

Victorian resistance to endorsing any form of moral relativism or dereliction of individual responsibility.

The final case studied is that of sleepwalking nursemaid Sarah Minchin who feloniously wounded her charge. This case of absence is perhaps easier to understand for the modern reader, as it was to the contemporaries who were familiar with such events in popular culture and lore. The jury's decision suggests sympathy with Minchin's "condition" not evident in the trial of Allnutt. It also serves Eigen with the greatest opportunity to investigate the aforementioned "ghost in the sleepwalker", that is, the criminal other that exists in the unconscious.

As stated on the dust jacket, Eigen "provocatively" suggests that these trials represent early incarnations of the multiple personality disorder. The reader should caution that this is not the only diagnosis that was yet to appear in the court system. You get the sense that Eigen had so much fun researching this book, that his choice of cases had more to do with what excited him, rather than what fitted neatly together, or that stood to support his final bold hypothesis. The chronology is often hard to follow. Further, more could have been made of the wider implications of the machinations and posturing of those claiming expertise in these cases. The stand alone chapters make it ideal for course reading. Eigen has accomplished the rare mix of combining academic rigour with a colourfully written, thumping good read.

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Katherine Watson, *Poisoned lives: English poisoners and their victims*, London and New York, Hambledon and London, 2004, pp. xiv, 268, illus., £19.99 (hardback 1-85283-379-4).

This book provides a fresh look at the social history of poisons and poisoners based on around 500 cases of criminal poisoning that occurred in England between 1750 and 1914. Watson analyses not only published sources but also the rich documents stored at the National Archives at

Kew. As a consequence, the study offers reliable statistical data about poisoning and includes a broad range of cases, not only the most famous and popular poisoning trials. First of all, Watson describes the main poisons employed in the nineteenth century, their effects on human bodies and the three ways of detecting them: clinical symptoms, post-mortem autopsies and chemical tests. The different value of these signs changed over the period and depended on the poison (as exemplified by the extreme cases of arsenic and strychnine). Moreover, Watson provides statistical data about the principal poisons used in English criminal cases and how they could be obtained by murderers and given to their victims. Most of the poisons were employed in many common activities (agriculture, medicine, vermin control, manufacturing, etc.) and there were no effective legal restrictions on the sale of poisons before the Arsenic Act of 1851.

The large number of cases studied by Watson offers a good opportunity to undermine some broadly diffused ideas about poisons and poisoners. Contrary to common opinion, which emerged from several famous nineteenth-century cases such as those of Dr William Palmer (England), Lucretia Chapman (USA) or Madame Lafarge (France), not all poisoners were women or doctors. Of 540 criminal cases studied by Watson, the number of male accused poisoners roughly equals the number of female. Most of them have a family connection with their victims (mother or stepmother, husband, wife, etc.) and just a small number were physicians or nurses. The most famous nineteenth-century cases involved middle-class murders or professional bourgeois groups but the main group of poisoners were members of the lower classes who usually turned to poison as a means of escaping their intolerable situations. Watson devotes a large number of pages to a detailed analysis of the reasons which drove poisoners to commit their crime: the "reasons of the heart" (unhappy marriages, adultery), unwanted children (extreme poverty, reluctance to assume responsibilities of fatherhood, indifference) and "the root of all evil": money. Around 120 cases were clearly carried out for financial motives: insurance money, inherited properties, frauds

and other cases in which the poisoners expected to gain or save money after killing their victims. Because of their important role, Watson looks at the influence of life insurance companies and burial societies and shows that the absence of real control methods on death certificates induced greedy relatives to commit many “insurance poisonings” between 1840 and 1890. Many other poisoning crimes were motivated by despair and vengeance, particularly in the murders committed by domestic servants and children. After poverty, jealousy, money and vengeance, mental illness was another important cause of murders and suicides by poisoning. This last small group of cases (less than a tenth of poisoning crimes studied by Watson) are however very significant because they act as a bridge between the two major branches of nineteenth-century legal medicine: toxicology and psychiatry. While chemical proofs offered a solid basis for expert witnesses, insanity was a slippery domain. The diagnosis of insanity was an endless source of trouble for medical experts who openly disagreed about the psychological (or physiological) origins of mental disease and the degree of individual responsibility associated with mental instability. Because most of these crimes were murders followed by suicides or attempted suicides, Watson offers some hints about the causes of suicide and, in so doing, she engages in a brief dialogue with early twentieth-century sociologists such as Emile Durkheim and Maurice Halbwachs, who wrote many influential pages about that topic.

Victims, poisoners and their motives are the most important historical actors analysed in the book. Just one brief chapter focuses on expert witnesses. Watson analyses how, before the advent of scientific police, inquests were held by coroners and justices of the peace. Most frequently, coroners opened an inquest after being alerted by neighbours, doctors, relatives or victims. If no doubts were raised at the time of death, crimes were likely to escape justice. Moreover, not all the potential witnesses (including many local doctors) were able to recognize the symptoms associated with poisoning. The study shows that inquests were highly dependent upon local conditions,

particularly the capabilities, zeal and financial resources of coroners, magistrates and police. The absence of remuneration for coroners and expert witnesses has been regarded as a major problem for the development of legal medicine. Watson also discusses how Thomas Wakley managed to promote the role of scientific and medical expertise, even though he was not the first medical coroner nor did he completely succeed in reforming the coroner’s practice. At the end of the nineteenth century, the number of coroners with medical training was only about 15 per cent of the group serving in England and Wales. Watson discusses other trends which increased the participation of the medical profession in the courts: control of death certificates, official legal status and remuneration for medical witnesses, resources for autopsies and toxicological tests, etc. In complex inquests, local medical practitioners were replaced by famous doctors from large urban centres who could develop a national reputation as toxicologists, Alfred Taylor and Thomas Stevenson being the most famous during the second half of the nineteenth century. New and more complicated toxicological tests encouraged that trend because local doctors lacked both chemical training and laboratory resources. In spite of the problems mentioned, Watson concludes that “the English inquest was nonetheless an important factor in the detection of secret poisoning” (p. 173). Finally, always relying on particular cases, Watson discusses the practice of criminal law in nineteenth-century Britain: the development of modern police offices, and their role in the investigation of cases of poisoning.

The book mostly offers a biographical profile of poisoners and their victims and a broad discussion about their concerns, motives and feelings. The impressive richness of the sources analysed leaves many avenues for future research: the diverse chemical tests and the actual toxicological practices, the emergence and construction of reliable toxicological proofs, the changing value of legal and toxicological evidence in courtrooms, the tensions between provincial experts and famous London toxicologists, the frequent controversies between

experts, the influence of poisoning trials in the public understanding of science, etc. It would be useful if future studies developed these questions as brilliantly as Katherine Watson has in this work, which will appeal not only to historians of medicine, technology and science but also to a general audience.

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Lydia Marinelli and Andreas Mayer,
Dreaming by the book: Freud's The interpretation of dreams and the history of the psychoanalytic movement, transl. Susan Fairfield, New York, Other Press, 2003, pp. 264, US\$28.00 (hardback 1-59051-009-7).

Few books can claim the status of Sigmund Freud's *The interpretation of dreams*. The record of a process of self-analysis, the book became the foundation for a new scientific methodology, therapeutic treatment, and cultural consciousness. In *Dreaming by the book*, Lydia Marinelli and Andreas Mayer examine Freud's text as an open-ended, collective creation within the psychoanalytic community. As they explain, that communal effort became a highly contentious one. Their convincing perspective provides valuable and intriguing insights not only into the composition of *The interpretation of dreams* but also into the culture of Freud's book.

The authors chart three phases in the reception and revision of *The interpretation of dreams*. In the first phase, the book became a tool of clinical and professional training, especially among Freud's adherents at the Burghölzli clinic in Zurich. At the Burghölzli, Eugen Bleuler and Carl G Jung used the dream book to assist in training psychiatrists in association psychology and in teaching them to recognize their patients' complexes. In the second edition, Freud accordingly drew attention to links between his own theories and the Burghölzli therapeutic approach. The book, however, never united Vienna and Zurich around a common clinical training or practice.

In the second phase of its history, the dream book became part of a strategy for Zurich and Vienna to cooperate in the field of applied psychoanalysis. In an illuminating discussion, Marinelli and Mayer examine how the study of dreams in both cities contributed to a collective exploration of symbolism, the results of which Freud incorporated into revised editions of the book. At the Burghölzli, Jung and his associates sought inner links between symbolic images and emotional complexes. In Vienna, Wilhelm Stekel attempted to create a popular dictionary of dream symbols. Freud's close Viennese follower, Otto Rank found in myth and literature parallels to dream language and images, and included an excursus on his finds in the dream book's fourth edition. The study of symbols became bitterly contested terrain in early twentieth-century scholarship. As Marinelli and Mayer show, the psychoanalysis of symbols proved equally conflicted, foreshadowing the ultimate departures of Jung, Stekel, and Rank.

During the 1920s, in its third phase, the book ceased being either a collective professional project or an organizational tool for the movement. Rather, through a growing number of translations, it appeared as the founding document of psychoanalysis and thus the necessary starting-point of its institutional history. During and immediately after the First World War, translators remained free to substitute their own dream material for Freud's in order better to explicate dream theory. With the effort to produce standard German and English versions, however, the original printed edition re-emerged as the authoritative text and Freud re-claimed sole authorship.

The appendices to Marinelli and Mayer's book include newly published letters from Bleuler to Freud, in which Bleuler describes his efforts to use the dream book as both a teaching tool and, less successfully, a guide to self-analysis. The supplements present two letters to Freud from his early Swiss supporter, Alphonse Maeder (one newly published, the other newly translated into English) in which Maeder responds to the concern, voiced to him by Freud, that members of the Zurich circle held anti-Semitic views.