



Mad travelers : reflections on the reality of transient mental illnesses /

Hacking, Ian

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1998

Case Reports

Case studies.

Casestudies (vorm)

Case studies.

Études

de cas.

Monografía

Albert Dadas suffered from a strange compulsion that led him to travel obsessively, often without identification, not knowing who he was or why he traveled. Medical reports of Dadas set off at the time a small epidemic of compulsive mad voyagers, the epicenter of which was Bordeaux but which soon spread throughout France to Italy, Germany, and Russia. Today we are besieged by mental illnesses of the moment, such as chronic fatigue syndrome and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The debate rages about which of these conditions are affectations or cultural artifacts and which are "real." In *Mad Travelers*, Ian Hacking uses the Dadas case to weigh the legitimacy of cultural influences versus physical symptoms in the diagnosis of psychiatric disorders. He argues that psychological symptoms find stable homes at a given place and time, in "ecological niches" where transient illnesses flourish. Using the records of Philippe Tissie, Dadas's physician, Hacking attempts to make sense of this strange epidemic. While telling his fascinating tale, he raises probing questions about the nature of the mental disorders, the cultural repercussions of their diagnosis, and the relevance of this century-old case study for today's overanalyzed society

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