

Undaunted by the shortage of traditional sources, she set about building a database of nurses at St George's Hospital in London between 1850 and 1900. Nurse registers, wage books and minute books were scrutinised, together with the Census, *The Hospital and Nursing Record*, and Charles Booth's mid-1890s survey of matrons in the capital. The resulting data were then used to examine the composition of the nursing community at St George's and the social mobility of its members.

Dr Hawkins begins by situating her novel methodology within the historiography of nursing. Unapologetic about her status as a non-nurse, she argues that, for too long, both gender and labour historians left nursing history to 'enthusiastic amateurs' intent upon telling stories of 'heroic self-congratulation' (p. 1). Critical of such hagiography, Chapter One challenges the popular assumption that, thanks to Victorian reformers, 'working-class women had all but been excluded' (p. 32) from hospital nursing by 1900.

After reviewing nursing at St George's between 1733 (when the hospital was founded) and 1850, Chapter Two charts the subsequent characteristics of its nurses. Some movement towards the reformers' 'ideal' of younger, unmarried recruits from the higher social classes was revealed. Nevertheless, 'by the 1890s, with just under 40 per cent of its staff still originating from Classes III and below, it cannot be said that the hospital had become an exclusive bastion of middle-class nursing' (p. 56).

In Chapter Three, probationer schemes come under that spotlight. Detailing the input of doctors and hospital managers, Dr Hawkins shows how by 1900 – after lagging behind other London hospitals due to a matron unsympathetic to nurse education – St George's had finally established a training school. Retention is the subject of Chapter Four, which looks at the mechanisms used to attract potential recruits and 'to stop the revolving door through which nurses came and went at rapid rate' (p. 138). Better pay, improved accommodation, more generous

leave arrangements, and a reduction in domestic chores were among the strategies adopted by St George's to deflect the charge of 'White Slavery in Hospitals' made by the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Chapter Five tackles the development of nursing as a career through a discussion of why nurses left the Hospital. After demolishing the myth that nursing was a marriage market, and assessing the significance of dismissal, ill health, and resignation, Dr Hawkins found that by the 1880s almost ninety per cent of the nurses whom she was able to trace had nursing jobs – whether in other medical institutions or in the community. These women, she elaborates in Chapter Six, were 'on a quest for independence, quite removed from the docile, saintly nurse of myth' (p. 171); they had taken 'a positive and informed decision' (p. 182) to enter the profession and make nursing their career.

The book is produced to a high standard. Each chapter is followed by a fascinating one-page pen portrait of a nurse whose life story Dr Hawkins has reconstructed. The absorption of such accounts (or extracts from them) into the text would have further animated the argument, which is well supported by graphs and occasional illustrations. For a research monograph, priced at £75, it is a pity that Routledge has opted for the Harvard system of referencing, which does not allow the author to do full justice to her primary and secondary materials. These quibbles aside, Sue Hawkins has produced an important addition to nursing history, which demonstrates persuasively the benefits of engaging with the broader historical context.

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Trevor Hamilton, *Immortal Longings: F.W.H. Myers and the Victorian Search for Life after Death* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2009), pp. 359, £19.95, hardback, ISBN: 9-781845-401238.

Since Henri Ellenberger's *Discovery of the Unconscious* (1970), historical interest in Frederic Myers (1843–1901), a Trinity classicist and poet, Cambridgeshire inspector of schools, and co-founder of the Society for Psychical Research, has grown slowly but steadily. *Immortal Longings*, based on a wealth of primary and secondary sources, is the first biographical monograph dedicated to this unusual figure. While the focus of the book is clearly on Myers' research into 'supernormal' phenomena, and particularly the question of the survival of the human personality after bodily death, Trevor Hamilton also provides original insights into Myers the man of letters and, perhaps most interesting to readers of this journal, Myers the psychologist.

Lacking formal scientific or medical training, Myers was a hugely disciplined and gifted autodidact well versed in physiology and science at large. Together with his close friend Edmund Gurney (1847–88), he studied the psychology of sensory and motor automatisms as well as hypnotism. Gurney and Myers were the first to present strong arguments contradicting W.B. Carpenter's notion of automatisms as 'unconscious cerebration', and they upset the dominant medical view of hallucinations and dissociative phenomena as intrinsically pathological. Popular for having coined the term 'telepathy', Myers's coinage of 'hypnopompic' is less known. With his brother, the physician Arthur Myers (with whom he undertook a scientific evaluation of alleged miraculous healings at Lourdes), his intimate friend Henry Sidgwick and Sidgwick's wife Eleanor, Myers actively participated in the making of fledgling academic psychology. They attended and helped to organise the International Congresses for Physiological/Experimental Psychology, with Myers serving as secretary of the second Congress in 1892 at University College, London. The first British author to identify the significance of Freud's work in 1893, Myers was a friend of Théodore Flournoy and William James, whose

psychology cannot be understood without an appreciation of the considerable impact Myers' concept of the 'subliminal Self' had on both. Though Myers was a very visible author when alive, and respected by most contemporary psychologists interested in the psychology of the unconscious, his work was quickly forgotten after his death.

Doing justice to the immense diversity and often conflicting facets of Myers' personality, Hamilton competently stands up to the challenge to paint a nuanced and psychologically plausible picture of this controversial figure. Presenting a well-substantiated alternative to certain previous portrayals of Myers as a ruthless philanderer and cheat, and, as an intrinsically gullible victim of a desperate will to believe, Hamilton offers an impartial and detached revision of former accounts that appear to have retroactively punished rather than explained Myers' and other eminent intellectuals' epistemic deviance. For example, Hamilton argues that, contrary to popular, widely promulgated accounts of Myers and his fellow psychical researchers, a 'will to believe' in post-mortem survival, telepathy and other scientifically unpopular notions, does not necessarily exclude a 'will to know' and thus the capacity for thorough self-criticism, methodological rigour and relentless suspicion of errors. At the same time, Hamilton does not gloss over certain sins doubtlessly committed by Myers, but he makes a compelling case that they do not detract from the overall value of his contributions to contemporary studies of the human mind, which, as William James observed in an obituary of Myers, had an enormous significance for the mind sciences quite independent from the unpopular research questions they were entangled with.

To be sure, the Myers who emerges from this overdue biographical study is a terrible snob. But he was also a man of high intellectual integrity and courage, whose friendship with men of equally independent minds, such as Henry Sidgwick and William James, appears more comprehensible in Hamilton's account than in previous ones that

had a metaphysical axe to grind. Even though *Immortal Longings* might be a little too concerned with clarifying the question of whether or not Myers was a nasty or likeable fellow, it shows, current trends in historical scholarship notwithstanding, that there is still considerable use for traditional biographical studies – particularly if they serve to rehabilitate misunderstood historical figures who may have fallen victim to ideological boundary-work which historians have not always resisted participating in.

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Catharine Coleborne, *Madness in the Family: Insanity and Institutions in the Australasian Colonial World, 1860–1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. xv + 220, £80.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-230-57807-4.

During the 1970s and 1980s, psychiatric histories tended to stress the key roles played by the state and the medical profession in the growth of nineteenth-century lunatic asylums. But, in recent years, attention has turned increasingly to the involvement of families in the committal process. Catharine Coleborne draws on a vast literature dealing with asylums, medicine, families, emotions, colonialism and race in order to examine the relationships between families and four Australasian asylums during the period 1860–1914. The asylums were located in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Auckland. Coleborne aims, among other things, to see what the records of these institutions have to tell us about the nature of families in white-settler British colonies.

The book examines ‘colonial psychiatry’ and its influence in constructing a ‘white’ identity (p. 42). It shows how psychiatry, with its growing emphasis on the hereditary nature of mental illness, began to focus on the family and was concerned especially by settlers who

lacked colonial families. However, at the ‘centre of this book’, according to Coleborne, is an analysis of the ways in which ‘lay descriptions’ of insanity were used by doctors, both before and during committal (p. 147). Thus, chapters investigate family inputs into case records, correspondence between families and asylums, disputes over maintenance payments, and schemes whereby families could take back patients on temporary release. The concluding chapter devotes space to critiquing asylum archives and ends on a rather equivocal note. It states confidently that ‘families were in fact present at committal, discharge, and during patients’ stays in the institution’, but argues that examining asylum sources with the ‘theoretical tools to discover patient and family “agency”... may not by itself be enough to reshape either histories of the colonial family, or histories of insanity’ (p. 152). This, of course, begs the question: what is required to ‘reshape’ such histories?

While well written, the book is quite repetitive. As well as the basic contents of the six main chapters being rehearsed in both the introduction and conclusion, each individual chapter has an introduction and conclusion setting out its main arguments. Thus, most key points are discussed at least four times. A looser, more flexible structure would have made for a pleasanter read. There are also rather a lot of factual, spelling and printing errors, plus some problems with the maps and statistics. For example, Yarra Bend Asylum in Melbourne is said to have opened in the 1850s – in fact it opened in 1848. It was then in the Port Phillip District – not ‘Philip’ (p. 23). In the first map, Australian towns are misplaced and their names misspelled. New South Wales is described as the ‘hub’ of Australasian ‘intellectual exchanges’ about insanity. The map displaying this ‘hub’ has a series of arrows apparently illustrating the directions of these exchanges, yet Melbourne and Brisbane are shown influencing Sydney, not *vice versa* (p. 26). As for the statistical tables, they all relate to ‘c.1905’ (pp. 37 and 136). This is very late in the period under study: some matching statistics from the 1860s would have