

history might have found it helpful to have a few more snippets, perhaps a timetable, depicting general warfare during 1806–55. Still, this work's focus on the educational and administrative aspects of surgery nicely complements the popular "war porn" accounts that highlight only the gruesome casualties of warfare.

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Jesse F Ballenger, *Self, senility, and Alzheimer's disease in modern America: a history*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, pp. xvii, 236, £28.50, \$43.00 (hardback 0-8018-8276-1).

In this persuasive and interesting monograph, Jesse Ballenger argues that the narratives that describe ageing have reflected the rapidly changing socio-cultural landscapes of the modern United States. Taking fear of senility as his starting point, Ballenger questions the assumption that people have *always* feared dementia or understood mental diminishment in the same way. Drawing upon medical, political, popular and even contemporary academic sources, he then demonstrates generation-by-generation that the interaction between the various understandings of ageing, senility, and Alzheimer's disease have historically been inextricable from contemporaneous incarnations of biomedical knowledge and practice, as well as anxieties about the status of "selfhood". Thus, this book is a cultural and intellectual history of ageing. It explores, for example, how the meaning of the word senility, which initially and innocuously denoted old age, came to represent in social and scientific discourses, first a lessening of vital energy, then became "a waste-basket term for a variety of discrete" (p. 80) diseases, and achieved finally, partial synonymy with Alzheimer's disease. The result, Ballenger concludes, is that today dementia is "emblematic" of our times (p. 153) and the "stories we tell about Alzheimer's"

have become "the stories we tell about ourselves in a culture characterized by the subversion of narrative, the contingency and instability of language and meaning, and an often fractured, disjointed experience of subjectivity" (p. 172).

This is a powerful, lucid account. It is at times emotionally challenging and disconcerting, but Ballenger handles his documentation carefully, never wallowing too much in the dramatic source material but always offering enough to keep the reader focused on the human element in his argument.

In the spirit of offering a balanced commentary, I have certain qualms about Ballenger's title and analysis. In many respects, the title feels somewhat misleading. The argument and narrative focus mainly on the continental north-eastern United States. Are readers to presume that the Mid-West, the Deep South, the Pacific Northwest, as well as Canada are covered in this account? True, some of the sources Ballenger uses circulated *en masse* throughout "America", but many of his more provocative statements, for example, "Senility haunts the landscape of the self-made man" (p. 9), would require several careful local analyses before the generalizations could be sustained.

Such observations also raise my second concern about this analysis. The sources on ageing, senility, and Alzheimer's disease are often rhetorical howitzers, which especially weaken the defences of those of us who have experienced dementia first-hand. The claim, after the fashion of Sander Gilman (p. 30), that the salience of these sources for historians may lie in the way they construct a contingent but none the less authentic and historicized picture of "selfhood", demands a reciprocal question. Namely, to what degree are these sources perhaps *not* reflective of how people in modern America understand their bodies, minds, and "selves"? Much of the evidence used throughout this study—e.g. "more people outlive their brains" (p. 38)—provides us with a depiction of the "self" that is generated in a literature rife with ulterior (or at least incidental) motives. Indeed Ballenger admits as much, yet he continually creates a binary opposition

between “the normal and the pathological” (pp. 3, 44, 74, and 135) and ultimately depicts senility as the definitive diseased Other from which we can reconstruct a historicized “normal” selfhood. Before we can be sure that such evidence posits an authentic expression of a normal Other, it seems reasonable, if not imperative, to examine how people understood the decline of their “physical self” in the presence of a “normal” mind as well. Here a comparative approach measuring discourses of senility against similar ones readily available for such physical diseases as multiple sclerosis or dystonia would have been useful and might well have demonstrated that the discourses of senility were indeed unique. As rendered in this account, however, we cannot be certain.

Nevertheless, Ballenger can be congratulated for a truly fascinating exploration of ageing and senility. This book will appeal to physicians and historians, and the author (or the publishers) should consider marketing it to a broader public audience.

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Wolfgang U Eckart (ed.), *Man, medicine, and the state: the human body as an object of government sponsored medical research in the 20th century*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft, Band 2, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2006, pp. 297, €43.00 (paperback 978-3-515-08794-0).

After *Useful bodies* (2003, edited by Jordan Goodman, Anthony McElligott and Lara Marks) and *Twentieth century ethics of human subjects research* (2004, edited by Volker Roelcke and Giovanni Maio), the present volume is the third collection of essays in a short time that explores the “dark side” of human experimentation in the past century through a range of case studies. As in *Useful bodies*, the focus is on the social and political contexts that facilitated unethical trials on human subjects, and as in the Roelcke/Maio volume, historical

and ethical assessments are often coupled (cf. my reviews in *Med. Hist.* 2005, **49**: 221–2; 2006, **50**: 254–5).

However, Eckart’s collection provides more than just an extension of current knowledge about twentieth-century abuses in human research. Arising from a Heidelberg conference in 2003 as part of a larger project on the history of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) between 1920 and 1970, this book contains several contributions that investigate in detail the dynamics created by state funding for certain areas of medical research, especially during the period of National Socialism. This applies in particular to Volker Roelcke’s paper on the psychiatric genetics of Ernst Rüdin, Karl Heinz Roth’s essay on German aviation medicine, Marion Hulverscheidt’s account of malaria research, Alexander Neumann’s discussion of nutritional physiology and Gabriele Moser’s article on Kurt Blome and cancer research in the Third Reich. Moreover, the DFG’s role in redefining and reconstituting anthropology and human genetics as academic disciplines in Germany after the Second World War is analysed by Anne Cottebrune. Revealing as these discussions are regarding the funding drive behind those research fields and its ethical implications, they would have been more useful to a broader readership if the volume had included a background contribution on the institutional development of the German Research Foundation in the relevant period. Also, the English of some of the papers by German authors would have benefited from more careful copy-editing.

Other papers add details of the medical atrocities committed in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, for example of the experiments in Natzweiler with chemical warfare agents and of the notorious hypothermia experiments in Dachau. This is complemented by a contribution on Japanese biological warfare research on Chinese prisoners in Harbin during the Second World War. Till Bärnighausen, author of this latter paper, examines for the Japanese experiments the ethical question that has been