

## English abstracts 30(2013): 2

### **Jutta Ahlbeck, Päivi Lappalainen, Kati Launis & Kirsi Tuohela, Degeneration and modernizing Finland: Tracing cultural meanings of illness**

Modernization, commonly understood as a progressive project, also carried with it more problematic aspects, namely the substantial and symbolic fight against illness and immorality, with the ultimate aim of a pure and healthy society. By focusing on the concept of degeneration, the article examines the multiple ways in which illness and its normative aspects were discussed in Finland from the late nineteenth century until World War II. A wide range of materials – medical texts, fiction and autobiographies – demonstrate degeneration not as an undisputed, but rather as a contradictory societal and cultural phenomenon. Citizens were constructed differently in relation to gender, race, and social class, but the article also addresses contradictions in public writings and personal accounts. Whereas degeneration in the medical discourse was seen as a “medical fact” and portrayed in negative terms as something that had to be suppressed and controlled (with the Law on Sterilization being the most radical “solution”), auto-

biographical texts and literature offered alternative views of degeneration. In these latter writings, depictions of degeneration were sometimes used as a means for societal critique, at times decadence was elevated as artists’ or exceptional individuals’ carefree way of living, or even as heavenly gifts. The article hence offers new insights into the ambivalent medical and literary narratives of illness in modernizing Finland.

### **Anna-Maria Mäki-Kuutti, Masters of the good everyday – Tohtori Kiminkinen and the cruel optimism of popular media**

Conceptions of health and health professionals are constructed as a part of many social, economic and cultural practices and the networks they form. Recently these practices have turned more market-led, mediatized and affective than before. Health has become an increasingly integral part of people’s identity construction. This has challenged the significance of traditional authorities and information providers in health communication. The article examines how and on what conditions professional expertise is produced in the context

of late modern everyday life. The data consists of popular health media materials: a Finnish medical entertainment-education television programme *Tohtori Kiminkinen* (YLE, season 1, 2009) and a series of columns and expert interviews in a Finnish health magazine *Kotilääkäri* (volume 2010). The structural and ideological backgrounds of expert power are analyzed from the viewpoints of governmentality and discourse theory.

### **Johanna Uotinen, Talking about boxes containing random number generators – Operating room and intensive care unit personnel’s experiences concerning health technologies**

The modern western health care system is technologically mediated. Its technological core is an intensive care unit and an operating room: the health care professionals working there face a myriad of technological apparatuses in their everyday work. This article focuses on the technological experiences and understandings of nurses, anesthesiologists and porters working in a middle-sized Finnish regional hospital’s intensive care unit and operating rooms. The article discusses the characteristics and defini-

tions of health technologies, technological change, as well as the benefits and disadvantages of the technologies. These are pondered on through practice theory and the concept of practice. In conclusion, it is suggested that the personnels' professional skills keep the technology in its right place, as the staging of the healing performance.