

through seven chapters to end in 1965 with the popular British television programme, *Tomorrow's world*. Each chapter addresses a non-fiction genre (in some cases genres), analysing the larger scientific, technological, social, and cultural forces in play at the time. Through core chapters 2 to 5, Boon adroitly weaves the career of the eminent British filmmaker Paul Rotha. In each chapter, Boon presents his own insightful reading of key films and television programmes, the end result being a comprehensive analysis of science in British non-fiction film.

'Science, nature and filmmaking', the first chapter of the book, deals with the beginnings of scientific film in the 1890s as an experimental instrument for scientific and medical research. It goes on to map the science film's move to theatre and music hall, where film techniques developed in the laboratory, such as microcinematography and slow motion, were presented to the general public in the form of "actualities", combining the instructional capacities of images with their power to amaze. The next four chapters are devoted primarily to the documentary genre and Rotha's key role in the development of scientific documentary. In the inter-war years, documentary was constructed by film pioneers such as Dzega Vertov, John Grierson, and Rotha, as a distinctive medium linking science and technology to the citizen and the state in such a way as to reveal the deeper social and political reality underlying the world of appearances. The documentary, utilizing the analytically sophisticated and emotionally literate film technique of dialectical montage, presented to audiences a highly aestheticized account of the ability, power, and responsibility of human beings to transform their world. However, Boon argues that documentary was shaped as powerfully by forces concrete and historical as by the idealist(ic) vision of its founders.

In the ensuing chapters, Boon ably supports his argument through his examination of the interface between documentary and the social relations of science, the effect of the Second World War on documentary film production,

and the stylistic evolution of the genre through the 1950s and 1960s. His lucid analysis of the development of the documentary mode through its specific historical relationship to science and technology cannot be summarized in a short review. However, one point (of many) worth noting is Boon's warning that scholars' too strict adherence to formalist definitions of documentary often obscure the historically contingent relations—between technology and work, science and citizenship, rationality and response—that determine documentary's iconographic approach to its subjects. The final two chapters of the book document the growth of science in television, a process which variously continued, abandoned, subsumed, and superseded the subjects, techniques, genres, and politics of non-fiction film. A decreased stress on the social relations of science, an increased emphasis on representations of basic science, and the portrayal of science as a way of life and a culture in its own right are some of the trends highlighted by Boon in his analysis of the move to the new medium.

Though *Films of fact* confines itself to British non-fiction film, the scope of its analysis makes it essential reading for historians of science and technology who wish to utilize film, and, by the same token, for media studies scholars who seek engagement with the scientific and the technological.

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Helen Bömelburg, *Der Arzt und sein Modell. Porträtfotografien aus der deutschen Psychiatrie 1880 bis 1933*, Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte, Band 30, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2007, pp. 238, €38.00 (paperback 978-3-515-09069-8).

This book investigates how photographic portraits of psychiatric patients generated concepts about mental illness that were then diffused into society. Bömelburg argues that psychiatrists had a marked interest in visually

portraying mental deviance. She explores how these portraits were understood and used, and what aesthetic and moral preconceptions psychiatrists brought to this imaging technology. She describes the book as “a medical, photographic, artistic, and cultural history of vision and representation” (p. 33). It draws on patient records from Hamburg, Giessen and Göttingen (chapter 3) and on pictures published in journals and textbooks (chapter 4). In chapter 5 Bömelburg considers the aesthetic and gender attributes of the portraits, before finally attempting to embed them in the traditions of other physiognomic, bourgeois and criminological forms of representation.

Throughout much of the book, Bömelburg’s analysis is plagued by the albatross of psychiatrists having written virtually nothing about the photographs they used. Although Bömelburg notes this on several occasions, it does not stop her from drawing sweeping conclusions about the significance of portraits. Nor does it prevent her from extrapolating—at times recklessly—from those relatively isolated examples of practitioners who did reflect on their use of portraits (such as Hermann Oppenheim or Robert Sommer) to all psychiatrists in Germany between 1880 and 1933.

Bömelburg interprets portraits as “stagings of morbid deviance” (p. 23) and as mirror-images of bourgeois values. There is certainly much truth to these claims. But they are also only part of the story, because psychiatrists also had an interest in curing their patients. Alongside the staging of deviance stood their efforts to demonstrate that many patients were cut from the same cloth as everyone else. If only to evoke empathy in the general public or to demonstrate the danger that mental illness posed to everyone, psychiatrists had no unbounded interest in staging deviance. On the contrary, the walls separating psychiatric institutions and the general populace were becoming more porous. Outpatient clinics, expanding community care, and institutional alternatives for alcoholics and “nervous” patients blurred distinctions between the

institutionalized madman and “respectable” society. While at times psychiatrists had an interest in staging the otherness of patients needing their expertise, they also had an interest in staging the sameness of patients returning to productive lives. Bömelburg’s narrow perspective on portraits fails to capture these dual motives; nor does she recognize that psychiatrists may well have shied away from using portraits because they did not want to reinforce the public stereotypes that undercut their efforts to see patients reintegrated into society.

In some respects, Bömelburg has tried to have her cake and eat it too. On the one hand, she sees a “fundamental contradiction” in psychiatrists publishing psychiatric portraits while simultaneously warning about the dangers of “naively reading disease from a patient’s body” (p. 106). On the other, she finds that the “proportion of patient portraits was small” (p. 109) compared to other kinds of pictures in medical journals. Indeed, it seems that publishing patient portraits was very much the exception, not the rule. Yet reading the book, one comes away with the sense that photographic portraits were enthusiastically embraced by psychiatrists as being morally salubrious and scientifically *de rigueur*. But in fact, portrait-photography faced resistances and critique. For example, contrary to Bömelburg’s assertions, German Lombrosians like Hans Kurella never defined a viable portrait style. If anything, Lombroso and Kurella put psychiatrists off trying to depict the complexities of madness using portraits. Furthermore, to my knowledge, no one ever claimed that portraits could supplant direct bedside observation; indeed, perhaps portraits were so little used and talked about because psychiatrists recognized them to be exceedingly poor clinical tools. By contrast, if there was a style of representation used to depict madness between 1880 and 1933, then it is far more likely to have been the microscopic photography of stained brain specimens. Compared with patient portraits, these images were immeasurably more significant in producing psychiatric

knowledge, legitimating professional practice, shoring up bourgeois values and cultivating an aesthetic sense of scientific work. Because Bömelburg fails to recognize these alternatives and resistances, hers is an implausible story of portrait photography's role and significance in psychiatric practice.

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Bengt Jangfeldt, *Axel Munthe: the road to San Michele*, translated by Harry Watson, London and New York, I B Tauris, 2008, pp. ix, 383, illus., £25.00 (hardback 978-1-84511-720-7).

Dr Axel Munthe (1857–1949) is best known as the author of *The story of San Michele* (London, John Murray, 1929), a book translated into some forty languages, which has fascinated readers across the world. In a semi-fictional autobiography the elderly Munthe presented himself as an old hermit, retired from medical practice to a mystical retreat on the isle of Capri. The adventures and sentiments of the hero in *The story of San Michele* were a construction of an alternative life, that of an ideal physician, ever available to his patients, never charging for his services, modelling his life on St Francis, and a benevolent protector of animals. This book and probably also Munthe's earlier *Letters from a mourning city* (London, John Murray, 1887, 1899) about volunteer work during a cholera epidemic in Naples inspired many men and women to good deeds in medical service. Munthe did not publish in medical journals. His early fiction, however, provides some interesting glimpses into the practice of medicine a century ago.

Bengt Jangfeldt's biography *Axel Munthe: the road to San Michele* is a valuable contribution to the publications in English about the medical man Axel Munthe, who developed into a literary personality. Drawing on a treasure trove of Munthe's preserved private correspondence and other sources,

Jangfeldt has meticulously traced his life's journey and professional career. The younger son of an apothecary in Sweden, Munthe's brief medical education in Montpellier and Paris prepared him for work as an obstetrician, but he fashioned himself as a nerve doctor, claiming that he had trained under Jean-Martin Charcot at La Salpêtrière. His attempts to build a medical practice in Paris in the 1880s failed, but he was assisted to set up practice at Piazza di Spagna in Rome and became a sought-after physician among English, American and Scandinavian expatriates in the 1890s.

Munthe retired, a wealthy man, to the isle of Capri, where he would have his main residence for forty years. On Capri he had already built the Villa San Michele, presently a popular tourist attraction. In the private realm, Munthe experienced two failed marriages. With his English second wife Hilda, *née* Pennington Mellor, Munthe had two sons. For thirty years he maintained a close relationship with Queen Victoria of Sweden, a relationship lasting until her death in 1930. Munthe left Capri in 1943 and spent the remaining years of his life in an apartment at the Royal Palace in Stockholm. Jangfeldt's main focus is on the Anglophile, cosmopolitan Munthe's personal life and the social milieu in which he moved. Jangfeldt's fascination with Munthe's ascent into high society—diplomatic circles, nobility, and the network of royal families in Europe a hundred years ago—and Munthe's stance in the two world wars conveys empathy and thrill.

Sweden does not have a great biographical tradition on a par with France or Britain. Jangfeldt's work in this genre is therefore a first. Lytton Strachey pointed out in his preface to *Eminent Victorians* that a biographer has two duties: to preserve, and to lay bare, to expose. Jangfeldt excels in the first task, but he is not a critical historian who cynically examines his findings to uncover a truth less seductive to a romantic imagination than the first, fresh impressions. Nevertheless, a reader interested to learn about the life of a high society physician a hundred years ago