

both in terms of length and their ability to provide the “new perspectives” which the title promises. We are little wiser about the extent of the pandemic in Asia or in Africa from this volume; there is nothing on Latin America. It is, of course, almost impossible when the raw data is limited or unreliable, yet the editors do not attempt to draw out the comparative perspectives on what they do have to work with, apart from a short introductory essay. However, these papers, which would have benefited from some cross-infection, provide a very useful introduction to a neglected episode of global significance, and raise many more interesting questions than they are currently able to answer.

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Anna Lundberg, *Care and coercion: medical knowledge, social policy and patients with venereal disease in Sweden 1785–1903*, Report no. 14 from the Demographic Data Base, Umeå University, 1999, pp. 309 (91-7191-675-X).

Anna Lundberg’s book covers a number of topics related to venereal disease in nineteenth-century Sweden such as political ideas, legislation, medical knowledge and practice, social characteristics of patients treated at hospitals, and the social and health consequences of being hospitalized for a venereal disease. Lundberg has undertaken a huge task in analysing a wide variety of material in order to tell the story of venereal disease in Sweden. The sources studied include transcripts of parliamentary debates, laws, medical journals, patient records, records from parish meetings, etc. The reader is presented with many interesting stories about both doctors and patients. It sometimes seems as if the author wants to share with us most of what she has gathered together. The amount of information sometimes overshadows important findings, such as the change from the view of venereal disease as connected with poverty to that of its being connected with immoral behaviour.

The most interesting findings result from Lundberg’s analysis of the demographic life-course of patients from one hospital during 1814–44 and from another during the following forty-five years. She shows that the majority of patients with a venereal disease did not suffer serious social or health consequences from being hospitalized. That is to say, they got married like others. One important exception is that mortality among the patients discharged from the first hospital was higher than that among the control group. Children born to former female patients also had a high mortality rate at the first hospital. Patients discharged from the second hospital investigated had hardly any excess mortality as compared to the control group and the difference in infant mortality was smaller than among patients from the first hospital.

There are some problems with the study. The patients are compared to a control group, described as “similar men and women”. This, however, is not a satisfactory description of the control group sampling. There was no infant mortality at all in the offspring of the control group of the first hospital. This gives the impression that the control group was neither representative in terms of the rest of the population nor comparable to the patient group, because the general level of infant mortality was so high (around 15 per cent) at the time that one would expect at least some mortality also in the control group. When the geographical distribution of patients is studied, it is not calculated in relation to the population, hence we do not know if the high numbers are due to a big population in the area or a high frequency of venereal disease and therefore if it is of special interest to study the areas with many patients. The author also gives some surprising interpretations of her results, as when she says that there was no significant gender difference between the patients at the department of venereal disease and the general hospital, in spite of the fact that the women constituted 61 per cent of the patients at venereal departments and only 43 per cent at the general wards.

The book would have gained from a clearer focus from a more selective use of the extensive information, and especially from more careful

work with the analyses of the demographic data. The book does, however, have the merit of presenting a lot of interesting information and references to sources on venereal disease in Sweden which will be of great help for scholars in the field.

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**Catharine Coleborne and Dolly MacKinnon,** *'Madness' in Australia: histories, heritage and the asylum*, UQP Australian Studies, St Lucia, QLD, University of Queensland Press in association with the API Network and Curtin University of Technology, 2003, pp. xiv, 269, Australian \$35.00 (paperback 0-7022-3406-0).

These eighteen chapters written by mostly different authors are interesting accounts of various aspects of Australian asylum care in the nineteenth century and mental hospital care in the early twentieth century. Although the emphasis is on the Victorian experience, some papers relate to more recent matters such as the infamous Chelmsford Hospital in Sydney.

Particularly poignant chapters are those by Janice Chesters and Tanja Luckins. Chesters describes the different experiences of three women emphasizing "the complexity and diversity of the asylum experience". For some women it was a "women's refuge, a hospital, and a home when there seemed nowhere else to go". For one patient, Jane S, the hospital was a disastrous experience, not because of the asylum treatment, as she died a few days after admission from complications of scarlet fever, but because she had been abandoned by general medical and hospital services, then had a long train journey to the asylum as the only place that would accept her. Luckins describes the sufferings of women who had lost loved ones in the First World War. These vignettes illustrate profound distress. It is an area that has not received the same attention as "shell shock in men".

Two papers by MacKinnon discuss different aspects of sound in mental institutions. Her first paper shows how noisy they could be in

contrast to the mostly silent shells of today. The second reviews the perceived benefits of music mostly for female patients with a discussion of the piano as the centrepiece for music programmes.

The paper by Fox describes the moves by nineteenth-century alienists to improve the lot of the intellectually disabled by training and education. However the process was reversed by the developing doctrine of eugenics to a state of "lifelong segregated institutionalisation".

Two papers relate mainly to the Cunningham Dax collection of psychiatric art. They critically describe one aspect of the life work of this eminent nonagenarian psychiatrist. He has collected over 9000 paintings and other art works. The meaningful illustration to this book is one of the collection. The contemporary purpose of this wondrous collection is now public education about the "primary experience of mental illness" as shown in patient art.

On the administrative front, the chapter by Susan Piddock on plans for an "ideal asylum" in South Australia illustrates that knowledge and concern were present to apply the principles of good moral therapy and non-restraint, but how various circumstances thwarted this ideal.

Andrew Crowther's paper on the 'Administration and the asylum in Victoria, 1860s–1880s', is a rather sad article illustrating the poor state of the asylums then and Dr Edward Paley's ineffectiveness as Inspector of Asylums (which contrasts markedly with Dr Frederick Manning's work in NSW at that time).

Overall the articles are well written and researched. They will encourage greater interest in and a more in-depth understanding of the asylum era, beyond the often facile stereotypes that exist in the community. Unfortunately there are no articles by clinical professionals who have worked in the mental hospitals. Nor is nineteenth-century treatment in New South Wales covered. In particular, there is no reference to the work and writings of Frederick Manning, Inspector General of the Insane in NSW, the most influential alienist in nineteenth-century Australia. Hopefully, the completion of his biography by myself and Peter Shea will add to our understanding of this era.