



## Historiographical Themes in the History of Psychiatry

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LAST MODIFIED: 17 APRIL 2025

DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780197768723-0043

### Introduction

The history of psychiatry is contemporary to the establishment of psychiatry as a specialty itself. Indeed, those who strove to define psychiatry as a distinct scientific medical discipline sought out predecessors to legitimize the discipline. Therefore, there has been a history of psychiatry, written by psychiatrists, since the mid-nineteenth century. However, beginning in the 1950s, scholars in the social sciences—including anthropologists, sociologists, and historians—began offering alternative, sometimes competing, narratives to those put forward by these practitioner-historians. This ongoing tension has proven to be particularly fruitful, as psychiatry has become one of the most researched specialties in the history of medicine, over-represented in major medical history journals and even having its own dedicated publication, *History of Psychiatry*. Over the past seventy years, sources used to write this history have diversified considerably. Initially, the focus was limited to published handbooks and articles by well-known white male psychiatrists. Over time, the range of materials has broadened to include other writings by physicians (such as medical notes, personal journals, and letters between colleagues) as well as documentation from other sources, including local and regional asylum administrations, patients and their families, and other people in other occupations, such as nurses, psychologists, and social workers. This shift has transformed the narrative from a purely medical perspective to a more multifaceted and inclusive story. In the past two decades, the history of psychiatry has faced a challenge similar to that of psychiatry itself: defining the boundaries of the discipline. Since the 1960s, when psychiatry moved beyond the asylum, it gained new areas of intervention but also encountered new scientific discourses that either complemented or contested it. These blurred boundaries have also affected the writing of its history, which has become less tied to the medical discipline. Often, a thematic approach is taken, highlighting the multiplicity of actors involved, the diversification of spaces, and the specialization of therapies.

### General Overviews

Compared to other medical disciplines, the history of psychiatry has a strikingly vibrant, diverse, and long-standing historiography. Eghigian 2017 represents the most recent collective effort to provide an international overview of current research. Scull 2015 offers a similar perspective in an engaging single-author work. Coleborne 2019 goes beyond the community of historians with a thought-provoking essay on the role of history in broader discussions of mental health. Millard and Wallis 2022 highlights both the challenges and opportunities presented by the wide range of sources used in contemporary psychiatric historiography.

**Coleborne, Catharine.** *Why Talk about Madness? Bringing History into the Conversation*. London: Palgrave, 2019.

Makes a convincing case for why history is necessary if we want to address mental health issues.

**Eghigian, Greg, ed. *The Routledge History of Madness and Mental Health*. Basingstoke, UK: Taylor & Francis, 2017.**

This edited volume brings together nearly twenty researchers who provide insights organized chronologically (e.g., Chiara Thumiger on Antiquity), geographically (e.g., Sally Swartz on Africa), and thematically (e.g., Jesse Ballenger on aging).

**Millard, Chris, and Jennifer Wallis, eds. *Sources in the History of Psychiatry, from 1800 to the Present*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2022.**

For a long time, writing a history of psychiatry that went beyond well-known psychiatrists ran into the challenge of accessing archives. Chris Millard and Jennifer Wallis present the range of archives that are available for writing a multi-voiced history of madness, while also addressing the ethical questions involved in this research.

**Scully, Andrew. *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity, from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.**

Written by one of the most prolific and also most controversial historians of the field, the book is a *tour de force* on how insanity has been handled for over 2,500 years.

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## Journals

The history of psychiatry is one of the few medical subdisciplines that has its own dedicated peer-reviewed journal. Established in 1990, *History of Psychiatry* provides a regular and broad platform for research in the field, offering historiographic overviews and wide-ranging reviews of the Anglophone literature, and some of the major controversies in the history of psychiatry have played out in its pages. However, leading journals in medical history, such as *Medical History*, *Social History of Medicine*, and *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* also frequently feature articles related to psychiatry. In recent years, as the scope of topics within the field has expanded (see Introduction), historians of psychiatry have increasingly published in general history journals as well. Some medical journals also welcome historical articles. *World Psychiatry* occasionally includes historically grounded articles. Since 1979, *Schizophrenia Bulletin* has regularly published a section titled *First Person Account*, and it has gradually developed into a unique and valuable resource.

### ***Bulletin of the History of Medicine*. 1933–.**

One of the oldest journals of medical history, the BHM is published today by the American Association for the History of Medicine (AAHM) and the Johns Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine.

### ***History of Psychiatry*. 1990–.**

Covers a wide range of topics related to the history of psychiatry and has been host to most of the important historiographical debates structuring the field.

### ***Medical History*. 1957–.**

Associated with the Asian Society for the History of Medicine. Devoted to all aspects of the history of medicine.

### ***Schizophrenia Bulletin*. 1969–.**

Although most disciplinary journals are open to historical pieces, the *Schizophrenia Bulletin* has a long-running series, *First Person*

Although most disciplinary journals are open to historical pieces, the *Compendium Baroni* has a long running series, *First Person Account*, that is particularly interesting for historians.

### ***Social History of Medicine.* 1988–.**

The journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine (SSHM); focuses on the social aspects of health and illness.

### ***World Psychiatry.* 2002–.**

The journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA); open to short historical accounts.

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## **Classics**

When the humanities and social sciences began to take an interest in the history of psychiatry in the 1960s, a select group of authors quickly became influential across disciplines. Michel Foucault, Erving Goffman, and Franz Fanon remain key references, even sixty years after the publication of their work. The French philosopher Michel Foucault dedicated part of his oeuvre to the history of psychiatry, becoming one of the most quoted scholars of the twentieth century. Foucault 1964 and his lectures at the Collège de France continue to serve as a framework for many historians. Lawlor and Nale 2014 not only examines Foucault's impact on the history of psychiatry but also provides a broader overview of his status in contemporary thought. Goffman 1961 introduces the influential concept of the "total institution", offering a lens through which to analyze the experiences of institutionalized individuals. Shalin 2014 contextualizes this seminal work from a biographical perspective. Although Fanon 1967 was published in 1952, it only gained prominence within psychiatric history in the last decade, as postcolonial theory began to influence mad studies. Gibson and Beneduce 2017 explores Fanon's life as a psychiatrist, including his work at the Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital in Algeria.

### **Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.**

First published in France in 1952, *Black Skin, White Masks* interrogates the effects of colonial settings on the human psyche.

### **Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. London: Tavistock, 1964.**

This study of the meanings of madness in politics, medicine, law, and beyond, from the Middle Ages through the late eighteenth century, was published in French in 1961 and has structured the historiography of psychiatry more than any other work.

### **Gibson, Nigel C., and Roberto Beneduce. *Frantz Fanon, Psychiatry and Politics*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.**

For several decades, academic interest focused on Fanon's political texts. This book recontextualizes these texts by looking at Fanon as a psychiatrist.

### **Goffman, Erving. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1961.**

Based on participative field work in one of the largest asylums in the United States in the 1950s, the book is based on four largely independent chapters and offers concepts such as "moral career," "total institution," and "underlife of public institutions" that are still fruitful today.

Lawlor, Leonard, and John Nale, eds. *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Lawlor, Leonard, and John Hale, eds. *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

This volume comprises 117 entries written by seventy-two contributors, mainly philosophers.

Shalin, Dmitri N. "Goffman on Mental Illness: Asylums and "The Insanity of Place" Revisited." *Symbolic Interaction* 37.1 (2014): 122–144.

Shows how sociological imagination draws from personal experience and how research is intertwined with personal biographies. Focusing on Erving Goffman, it argues that his views on mental illness were shaped by his family and personal experiences.

## A Historiographical Triad: Psychiatrists, Diagnoses, and Asylums

The history of psychiatry since the 1960s has pursued three essential questions shaped by new approaches from social sciences and humanities. First, historians have focused on the social history of psychiatrists, exploring the medicalization of social issues and the discipline's legitimacy in light of these transformations. These studies are often limited to a given country. Dowbiggin 1991 traces the history of 19th-century French psychiatry, while Engstrom 2003 offers an analysis of clinical psychiatry in Imperial Germany. Lamb 2014 focuses on one iconic figure, Adolf Meyer, to examine the origins of American psychiatry. However, similar comprehensive studies for the twentieth century are still lacking. Second, following a tradition initially established by physicians, the history of diagnostic categories remains one of the most extensively studied areas of psychiatric historiography. Early genealogies were mainly based on manuals and scientific articles; over time, they have incorporated reflections on how scientific knowledge is produced and the social implications of psychiatric diagnoses. Although it is thirty years old, Berrios and Porter 1995 remains a foundational reference for the history of diagnoses. Noll 2011 focuses on dementia praecox, a term widely used for decades in the Western world. Metzl 2010 explores how race and psychiatric labeling interact through a praxeological lens focusing on social practices. Finally, the birth of psychiatry as a medical specialty is closely tied to the creation of specific institutions for those labeled as mad. Asylums play a central role in this history, thanks to the wealth of archives they produced and preserved—administrative reports, patient files, discussions of funding in meetings, and media coverage. Scull 1979 presents a Marxist interpretation of the rise of asylums during the Victorian era. Grob 1983 and Grob 1991 offer a comprehensive overview of nearly two centuries of psychiatric care in the United States. Andrews and Digby 2004, along with Topp, et al. 2007, belongs to a revisionist school that moves beyond the 1970s and 1980s narratives framing psychiatry as merely a bourgeois tool of social control. Despo, et al. 2016 and Burns and Foot 2020 focus on the period when asylums became central to efforts to reform psychiatry, and when alternative forms of care and institutions were developed and put into practice.

Andrews, Jonathan, and Anne Digby, eds. *Sex and Seclusion, Class and Custody: Perspectives on Gender and Class in the History of British and Irish Psychiatry*. Amsterdam: Brill, 2004.

Challenges previous feminist and revisionist theories by using extensive archival materials to show that definitions of madness were precise and often a response to economic and psychological pressures. The collection argues that asylums were not merely instruments of social control but often served as refuges for the working class.

Berrios, German E., and Roy Porter, eds. *A History of Clinical Psychiatry*. London: Athlone Press, 1995.

Co-edited by the physician German E. Berrios and one of the most important social historians of medicine, Roy Porter, this is the most comprehensive historical account of the most widely used psychiatric diagnostic categories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



**Burns, Tom, and John Foot, eds. *Basaglia's International Legacy: From Asylum to Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.**

Centers on Franco Basaglia's radical advocacy for the closure of mental hospitals and patient liberation in Italy, which influenced international mental health policies and practices. Through various national case studies, the book highlights the wide range of responses to deinstitutionalization, examining both the adoption and rejection of Basaglia's ideas and addressing ongoing challenges in mental health-care reform.

**Despo, Kritsotaki, Vicky Long, and Matthew Smith, eds. *Deinstitutionalisation and After: Post-War Psychiatry in the Western World*. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2016.**

Explores the shift from institutional to community-based mental health care in the Western world following World War II. Examines the driving forces behind deinstitutionalization, the challenges faced during the transition, and its ongoing impact on mental health-care systems. Offers a multidisciplinary perspective, highlighting how various countries adapted to new psychiatric practices and the consequences for patients, communities, and mental health policies.

**Dowbiggin, Ian Robert. *Inheriting Madness: Professionalization and Psychiatric Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.**

Explores the development of psychiatry as a professional field in 19th-century France. Examines how psychiatric knowledge was shaped by social, cultural, and institutional factors, emphasizing the role of inheritance theories in understanding mental illness. Highlights the interplay between medical professionals and broader societal changes in shaping the practice and perception of psychiatry during this period.

**Engstrom, Eric. *Clinical Psychiatry in Imperial Germany: A History of Psychiatric Practice*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003.**

Delves into the evolution of psychiatric practice in Germany during the imperial period. Examines the professionalization of psychiatry, the development of clinical methods, and the institutional contexts that shaped psychiatric care. Highlights the dynamic interactions between psychiatrists, patients, and the state in the development of modern psychiatric practices.

**Grob, Gerald. *Mental Illness and American Society, 1875–1940*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.**

Examines the transformation of psychiatric practices in the United States from 1875 to 1940. Highlights how psychiatrists, faced with an increasing number of chronically insane patients and isolation from mainstream medicine, shifted their focus toward research, intensive care, and community-based prevention programs, often neglecting the institutionalized. Also explores the interplay between psychiatric theory, public policy, and administrative structures, providing a critical look at how professional and social dynamics shaped the treatment of mental illness

**Grob, Gerald N. *From Asylum to Community: Mental Health Policy in Modern America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991.**

Concludes a trilogy on the history of mental illness in the United States, highlighting the shift from institutional care to community-based treatment following World War II. Details how psychiatric care changed with federal involvement, psychopharmacological advancements, and the depopulation of mental hospitals, resulting in many chronically ill patients ending up in inadequate care settings. Uses extensive archival sources to critically analyze mental health policies and their oft-unintended consequences, maintaining a focus on chronically mentally ill throughout his narrative

**Lamb, Susan D. *Pathologist of the Mind: Adolf Meyer and the Origins of American Psychiatry*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014.**

Details Meyer's holistic approach to mental illness, emphasizing the importance of understanding patients' life histories and social contexts. Highlights Meyer's influence on psychiatric practice and his role in shaping modern concepts of mental health care in the United States.

**Metzl, Jonathan M. *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2010.**

Investigates the racialization of schizophrenia in the United States. Examines how cultural and political factors, particularly during the civil rights era, led schizophrenia to be associated with African American men. Highlights the impact of this racial bias on psychiatric diagnoses and treatment, revealing broader implications for understanding mental health and race.

**Noll, Richard. *American Madness: The Rise and Fall of Dementia Praecox*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.**

Chronicles the history of the psychiatric diagnosis of dementia praecox in the United States, tracing its origins with Emil Kraepelin and its evolution into the concept of schizophrenia, influenced by psychoanalytic ideas. Explores scientific and medical advancements as well as professional tensions and societal impacts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Particularly highlights the contributions of figures like Adolf Meyer and Bayard Taylor Holmes by weaving their personal and professional histories into the broader narrative of psychiatric history and its transformation.

**Scully, Andrew. *Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.**

Investigates the institutional and social responses to insanity in England during the nineteenth century. Provides a detailed examination of the development and operation of asylums, highlighting how they reflected and reinforced social hierarchies and norms.

**Topp, Leslie, James E. Moran, and Jonathan Andrews, eds. *Madness, Architecture and the Built Environment: Psychiatric Spaces in Historical Context*. London: Routledge, 2007.**

Features a multidisciplinary approach, including historians, geographers, sociologists, and architects offering diverse perspectives on asylum architecture from the sixteenth to the twentieth century across several regions, including Europe, India, and South Africa. Enhances the understanding of how the design and use of psychiatric spaces influenced and reflected broader societal norms and patient experiences

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## New Avenues of Inquiry

By the 1980s, a primary focus on psychiatrists, diagnoses, and asylums was seen as too narrow to fully capture the complexity of psychiatry's history, which needed to include more perspectives and voices. The article Porter 1985 was the most influential of calls for greater consideration of patients. Although this seminal work did not specifically address psychiatry, it had a profound impact, though monographs on the subject remain rare, as Bacopoulos-Viau and Fauvel 2016 laments in its revisiting of Porter's article thirty years later. Suzuki 2006 is a rare exception, exploring the dynamics of mental illness within families in early-19th-century England through "Commissions of Lunacy," part of a legal procedure used to declare individuals insane. Morrison 2013 focuses on (ex-)patients who banded together to "talk back to psychiatry." In addition to patients, nurses have become an important part of this turn in psychiatric history, amplifying multiple voices. Boschma 2003 offers a classic social history of nursing as a profession in the Netherlands between 1800 and 1920. In contrast, Dickinson 2016 examines how queer people were "cured" in British mental hospitals, telling the story from the perspective of the nursing staff rather than focusing on physicians. Science and technology studies (STS) and the material turn also

influenced the writing of psychiatric history. Hess and Mendelsohn 2010 examines how the collection and organization of patient histories into cases and series became a foundational method for generating medical knowledge. Ankele and Majerus 2020 explores the role of objects and material culture in psychiatry, emphasizing how everyday items help us understand patients' experiences and institutional practices. By the 1960s, with the rise of critiques of psychiatry and demands for deinstitutionalization, the boundary between madness and reason became more blurred: psychological deviance was no longer confined to psychiatry and asylums. New professions emerged, and viewing madness solely through a medical lens became inadequate. From this dual movement—critical approaches and the transcendence of a purely psychiatric view—two new ways of considering the history of madness emerged: mad studies and disability studies. The first, rooted in consumer/survivor movements, emphasizes the lived experiences of those labeled mentally ill. Menzies, et al. 2013 is a foundational work in mad studies, offering a critical examination of mental health issues from the perspectives of psychiatric survivors, mad-identified individuals, and their allies. The second goes beyond madness, exploring how impairments are socially transformed into disabilities. Lennard 2017 compiles essential readings and scholarship in the field of disability studies.

**Ankele, Monika, and Benoît Majerus, eds. *Material Cultures of Psychiatry*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript-Verlag, 2020.**

A collection of contributions from various scholars, exploring how objects such as textiles, furniture, and even medical devices influenced and reflected the lives of patients and the operation of mental health facilities. By integrating approaches from history, anthropology, and art, the volume offers a nuanced view of psychiatric practices and challenges traditional narratives, emphasizing the agency of patients in repurposing and interacting with their material environment.

**Bacopoulos-Viau, Alexandra, and Aude Fauvel. "The Patient's Turn: Roy Porter and Psychiatry's Tales, Thirty Years On." *Medical History* 60.1 (2016): 1–18.**

Revisits the influential essay Porter 1985, which called for a shift in the history of medicine to include patient narratives. Discusses how Porter's ideas have influenced the field of psychiatry, emphasizing the importance of patient voices in understanding the history and practice of mental health care. Despite Porter's impact, the article argues that the patient's perspective remains underrepresented in historical research and advocates for continued exploration and inclusion of patient experiences to gain a more comprehensive understanding of psychiatric history.

**Boschma, Geertje. *The Rise of Mental Health Nursing: A History of Psychiatric Care in Dutch Asylums, 1890–1920*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003.**

Explores the development of psychiatric care in asylums in the Netherlands from 1890 to 1920, a period marked by significant transformation in the treatment of mental illness. Details the shift from viewing psychiatric patients as "lost in reason" to recognizing them as individuals with mental illnesses, highlighting the profound changes in societal and institutional approaches to mental health care. Examines the impact of religious, political, and social forces on mental health institutions and emphasizes the critical role of gender in the evolution of mental health nursing.

**Dickinson, Tommy. "Curing Queers": *Mental Nurses and Their Patients, 1935–74*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2016.**

Uncovers the history of aversion therapy administered to homosexual and transvestite patients in British mental hospitals from 1935 to 1974. Emphasizes the role of nurses, rather than doctors, in these treatments, highlighting their complex motivations and often conflicted emotions, particularly for nurses who were themselves gay. Contextualizes these practices within the broader social and political shifts that went from viewing homosexuality as a crime, to seeing it as a treatable pathology, to, eventually, growing acceptance since the 1970s.

**Hess, Volker, and J. Andrew Mendelsohn. "Case and Series: Medical Knowledge and Paper Technology, 1600–1900." *History***

**of Science 48.3–4 (2010): 287–314.**

Although Hess and Mendelsohn do not focus on psychiatry, their article is highly relevant for the historiography of psychiatry. It highlights the role of paper tools such as indexes, tables, and registers in transforming individual patient observations into generalized medical insights, demonstrating how administrative practices and documentation techniques have profoundly shaped the practice and epistemology of modern medicine.

**Lennard, J. Davis, ed. *The Disability Studies Reader*. 4th ed. New York: Routledge, 2017.**

Covers a broad range of themes, including the social construction of disability, intersectionality, the impact of disability on identity and culture, and the role of technology and bioethics. Features contributions from leading scholars and activists who challenge traditional medical and charitable models of disability, advocating instead for a social and political understanding of disability.

**Menzies, Robert J., Geoffrey Reaume, and Brenda A. LeFrançois, eds. *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2013.**

The twenty-three chapters in this volume present a diverse range of voices and experiences, challenging mainstream mental health paradigms and advocating for the inclusion of lived experiences in understanding madness. Key themes include the critique of psychiatric practices, the importance of solidarity and community in challenging mental health stigma and discrimination, and the conceptualization of psychiatrization as epistemic violence.

**Morrison, Linda J. *Talking Back to Psychiatry: The Psychiatric Consumer/Survivor/Ex-Patient Movement*. London: Taylor and Francis, 2013.**

Explores the psychiatric consumer/survivor/ex-patient (c/s/x) movement, highlighting the experiences and motivations of activists who have been diagnosed with mental illness and their efforts to challenge psychiatric practices. Discusses how these activists resist the traditional “sick role” and psychiatric authority, advocating for more human rights, informed choices, and alternatives to standard psychiatric treatments.

**Porter, Roy. “The Patient’s View: Doing Medical History from Below.” *Theory and Society* 14.2 (1985): 175–198.**

Even if this article does not specifically address patients in psychiatry, it proved to be one of the most influential texts in the history of psychiatry, introducing the patient’s view in a history that had previously focused mainly on psychiatrists.

**Suzuki, Akihito. *Madness at Home: The Psychiatrist, the Patient, and the Family in England, 1820–1860*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.**

Focuses on the family dramas and societal implications surrounding Commissions of Lunacy, relying heavily on newspaper accounts and public records. Argues that the concept of “domestic psychiatry” and the famous “moral treatment” had roots in the home, challenging traditional psychiatric narratives and emphasizing the role of family and public perception in the treatment of mental illness.

## Beyond the Global North

Psychiatric science developed as a Western discipline, and its historiography developed in parallel. In Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East, colonial psychiatry was part of a form of governmentality that promoted an essential difference between colonizers and the colonized, grounded in racial hierarchies. It was not until the 1990s that historians began to focus on psychiatry as a body of knowledge both about and within the colonies, initially concentrating on the British Empire before expanding to other colonial regions. Ernst 1991 quickly became a classic, with the author’s work remaining central to debate on colonial India. Vaughan 1991 and Sadewsky



Ernst 1991 quickly became a classic, with the author's work remaining central to debate on colonial India. Vaughan 1991 and Sadowsky 1999 hold similar importance for British psychiatry in Africa. In the 2000s, other colonial contexts also became subjects of monographs, such as Pols 2006 on the Netherlands, Keller 2007 and Edington 2020 on French psychiatry, or Leckie 2020 on the Pacific. However, historians still face challenges in accessing experiences of mental illness in these regions. As a Western construct, the concept of madness often obscures the Indigenous practices that existed prior to colonization and persisted throughout the colonial period. Hunt and Büschel 2024 aims to overcome these biases in an edited volume, which more fully incorporates African perspectives.

**Edington, Claire. *Beyond the Asylum: Mental Illness in French Colonial Vietnam*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020.**

Moving beyond the focus on asylums, Edington examines how mental illness was institutionalized in Vietnam and how French psychiatric practices interacted with local Vietnamese beliefs and practices. She highlights the "colonial micropolitics" involving everyday interactions between French experts, colonial authorities, and Vietnamese families, revealing a more nuanced and hybrid form of psychiatric power.

**Ernst, Waltraud. *Mad Tales from the Raj: The European Insane in British India, 1800–1858*. London: Routledge, 1991.**

Highlights the unique institutional character and political functions of colonial asylums compared to their counterparts in the British Isles. Discusses the minor role of psychiatry in British India in terms of practitioners and institutions, and its significant symbolic importance as a mark of the "civilizing mission" of colonialism. Meticulously analyzes how insane Europeans were institutionalized to maintain the image of rational colonial rulers, and explores the British perception of India's environment as detrimental to mental health.

**Hunt, Nancy Rose, and Hubertus Büschel, eds. *Psychiatric Contours: New African Histories of Madness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2024.**

Explores the complex interplay between psychiatry, colonial power, and African cultures since the seventeenth century. Investigates how madness and psychiatric practices were interpreted, resisted, and transformed in African contexts, focusing on patient experiences, vernacular healing practices, and the psychopolitical dimensions of mental health. It aims to broaden the understanding of psychiatric histories by incorporating diverse African perspectives.

**Keller, Richard. *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in French North Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.**

Examines the interplay between psychiatry and colonial power in French North Africa, particularly Algeria, from the late nineteenth century through the postcolonial era. Reveals how colonial psychiatry was deeply intertwined with the processes of invasion, occupation, and conquest, transforming mental illness into a tool of colonial control. Traces the evolution of psychiatric thought and practice in the Maghreb, influenced by French and Indigenous perspectives, and the political and social consequences of these medical practices.

**Leckie, Jacqueline. *Colonizing Madness: Asylum and Community in Fiji*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020.**

Explores Fijian and Indo-Fijian perceptions of mental disorders, intersecting colonial legal frameworks with Indigenous caregiving systems, and highlights the complexities of diagnosing, treating, and controlling madness. Despite post-independence reforms, Leckie underscores the persistent struggles in Fiji's mental health care due to economic constraints and political instability.

**Pols, Hans. "The Development of Psychiatry in Indonesia: From Colonial to Modern Times." *International Review of Psychiatry* 18.4 (2006): 363–370.**

Traces the evolution of psychiatric care in Indonesia from the Dutch colonial era to contemporary times. Initially, mental health care during the colonial period amounted to large mental hospitals providing custodial care for both European and indigenous patients, with a significant difference in the treatments for each group. Post-independence, significant reforms were initiated in the 1960s, expanding

mental health facilities and integrating traditional healing practices, but the system faced challenges in the 1990s due to reduced government funding, leading to ongoing efforts to modernize and integrate mental health care in Indonesia.

**Sadowsky, Jonathan. *Imperial Bedlam: Institutions of Madness in Colonial Southwest Nigeria*. Berkeley: University of California, 1999.**

Details how colonial psychiatric practices imposed the label of madness on Nigerian subjects and explores their reactions to this stigmatization. Situates the experiences of these individuals within both the broader history of European psychiatry and the specific cultural context of colonial Nigeria. Highlights how the boundaries of “mind” were reconstructed for African colonial subjects. One of the most compelling aspects of the book is its use of documents that allow the voices of the “mad” to be heard, providing a nuanced portrait of how colonial power dynamics influenced psychiatric practices.

**Vaughan, Megan. *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1991.**

Investigates how colonial medical discourses constructed African identities, revealing the ways Western biomedical practices imposed meanings on African bodies. Explores recurring tropes about Africa in Western medical discourse, analyzing how specific medical constructions of African identity evolved within precise social and political contexts. Discusses shifts in medical discourse, from environmental views of disease causation to a focus on cultural and racial differences, detailing how these changes influenced medical practices and policies in colonial Africa.

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## A World beyond Anglophone Literature

Intended for an English-speaking audience, this overview has thus far included only English-language references. British historiography, notably through the Wellcome Centers, has been pioneering in many fields and has significantly advanced research on this topic. However, there is also a substantial body of literature in languages other than English that I would like to highlight, although it is limited by my own linguistic limitations. In the Netherlands, historiography is a dynamic field that has produced a wealth of research. Situated at the crossroads of three major psychiatric traditions (France, Germany, and Great Britain), the Netherlands provides a fascinating case study for understanding developments in Western psychiatry. Oosterhuis and Gijswijt-Hofstra 2008 offers a monumental history of psychiatry in the Netherlands. Brink 2010 presents a century-long history of how psychiatry and society were intertwined across different political regimes in Germany. Valeriano 2017 examines internment practices in mental asylums during the fascist regime in Italy, exploring how political regimes influence medical practices, while Babini 2009 provides a broader history of Italian psychiatry in the twentieth century. Inspired by the work of Porter 1985, Le Bras 2024 revitalizes French historiography, which has often been dominated by references to Michel Foucault, by focusing on the lives of individuals confined in asylums during the nineteenth century, revisiting narratives of gender and class in psychiatric history. Gender is also a central theme in Meier, et al. 2007, which explores the dual role of psychiatry as both a therapeutic and order-enforcing institution. Murat 2011 re-examines the complex relationship between madness and political upheaval in France, from the French Revolution to the Commune. Finally, Balz 2010 offers a microhistory of the introduction of neuroleptics—often hailed as the therapeutic revolution of 20th-century psychiatry—that challenges conventional narratives framing the discovery and establishment of modern psychopharmaceuticals as a straightforward story of medical progress.

**Babini, Valeria Paola. *Liberi tutti: manicomio e psichiatri in Italia ; una storia del Novecento*. Bologna, Italy: Il mulino, 2009.**

Explores the history of psychiatric hospitals and psychiatry in Italy throughout the twentieth century. Addresses significant periods and themes such as the impact of World War I, the dominance of biological and hereditary theories, the marginalization of psychoanalysis, and developments in shock therapies. Highlights lesser-known periods, particularly the 1950s and 1960s, which saw a mix of neurological dominance and the emergence of phenomenology. Concludes with a detailed examination of the cultural and political context leading to the 1978 Basaglia Law, which revolutionized psychiatric care in Italy by promoting deinstitutionalization.

**Balz, Viola. *Zwischen Wirkung und Erfahrung—Eine Geschichte Der Psychopharmaka Neuroleptika in Der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1950–1980*. Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript, 2010.**

Provides a detailed history of psychopharmaceuticals, specifically focusing on neuroleptics in West Germany from 1950 to 1980. Examines the complex social processes involved in their acceptance and use, particularly through a case study of the introduction of chlorpromazine, the first “modern” psychopharmaceutical.

**Brink, Cornelia. *Grenzen der Anstalt: Psychiatrie und Gesellschaft in Deutschland 1860–1980*. Göttingen, Germany: Wallenstein, 2010.**

Spans a wide timeframe, addressing the establishment of psychiatric institutions and how they changed with time as well as the legal, medical, and social discourses. Explores the development of closed psychiatric asylums in the 1860s, the asylum boom during the German Empire, and the complex interplay between psychiatric reforms, medical advancements, and eugenic ideologies in the Weimar Republic and Nazi era. Analyzes how economic pressures and political regimes influenced psychiatric practices, including the radicalization of eugenic policies and the implementation of forced sterilizations and euthanasia. Also delves into the postwar period, discussing the slow improvements in psychiatric care, the impact of public and media attention to mental health issues, and the gradual legislative reforms in the 1960s and 1970s.

**Le Bras, Anatole. *Aliénés: une histoire sociale de la folie au XIXe siècle*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2024.**

Examines who mental patients were, the reasons for their internment, and their experiences in asylums. By studying biographical trajectories and considering the impact of class and gender, Le Bras highlights the social, political, and economic forces that influenced the lives of the institutionalized. Le Bras discusses the dynamics of family involvement in the internment process, the varied reasons for internment (such as violence, suicidal thoughts, and alcoholism), and the gendered nature of psychiatric diagnoses. He also examines daily life in asylums, interactions between patients and their families.

**Meier, Marietta, Brigitta Bernet, Roswitha Dubach, and Urs Germann. *Zwang zur Ordnung : Psychiatrie im Kanton Zürich, 1870–1970*. Zurich: Chronos, 2007.**

Using quantitative analysis of patient records and detailed case studies, the authors examine various aspects of psychiatric history, including eugenic practices, forced sterilization, and psychosurgery aimed at treating “asocial behavior.” The book highlights the role of gender in psychiatric diagnoses and treatments, showing that women have been more frequently diagnosed with schizophrenia and subjected to disciplinary therapies.

**Murat, Laure. *L'homme qui se prenait pour Napoléon: pour une histoire politique de la folie*. Paris: Gallimard, 2011.**

Aims to re-examine the intricate relationship between madness and political upheavals in France from the French Revolution to the Commune. Explores how political crises influenced the concept and treatment of madness, arguing that madness itself is a political phenomenon, either emerging from the violence of events or used by authorities to suppress dissent. By analyzing case studies from early-19th-century psychiatrists like Philippe Pinel and Jean-Étienne Esquirol, Murat highlights the shifting perception of madness, from being seen as incurable to being treatable.

**Oosterhuis, Harry, and Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra. *Verward van Geest en ander Ongerief : Psychiatrie en Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg in Nederland (1870–2005)*. 3 vols. Houten, The Netherlands: Bohn Stafleu van Loghum, 2008.**

Written by the two most prolific historians of psychiatric historiography in the Netherlands, this three-volume work adopts an eclectic approach, utilizing a variety of theoretical concepts. It is notable for its detailed examination of the growth of outpatient mental health facilities, professional competition, and societal contexts that influence developments in mental health care.

**Valeriano, Annacarla. *Malacarne: donne e manicomio nell'Italia fascista*. Saggi. Storia e scienze sociali. Rome: Donzelli, 2017.**

Highlights how the fascist regime's repressive policies and increased police powers led to a significant increase in the number of asylum patients. Focuses on women who were institutionalized for not conforming to the regime's ideals, exploring how the nationalist and eugenic ideologies of the time targeted those seen as physically inadequate or morally deviant.

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