mentaire la théorie des affinités qui lui paraissait trop difficile. En France, l'alchimie est discréditée avant Lavoisier par les campagnes de discrédit menées au sein de l'Académie royale des sciences de Paris, et les attaques des auteurs de traités ou dictionnaires, comme Boerhaave ou Macquer, qui ont permis de légitimer et dignifier la «chimie éclairée». Réputée utile au bien public, comme à la richesse des nations, la chimie devient la science à la mode. Kahn ne dit rien sur les effets de la popularité de la chimie au XVIII^e siècle, sur le public des centaines de cours de chimie délivrés dans le royaume, qui ont contribué à marginaliser l'alchimie.

Il reste que cet ouvrage à la fois érudit et synthétique offre un panorama très utile de l'évolution de l'alchimie sur plus de trois siècles. Il se lit bien et fournit une mine de ressources grâce à sa bibliographie, son index et son glossaire.

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Tornay, Magaly: **Zugriffe auf das Ich**. Psychoaktive Stoffe und Personenkonzepte in der Schweiz, 1945 bis 1980. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2016. XI+286 S. (Historische Wissensforschung 4). € 49.–. ISBN 978-3-16-154279-4 (e-book: 978-3-16-154280-0)

Regardless of whether the present neuroscientific identity of psychiatry is read as the zenith of progress or as the nadir of the mechanistic degeneration of the discipline, its origin is usually situated in the aftermath of World War II. Initiated by the discovery of antipsychotics and antidepressants in the 1950s, the biological turn of psychiatry (ca. 1950–1980) has allegedly had not only a revolutionary impact on mental disease – its understanding, therapy, classification and institutional organisation. As the story goes, it has sparked a profound transformation of the way we conceive ourselves and behave, leading to a veritable “neurochemical reshaping of personhood”, as Nikolas Rose put it.

Magaly Tornay's book explores the roots of this “neurochemical self” (still Rose), by focusing on the very relationships between psychoactive substances and personhood during the three decades following WWII. Building on Ian Hacking's “looping-effect” she assumes a dynamic, interactive causal relationship between psychopharmacology and personhood in the period considered. Unlike Hacking, however, Tornay closely investigates the objects, or better, the quasi-objects (*sensu* Latour) and techniques involved in what she calls the “psychopharmacological grammar of the self”. To this end, she points the lens on Switzerland, where the “pharmacon-person-nexus” has been intensely negotiated and tied, and draws from a heterogeneous panoply of sources, such as the Novartis archive and those of different Swiss Psychiatric Hospitals, several leading psychiatric journals and conference proceedings.

The first part of the book (*Experimentalanordnungen*, 1945–1960) immediately illustrates the short-circuits faced by the scientific community in dealing with two unsteady variables: the unclear mechanisms of action of the substances and the black box of the self. No matter whether they tested LSD (chapter 1) or Chlorpromazin (the first antipsychotic – chapter 2), and how sophisticated their tools (Rorschach tests; film recordings) or their experimental subjects (the scientists themselves, spiders or artists) were, the ambiguity persisted.

The second part (*Wissensordnungen*, 1955–1965) offers a close reading of the II International Congress of Psychiatry, in Zurich in 1957 (chapter 3). Against this background, Tornay discusses the making of psychopharmacological expertise – its actors, their languages, disciplines and schools – pointing at how surprisingly encompassing and unifying the psychopharmacological logic was in this phase. This well emerges in the case study of the “Geigy rot” (now known as Imipramine, the first antidepressant, tested at the Münsterlingen psychiatric hospital by Roland Kuhn) and that of the “depression epidemics” (chapter 4).

The last part (*Ausweitung der therapeutischen Sphäre*, 1962–1980) shows how in this period the boundaries of the pharmacon-person-nexus were pushed to the extreme: the individual dissolved into single symptoms on the one hand and into whole populations (statistical turn, chapter 5) on the other, while the pharmacon evades the therapeutic context (from the clinic to the street; from medicaments to drugs – chapter 6).

The chapters are well-constructed, as stand-alone histories that can even be enjoyed individually. This does not detract from the formal consistency of the book. There is very little repetition from one chapter to the other, while one may lament some degree of redundancy within the single chapters, which burdens an otherwise pleasant reading.

Tornay’s book is not only a timely endeavour, but also a daring one, as she takes the bull of the “neurochemical self” directly by the horns: the pharmacon *and* the self. Hacking’s looping effect, we have to remind, has a double arc. Declined on the book’s topic, one should go from the drugs to the person, the other in the opposite direction. While the first (how the pharmacon modified personhood) is clearly displayed, the second one (how personhood influenced psychopharmacology at its turn) is less well outlined. The reason for this may lay in the elusiveness of the second pole itself, which, as the author anticipates, was discretionarily defined as “interiority, mental area, psyche, brain, neurochemical processes, soul, self, subject, behaviour or personality” (p. 4). Tornay’s analysis, however, struggles to unravel this hazy melee.

Yet, precisely in the interplay with the pharmacon, the self could have had assumed clearer contours or at least a clearer demarcation from its synonyms. As the French chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul established in the law of colour perception known as simultaneous contrast, the simultaneous perception of two contiguous colours heightens the tone of both. Applied to the pharmacon-person-nexus, this effect definitely occurred for the pharmacon; yet less for the person. Tornay’s grasp on the drug seems to be firmer than on the self.

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Meier, Marietta: **Spannungsherde**. Psychochirurgie nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Göttingen, Wallstein Verlag, 2015. 392 S. Ill. € 42.–. ISBN 978-3-8353-1733-8

Consacré à la psychochirurgie après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, cet ouvrage vient combler une lacune historiographique majeure. Alors que la pratique de la lobotomie a alimenté, au même titre que celle des électrochocs, un discours antipsychiatrique