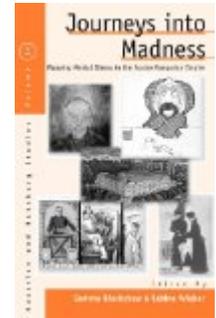


Gemma Blackshaw, Sabine Wieber, eds. *Journeys into Madness: Mapping Mental Illness in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*. Austrian and Habsburg Studies Seris. New York: Berghahn Books, 2012. Illustrations. viii + 213 pp. \$70.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-85745-458-4.



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Journeys into Madness: Mapping Mental Illness in the Austro-Hungarian Empire is an anthology dealing with journeys to and from Austrian mental institutions as well as metaphorical journeys crossing boundaries into and out of sanity. The volume draws on the exhibition *Madness and Modernity: Kunst und Wahn in Wien um 1900* (2009-10) and on a conference entitled “Journeys into Madness: Representing Mental Illness in the Arts and Sciences: 1850-1930,” which took place in 2007. The editors, Gemma Blackshaw and Sabine Wieber, chose to focus on Austria-Hungary, because of “how utterly central madness and mental illness was to the articulation of Austro-Hungarian identity, touching the lives of so many” (p. 4). They broaden the disciplinary focus beyond the arts and literature to encompass diverse fields, including “medical and architectural history, musicology, and sociology.” They also aim to move beyond the “Schorskean paradigm,” which tends to “reduce the complex and contested territory of psychiatry in Austria-Hungary to Vienna, to Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis and in particular to

his notion of an Oedipal revolt of the sons against their liberal fathers” (p. 5). The essays, representing a variety of disciplines and approaches, contribute new ways to look at mental illness in the Austrian context.

Missing from the volume is an in-depth examination of the linking of mental illness to Jews and women in the Austrian imagination and the role this connection played in Austrian understanding of madness. While the essays address the “boundaries between such territories as sanity and insanity, neurosis and psychoanalysis” (p. 3), boundaries between masculinity and femininity and Jew and non-Jew are left largely unexplored, leading to some oversights and generalizations. Only one piece is focused primarily on gender—and it is on a woman who was far from typical, the empress Elisabeth—and only one essay deals with the Jewish question, despite the prevailing anti-semitism in Austria, which linked mental illness to Jews. Furthermore, in the 1880s, Bertha Pappenheim (Anna O.), a young Jewish woman, developed a therapy she coined the “talking cure” to

help alleviate her physical symptoms during her treatment with Josef Breuer, Freud's older colleague. The "talking cure" is therefore Pappenheim's contribution and not Freud's as asserted in three essays in *Journeys into Madness* (pp. 19, 43, 56). Despite the key role played by Jewish women such as Pappenheim in the development of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and medicine, Jewish women are not addressed.

The collection opens with Leslie Topp's contribution, "The Mad Objects of Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Journeys, Contexts and Dislocations in the Exhibition 'Madness and Modernity.'" Topp describes the journey of creating and curating an interdisciplinary exhibition. Different types of objects were juxtaposed and arranged arbitrarily in order to create relationships and reconnections. Topp describes the various sections of the exhibit, highlighting the way objects underwent their own journeys and transformations over the course of history and how their meanings change when placed in different contexts. In analyzing the section "The Modernist Mental Hospital," which focused on the Lower Austria Provincial Institution for the Mental and Nervous Disorders "Am Steinhof," Topp provides a detailed description of the history and arrangement of the various sketches, models, drawings, and objects in the exhibit. Given her interest in the objects' changing meanings in different contexts, it is surprising that she does not mention that this institution was to become a center for medical murder under National Socialism.

In "Solving Riddles: Freud, Vienna and the Historiography of Madness," Steven Beller revisits Freud's journey from investigating the human mind and motivations to explaining antisemitism. Beller convincingly argues for psychoanalysis's value as an open-ended rather than a closed system. Its rebellion against the Viennese context lies in its ambiguity and liberating impact. Beller concludes that this open-ended intellectuality (which Freud saw as Jewish) "will remain as psychoanal-

ysis's legacy" (p. 40). He rightly highlights Freud's Jewish identity as formative in the development of psychoanalysis; however, his position that psychoanalysis is influenced by the exegetical tradition of interpretation is debatable, given Freud's nonorthodox upbringing and his aversion to religious values. In addition, more could have been said about the significance of Jewish female patients in the development of psychoanalysis.

Gavin Plumley, in "Symphonies and Psychosis in Mahler's Vienna," tells of Gustav Mahler's consultation with Freud in 1910 in the aftermath of his wife Alma Mahler's affair with architect Walter Gropius. According to Marie Bonaparte who wrote about the encounter in her diary (Freud himself left no details of the meeting), Freud attributed Mahler's depression to an association of Alma with his mother and the fear of losing her, but later admitted that he had failed in his diagnosis. While Plumley makes important points about the incorporation of psychological themes in Viennese modern music and the ambiguity of modern anxieties, which on the one hand Freud sought to cure, but on the other hand were linked to creativity, he makes almost no mention of the Jewish backgrounds of his subjects, other than to note Mahler's conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1897 to be appointed musical director of the Hofoper (p. 45). Mahler's anxieties caused by city life and his wife's affair must also be understood in the context of his Jewish identity in a city and field afflicted with antisemitism. As Michael Haas demonstrates in *Forbidden Music: The Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis* (2013), Mahler's Jewishness was a source of anxiety for him and a point of contention in his relationship with Alma. Given Freud's tendency to suppress the Jewishness of his patients, it is not surprising that Freud appears to have missed the mark in his analysis of Mahler.

The next two essays examine the emergence of sanatoriums in the Austrian provinces for recuperation from nervous disorders and the resulting

phenomenon of health tourism in central Europe. Nicola Imrie's "Creating an Appropriate Social Milieu: Journeys to Health at a Sanatorium for Nervous Disorders," focuses on the Sanatorium Dr. Schalk in Abbazia, Küstenland, examining how its spatial layout created the illusion of a fashionable spa resort which excluded psychiatric patients. Jill Steward's "Travel to the Spas: The Growth of Health Tourism in Central Europe, 1850-1914" demonstrates a growing demand for health travel. Steward provides a brief account of four individuals who engaged in health travel: the Empress Elisabeth, Lady Paget (wife of the former ambassador to Vienna), Alma Mahler, and Franz Kafka. The accounts of the three women add a welcome gendered perspective; however, the account of Kafka's health travels omits mention of his Jewish identity that undoubtedly played a role in his "nervousness." Steward mentions that anti-semitism prevailed in many spas, citing Frank Bajohr ("*Unser Hotel ist Judenfrei*," *Bader-antisemitismus im 19. Und 20. Jahrhundert [2003]*). However, both Imrie and Steward could have done more to address antisemitism in *Sommerfrische* (summer resorts) and sanatoriums in the Austrian provinces and its impact on Jewish and non-Jewish health tourists. For example, Imrie writes about the positive reception in Abbazia of "respected Vienna surgeon Dr. Theodor Billroth." She includes a detailed note about his career and life, but does not mention that in 1875, he argued that Jews from Hungary and Galicia lacked talent and should not be accepted to the Viennese medical school.

Sabine Wieber's "Vienna's Most Fashionable Neurasthenic: Empress Sisi and the Cult of the Size Zero" provides first, a fascinating look at the empress's self-fashioning through attempts to control her visual representations, image, and body; and, second, a discussion of how this process contributed to the images of ideal femininity in the late nineteenth century. Ultimately, Empress Elisabeth's obsession led to her physical and mental deterioration. She spent the last decades of her

life traveling throughout Europe to find respite from her physical and mental suffering. In chapter 7, "Peter Altenberg: Authoring Madness in Vienna circa 1900," Gemma Blackshaw uses the portrait-caricatures of Altenberg (Richard Engländer) to illustrate his efforts to control his image as the "mad writer." Altenberg inscribed, signed, and dated these illustrations by caricaturists to assert ownership of his madness. Blackshaw traces Altenberg's journey from a neurasthenic to a psychotic patient forcibly institutionalized in the Steinhof asylum. His physical journeys to more restrictive institutions caused him to feel a loss of control and a sense of exile. After his release from Steinhof, he regained control over his madness by returning to the earlier caricatures of himself. Blackshaw sheds light on patients' experiences of institutions and how they differed from the favorable perception of institutions from the outside. She acknowledges the relevance of Altenberg's Jewish and sexual identities, but focuses on Altenberg's identity as the mad writer and his experience in Steinhof. One wonders how his Jewishness might have shaped both his identity and his experiences.

A fictional account of a mental institution in *The Man without Qualities* (1930-32) is the subject of Geoffrey C. Howes's essay "'Hell is not Interesting, It is Terrifying': A Reading of the Madhouse Chapter in Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities*." Howes traces the origins of this fictional account to Musil's diary account of a visit to the insane asylum S. Maria della Pietá in 1913. Drawing on the diary entry, Musil rearranged and expanded the scenes to explore the relationship of madness and the "normal" world in prewar Europe. In the context of the novel, the purpose of the visit was to bring about a meeting between two mentally ill characters, Clarisse, the wife of a friend of Ulrich, the protagonist, and Moosbrugger, an institutionalized itinerant worker who murdered a prostitute. Unlike the diary account, the novel tells of the asylum visit from the perspectives of each of the characters present in order to show

the social function of mental illness, concluding that madness “depends on who is observing it” and that the most important thing about the madman is his isolation (pp. 140-141). The madness of the individual also plays a role as metaphor for the isolation and disunity of prewar Austria. References to Clarisse’s androgyny raise questions about the role of gender in madness that could be further explored.

The next two essays, “Reason Dazzled: Klimt, Krakauer and the Eyes of the Medusa” by Luke Heighton and “Mapping the Sanatorium: Heinrich Obersteiner and the Art of Psychiatric Patients in Oberdöbling around 1900” by Anna Lehninger, turn their attention to evaluating the artwork of institutionalized patients. Heighton’s essay finds similarities between Gustav Klimt’s paintings and those of L. Krakauer, a mentally ill patient, demonstrating connections between madness and modernity. He argues that “both Klimt and Krakauer’s works are framed by a shared interest in the themes of sex, death, madness and the oft-referred-to Viennese crisis of masculinity that has come to dominate contemporary readings of fin-de-siècle Viennese cultural production” (pp. 146-147). He concludes that artwork by modernists and by patient artists is shaped by the same discourses and therefore should be read alongside one another in order to shed greater light on modern culture. Lehninger looks at a Viennese private clinic in the suburb of Oberdöbling from the perspective of the patients through an investigation of their artwork. The artwork reveals that patients’ experience of life in institutions was decidedly more negative than the clinic’s self-perception or the way that institutions were perceived from the outside. She focuses on two patients, Frau A and Herr Sz. While Herr Sz. can be identified as Count Carl Philipp Maria Széchenyi by using medical reports, Frau A.’s identity cannot be determined. However, both present the institution as oppressive, prisonlike, and arbitrary, contributing to anti-psychiatry discourses of the late nineteenth century, helping to

create “a multifaceted view of the psychiatric institutions” (p. 177).

The final piece in the collection, “The Württemberg Asylum of Schussenried: A Psychiatric Space and Its Encounter with Literature and Culture from the ‘Outside,’” by Thomas Müller and Frank Kuhn, oddly, is not about an Austrian asylum but rather about an asylum in a small town in southwestern Germany. While the editors justify its inclusion in the introduction, stating that the Württemberg Asylum was “just across the Austrian border” (p. 8), the essay itself does not mention Austria at all, making one wonder why it is included in this collection. Müller and Kuhn do touch on many of the same themes found throughout *Journeys into Madness*, such as the permeability of the boundaries between the inside and the outside of the asylum. For example, a journal produced from inside the asylum was read by those on the outside as well and community events such as carnival festivities were held inside the asylum. The authors also discuss patients’ writings about their negative experiences of asylum life, which contributed to the growing anti-psychiatric movement. They conclude that by using a variety of sources depicting different perspectives of the asylum, a “relatively complex and also contradictory picture is thus presented of German psychiatric institutions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a picture that does not fit into commonly accepted psychiatric schemata” (p. 196). The presence of these similar themes calls into question the premise stated in the book’s introduction that there is something particularly intense about the encounter with madness in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This essay about Germany shares many of the same underlying themes and thus does not support one of the book’s main arguments.

To conclude, the principal theme of this volume, visual culture’s relationship with madness as it came to be understood in this period, is fascinating and important. Nervousness as an interme-

diate stage between normal and abnormal; the phenomenon of routine travel to treat nervous disorders in resortlike accommodations where individuals could escape from the pressures of city life and enjoy the clean mountain air; and the romanticization of madness as a sign of true genius, creativity, and a source of inspiration are some of the many areas and topics explored in this collection. The essays illustrate that the meaning of madness and how the mentally ill are treated by society is culturally and historically determined. Despite the reservations noted above, *Journeys into Madness* is a valuable collection that provides insight into the way mental illness was understood and functioned at a particular time and place in history, a topic that is still relevant for today and the future.

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