



Marjory Harper, ed.. *Migration and Mental Health: Past and Present*. Mental Health in Historical Perspective Series. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 280 pp. \$99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-137-52967-1.

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Commissioned by Iain C. Hutchison (University of Glasgow)

Migration and Mental Health: Past and Present is part of the series Mental Health in Historical Perspective; this volume places the focus on migration, in various forms, but mainly to or from the British Isles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All of the contributors are based in the United Kingdom or Canada. This collection of essays originated in a symposium funded by the Wellcome Trust, and it reads like a good symposium, with recurring themes throughout.

There is a strong interdisciplinary emphasis in this collection. History, of course, is the main approach, but it is well supported by scholarship and methods from geography, literature, and even theology, as well as social work, policy, and psychiatry. The interplay of disciplines is collegial, with the effect of building rather than muddling the key points from essay to essay. Sources are also eclectic: personal letters, medical records, state bureaucratic records (petitions for assistance, case records for child protection, deportation files), legal and legislative documents, and fictional treatments all come into consideration.

Some readers may be surprised by the wide range of topics covered by “migration,” as the authors here define it. These essays are not only, or even primarily, concerned with the voluntary permanent immigrant, packing a trunk with hope and seeking a new life in another land. In this col-

lection, migration also includes less iconic experiences: the colonial bureaucrat, the reluctant war bride, the discharged military man, and the fugitive. We see migration as traumatic, even catastrophic, for some, while for others migration brings relief from ill-suited expectations at home.

Other readers, instead, may be surprised by the wide range of topics covered by “mental health” in this collection. Again, popular culture and rhetoric give us stock characters, like the nostalgic immigrant, melancholy, and longing for left-behind loved ones and customs; or the violent rage of a strange newcomer intent on causing harm. But the essays in Marjory Harper’s collection embrace the “unsettled settlers,” rarely dramatic in their disorientation and despair, perhaps stumbling along for years until they seek or find outside intervention, and thus leave a record in a bureaucrat’s file for historians to find. Literary treatments of the immigrant’s predicament are helpful here, where real shifts in cultural explanations are preserved in plot and character. (A reader might well come away from this book with a fresh list of novels to acquire.)

Two introductory chapters, by John Swinton and Sergei Shubin, help place these wide-ranging concepts in historical and philosophical contexts, and highlight how migrancy and madness have been seen as intertwined for many centuries. The

chapter by James Moran and Lisa Chilton may be an outlier, because it is focused on experiences in the long eighteenth century, but its inclusion is welcome for the way it brings a longer timeline and international law into the conversation.

Overall, this collection is a solid effort at doing “beyond the asylum” disability history.

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