

'white' was a matter of legal review that was frequently contested in court. To Bodenhorn, this implies that legal recognition as 'white' or 'non-white' was associated with more than social standing. Second, the scientific literature surrounding colour and race married racist eugenics and crude measurement—lending further support to the amorphous definition of race in early America. These foundational chapters lay the groundwork for the empirical chapters that follow, each of which deals with one specific aspect of the consequences of colour. Drawing his empirical cues from the scientific discourse of the time, Bodenhorn concentrates on black–'mulatto' differences.

The most speculative chapters consider life on the plantation and the health consequences of colour differentials. Bodenhorn shows that the likelihood of a better position in the plantation hierarchy was related to skin shade and that 'mulatto' slaves were more likely to flee and to be granted freedom. Given that free blacks were more likely to be lighter-skinned, the increased advertisement for 'mulatto' slaves could have reflected their greater likelihood of blending in to free black communities. Bodenhorn also advances the proposition that some enslaved 'mulatto' individuals used sexual favours to their advantage. While provocative, it is difficult to determine how general such a practice was, or how we should interpret sexual relations during slavery, irrespective of skin colour. Despite an apparent height advantage, light-coloured blacks did not enjoy any mortality advantage. Bodenhorn does not fully consider the issues with measurement here, and some speculative work from Union Army veterans is at odds with the height advantage that Bodenhorn documents in the antebellum era, but he is careful to note how the height advantage is consistent with better nutrition and well-being.

The chapters regarding marriage and family, occupation, and wealth are thorough explorations of the antebellum colour relationship. Bodenhorn shows again and again that colour played a crucial role in social outcomes. There was assortative mating by colour, 'mulattos' had larger families than other African-Americans, they held higher-status occupations, and they were more likely to hold wealth. While Bodenhorn is careful to note that the effect was not causal, I was most impressed by the wealth of evidence that Bodenhorn brings to the analysis. He moves beyond the standard analysis of census data to use court records, church registries, free black registers, tax records, runaway slave advertisements, and other non-standard sources to document the extent and magnitude of the colour advantage.

The most interesting aspects, of which I would have favoured further exploration, lie in the post-bellum consequences of colourism. This would include the continuation of a colour advantage for light-skinned blacks despite the growing resistance to 'mulatto' as its own racial category. Although the book deals with plantation life in the shadow of colour, the impact of slavery as an institution on the continuation of colourism should also be explored comparatively. Bodenhorn hints that the current racial structure, where any deviation from whiteness is blackness, is the product of post-bellum racial categories. Fully outlining this intriguing point is beyond the scope of the current book, but Bodenhorn has laid the groundwork for future exploration of racial and colour analysis.

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Waltraud Ernst, ed., *Work, psychiatry and society, c. 1750–2015* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. Pp. xiii+378. 20 figs. ISBN 9780719097690 Hbk. £75)

This is a large (introduction plus 17 chapters) as well as significant volume, making it difficult to assess in a short review. Readers are therefore strongly recommended to read all the essays, as each offers an interesting and nuanced account of work inside and outside the

asylum in various places at different times. Institutional histories have always acknowledged that work was an important part of the asylum world, but moving analysis of the nature and purpose of patient labour from the margins of such studies to become the central focus of this volume has raised many important, if disturbing, new questions. The contributors are understandably sensitive to the issues of forced labour and patient exploitation, but many of the case studies show that it was the better institutions (measured against a number of criteria by contemporary as well as historical commentators) that prioritized work, even while explaining the competing agendas that informed the different work programmes as they evolved.

These findings make it more explicable that work was often central to efforts to reform particular asylums. Yet the case studies also make clear that there could be a significant tension between a commitment to work therapies and medical approaches that in the twentieth century sought to harness the potential of drugs, electroconvulsive therapy, and psychosurgery. Later chapters in the volume discuss how changing labour market conditions, and perhaps a greater acceptance of psychological casualties, also served to undermine asylum work programmes. Many of the authors develop their studies of work in an institutional setting against a backdrop of changing economic, social, and political conditions in a wider regional, national, and international context. This adds real richness and allows the reader to understand the diversity of responses to superficially similar crises of overcrowding and under-resourcing, together with the ongoing need to manage acute and chronic cases of mental illness, and to offer patients humane treatment in the face of public scepticism and even hostility.

Waltraud Ernst is to be congratulated for not only developing a project that has brought together such an impressive range of contributors, but maximizing the impact of their work. Careful editing has created a volume where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. There is a coherence to the selection and presentation of material that probably owes much to the success of the original conference that initiated the publication. It is, however, the introduction that really impresses. In a multi-authored work, especially one that deals with topics that are complicated as well as controversial, it is vitally important that themes and issues are introduced in a way that engages the attention of the general reader while also highlighting points of debate on which specialists will want to concentrate. Too many recent publications fall short on both agendas and just offer an abbreviated summary of what is to come. Instead Waltraud Ernst offers a research-driven introduction that provides a helpful model of what can be achieved with appropriate attention to large themes and important details. For all the sophistication of the arguments put forward, the introduction and the chapters that follow are very easy to read, making them accessible to a wide audience and hopefully a core text for students being introduced to the history of asylums.

Inevitably there are questions about what has been included and what has not. The international coverage is excellent, reflecting the editor's interest in transnational developments, but with several references to the influence of French psychiatry it is a shame that there was no essay concentrating on France. Many chapters also tend to focus on doctors and patients, with other staff such as nurses or attendants relegated to the margins and often viewed rather negatively. There was perhaps also more scope to discuss the attitude of family members to patient work before, during, and after periods of institutionalization, as personal research on learning disability provision suggests that this is one of the few topics that prompted conversation between asylum authorities and relatives.

Since this important edited collection is bound to stimulate further work, there are other avenues to explore, and its opening of new possibilities is a genuine strength of the volume. It therefore seems grudging to mention the very minor weaknesses, but there are signs of tension over the ordering of the chapters. Many cover extended periods in ways that perhaps prohibit a straightforward chronological arrangement, but although the editor makes a very

strong case for putting the final chapter last, my personal opinion was that it might have been better first, as the change of methodology as well as the 'then and now' contrast struck a rather discordant note for this reader.

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PAMELA DALE

Shellen Xiao Wu, *Empires of coal: fueling China's entry into the modern world order, 1860–1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015. Pp. xii+266. 12 figs. ISBN 9780804792844 Hbk. \$45.00)

The history of coal in China is a well-trodden academic terrain. Scholars have long looked to its intimate relationship with industrialization to understand how economic development in modern China 'succeeded' or 'failed'. They have also evaluated the role of foreign imperialism within this mix, but have generally minimized its importance or altogether discounted its significance. Shellen Wu's study of coal, by contrast, writes imperialism back into the heart of the modern Chinese experience, rightfully noting that it was an 'inescapable reality' (p. 20) in the late nineteenth century. Yet her study is concerned less with the tangible manifestations of imperialism such as gunboat diplomacy, unequal treaties, and foreign investment. Instead, it focuses more on the dialectical relationship between China and other empires (primarily German) in shaping an emergent global discourse on energy. This transformation in thinking was subtle but critical. Before coal could be *used*, it had to be understood as *useful*, and the pressing needs of industrialization impelled China to join other empires in a race to exploit the world's abundant anthracite. In the process, coal was reconceptualized, from just another commodity to be extracted and taxed, to an indispensable fuel powering a new economic order.

Wu's study adopts a comparative perspective by placing China within the constellation of industrializing empires grappling with the challenges of surviving and mastering this brave new world. It also takes a connective approach, by showing how shifting understandings of coal unfolded not in a domestic vacuum but within global circuits of exchange. Wu unpacks this conceptual transformation through three different subjects. The first are technical experts, the foreigners who were on the frontlines of identifying and exploiting China's mineral wealth. Some made lasting marks on history, like the explorer Ferdinand von Richthofen, whose famed expedition yielded the first maps and popular accounts of Chinese coal deposits. Others toiled outside the limelight, like the many engineers passing through China on short-term assignments, managing everyday mining operations and serving as the first geological experts in the Chinese academy. Famous or not, these experts have all since earned praise for promoting scientific knowledge as well as scorn for opening the doors to foreign imperialism. Yet this reading of history, Wu argues, overlooks the diverse motives and ignores the many ways in which Chinese officials and foreign experts made use of one another. More fundamentally, it conveniently forgets that the circulation of foreign experts was a global phenomenon, common in the west and Japan. Far from falling hopelessly behind the great game of imperial geology, China was thus actually emulating its peers to keep pace.

The study's second subject is technical knowledge, its transmission, dissemination, and consumption. Through a deep reading of formative Chinese translations on geology, Wu highlights the vital role of Protestant missionaries and Chinese literati as mediators of nineteenth-century science. Bringing welcomed light to the torturous process of translation also bolsters Wu's larger contention that science was less a 'static knowledge base' to be uncovered and more a 'social activity' shaped by cultural mores (p. 69). In any case, these initial forays at dissemination were quickly superseded by better translations,