

What confounds all three authors is the underlying irrationality behind extremist ideology, that people really believe outlandish conspiracies, that certain people are perceived literal embodiments of pure evil. Moreover, people like McVeigh, Koresh, Jim Jones, Charles Manson, Pol Pot, and other apocalyptic types see people as objects to further their own ends. Yet the issue does not rest on cleverly manipulative leaders, nor exposure to seductive ideology. The appeal of right-wing extremism, and therefore its ability to inflict harm in the world, depends on social conditions, upbringing, and experience that make some people more or less willing to follow. How these experiences shape the individual is crucial, because only people can have thoughts, hold values, take up arms, fight wars, and persecute other people. Words are nothing more than words, unless people endow them with divine importance and act accordingly.

*Masters of Bedlam: the Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade.* By Andrew Scull, Charlotte MacKenzie, and Nicholas Hervey. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, 363 pages, Cloth.

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As someone who does not read biographies for entertainment, I opened *Masters of Bedlam* with less enthusiasm than I generally approach Andrew Scull's books on the history of psychiatry. Seven biographies, in particular, seemed an awful lot. But by the end of the book I was turning the pages as fast as those of a Stephen King novel to find out what happened next in the nineteenth century mad doctoring trade.

*Masters of Bedlam* frames its seven biographies with introductory and concluding chapters linking this time period in the history of British psychiatry with what came before and after these men's careers. The first "master of Bedlam" is John Haslam, who was born in 1764; the last is Henry Maudsley, who died in 1918. The other biographies are of John Connolly, W.A.F. Browne, Sir Alexander Morison, Samuel Gaskell, and Sir John Charles Bucknill. At the center of the biographies is Bethlem or Bedlam hospital, an institution which symbolized all that was wrong in asylum care in the eighteenth through the twentieth century.

Bethlem or Bedlam was only one of many asylums in nineteenth century Britain, but its name was the one that evoked the canonical imagery of the mistreatment of lunatics: the naked patient chained to the wall, wallowing in straw and excrement. The debate over this "mechanical" (as opposed to pharmacological or moral) restraint of the mad was, in the wake of the scandal at Bethlem during Haslam's tenure, the focus of public, media and legislative furor over the treatment of asylum patients.

These biographies are sociobiographical rather than psychobiographical. In psychobiographies, the early experiences of the subject are presented causally in relation to later events. Only in a few places such as the section on Henry Maudsley's "Desolate Upbringing" (p. 227-228) do the authors venture into this terrain (which in this reviewer's opinion is a plus for the book). Their purpose is sociobiographical: the simultaneous illumination of individual lives, organizational contingencies, and social currents as a way of

understanding history. *Masters of Bedlam* succeeds wonderfully at doing just that.

During the nineteenth century the problems and issues associated with insane patients, asylums, and the profession of mad-doctoring (later in the century psychiatry), were discussed endlessly in print, leaving a rich paper trail for projects such as this book. In addition to the issue of mechanical constraint, physicians and reformers debated the merits of placement of the insane in public asylums, private asylums, domestic arrangements (reminiscent of board and care homes) or singly in private homes--or of keeping them out of the asylum and away from physicians altogether. Reams of print compared somatic to psychical and materialist to religious theories of insanity, and medical to nonmedical treatment. Phrenology, moral treatment and psychoanalysis all made an appearance during the course of the century, while numerous reform efforts (including, in these pages, the involvement of Samuel Gaskell in Dorothea Dix's investigations of Scottish asylums) resulted in a plethora of insanity legislation on both sides of the Atlantic.

Meanwhile the numbers and percentage of the population deemed in need of these alienist services increased steadily during the century. These growing numbers challenged asylum superintendents to find room for patients, and to contain and (perhaps) cure them without resorting to shackles and chains. At the same time these masters of bedlam were challenged by issues of professional pay and status, since medicine--and especially mad-doctoring--still did not have the gentlemanly associations of the other professions: the law and the church. These biographies give a fascinating picture of the patchwork of asylum superintendancy, private consulting and boarding, and other work that these men put together to support themselves and (in all cases but Samuel Gaskell, who died a bachelor) their families.

This book is therefore of great interest not only to practitioners in the history of psychiatry, but also to those interested in professions and professional organizations. These masters of Bedlam joined, initiated, and supported professional organizations for the advancement of mad-doctoring, complete with annual meetings and professional journals for the publication and dissemination of their ideas. Indeed, it was through these organizations and publications that mad-doctors developed the contacts that enabled them to acquire both paying positions and paying patients. In a complex and shifting eighteenth century class system, these men gained or lost the possibility of attaining the status of country gentleman as their careers and fortunes as mad-doctors waxed and waned.

Not only the way in which the profession was structured, but also the way in which the insane were housed and treated, reflected eighteenth century Britain's social class system. "Chancery lunatics" from aristocratic or wealthy families were placed in "single care" to be pampered and even travel abroad with the mad doctors and their families. Private asylums, some owned by these mad-doctors, housed those among the middle and upper classes able and willing to pay.<sup>1</sup> The burgeoning public asylums accommodated a handful of paying patients, but were filled mostly with pauper lunatics, idiots, and the incontinent "dirty patients" for whom these asylum supervisors had to devise special policies.

The great debates about the nature of mental illness during the nineteenth century also revolved around social class (as well as gender, which, with the exception of Henry Maudsley's, is given short shrift in these mad-doctors' biographies). During the first decades of the century, in Haslam's and Browne's time, insanity was associated with the civilized, educated aristocratic classes whose senses were dazed with too much luxury and amusement--or, if they were women, with too much Latin and mathematics. From midcentury into the Victorian era, however, theories such as hereditary degeneracy, Lamarckianism, and Darwinism shifted the etiological focus of these mad-doctors toward the pauper lunatic. With this shift (during which the hysterical or neurasthenic gentlewoman or gentleman was not abandoned but consigned to the consulting room), optimism about the curability of insanity within the asylum gave way to pessimism concerning both individual and family degeneration.

Given the centrality of class in these mad-doctors and mad patients' lives, the content of *Masters of Bedlam* is of interest to sociologists of stratification and inequality, as well as to social historians of the professions and of psychiatry. As to style, it would not escape censure among the postmodern and narrativist wings of contemporary social science. Although Scull and his coauthors "give voice" to these mad-doctors by quoting as well as analyzing their written words, their analysis is not limited to those written words. Instead, they use the conventional biographical-literary style of putting words in the mouths, and feelings and motivations in the minds, of their subjects.

My own caveat is that I would have liked a bibliography, which is lacking (there is a good index and a thick set of endnotes). Otherwise I found *Masters of Bedlam* highly readable and informative; well written and

<sup>1</sup> My mother, in her late eighties a victim of senile dementia, died in Ticehurst House in Sussex, an eighteenth century asylum for whom Henry Maudsley acted as consultant during the nineteenth century.

apparently (although I am no judge of historical research) carefully researched. The current plethora of works in the history of psychiatry is marked by two main genres: wide sweeps through historical time on the one hand (not popular at present), and small, cross-sectional analyses of small bits of time and place on the other. This set of biographies makes a nice additional, and alternative, approach.

*To Call It Home: The New Immigrants of Southwestern Minnesota.* By Joseph A. Amato with John Meyer, John Radzilowski, Donata DeBruyckere, and Anthony Amato. 1996. Marshall, Minn.: Crossings Press, 120 pages, Paper.

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Over the last three decades, stockyards and meatpacking plants in Chicago, Fort Worth, Kansas City, Omaha, and other urban centers have been abandoned and torn down, or transformed into tony shopping districts. Names that meant meat in the days of our youth are gone-- Armour, Cudahy, Rath, Swift, Wilson--bought out or driven out by the "new packers"--IBP, ConAgra, Excel. Poultry has moved from the barnyard and the hen house to factory farms, getting ever cheaper but looking and tasting less and less like the fryers our mothers and grandmothers used to serve for Sunday dinner. Meatpacking and poultry processing have reorganized and relocated. They fled union wages and outmoded factories in the cities for reduced transportation costs and tax abatements from rural communities desperate for new jobs--any jobs. New plants, kept afloat in a marginally profitable industry by depressed wages and economies of scale, have indeed transformed the economies of small towns across America, from Gainesville, Georgia, the "Poultry Capital of the World," to Garden City, Kansas, the "trophy buckle on the beef belt."

Like much of rural America, southwestern Minnesota suffered economic decline in the 1980s. And as elsewhere in the Midwest and Southeast, its communities are building their economic hopes for the 1990s and beyond on meat and poultry processing. *To Call It Home* examines the changes meatpacking and poultry processing have brought to the towns and hamlets of southwestern Minnesota. Written originally for community leaders and elected officials, and the basic document for a 1996 conference at Southwest State University, Marshall, Minnesota, this book chronicles a work in progress--the communities it describes.

This little book shows the importance--too often ignored--of regional studies to an understanding of larger social, economic, political, and theoretical issues. It reveals both the common outcomes of common forces and the variation that comes from unique circumstances and individual actors in specific communities. In the pages of *To Call It Home* we learn how the so-called new immigration is transforming