

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.¹

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.

soul. Like the land, our lives are shaped by events that occur with the passage of time, but unlike the earth, our bodies are limited by that same passage. Bodies dissolve into the matter of time. This is the idea expressed by Baudelaire in his poem “Une charogne” (“Carrion”) from *Les fleurs du mal*:

Yet you will come to this offense,
this horrible decay,
you, the light of my life, the sun
and moon and stars of my love!²

The dark theme of these photographs is superficially evident in the darkness of the images themselves. Dim skies hover over expansive fields swept free of detail with swooping patterns of near-blackness. These images are a striking departure from Mann’s previous work, such as the famous *Immediate Family* series of her three children growing up. They differ not only in content, but also in that they are not infused with the same languid, romantic Southern light, a light that was also present in her two previous series of landscape photos, *Mother Land* and *Deep South*. Made from 8” × 10” wet-plate collodion glass negatives, the 14 large-scale (40” × 50”) photographs in *What Remains* blur the line between painting and photography. This extremely labour-intensive 19th-century process of producing negatives involves spreading a liquid emulsion on a glass plate in order to sensitize it to light. The plate is then developed on site using a portable darkroom. The result is a negative that appears to have been painted on glass, complete with faults such as peeling corners and scattered debris, which fuse with the final image as if part of the landscape itself. Flecks of white dust scurry like falling stars across a dim sky broken by the shadowy blotches of scattered trees. Liquid skies pour down

across charcoal fields and run off the edge of the frame. A pale chemical rain drips from thin patches of sky like streaks across a cracked windshield. Fields of grass undulate as if seen through the hot, blurry air that floats above a fire. Susan Sontag wrote, “The painter constructs, the photographer discloses,”³ but Mann uses this process to succeed at both simultaneously.

This series of photographs is part of a larger body of work labelled in her latest book as “a five-part meditation on mortality.” The work will premiere in its entirety at the Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington, DC, in June 2004. Its other components include images of the remains of one of her family’s greyhound dogs, a series of almost corpse-like images of the faces of her now-adult children, and near-apocalyptic pictures of decomposing bodies found in various stages of decay after being left exposed to the elements for the purposes of forensic research.

The large, dark patches of land and sky in *Last Measure* occasionally flicker with specks of light that are like darting fireflies luring us with the temptation of heaven, while at other times the earth flows into flat black pools that seem as inescapable as hell. Maybe they are where this world meets the next. Or maybe they are places we imagined might exist, but scarcely dare to conjure in our minds. Or maybe they are places that are familiar, because we have known the hunger of the land.



Sally Mann. *Untitled, 2000 [Appomattox #16]*. Gelatin silver enlargement, 40” × 50”, from 8” × 10” collodion wet-plate negative, with custom Soluvar varnish.

Jonah Samson

Family Medicine Resident
St. Michael’s Hospital
Toronto, Ont.

References

1. Mann S. *What remains*. New York: Bulfinch Press; 2003. p. 6.
2. Baudelaire C. *The flowers of evil*. Howard R, trans. Boston: David R. Godine; 1982. p. 36. [The original reads: Et pourtant vous serez semblable à cette ordure, / À cette horrible infection / Étoile de mes yeux, soleil de ma nature, / Vous, mon ange et ma passion!]
3. Sontag S. *On photography*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson; 1977. p. 83.

Last Measure was on view at Edwynn Houk Gallery in New York City from Sept. 18 to Nov. 15, 2003. Sally Mann’s work can be viewed at www.houkgallery.com