

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

been informative. In addition, the bibliography contains a significant number of misprints (pp. 199, 203, 206–13).

These blemishes aside, this book accomplishes a great deal in tracing the complex relationships that existed between families and asylums in the Antipodes. Yet Coleborne is right to call for more research. Her book demonstrates that much remains to be done before we can thoroughly understand the family–asylum relationship and what exactly it meant for patients.

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Galina Kichigina, *The Imperial Laboratory: Experimental Physiology and Clinical Medicine in Post-Crimean Russia*, Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine, Clio Medica, 87 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. vi + 374, €76.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-90-420-2658-2.

Unlike its counterparts in France, Germany, and Britain, nineteenth-century physiology in Russia has attracted little attention from Western historians. Thanks to the pioneering studies of Daniel P. Todes, the life and works of Russia's most famous physiological laboratory of the Nobel Prize winner Ivan Pavlov have been explored in detail. That laboratory, however, did not emerge like Athena from the head of Zeus: it built upon and continued a tradition of experimental physiological research, which had begun after Russia's catastrophic defeat in the Crimean War of 1853–5 as part of far-reaching reforms in all walks of the country's life. Galina Kichigina's *The Imperial Laboratory* sets out to document the emergence and development of this tradition. The book examines the disciplinary development of Russian physiology, focusing on the rise of the laboratory as the preferred site of medical research and education at the country's

premier medical school – the Military–Surgical Academy in St Petersburg.

The Imperial Laboratory is built around a 'collective biography' of five Russian chemists and physicians – Alexander P. Borodin, Sergei P. Botkin, Elie de Cyon, Ivan M. Sechenov, and Nikolai N. Zinin – who, in their capacity as professors, initiated laboratory research and instruction at the Academy. Kichigina suggests that the introduction of the laboratory to Russia was the result of a wholesale 'import' of the German laboratory, ranging from its instruments and research foci, to its pedagogical techniques and social dynamics, by the five protagonists. Borodin, Botkin, Cyon, Sechenov, and Zinin themselves had learned of the advantages of the laboratory during their postgraduate studies under the supervision of the founders of 'experimental medicine' and 'physical–chemical physiology', including Justus von Liebig, Emil du Bois-Reymond, Carl Ludwig, and Rudolf Virchow. Accordingly, the book's first part details the rise of the German physiological laboratory during the 1840s–50s and documents the protagonists' experiences in Berlin, Heidelberg, Vienna, and Leipzig. Surprisingly, one of the five leading protagonists, Cyon, does not appear in this part.

The book's second and longest part depicts the drastic reforms that the Military–Surgical Academy underwent in the aftermath of the Crimean War, demonstrating the commitment of the Academy's administration to emulating the advances of Western medical research and education. Kichigina exemplifies the extent and content of the reforms by tracing the careers of the five protagonists, detailing their individual contributions to, and innovations in the development of laboratory research and teaching under the Academy's auspices during the 1860s and 1870s.

The book's last and the shortest part is devoted in its entirety to the career of Sechenov after he left the Military–Surgical Academy in 1870. Its six very brief (six–eight