

Recent

Emily Baum. *The Invention of Madness: State, Society, and the Insane in Modern China.*

(Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute.) ix + 267 pp., glossary, notes, bibl., index. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2018. \$37.50 (paper). ISBN 9780226558240.

Among proliferating scholarly works on the history of psychiatry in Chinese worlds, Emily Baum's *The Invention of Madness: State, Society, and the Insane in Modern China* is a timely account that traces how mad experiences were managed from late Qing to Republican China. Prior to her work, various historical accounts have endeavored to canonize the significance of psychiatry at the beginning of modern China; however, they have been sporadic and discontinuous. Instead, in a book based on her doctoral thesis and drawing from materials in the Beijing Municipal Archives and the Rockefeller Archives, Baum beautifully interweaves two major theses in the history of medicine: the introduction of modern medicine in China and the defining of lunacy and the institutionalizing of the insane.

Baum persuasively tells the story of the double “otherness” in modern Chinese society. She not only recaptures the landscape of an asylum-turned-hospital but also presents a thorough analysis of the culture and society in which such an institution functioned. Using the story of the Beijing Municipal Asylum and its later incarnation as the Psychopathic Hospital run by Peking Union Medical College (PUMC), Baum successfully paints a picture of madness at the juncture between China and the West and between the traditional and the scientific. Her use of the term “invention” in her title is intentional. She tries to “emphasize the agential quality of local knowledge production” and to present “the morphology of the condition (alongside its related institutions)” as “so thoroughly transformed during the Republican period as to no longer be recognizable to its imperial antecedents” (p. 5). Ultimately, even if a “local knowledge” as conventionally understood is not produced, at least the polyphony of madness and its multiple interventions with Chinese characteristics are thoroughly analyzed.

Readers will be curious about when “madness” began to be categorized as “mental illness” in China. In Chapter 4 Baum provides a detailed examination of the transformation of a police-run lunatic asylum into a charity-based medical institution (the PUMC Psychopathic Hospital). Throughout her other six chapters, Baum explains how such a gradual transformation was contingent on the requirements of modern city design, the demand to enforce policing to regulate city life, the changing capacity of Chinese families to deal with and contain their mentally ill members, and the rise of medical entrepreneurs in China's capital city. In the same way that natural historians fixed labels to specimens in a museum, these stakeholders collectively, in the 1920s and 1930s, facilitated the changing definition of madness.

In chronological order, *The Invention of Madness* first considers how madness was understood in late Qing China, then how it emerged as a family problem and public nuisance in the newly devised city that required urban policing; there follow discussions of how madness was medicalized, furthering the interests of medical men, and how it was finally absorbed into the discourse of mental hygiene as a feature of Chinese state power seeking to create a healthy nation. That said, Baum does not give readers a whiggish view of how the psy sciences progressed to become fully formed disciplines that are able to account for varying concepts of madness among “intellectuals, medical practitioners and ordinary people” (p. 161). The “disunity of madness” (p. 108) has not become a thing of the past. The book effectively explains the background to the contemporary challenges in treating the mentally ill that the “new” China has continued to face during the socialist and postsocialist period: policing, civil affairs, and medical authorities are still largely unintegrated, despite century-long governmental and professional efforts.

In Chapter 7, as an illustration of this lack of integration, Baum employs four vignettes to question the effectiveness of neuropsychiatry—assumed, if one takes the progressive view of science, to be the best approach to madness science has to offer. These vignettes include the disparate heart and brain theories of

traditional medical ideas and modern sciences, the problem of Chinese–English translation of medical concepts, the still chaotic mixing of theories and interventions, and the way Chinese identity obstructs Western psychiatric practices. By not offering a thorough explanation, Baum leaves her readers space to ponder the root causes of such disintegration. In the end, the adoption of mental illness theories remained limited to hospital practices at PUMC; the institutionalization of neuropsychiatry in Beijing also occurred solely as a result of a partially vested interest of the state. Whether such “advancement” also happened in other parts of China remains questionable.

To elucidate the continuous disintegration, a preliminary probe into contemporary China would have been useful. For example, exploration of the issues of bureaucracy covered in the book could be revealing. How has it caught up with the rapid adoption of modern psychiatric concepts? Also, how has the flourishing but unevenly developing psychiatric infrastructure impacted a society in which the concept of mental illness is still liminal between its scientific definitions and social implications? These are questions that are not easy for any historian to answer. But readers can find clues in this book.

Harry Yi-Jui Wu

Harry Yi-Jui Wu is Assistant Professor and Director of the Medical Ethics and Humanities Unit in the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine at the University of Hong Kong. He has written extensively on the history of psychiatry from transnational perspectives. He is now combining environmental and medical issues in several ongoing projects.

Seth C. Rasmussen (Editor). *Igniting the Chemical Ring of Fire: Historical Evolution of the Chemical Communities of the Pacific Rim*. xvi + 467 pp., figs., bibl., index. London: World Scientific, 2018. £86 (cloth). ISBN 9781786344540.

In contrast to the abundance of literature on the history of modern chemistry in Europe and North America, developments elsewhere have been relatively neglected. One may thus welcome the collective volume under review, which includes many useful contributions among its fifteen chapters. These originated in an international symposium in December 2015 co-organized by historians from the United States, Canada, Japan, and Australia, with additional contributions on China and South Korea; later recruitments extended the book’s coverage to New Zealand, Russia, Taiwan (Formosa), and Vietnam. Unfortunately, coverage of the “Ring of Fire” is not quite complete; the book omits all of the Americas south of the United States, as well as many countries in Southeast Asia and the Southern Pacific. Moreover, the untimely deaths of Mel Usselman (1946–2015) and Masanori Kaji (1956–2016) deprived the book of a potential second Canadian and third Japanese chapter (Kaji, however, contributed the chapter on Formosa before his death). The book is rightly dedicated to both scholars.

The editor and program chair for the original symposium, Seth Rasmussen, belongs to a relatively rare group of chemists who are also historians of their discipline—as are most of the other contributors, judging from their professional affiliations. But scientific expertise does not necessarily imply a breadth of historical perspective; in the absence of biographical sketches for anyone but the editor, however, the contributors’ professional expertise in history or history of science may be somewhat difficult to determine. As Rasmussen notes (pp. xi–xii), World Scientific Publishing envisioned a book related to *Creating Networks in Chemistry* (Royal Society of Chemistry, 2008), whose chapters elucidate the development of national chemical societies in Europe to 1914. In part owing to strong editorial guidance and the contributors’ generally strong historical backgrounds, that volume achieves excellent thematic and chronological coherence, concluding with an exemplary transnational comparative analysis by the editors, Soňa Štrbáňová and Anita Kildebaek Nielsen. Regrettably, these features are missing in the volume under review. Rasmussen’s short introductory chapter, presenting the “Pacific Rim” and the “[Chemical] Ring of Fire” as organizing notions, cannot