

burg state. Nevertheless, it provided "room for the pomp and spectacle of [its] court" as well as for "the time-wasting rituals of [the] leisure classes." It was the latter, of course, that largely inspired the artistic and intellectual flowering of *fin de siècle* Vienna, the subject of much recent scholarship in America.

Although the empires that the three cities were meant to glorify have disappeared, the cities retain their majesty. They are also reminders of the importance of the street as the essential stimulus to urban life and beauty.

Science & Technology

**GREAT AND
DESPERATE CURES**
**The Rise and Decline of
Psychosurgery and Other
Radical Treatments for
Mental Illness**

by Elliot S. Valenstein
Basic, 1986
338 pp. \$19.95

To perform a lobotomy, a surgeon typically would penetrate his patient's skull with an instrument resembling, variously, "an apple corer, a butter spreader, or an ice pick," and then blindly proceed to destroy portions of the prefrontal lobe. Between 1948 and 1952—the heyday of lobotomy—tens of thousands of mentally ill individuals in America, Europe, and Japan had the operation. On some psychotics it had a calming effect. Some died, and many were simply hurt. Yet the demise of psychosurgery during the 1960s resulted not from scientific scrutiny or public outcry but from the introduction of new drugs.

Valenstein, a neuroscientist at the University of Michigan, locates lobotomy within the long debate dividing both psychiatry and neurology since the 19th century. It pits those who believe mental illness is the product of "life experiences" against those who hold that it is biologically caused. To the latter, such drastic procedures as electroshock and lobotomy were more scientific, more truly "medical," than mere "talking" treatments. They also promised quick results.

Valenstein tells the story largely through portraits of two ambitious physicians. Egas Moniz (1874–1955), an aristocratic Portuguese neurologist, performed the first "leucotomy" in 1935 and soon was claiming miraculous improvements in most of his patients. Moniz, who shared the Nobel in 1949, found an eager American disciple in psychiatrist Walter Freeman (1895–1972), who toured the country to perform about 3500 lobotomies. The media was briefly enthralled: "No Worse Than Removing a Tooth" ran the typical cheer of one small-town paper.