Jennifer L. Lambe, *Madhouse: Psychiatry and Politics in Cuban History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. xiv + 325 pp. (Paper US\$32.95)

What is madness? And what role do psychiatry and politics play in its definition, institutionalization, or discursive construction and circulation? These are big questions, suggested by the very title of this book. In the introduction, Jennifer Lambe concentrates on the second with the proposition that Mazorra, Havana's notorious asylum, has mirrored the state, and "served as the state's measure, drawing attention, from the margins, to the state's central contradictions, inequalities and perversities" (p. 6).

Ranging from the late nineteenth century to the recent past, *Madhouse* attends to interactions among state officials, legal regimes, and clinical approaches to what has been variably termed insanity, or loss of reason. In addition, it traces some of the foundational theories of psychiatry and related social sciences such as criminology and forensic anthropology. Crossing the temporal divide that the 1959 Revolution often imposes on books about Cuba, the book's latter sections address postrevolutionary debates about mental health, including perceptions of homosexuality and the advent of "nervousness" along with the widespread use of prescription drugs to combat it. Some of these issues have received more historiographic attention than others, and this informative and well-researched volume happily brings together new and familiar material. As might be expected with such delicate subject matter, however, there are tough methodological questions that remain unresolved.

The Wars of Independence and subsequent U.S. occupation in Cuba marked a moment of renewal for Mazorra, founded in the mid-nineteenth century and widely recognized to be in need of reform. Lambe demonstrates that institutional reform served both imperial and nationalist interests and began with promise, but eventually became mired in struggles to maintain patients' health as well as to sustain autonomy in governance. During the Republic the institution shadowed both the accomplishments and travails of distinct administrations as they supported social science, debated the relationships among race, religiosity, crime, and mental health, navigated populist politics and episodes of graft and corruption, and negotiated ongoing ambivalences about the United States. The 1959 Revolution ushered in a temporary period of what Lambe calls "unity between hospital and state" (p. 16) under the directorship of Dr. Eduardo Bernabé Ordaz. Sections on the early revolutionary period contain some of the richest material about the experiences of inhabitants of Mazorra, ranging from salutary work regimes to brutalizing experiments with treatments for homosexuality. Here, claims about the parallel promises and

obstacles of the state and the hospital are most persuasively presented. The book moves away from Mazorra in the final chapters, considering questions of mental health in the broader context of Cuban society, including diasporic groups in Miami with an emphasis on the politicization of psychological discourses in literary and popular culture and in institutional contexts.

One of the biggest challenges of writing a book like this is dealing with the purported subject matter. Strategies of representation for the hundreds if not thousands of people who were institutionalized or designated as mad, or insane, must render humans out of dehumanizing source material. In some ways, the book's subject matter corners a researcher even before beginning: how to lend some dignity to people who have been described in the most abject terms in sources that are the primary material for analysis? Lambe promises both an account of some of the patients' experiences, and an effort to avoid replicating prurient social scientific or journalistic narratives. But the emphasis on politics and administration and frequent turns to descriptions of outlandish behavior or patient abuse, reinforced by photographs of Mazorra's inhabitants at their most vulnerable and exposed, undermines her proposed intentions. Madness is a complicated business, and situating it in its cultural and political contexts is crucial for our understanding.

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