
NEW TITLES

History

**MIND-FORG'D
MANACLES:
A History of Madness in
England from the
Restoration to the Regency**
by Roy Porter
Harvard, 1987
412 pp. \$38.50



"They said I was mad," wrote 17th-century poet Nathaniel Lee when confined to Bedlam, "and I said they were mad; damn them, they outvoted me." Porter, a historian at London's Wellcome Institute, delves into documents from the "long 18th century" (1660-1800) to uncover what madness was before the advent of psychiatry, how it was treated in a society almost devoid of mental institutions, and how attitudes toward it were changed by Enlightenment ideas.

According to the influential social theorist Michel Foucault (*Folie et Dérison*, 1961) 18th-century madmen throughout Europe were victims of the "great confinement"—mad and bad lumped together in a bourgeois plot to rid the streets of lowlife considered to be no better than animals. Not so in England, says Porter. Until the 1845 universalization of county asylums, there were few lockups and an array of treatments. Madness, from 1660 on, was seen first as possession by the devil, then as an imbalance of "humours," and, finally, in light of John Locke's empiricism, as a state of error that experience could correct. Locke's ideas provided not only a new idea of what madmen were but also the groundwork for psychiatry, the new science of the "moral management" of the mad. Those with the "English malady"—far from being trapped, as Foucault would have it, in the frozen category of "Unreason"—were thought only to suffer from misconceptions grounded on false consciousness. And so, like children, says Porter, they could be educated out of it.

THE TRIAL OF SOCRATES
by I. F. Stone
Little, Brown, 1988
282 pp. \$18.95

With the same *chutzpah* that he displayed in his journalism, I. F. Stone asks the question that has vexed many a classical scholar: Why did the open, democratic society of Athens condemn Socrates (470?-399 B.C.) to death for the offense of speaking his own mind?

Stone attempts not only to reconstruct the case for Athens in the famous trial of 399 B.C. but also to discredit Socrates at every turn. He marshals evidence from a vast array of hearsay—the conflicting accounts of Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and Aristophanes. Socrates, one learns, justly earned

the label *idiotes*—the derisive epithet ancient Athenians applied to those who took little part in the political life of the city. He was also a loud-mouth who preferred the closed society of enemy Sparta, even though that stern city-state would never have tolerated his gadfly behavior.

Behind the official charges leveled against Socrates—impiety and corrupting the young—were what Stone calls the “three earthquakes”: the revolts of 411, 404, and 401, all of which briefly installed aristocratic dictatorships. These three reigns of terror made Athenians fearful of forever losing their democracy; yet Socrates did not abandon “his antidemocratic and antipolitical teachings.” The Athenians, moreover, did not forget that the most dangerous of the former dictators were Alcibiades and Critias, the philosopher’s prize pupils. “As a teacher of virtue,” Stone contends, “Socrates was a failure.”

As harsh as Stone’s verdict is, his most controversial claim is that Socrates could have avoided death: “Had Socrates invoked freedom of speech as a basic right of all Athenians—not just the privilege of a superior and self-selected few like himself—he would have struck a . . . responsive chord.” But to plea for acquittal on those grounds would have meant acknowledging the virtue of the *polis*; for that, Socrates was too proud.

**THOSE TERRIBLE
CARPETBAGGERS:
A Reinterpretation**
by Richard Nelson Current
Oxford, 1988
475 pp. \$24.95

Even as late as the publication of John F. Kennedy’s *Profiles in Courage* (1956), carpetbaggers were depicted as the rascals of the post-Civil War Reconstruction. If Kennedy (and ghostwriter Theodore C. Sorensen) had looked more closely at the facts, they would have found that carpetbaggers were not all corrupt opportunists or profiteers; some, indeed, were eager to improve conditions in the stricken South; many others were simply engaged in the legitimate pursuit of gain.

Current, an emeritus professor at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, is not the first to reconsider these much maligned men, but his readable, artfully constructed group portrait helps make the revisionist case more persuasive. Of his 10 subjects, one, Adelbert Ames, was a Maine-born career Army officer who became provisional governor of Mississippi shortly after the Reconstruction Act of 1867. Working hard to protect