

language and metaphorical allusions. Because medical writings explicate a multiplicity of symptoms associated with masturbation—physical, mental, and moral—they can be mapped onto a variety of complaints, with the result that taxonomic boundaries between diseases break down. The result is a reciprocal relationship where theories of disease and masturbation reinforce one another. Masturbation, like consumption, can be caught from those already familiar with its practices; individuals such as Lucy Westenra in *Dracula* and Laura in J S Le Fanu's *Carmilla* are congenitally predisposed towards destructive female sexuality through family weakness; like opium addiction it consumes the individual with “mad hungers” (p. 123).

Diane Mason's sheer tenacity in combing her texts for signifiers of autoerotic behaviour does at times give the impression that her arguments are somewhat overwrought, and it is possible to lose the thread of her argument in such detailed discussions of Victorian language and metaphor. Yet these minor quibbles are far outweighed by the issues she raises concerning the centrality of masturbation as a cultural phenomenon in the Victorian era. Too detailed for someone looking for an introduction to Victorian views of sexuality, the text would be an excellent point of reference for someone looking to continue work on the role of masturbation in cultural perceptions of sexuality. At a time when historians and practitioners of medicine are increasingly aware of the value of close textual readings, of case studies or fictional medical encounters, a work such as this is a striking example of what can be found if stories are examined thoroughly and with the right tools.

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Lee-Ann Monk, *Attending madness: at work in the Australian colonial asylum*, Clio Medica 84, Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine, Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 2008, pp. 266, €55.00 (hardback 978-90-420-2419-9).

Lee-Ann Monk has chosen an intriguing and little studied topic from the history of madness. The lay attendants, who worked directly with those admitted to nineteenth-century lunatic asylums, are the focus of her research, which centres on the archives of the insane institutions set up in the Australian colony of Victoria. Whereas the educated medical elite, who ran the asylums, and the patients themselves, have received extensive attention from contemporary historians, the attendants have remained largely in the shadows. In her book, *Attending madness: at work in the Australian colonial asylum*, Monk attempts to revise the “popular mythology of the lunatic asylum” which has “repressed the memory of asylum workers' occupation and their sense of themselves as attendants” (p. 8). Her overarching thesis is that, prior to the return of these institutions to medical control at the end of the nineteenth century, by the late 1870s and early 1880s the attendants had acquired an “occupational authority . . . sufficiently strong to rival that of asylum doctors” (p. 221).

On the surface this seems a commendable historical project, but in practice her specific aims, which speak to a contemporary obsession with “identity”, leave the reader feeling unsatisfied and unconvinced. The sections on gender are a case in point. Monk explains that “establishing an occupational status consistent with gender identity was difficult for [the attendants] because the gender definition of asylum work . . . was uncertain” (p. 61). And with this contention in mind she discusses, in chapter 8, a series of wage protests by the attendants at the Ararat Asylum, who claimed that their income was insufficient to support themselves and their families in the local area. Affordable accommodation was scarce and the

cost of living high. The men insisted that it was “utterly impossible to put anything whatever . . . by for a rainy day”, and that they could only support their dependents “respectably” with “much struggle and difficulty”.

The interpretative line that is taken up by Monk, in response to these archival records, utilizes a gender analysis approach: “[T]he reduction in the wages was potentially more than an economic challenge”, she insists. “It was also a ‘psychic’ challenge to their masculine independence and ‘manly pride’ because it threatened their ability to support their families” (p. 181). Whilst this reading of the sources is not inconsistent in any way, there is no evidence that actively supports it. More generally, Monk never stops to interrogate the strengths and weaknesses of her chosen approach. In this specific section, for example, she does not question whether this group of historical actors were concerned about their identity, occupational, gender or otherwise, in and of itself or only as a means to a pragmatic end. Indeed, did their aspirations to live a “respectable” life indicate a concern with anything like a twenty-first-century concept of “identity”? On this occasion it feels as if the author has put the theoretical cart before the empirical horse.

Other portions of the book, where the sources are better suited to Monk’s chosen methodology, are stronger. In chapter 2, for example, she does make a persuasive case that the attendants at the Yarra Bend Asylum were concerned about separating themselves, as a certain “type” of person, from the patients. This section is built around the records pertaining to the employment of one particular co-worker who had originally been admitted to the institution as a patient before being taken onto the payroll. In this instance her decision to examine the notion of the attendants’ occupational identity is a potentially rewarding one. Only potentially, however, since the relentless narcissism, implied by her focus on the attendants’ own identity, is

frustrating. Here she misses her chance to make a truly original contribution to the history of madness; she does not ask how this group of laypeople perceived the afflicted in their care. That they felt it necessary to work at distinguishing themselves from their patients is an insightful observation and begs the question as to how madness was defined within the community at this time. Its conceptualization, in the contemporary medical literature, has long been picked over by historians but here was the promise of a novel perspective on an important question. Instead we are offered a “fashionable” but ultimately disappointing study.

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Erika Dyck, *Psychedelic psychiatry: LSD from clinic to campus*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008, pp. xiii, 199, £19.00 (hardback 978-0-8018-8994-3).

This book explores the history of early LSD experimentation in Saskatchewan, the unlikely birthplace of psychedelic psychiatry. In 1944, the small, primarily rural, province of Saskatchewan became the first province in Canada to elect a socialist government. The promise of health-care reform, including significant support for research, lured many medical researchers to the province. Dyck argues that the combination of progressive doctors, a high degree of professional autonomy and a supportive research environment allowed psychiatrists in Saskatchewan to innovate and take risks.

One of the people who came to Saskatchewan was Humphry Osmond, a British-trained psychiatrist, who had been working on the links between mescaline and hallucinations. Along