I admire David Healy, but for a potentially book-review-distorting reason. Such is the case with the infamous: their press often prejudices the public reception of any honest effort they might make, including the writing of a history book. To summarize recent history: Healy, a leading historian of psychiatry, is better known as the fellow they call “the Left Atrium.”

The issue precipitating the brouhaha was Healy’s lifelong bugbear: his personal evangelism: in the references he cites himself 10 times out of a total of 50; in the second chapter, 10 out of 82 references are self-citations. This practice continues throughout the book, such that, out of a total of 938 entries, 149 references, or 16%, are to his own work.

That being said, one’s verdict on a book should not be based merely on the author’s psychology. I turn, then, to Healy’s argument and its development. A history text concerned with drug therapies for mental illness could not begin without a brief overview of the philosophical and theological underpinnings of psychiatry, along with the major trends within the field. Healy’s first two chapters accomplish this commendably; of particular interest is his discussion of the ramifications of laws by which previously available psychoactive substances could henceforth be obtained only by prescription. Unfortunately, the brevity of these two contextual chapters is not preserved through the remainder of the book.

In this new world, psychiatric concepts have become products in a marketplace in a way that leaves the rise and fall of psychiatric theories subject to the vagaries of industrial regulation and patenting.

In this new world, psychiatric concepts have become products in a marketplace in a way that leaves the rise and fall of psychiatric theories subject to the vagaries of industrial regulation and patenting.

With the debate so framed, one wonders about Healy’s motives. Is this a self-aggrandizing exercise in sensationalism, or the product of an honest inquiry? Healy further undermines his objectivity with a distressing habit of personal evangelism: in the references for the first chapter he cites himself 10 times out of a total of 50; in the second chapter, 10 out of 82 references are self-citations. This practice continues throughout the book, such that, out of a total of 938 entries, 149 references, or 16%, are to his own work.

That being said, one’s verdict on a book should not be based merely on the author’s psychology. I turn, then, to Healy’s argument and its development. A history text concerned with drug therapies for mental illness could not begin without a brief overview of the philosophical and theological underpinnings of psychiatry, along with the major trends within the field. Healy’s first two chapters accomplish this commendably; of particular interest is his discussion of the ramifications of laws by which previously available psychoactive substances could henceforth be obtained only by prescription. Unfortunately, the brevity of these two contextual chapters is not preserved through the remainder of the book.

In the references for the first chapter he cites himself 10 times out of a total of 50; in the second chapter, 10 out of 82 references are self-citations. This practice continues throughout the book, such that, out of a total of 938 entries, 149 references, or 16%, are to his own work.

That being said, one’s verdict on a book should not be based merely on the author’s psychology. I turn, then, to Healy’s argument and its development. A history text concerned with drug therapies for mental illness could not begin without a brief overview of the philosophical and theological underpinnings of psychiatry, along with the major trends within the field. Healy’s first two chapters accomplish this commendably; of particular interest is his discussion of the ramifications of laws by which previously available psychoactive substances could henceforth be obtained only by prescription. Unfortunately, the brevity of these two contextual chapters is not preserved through the remainder of the book.

In this new world, psychiatric concepts have become products in a marketplace in a way that leaves the rise and fall of psychiatric theories subject to the vagaries of industrial regulation and patenting.
what have historically been variants of normal psychological states. He documents the many conundrums, fiascoes and contradictions of the marketing, use and abuse of pharmaceuticals. In fact, Healy’s major objection to the market-driven treatment of mental illness is supported so well that I expect this book to become a seminal critique of the drug industry. It is to Healy’s credit that he makes this critique a human story: amidst the PR machinations of corporations exists a sad, hubristic tale of egos warring for the supremacy of pet postulates and discoveries. Healy makes his narrative especially interesting when he recounts the actions of Nobel-seeking scientists who sabotage each other’s reputations in the overweening quest for the prize.

Healy has so revolutionized my own outlook on the fraught social context of mental illness (and I imagine that my perspective was typical of recent graduates of Canadian medical schools) that I’d argue he should be offered a dual appointment in the faculties of history and of medicine. I wish I had been exposed to a professor who might have railed as follows,

One of the components of the trick the living play on the dead that we call writing history is to paint a picture of progress. Nowhere in history is this seen more clearly than in the history of medicine, where former ages are portrayed as dark ages.

Bracing stuff for an undergraduate, no? Particularly so is the aftermath of this statement, wherein Healy defends the efficacies of such derided therapies as psychosurgery and the induction of insulin coma. Such dogged unfashionability is entertaining in itself, but more often than not Healy lays out common preconceptions in order to completely destroy them. _The Creation of Psychopharmacology_ can be thought of as one gigantic, erudite disputation of the most familiar beliefs in psychiatry today. On this point Healy sounds a sinister and cautionary note: the official history of psychiatry is amnesiac and revisionist, in which the “new” is the “only,” and the definitions of mental illness are written on the basis of treatments and not on any intrinsic idea of disease. He derides modern psychiatry’s method of conceiving of mental disorders in terms of therapies, implying that the advent of a new therapy brings a new condition that must be treated.

As the first comprehensive history of drug treatment of mental illness in the Western world, this work is a landmark volume with appeal beyond the narrow demographic of mental health practitioners. Healy has convincingly indicted the often bizarre and distressingly commercial logic used to support the treatment of the mentally ill. Yet, amid the immense scholarship of this work, I imagine that a very personal score has been settled here. After all, what better way to have the last word than to write the book on the subject?

Shane Neilson
Family Physician
Guelph, Ont.

_Lifeworks_

_The measure of Mann_

In time our physical remains will melt into the soil of the shifting landscape. This process, part of the unapologetic dark beauty of nature, is the sombre idea that confronts the viewer of Sally Mann’s recent exposition of landscape photographs, _Last Measure_. The moody precursor for these images is eloquently described in Mann’s introduction to her latest book, _What Remains_:

When the land subsumes the dead, they become the rich body of earth, the dark matter of creation. As I walk the fields of this farm, beneath my feet shift the bones of incalculable bodies; death is the sculptor of the ravishing landscape, the terrible mother, the damp creator of life, by whom we are one day devoured.

These images were made while Mann was wandering through sites that were once American Civil War battlefields such as Antietam and Fredericksburg, where unknown numbers lost their lives. Her work depicts land as a metaphor for loss, and offers a repackaging of a recurring theme in the history of art: the _memento mori_. Mann forces us to contemplate the imperceptible and fragile boundary between body and

*Sally Mann. Untitled, 2001 [Antietam #2].* Gelatin silver enlargement, 40” × 50”, from 8” × 10” collodian wet-plate negative, with custom Soluvar varnish.