



Insane treatment: Jack Nicholson in *One Flew over the Cuckoos Nest*.

from the scientific literature or statistical and epidemiological context. Those still touched by postmodernism will enjoy the irony of the story the author tells and even the three small — and moving — autobiographical snippets from his own life.

All intellectuals, whether trendy or traditional, will appreciate Braslow's consideration of the anti-psychiatry movement, particularly the branch opened up by the philosopher Michel Foucault. In response to others who explicitly try to use history for social purposes in bottom-up rather than top-down accounts, Braslow works hard to elicit the voice of the patient as well as the doctor. He has incorporated some of the viewpoints of these anti-psychiatry scholars. He addresses their questions — and then he trumps them.

Historians seeking to establish a narrative of modern medicine have moved back and

forth between science and therapy. Braslow focuses on modes of treatment, but he also recaps the standard scientific history of each innovation. Only after he has shown the original therapeutic rationale does he describe what happened as physicians and patients negotiated the use of each treatment.

By the end of the nineteenth century, physical restraint of patients was generally agreed to be undesirable — but nothing was as undesirable as uncontrolled behaviour, which often caused injury and was deeply distressing to the patient. ("She was given to violent attacks.... Restraint and room seclusion were necessary. Last June, when she became dangerous to keep in a dormitory unit, she was sent to the chronic disturbed unit.")

The first new somatic modality was hydrotherapy: wet packs and the continuous

bath, both of which often had calming effects. The second was sterilization, which in practice lost the eugenic purpose on which so many accounts have focused, and which, both doctors and patients believed, had desirable therapeutic effects on individuals. The next intervention was malaria fever treatment for tertiary syphilis of the brain (the effectiveness of which won a Nobel prize for Julius Wagner-Jauregg). Then in the 1930s came insulin and electroshock therapies. Finally, lobotomy was introduced, followed by the chemically invasive neuroleptics.

As one therapy followed another (and could disappear even more suddenly than it arrived), tendencies emerged in the succession of procedures. One line of progression was the shift of attention from the sick person to the disease — noted long since in general medical practice. Another continuity was the change in the way in which doctors and patients negotiated treatment, as the rationales for each type of therapy became increasingly 'scientific'.

A third continuity, and the one with which Braslow is justifiably most fascinated, is the way in which "the history of twentieth-century somatic therapies is a series of increasingly invasive attempts to control the psychiatric patient through his or her body". At first, in hydrotherapy, the attack on the body was superficial. Gradually, however, the invasion targeted the brain directly, until, with surgery and chemicals, it was increasingly directed towards specific areas of the brain and ultimately specific brain cells.

But each time psychiatrists provided a biological basis for their therapies, they tended to lose their patients — to surgery or to internal medicine (as in lobotomy and tertiary syphilis). Braslow shows that biological psychiatrists are today following a dangerous path, and he perhaps more than implicitly suggests that they should concentrate on the relationship between the doctor and the patient — exactly the direction in which historical reconstructions started moving a generation ago.

Braslow points out that there are no villains in the book, and indeed one of his great accomplishments is to vindicate the motives of physicians. There is irony and tragedy and much complexity here: it is a book about an imperfect world. Never mind that the author slights the overwhelming presence of the senile, interprets to the point of mind reading in places, and gratuitously plays with the Foucaultian idea of 'discipline'. His narrative decisively conveys the reality of psychiatric practice and illness from 1900 to 1954 more accurately than previous accounts. The moral to his story will weigh heavily on any thoughtful reader. □

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