

Mind Fixers by Anne Harrington



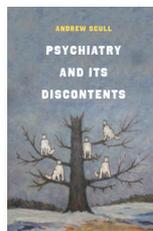
In her new book, Anne Harrington sews a comprehensive thread across psychiatry's problematic backdrop. The first attempts at biological psychiatry in the late 19th century, the birth and hegemony of psychoanalysis and the failed promise of the modern 'biological revolution' in psychiatry via psychopharmacology and the brain sciences; so, Harrington contends — all false starts of psychiatry are pulled apart and scrutinized and Harrington takes no prisoners. The end of this tale

finds no solace in psychiatry's search for the biology behind mental illness. The abandonment of psychiatric research by the pharmaceutical industry and the vicissitudes of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) bring Harrington to her conclusion of a psychiatric establishment in chronic crisis, an open wound that this American-centric history virtuosically drives home. Albeit solidly researched, *Mind Fixers* still seems to confuse biological bases with biological causes of mental illness, disregarding that inasmuch as mental illness must be grounded in biology, its causes and triggers may be variously found in that liminal space between one's environment and brain circuits. *Mind Fixers*, as psychiatric researchers were once known, may be dancing in the dark. But if not in its neurobiological reality, where may answers be found?

Pedro Ferreira

(Biochemical Society, UK)

Psychiatry and its Discontents by Andrew Scull



The history of mental illness has been the target of many scholarly works. Michel Foucault's 1961 *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* is a notorious example, and the one that Andrew Scull paraphrases to title his 2015 *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity, from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine*. In that well-

received global history of humanity's encounters with unreason, Scull elaborates on this proposal for a culturally systematic ostracism of that shunned other, 'the mad', an argument that he picks up in *Psychiatry and its Discontents* (2019). In this new volume, Scull collects a series of 16 essays that take the reader on a hopscotch journey across the history of psychiatry, from a systematic evisceration of Foucault's 1961 work to the taxonomic vicissitudes and shortcomings of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM). Scull presents a patchy but solid case for a profession in need of profound reinvention — as he bluntly puts it, "an approach on the brink of collapse". The biological turn of psychiatry has much to offer. As Scull suggests, however, this is a turn that has still not turned up.

Pedro Ferreira

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