, Gunnar Broberg writes of Swedish society in the first half of this century that it was, 'a country with rational, organized education, light veneer or steel furniture, kindergartens, cleanliness and order. That is how Sweden looked, at least from a distance.' (p. 5). Whilst differences existed between the nations that made up Scandinavia — Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark — Broberg emphasizes their shared tradition of race, culture and, in the period under study, modern, progressive liberal democratic social structures. He writes that

in the eyes of the rest of the world, Scandinavia probably still represents peace and prosperity. Its welfare program continued and accelerated after the war. People live longer and are wealthier than elsewhere. Nordic countries have come to stand for quality. (p. 7)

Broberg describes how these societies were reformed along scientific, rational principles formulated by scientists, including doctors, biologists, psychologists and anthropologists. Further, according to the authors of this collection of essays, eugenic sterilization laws were an integral part of the modernist, progressive reforms throughout Scandinavia. As these authors say, the Scandinavian sterilization legislation, which was enacted within a few years beginning in the late 1920s, was part of the reform eugenic movement. Reform eugenics included a variety of environmental social reforms, including the successful instigation of improvements in child and maternal health. This, the authors argue, was in contrast with mainline eugenics that distinguished pre-First World War thinking which was based on conservative tenets such as simple racial models of white superiority, an over-enthusiastic embracing of social Darwinism and primitive genetic theories of inheritance. Though this is a useful working distinction, Nils Roll-Hansen, in the conclusion to these essays, wisely warns against an over-dependence on the strict categorization of eugenics and eugenicists into discrete mainline and reform camps which, he indicates, is a trap some historians have not avoided.

The authors of these essays have, I think, satisfactorily demonstrated the 'reform' flavour of the Scandinavian laws. In this regard, the Scandinavian eugenic laws were unique: eugenic legislation in the United States, which was the only other democratic society to pass such laws, took no such unified action at one time or according to any single ideological consideration. The Scandinavian laws were also more efficiently (if that be the correct expression) executed in that they resulted in the sterilization of approximately 95,000 citizens between 1929 and 1960. In contrast, eugenic legislation in various States of America during the first four decades of this century brought about the sterilization of only one-third of that number.

It is tempting to make a comparison between Scandinavia and Australia when reading this book for so many similarities leap from the pages. There is not only a similarity in size of population. At the beginning of the century, there was the active development of social reform policies in a wide range of areas leading to the modern welfare state as well as the shared concern with 'racial purity' (as that expression was then used). Legislation similar to that of Scandinavia was widely canvassed in the Australian States during the 1920s and 1930s. The promoters of such legislation, who were generally medical scientists, failed in their task so that the eugenic movement in Australia

took a different course from its Scandinavian counterpart. Interestingly enough, Frank Tate, Victoria's first Director of Education, who was one of those eugenicists in Victoria who supported the introduction of legislation to stop the 'racially unfit' from propagating — as well as being a major figure in the reform of education in Australia — undertook a study tour of Scandinavia for the Victorian government and, in consequence, published an enthusiastic endorsement for the reformist Scandinavian society he visited.¹

In conclusion, I consider these essays an excellent exploration of the long-ignored darker side of the modernist, progressive movement which has significantly affected the societies we live in today.

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The National Health Service: A Political History. By Charles Webster. Oxford University Press 1998. Pp. xiii + 241. c. \$40, paper.

The British National Health Service (NHS) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary this year. The high point of the Attlee Labour Government's social welfare reforms, it became the archetype of 'socialised medicine'. Alone among the English-speaking nations, and almost alone in Europe, the British rejected insurance-based models of health finance and introduced a system that is (almost) free and (almost) universal.

Consequently, the appearance of a substantial study of the NHS is of interest to a wider audience than specialists on recent British political and medical history. Charles Webster, already well-known for major studies on early modern science and medicine, recently completed an exhaustive official history of the NHS from its origins in 1972. These two massive volumes give a thorough account of the policy-making process, an indispensable reference for the specialist historian. He has now summarised this history for a more general audience. Away from

1. Frank Tate, *Some Lessons from Rural Denmark*, Melbourne, 1924.