

## Medicine and Modernism: A Biography of Sir Henry Head

L S Jacyna, University College, London

This is the first in-depth study of the English neurologist and polymath Sir Henry Head (1861-1940). Head bridged the gap between science and the arts. He was a published poet who had close links with such figures as Thomas Hardy and Siegfried Sassoon. His research into the nervous system and the relationship between language and the brain broke new ground. L S Jacyna argues that these advances must be contextualised within wider Modernist debates about perception and language.

In his time, Head was best known for his research into the human nervous system. He did a series of experiments in collaboration with W H R Rivers in which cutaneous nerves were surgically severed in Head's arm and the stages by which sensation returned were charted over several years. Head's friend, the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, drew out the epistemological implications of how, in this new conception, the

nervous system evolved knowledge of the world.

Another important strand of his research concerned the localization of the language function within the brain. In his monumental work, *Aphasia and Kindred Disorders* (1926), Head radically revised current ideas about the physiological basis of language. As well as its impact on medicine and biology, this work was seen to have implications for other disciplines including linguistics and social anthropology.

This important new study draws upon a wide range of previously unpublished resources.

### Readership

History of Medicine, History of Science, Literary Studies

Hb: c.256pp: 2008  
978 1 85196 907 4: £60/\$99