Calming minds and instilling character: John Minson Galt II and the patients' library at Eastern Asylum, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1843–1860

Bettina Jean Manzo

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd

Part of the American Studies Commons

Recommended Citation


https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-vn9r-ha56

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.
CALMING MINDS AND INSTILLING CHARACTER: JOHN MINSON GALT II AND THE PATIENTS' LIBRARY AT EASTERN ASYLUM, WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA, 1843-1860

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the American Studies Program
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by
Bettina Jean Manzo
2004
APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Bettina Jean Manzo

Approved, November 2004

Robert A. Gross, Chair
University of Connecticut

John D. Haskell

Robert J. Scholnick

Carol Sheriff
DEDICATION

In memory of my grandmother, Elisabetta Biagioni.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I. The Rise of Moral Management in the Treatment of Insanity</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II. Reading in the Parlor, Reading in the Asylum: The Moral Managers and Patients’ Libraries</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III. John Minson Galt II: Family, Tradition, Destiny</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV. John Minson Galt II Comes of Age: Asylum Superintendent</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841-1861</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V. John Minson Galt II: A Man of Letters</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VI. “We Have Felt the Want of a Regular Library:” The Patients’ Library at Eastern Asylum, 1843-1861</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VII. Dissolution: John Minson Galt II, His Work, His Libraries</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A. Methodology in Compiling the Bibliography of Titles in the Patients’ Library at Eastern Asylum</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B. Patients’ Library, Eastern Asylum, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1843-1846, Alphabetical</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C. Patients’ Library at Eastern Asylum, 1843-1846, By Genre</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My especial appreciation goes to my advisor, Robert Gross. The interest he took and the time he devoted to making this dissertation as good as it could be is exemplified by a brief story. Sometime last year when I was struggling with the structure of one particular chapter, I received an email from Bob. He had awakened that morning thinking about my problem and had a suggestion to make. He had awakened thinking about my dissertation. Even I didn't turn my attention to my dissertation until at least mid-morning!

But that's Bob. His commitment to the obligation of serving as director of this dissertation was impeccable. Every chapter bears the stamp of his insightful commentary and suggestions, his wide, comprehensive knowledge of the relevant scholarship, and his editorial expertise. His standards of excellence set the bar very high indeed, but they made this study so much better than I ever envisioned it could be.

Many thanks to the committee members supervising this dissertation, John Haskell, Robert Scholnick, and Carol Sheriff, who willingly took on one more scholarly commitment among their many others, to share their insight, knowledge, and understanding of the topic and its context. A special thanks to John Haskell whose editing corrections strengthened this dissertation considerably.

Thanks also to the late William Gienapp, a true antebellum scholar and long a professor at Harvard University, who so many years ago expressed his confidence in my ability to pursue a doctoral degree successfully and inspired me to take the next step.

Others helped me in equally valuable ways. I spent many hours in the Special Collections Division at the Earl Gregg Swem Library, first at "old" Swem and then at the "new" Swem at Toano. But regardless of the location, the staff—Stacy Gould, Ute Schechter, Chandi Singer, and Gina Woodward—were always helpful in so many ways. I'd like to make especial mention of Susan Riggs, who often brought relevant documents to my attention and who always went out of her way to be sure I had what I needed; and thanks, of course, to the grand dame of them all, Margaret Cook. It was Margaret who first introduced me to the list of books kept at the patients' library and planted the seed of an idea from which this dissertation blossomed. Her knowledge of the Galt Papers, indeed of the entire collection of manuscripts held by Special Collections, is beyond what might be expected of any mere mortal.

There are others to thank at Swem Library. The Interlibrary Loan staff—Cathy Reed, Christie Arntz, Janet Elsasser, and Cynthia Mack—who again prove, if more proof be needed, that this department is indeed committed to helping its patrons find the sources they need and to placing them in their hands in the most timely manner.

And to the staff of the Circulation Department, who helped me track down all the books I needed, and especially to David Morales who cheerfully lugged tons of books back and forth for me from the Offsite Stacks without a look of reproach.
And finally, thanks to my Reference colleagues, who I know had to be wondering over the many years what in the world was taking me so long to finish this dissertation, but never made me feel like they were wondering. And to others at Swem who are too numerous to mention for being friends and colleagues.

Another round of appreciation goes to the Marty Kline, Assistant Director at Eastern State Hospital for his interest and support, and to Judy Belle, the librarian at the patients’ library, for allowing me the freedom to use the hospital’s library and archives. A special note of thanks to Wendy Gonaver who took time from her own dissertation to help me identify and locate relevant materials in the Eastern State Hospital Library archives, and who read through my dissertation and added helpful comments that improved the whole.

To Gail Greavy at John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library at Colonial Williamsburg for spending time with me to identify and retrieve documents and books related to Alexander Dickie Galt and his son, John Minson Galt II. Her knowledge helped me to solve a number of thorny problems in the final stages of this project.

Thanks, too, to Ben Reiss, Tulane University and Chris Zemla, Rutgers University, who working on similar projects, gave me the opportunity in conversation both by email and in person to clarify and draw my dissertation arguments more sharply.

Errors and omissions are inevitable. These I claim as my own.

And finally, a thank-you to my two sisters, Sylvia Mulherin and Sandra Whitlock, my brother-in-laws, Michael and Bill, my nieces and nephews, Jeannie, Michael, Kendra, and Will for being there to take my mind off academics and provide distraction when distraction was most sorely needed.

Thanks to all—may your tribe increase!
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Eastern Asylum Patients’ Library, 1843-1845, By Genre</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Eastern Asylum Patients’ Library, Date Distribution of Titles</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nationality of Authors</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Eastern Asylum Patients’ Library Comparison with Other Libraries, By Genre Percentage</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

In 1843, two years after assuming the superintendency at Eastern Asylum in Williamsburg, Virginia, John Minson Galt II established a patients’ library. It was not unique. Other asylum superintendents across America were building libraries for their patients as well, an essential component, they felt, of the broader moral management program borrowed from Europe and Great Britain for the cure of insanity. Along with other asylum activities, the library would help insane residents remain calm, recover stability by distraction from their delusions, and acquire mental habits of self-discipline. And in many cases libraries and reading would assist in restoring virtues that the superintendents believed to be closely associated with sanity—thrift, honesty, diligence, fortitude, hard work, and sobriety.

Within the context of moral management principles and of an antebellum culture that considered reading to be a virtue, the Eastern Asylum in Williamsburg, Virginia is a case study. Dating back to the late colonial era, Eastern Asylum was the only mental institution in America to have taken shape before the widespread adoption of moral management. Superintendent John Minson Galt II brought the Williamsburg asylum into the age of the asylum. In the 1840s and 1850s he created an environment for his patients that followed closely the standards set by northern asylums, except in one crucial area: the need to accommodate a regional culture predicated on the institution of slavery. In addition Galt’s economic and social background shaped the commitment he brought to the task of creating a patients’ library and the materials he selected for it. A man of letters, a trained physician, an affluent Virginian bound by southern and family traditions, a lonely man coping with his own psychological demons, Galt fashioned a print culture for his institutionalized audience whereby the illiterate might learn to read, the middle class might progress toward self-improvement, and where all, whether working class, middle class, or elite might become avid readers. Galt invited his patients, in spite of their mental problems or more accurately, because of them, to participate in that part of the larger antebellum society where everyone was expected to pick up a book and read.
CALMING MINDS AND INSTILLING CHARACTER
INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1862, Superintendent John Minson Galt II climbed the stairs to the top of the west tower of the Gothic dormitory at Eastern Asylum\(^1\) in Williamsburg, Virginia, and there with his neighbors, watched and waited in dreadful anticipation.\(^2\) The city of Norfolk had fallen to Union troops, and three columns of enemy soldiers were said to be marching up the Peninsula straight toward Williamsburg. Only eight months earlier, an optimistic Galt had bragged "the enemy could not possibly stand up" to the Confederate soldier, "but would at once sprint...to flight." Now with Union occupation almost a certainty he alternated between moods of agitation and despondency.\(^3\)

In better times, Galt had climbed the ninety-foot west tower only to enjoy the spectacular view. The York River lay to the east, the James River to the west, while directly below, Williamsburg sat neat and orderly, still adhering closely to its original street plan as depicted in an anonymous Frenchman's 1782 map. The wide sweep of the Duke of Gloucester Street dominated the village grid just as it had 100 years ago,

\(^1\)Norman Dain, *Disordered Minds: The First Century of Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Virginia, 1766-1866* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, distributed by University Press of Virginia, 1971), 2n; Dain notes that the Eastern State Asylum was called by many different names previous to 1841. In that year with the passage of new legislation affecting the structure of the asylum, the trustees were addressed as the “Directors of the Eastern Asylum for the maintenance and cure of insane persons.” It was only in 1894 that the asylum would be called Eastern State Hospital. To avoid confusion I will refer to the hospital as Eastern Asylum throughout this dissertation.

\(^2\)John Minson Galt II, *Diary*, (loose sheet of paper inside cover of the diary notebook, entry undated but probably May 3 or 4, 1862) Galt Family Papers I, (hereafter cited as GFP) I, MsV, Box 16, MsV77A, Swem Libraries, College of William and Mary; Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 167.

\(^3\)Ibid., 20 September 1861; 19, 20 February 1862; 6 March 1862.
although other colonial landmarks had disappeared or fallen into ruin. After the seat of state government had moved to Richmond in 1780, the Capitol building had changed hands several times, and fire and inattention had reduced the once fine, brick structure to rubble. In its place stood the white, porticoed Williamsburg Female Academy, a school built in 1839 for the daughters of affluent Virginians, although currently pressed into service for sick and wounded Confederate soldiers.\(^4\) The Raleigh Tavern a few blocks to the north, where Washington, Jefferson, and Henry had debated revolution and rebellion, had become a hole in the ground. A conflagration had swallowed up the tavern in 1859, and only its gable ends and foundation remained, gathering rainwater where local children played with boats in the summer and ice-skated in the winter.\(^5\)

For the forty-two-old Galt, the landscape was more than a collection of fading artifacts from Williamsburg's glorious past. It was a map dotted with personal memories. The small house on Woodpecker Lane, his childhood home now occupied by a slave family, still stood,\(^6\) while directly across town Galt could see the campus of his alma mater, the College of William and Mary. The main building of the college, the Wren, had been pressed into service as yet another makeshift hospital, and in classrooms where once Galt recited lessons in Latin and philosophy, he now treated soldiers suffering from fever, mumps, and measles with medicines from his asylum's apothecary.\(^7\) The college's


\(^6\) Elizabeth Neal Pitzer, *Sallie and Elizabeth Galt: Compliance and Resistance to the 'Southern Lady' Role in Antebellum Williamsburg* (master's thesis, College of William and Mary, 1985), 8. The east end of Francis Street was named Woodpecker Lane at that time.

\(^7\) JMGII, *Diary*, 25 June 1861.
library collection had been moved to the Brafferton, and the statue of Lord Botetourt, usually presiding over the courtyard had been placed at the asylum for safekeeping until the war was over. The courtyard once an empty field was dotted with over a hundred Confederate tents, soldiers and their accoutrements.

From his roost in the tower, Galt also could see best what he knew best—the Eastern Asylum grounds—his home for the last twenty years. When first established in 1773, the Williamsburg Lunatic Asylum had boasted only one small brick building that housed fifteen residents. By the time Galt inherited the complex seventy years later, the addition of two wings linked by covered verandas created a pleasant courtyard, while two separate buildings, the Doric and the Gothic, provided extra dormitory space. Smokehouses, stables, kitchens, and laundry facilities clustered behind the main complex across a narrow street.

The asylum grounds with only twenty acres in all, and tiny in comparison to other asylums in the country, still managed to project a parklike ambience to passers-by with its flowering trees, walkways, and semi-formal decorative gardens. In addition there was room for a vegetable garden where patients tended the potatoes, cabbage, turnips, rutabagas, beets, and peas served at the asylum's dinner tables. Partially encircled by

---

8 Ibid., 12 September 1861.
9 Whiffen, Public Buildings of Williamsburg, 190,193.
10 JMGII, Diary, 25 July 1861.
12 Ibid. "Figures 5 & 6," 101-02. An 1844 lithograph by Thomas Millington of the asylum and used on Eastern State's official letterhead depicts the asylum courtyard as a pastoral scene with cropped lawns, strolling patients, visitors, and several deer grazing in the front yard. A later lithograph done in 1855 by L.A. Ramn shows the same scene but with formal gardens and a profusion of new buildings and many trees. Both views probably exaggerated the asylum's attractiveness but were accurate in the essentials.
13 Eastern Asylum, Report of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum in the City of Williamsburg, Virginia, 1853. (Richmond: The Hospital, 1853), 44. The title and imprint of Eastern
walls and fences, and punctuated by a high, iron gate at the entrance, the asylum was home during peacetime to 250-300 patients, 20 staff, and 45 slaves. In wartime, the asylum was as much home to soldiers as it was the insane. Wagons and mules occupied the asylum grounds, the mules so thirsty they had exhausted the asylum's well reserves and so hungry Galt had sacrificed forage from the asylum's own supply. Soldiers, wounded and healthy, were a regular sight on asylum grounds, seeking either the medical care of a doctor or the spiritual counsel of the asylum chaplain. Occasional soldiers, just recently two from Louisiana, were even admitted as patients.14

John Minson Galt II had presided over the asylum for all of his adult life. Appointed superintendent when only twenty-one and a recent graduate from medical school, he had moved into the asylum in the summer of 1841 and spent the first of what was to be many nights there. His move to the asylum was as symbolic as it was real, for as he took the reins of management into his young, inexperienced hands, the changes that were to transpire at the asylum under his aegis between 1841 and 1862 were to be profound. Moral management, a system of care for the insane offering both humane treatment and a hope for cure, would finally reach Williamsburg's colonial-era lunatic asylum.

In 1862 as Galt stood atop his tower, he could see much of the past, but the future was clouded. On May 5 McClellan's forces marched into Williamsburg and took occupancy of the village and the asylum. Less than two weeks later John Minson Galt II

Asylum's annual report varied over the years as did the name of the hospital itself, and was known variously as Report of the Directors of the Lunatic Hospital at Williamsburg, Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Lunatic Asylum in the City of Williamsburg, Virginia, Report of the Court of Directors of the Lunatic Hospital at Williamsburg, Report of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum of Virginia, and so on. These reports will be cited under the uniform heading, Eastern Asylum Annual Report or (EAAR).

14Dain, Disordered Minds, 158; JMGII, Diary, 20 July 1861; 20 August 1861.
was dead at the age of forty-two.15

John Minson Galt II had reluctantly assumed the superintendency at Eastern Asylum in 1841, more in compliance with his dying father’s wishes than with his own ambitions. Once in the position, however, he became committed to creating a modern asylum in the model of moral management and to transforming Eastern Asylum from a place that warehoused the mad to one that actively sought to cure them. He became a charter member of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Insane Institutions (AMSAII), wrote a number of position papers for the organization, and contributed many articles to its professional journal, The American Journal of Insanity (AJII). In the decades before the Civil War then, as the north and south were slowly approaching Armageddon, Galt shared a common commitment to moral management and its therapies with his colleagues. Amidst a patchy quilt of sectional differences, the treatment of insanity in Virginia was part of the seamless whole that joined North and South together. In this realm, the two sections held far more in common than that which separated them.16

Despite the moral management approach Galt held in common with his colleagues and in spite of his contributions in shaping it, he was always to remain an outsider among his mental health colleagues, most of whom were older than he and hailed from the North. In addition, while many of his colleagues had pursued a physician’s career voluntarily in the hope of improving their status and incomes, Galt already came from an affluent background and had needed his family’s stern remonstrances to take up medicine as his life’s work; and while his colleagues had become asylum superintendents more by chance than by choice, Galt’s route to his

15Dain, Disordered Minds, 166-67.

16For further explanation of similarities and differences between the North and South preceding the Civil War see Edward Pessen’s “How Different From Each Other Were the Antebellum North and South?” American Historical Review 85, no. 5 (December 1980): 1119-49.
position as head of Eastern Asylum had been mapped out early in his life based on an obligation to tradition. The Galt family had managed the Williamsburg asylum from its inception in 1774. And finally, while his colleagues, once committed to the asylum profession, were willing to move from place to place to further their career prospects, Galt would always be tied by family, community position, southern values, and personal temperament to his small village in Virginia.

By far the most important difference between Galt and his colleagues, however, was the widening gap that grew between them in their views on professional issues. Tiny cracks became gaping chasms. In 1846 the *American Journal of Insanity* published excerpts from Galt’s first annual asylum report that included comments from the asylum minister calling for intrusive probing of a patient’s religious misconceptions. Amariah Brigham, a prominent New York superintendent, immediately denounced such ideas as dangerous, since such confrontation could only deepen a patient’s delusions. In the coming years Galt’s colleagues would also take exception to a number of his other management methods: his support of pledges, that is, promises made by patients to abandon unacceptable behaviors such as drinking, trying to escape, even suicide; his support of a total non-restraint policy as described by the British Lincoln Lunatic Asylum; and his admission of black patients and use of black staff at his hospital. In 1855, however, Galt crossed the line between simple, youthful wrong-headedness to malicious unorthodoxy. In an article for the *American Journal of Insanity* he suggested that patients be given more liberty outside the walls of an asylum, that the treatment of insanity might be modeled after the methods at Bicetre in Gheel, Belgium, where many of the insane were allowed to live in villages or on farms with sane families. This idea was not unknown to the other superintendents; it was unpalatable. By 1855 the institutionalization of the insane was well-established in America, and to accept the premise of integrating the insane into the community, no matter on how limited a basis, would not only have dismantled the institution as the focus of the treatment of the insane,
but the prestige and status of the superintendents who ran them. In addition to suggesting a Gheel-like system, Galt committed the unpardonable indiscretion of describing northern asylums as prisons and declaring American psychiatry as hidebound, needing not only reform but revolution. If there was one thing the superintendents had tried most to accomplish as a collective group, it was to destroy the public’s perception that the asylum was an institution of confinement and a place where the insane were thought of as no better than criminals. Galt had committed an unforgivable sin. The rupture between him and his fellows was complete, and the onset of the hostilities between the North and South erased any hope of eventual rapprochement.

If Galt varied in his opinions on a number of very important professional positions with his colleagues, he resembled them in at least one very crucial way. Like many of them he believed reading could play an important role in helping patients to recover their wits. Along with such moral management techniques as occupational therapy, recreational activities, religious services, indeed the very design and architecture of the asylum, reading could perform a variety of functions in keeping the insane tranquil, in distracting them from their delusions, obsessions, and depressions, in strengthening weakened brains, in helping them to believe (and hopefully to act) as if they were genteel guests living in a genteel setting. Yet reading, at least the right kind of reading, had another role to play as well, that of helping the morally insane, those who knew right from wrong, but still could not manage to behave accordingly, to recapture the virtues so valued by an antebellum middle-class society, those of industry, sobriety, thrift, honesty, and self-discipline.

In spite of the superintendents’ commitment to reading as a useful tool in the asylum, however, they certainly did not consider it an exotic activity, but rather saw it as the very foundation of their own lives. For most of the superintendents, as well as for others of their economic and social class, reading was a cherished activity, as integral and necessary to their world as waking up in the morning and going to sleep at night. When
they brought reading to the asylum they were certainly using it as a manipulative tool, but they were also sharing with their residents that which they themselves most treasured. In a culture that was undergoing great transformations—economic, religious, social, and political—reading was their anchor, their lifeline, their access to the world around them, their means of making sense of it, and in some way, controlling it. In bringing reading to the asylum they were merely sharing that which they themselves held in great esteem, rather than imposing upon the insane a form of treatment specifically created for them.

Reading, of course, had its dangers. By 1840 the market was flooded with all types of materials, some “pernicious,” and it was as important for the insane as well as the sane middle-class reader to avoid those printed materials. The term “polite literature,” that is materials drawn from acceptable genres of biography, history, travel, poetry, constituted the basis of any good library, and even novels once excoriated at their first appearance in the late eighteenth century, now too could be used to instruct, to distract, to entertain. In the world outside the asylum, it was for individuals to make whatever choices they might in selecting their reading matter. In the asylum, it was the superintendent’s (or his officer’s) prerogative.

Like many of his colleagues at AMSAI, Galt was a well-educated man who placed great value on gentility, learning, and self-improvement. From the first, his life was to be inextricably bound up with books and other printed materials. He was taught at home as a boy and also received private tutoring, and then as a youth received an excellent education at the grammar school and college at William and Mary. At nineteen he spent two years at the University of Pennsylvania’s medical school and there in the bustling streets of Philadelphia discovered the world of bookshops, book auctions, and fine libraries. Once home in 1843 he began collecting books for himself in earnest. Galt’s professional library was one of the best in the country, and because he could read and write many languages, the collection was international in flavor. He would learn not only from his American colleagues but from the moral management masters, Pinel and
Tuke, as well as dozens of other European doctors. Galt also collaborated with his sisters to build a family library, working most especially with his youngest sibling, Sallie, to accumulate perhaps the largest library in Williamsburg, one that would serve as a social and educational center for the many villagers who flocked there to borrow books and magazines.

A logical extension of Galt's voracious reading and study habits was his youthful ambition to become a scholar and author. He would make his fame in the treatment of insanity by becoming an authority in the field. He began by editing and publishing his father's case studies, then moved onto the larger task of publishing in a 500-page tome, relevant excerpts from the works of the most prominent doctors in Europe. He also set about publishing a variety of articles in the *American Journal of Insanity* about the effect of music on the insane, the segregation of the sexes, the medico-legal aspects of institutionalization, insanity in Italy, senile insanity, and the infamous Bicetre piece. He came to see himself, as did his relatives and other villagers, as a man of letters, a scholar, and although an adult, always a student.

Reading, books, and libraries played an immensely important role in his life, and these habits so central to the way he defined himself influenced his professional work profoundly. One of his first initiatives as superintendent at Eastern Asylum was to establish a patients' library and stock its shelves with over 200 books. Again, in this, he was not so different from his colleagues, for many of them, too, had established libraries, some with thousands of volumes, to use as one more moral management tool in helping patients to recover. In this sense, an examination of the patients' library at Eastern Asylum between 1840 and 1860 is notable for the way it illuminates a print culture specific to an antebellum subculture—the institutionalized insane. As useful, however, is the insight a detailed analysis of the collection at Eastern Asylum allows in demonstrating how one specific superintendent, John Minson Galt, dealt with the task of creating a print culture for his patients. With all his personal and professional

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
idiosyncrasies, his ties to the antebellum, mainstream, middle-class culture, and his exalted status as a scholar and man of letters in his own hometown, Galt allows us to see libraries for the insane on a dual plane. Not only were they the product of a moral management philosophy that mirrored the attitudes and approaches of the mental health profession and the values of the antebellum middle class, but they were also the creation of individuals like John Minson Galt II, who brought to his task of establishing a patients' library, his own set of personal values and experiences. From Galt's point of view, the asylum library had specific advantages that would help to cure his patients of their insanity and prepare them for life outside the walls of the asylum. Yet from another vantage point, the patients' library was as much a mirror image of him personally as it was of the moral management principles he and his professional colleagues espoused.
CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF MORAL MANAGEMENT IN THE TREATMENT OF INSANITY

When Royal Governor Frances Fauquier asked the Virginia Assembly in 1766 to provide funding for the establishment of a lunatic asylum in the capital town of Williamsburg, his motive was both humanitarian and pragmatic. The asylum, he explained, would provide for "these miserable objects who cannot help themselves," but it would also keep them from wandering "about the countryside terrifying the rest of their fellow creatures."¹ Fauquier's initiative, no doubt, was a response to the local pressures and concerns of his Virginian constituents, but from his worldview as an Englishman rather than a colonial, not a position without logic. A lunatic asylum was simply part of the collection of institutions "every civilized country"² should have. In Europe madhouses had existed for at least a hundred years and can be dated almost precisely to 1656, when the "Great Confinement," to use Michel Foucault's term brought about the incarceration in Paris of massive numbers of the insane, as well as the indigent, the disabled, the criminal class, and the diseased incarcerated in Paris. The practice rapidly spread across Europe. It represented a dramatic departure from the way the insane had been treated during the Middle Ages and to a lesser extent during the Renaissance when the mad interacted freely with the rest of society. Their presence and participation was an

¹Shomer Zwelling, Quest for a Cure: The Public Hospital in Williamsburg, 1773-1885 (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1985), 5.


12

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
acknowledgement of the dark but real side of human nature, which served as a foil to reason and, indeed, gave it definition. Initially the “Great Confinement” aimed at solving the problem of idleness among society’s estranged populations. It was the seventeenth century’s answer “to an economic crisis that affected the entire western world: reduction of wages, unemployment, scarcity of coin,” and the civil unrest that threatened to accompany it. But confinement of society’s undesirables became motivated much more by attitudinal than economic reasons, especially in regards to the insane among them. The eighteenth century was the Age of Enlightenment, whose leading thinkers celebrated reason as the central and defining characteristic of man. Those without it, most notably the insane, were an aberration of nature. Like animals without intellect or souls, the mad were to be separated indefinitely from the rest of society, silenced, and kept confined behind bars. The only way to master the animality of madness, it was thought, was through discipline and brutality.\(^3\)

Parallel with that view, however, ran a deep curiosity about insanity also characteristic of the age of reason. Men like Galileo, Descartes, and Newton had ushered in a period of intense scientific activity in the 1700s, which depended upon controlled experimentation and observation for the discovery of truth, rather than as in the past, upon the authority of church or state.\(^4\) Within this new culture, a new group of

\(^3\) Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 49, 54, 66. A variety of historians and critics have pointed out the factual errors in Foucault’s work, but his interpretation is important for providing a new way of looking at the dynamics of power and of societal attitudes toward the insane and their treatment in Europe over the course of several centuries.

professionals, the mad doctors—or as they preferred to be called, alienists (those who treated "mental alienation")—began to question and study the nature of insanity in earnest. They concluded that insanity was a bodily disorder like any other, but one that attacked the brain: 

"Madness was increasingly seen as something which could be authoritatively diagnosed, certified, and treated." 

Madness had become a disease. Tolerated and accepted as an important part of community life in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, silenced and incarcerated in the mid-seventeenth century, madmen became in the late seventeenth and most of the eighteenth century, as Foucault might have expressed it, subject "to perpetual objectification and judgment by official representatives of reason whose duty it [was] to bring him knowledge of his madness." 

The mad doctor's observation of insanity and the attempt to cure it would play out against commonly held principles of medicine during the period. Most physicians believed illness was related to an imbalance in the humors of the body—black and yellow bile, blood, and phlegm—a theory dating back to the ancient Greeks. The physicians' particular expertise lay in identifying the specific noxious humor causing a patient's ill health and in bringing it back into alignment with the others. Their therapies were aggressive and radical, often referred to as heroic, for they could kill as easily as cure.

rather than being confined by inclusive dates, has come to be seen more as a group of developments that occurred seamlessly from one time period to another.


6 Scull, "Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Age," in Madhouses, Mad Doctors, & Madmen, 6.

7 John W. Bernauer, Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Toward An Ethics for Thought (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1990), 41.
Bleeding was administered until a patient fainted. Blistering, the instigation of a second degree burn, was deemed successful only if the wound became infected and oozed pus. Purging, brought about by feeding the patient harsh emetics, provoked immediate and sometimes continuous vomiting or diarrhea.\textsuperscript{8}

These same theories and heroic medical treatments, once administered only to the sane with a diseased liver, lungs, or stomach, were now applied to the mad with a diseased brain. Even royalty was not exempt. King George III of England (1738-1820), who suffered from bouts of insanity throughout his life, was attended by a rotation of doctors who applied blisters to his head and neck, force fed him emetics, and bled him severely. As one contemporary observer noted,

\begin{quote}
the unhappy patient...was no longer treated as a human being. His body was immediately encased in a machine which left no liberty of motion. He was sometimes chained to a stake. He was frequently beaten, and starved...\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

Such was the nature of treatment for the insane, even those of royal blood.

Although ostensibly interested in finding a cure for insanity, the mad doctors of the eighteenth century were driven by more than scientific curiosity. They were one of many emerging professional groups in Europe trying to better themselves socially and financially. The mad doctors provided a special social service by "selling something intangible: skill and expertise rather than material goods," and a growing class of consumers, who often saw the insane only as a public nuisance or a family's shameful secret, were happy to avail themselves of the service. The mad doctors, like the new


\textsuperscript{9}Bynum, "Rationales for Therapy," 38.
class of dancing masters, man midwives, face painters, drawing tutors, estate managers, landscape painters, architects, journalists, and that host of other white collar, service, and quasi professional occupations which a society with increased economic surplus and pretensions to civilization generated.

had become an indispensable part of society.

In 1774 British parliamentary law codified the mad doctors' indispensability. It gave them legal responsibility for certification of the insane and for the regular inspection of madhouses, both safeguards applauded by a public which had a horror of being confined mistakenly. The mad doctors' prerogatives addressed the welfare of the lunatic; just as important he protected the "sane person's being improperly committed."11

In the last decade of the eighteenth century in Europe, a new model of treatment for the insane, moral management, emerged to challenge the domination and authority of the mad doctors, threatening their "income, prestige, and medical therapies."12 Phillipe Pinel (1745-1826), chief physician at Salpetriere and then Bicetre Asylum in Paris, William Tuke (1732-1822) of the York Retreat, England, and Vincenzo Chiarugi (1759-1820), Director of St. Bonafacio in Florence, are the names most often associated with this new humanitarian movement, but these men were really only a part of a larger general reform movement sweeping across Europe that affected not only asylums but prisons, workhouses, and poorhouses as well.13 The most attractive feature of moral management was the elimination of the brutality and neglect often associated with confining the insane. The mad doctors, in spite of believing the insane to be diseased and

10Scull, Masters of Bedlam, 5, 14.


12Bynum, "Rationales for Therapy," 44.

needing medical treatment, had made only token advances in improving the environment in which their patients were kept. The insane, it was thought, were impervious to heat or cold as well as to other harsh living conditions. Many of the doctor's techniques for jolting a patient into sanity involved physical intimidation and the inculcation of fear. In any case mad doctors did not have (nor particularly want) complete control of their asylums. The Monro family, for instance, a family of doctors associated with Bethlem Hospital in London for many years, and especially John Monro (1715-1791), actually made much of their income from private practice, using their position at the hospital as a springboard for making influential friends and garnering consultant jobs or prestigious clients:

Monro's hospital duties were understood by all to require nothing more than an intermittent attendance, leaving him ample time to prosecute a lucrative private trade in lunacy.\(^{14}\)

Important policy decisions about the hospital were made by the grand committees or governors who oversaw the hospitals, while the daily operation often fell to subcommittees or salaried officers. Together they created a well-entrenched, bureaucratic system that invited corruption and abuse. As a result, whatever the intentions of the mad doctors, madhouses in the mid to late seventeenth century had become synonymous with chains, beatings, sexual assaults on female inmates, and physical and mental torment. Ultimately both John Munro and the Bethlem apothecary, John Haslem (1764-1844), would be embroiled in scandals in 1815-1816 regarding the treatment of patients in their institution that would destroy their reputations and leave them unemployed.

As the mad doctors fortunes were on the decline, Pinel's and Tuke's were rising.

An apocryphal story has Pinel unshackling the inmates as his first official act at Salpetriere, a story that may have survived over the years because it so aptly captures the spirit of moral management philosophy and Pinel's approach toward the insane. An empiricist and pragmatist, Pinel had concluded that brutality simply drove the patient deeper into madness, while kindness coupled with firmness brought more positive results.15 William Tuke16 of England, a Quaker, arrived independently at the same conclusion. A young Quaker woman had died at Bethlem Hospital,17 London's infamous madhouse, under suspicious conditions, and worse, among non-Quakers. Determined that no fellow Quaker should again suffer the same fate, Tuke and a group of Friends raised the necessary funds to build an asylum, the Retreat of York, in 1792.18 Based upon religious principles rather than Pinel's secular empiricism, the Retreat reflected the Quaker belief that God's spirit or the inner light inhabited all men and women but could be dimmed by decadent habits. Insanity was the result. A return to a moral life would fan the embers of the inner light, return the patient to sanity, and more importantly save his soul.19 Like Pinel, Tuke found that kindness and respect directed toward the unhappy madman was much more conducive to rehabilitation than brutality. In his Retreat "neither chains nor corporal punishment are tolerated on any pretext."20

---

15Grob, Mental Institutions, 39-42; Scull, Masters of Bedlam, 30-31, 303n.97.

16William Tuke founded the York Retreat, but it would be his grandson, Samuel Tuke (1784-1857), who became best known for spreading the moral management gospel when he took charge of the asylum and wrote about it extensively.

17Bethlem, Bethlem, and Bethlehem all refer to the same London hospital for the insane.

18Grob, Mental Institutions, 43.


20Scull, “Moral Treatment Reconsidered,” in Madhouses, Mad Doctors, & Madmen, 111.
Pinel and Tuke, like the mad doctors, believed that excessive stimulation and irregular habits could trigger insanity but found the context for such stimulation in conditions brought about by social upheaval. Pinel cited the French Revolution and its aftermath as one source of agitation. Tuke placed the blame on the turmoil accompanying a changing economy that was increasingly replacing the small artisan's shop with large-scale factories. Both men believed it was imperative to remove the unhappy madman from the place and circumstances, and oftimes from the reprobate family and circle of friends, which had provoked his insanity and place him in the controlled environment of the asylum. There far removed from the conditions that had encouraged delusion, self-indulgence, and irrationality, the patient might regain his wits. Everything from the architecture of the asylum, interior decor, patient occupations, recreations and amusements to the kindly care of attendants and staff was organized to give the patient an opportunity to re-establish habits of self-control and discipline. This gentle but firm technique of moral treatment "sought to transform the lunatic, to remodel him into something approximating the bourgeois ideal of the rational individual" and held great advantage over intimidation in that "external coercion...could force outward conformity, but never the necessary internalization of moral standards."21

The moral managers' promotion of a more humane and compassionate treatment was acceptable to the mad doctors. What irked them was the insistence that medical therapy was useless in the treatment of the insane. At both Bicetre and The Retreat, the physician was at best a "shadowy figure," relegated to addressing only a patient's physical

21Scull, "Moral Treatment Reconsidered," 111. It is well to note here that while many historians, sociologists, and psychiatrists look at Pinel and Tuke as humanitarian reformers, Foucault strongly disagrees. For him Pinel and Tuke simply replaced one set of chains with another. Tuke's Retreat placed "the insane individual within a moral element where he will be in debate with himself and his surroundings: to constitute for him a milieu where, far from being protected, he will be kept in a perpetual anxiety, ceaselessly threatened by Law and Transgression." (Foucault, Madness and Civilization, 245.)
ailments. Bleeding, blistering, purging, and other heroic therapies were almost totally abandoned for they could not cure a problem thought to be moral and emotional rather than physical. Tuke, aware of the doctors' criticism, insisted that "minimization of medical therapy was not built into the institutional structure, it had merely evolved from careful observation." Pinel, too, simply pointed to the positive results he had obtained with the application of a "moral regimen exclusively" that gave credence to his "supposition that in a majority of instances, there is no organic lesion of the brain nor of the cranium".22

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the two groups of experts on insanity--the mad doctors and the moral managers--were on a collision course. The doctors were at a disadvantage. Although care of the insane had been their prerogative for almost a century, they had failed to prove conclusively that insanity was solely a physical disease. John Haslem, the famous apothecary of Bethlem Hospital and a firm believer in the "absolute right of the medical man to take complete charge of the care of the insane,23 had endeavored to bolster his position by performing hundreds of autopsies on the insane looking for and often finding brain lesions.24 Yet he could not refute the more important indictment against the mad doctors--their poor record in curing the insane. The harsh administrations of bleeding and blistering, mechanical restraint, and physical intimidation had no rehabilitative effect. The madhouses were more crowded than ever. The moral managers on the other hand bragged of a high rate of success with their gentler methods of therapy and claimed a cure rate reaching 99%. In addition moral managers held the higher moral ground, since the mad doctors had not endeared themselves to the public, beset as their asylums were by scandals like the "odd pregnancy of a female patient or

22Bynum, "Rationales for Therapy," 43, 42.

23Ibid., 47.

24Scull, Masters of Bedlam, 26.
sudden death of an inmate under mysterious circumstances." Or even worse the rumors of the confinement of harmless inmates like James Norris, who was kept naked and in a body cage chained to a wall for 12 years.

One thing both the mad doctor and the moral manager agreed upon was the need for institutionalization of the insane. The real question was, once the insane were institutionalized, who would treat them? In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, a combination of the two approaches—medical and moral—to curing insanity played out within the walls of the lunatic asylum. The moral managers admitted eventually that certain medicines like narcotics were useful at times especially for the most violent and excitable patients, and even occasionally administered bleeding and blistering for physical maladies. The mad doctors, on the other hand, conceded that moral management techniques were more humane and on a practical level made the patient more malleable and cooperative. They agreed to disagree as to the root cause of insanity.

In America in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, Benjamin Rush was the foremost popularizer of this combination of medical and moral management techniques. Rush enjoyed a national reputation, having served as a surgeon in the Revolutionary War, as representative to both the Continental Congress and to the postwar constitutional conventions, and as a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Europeans referred to him as the American Hippocrates. As documented by Michael


26Scull, Masters of Bedlam, 31-32. The case of James Norris was splashed across London newspapers and along with other examples of neglect and brutality eventually brought about the dismissal of John Haslem and John Monro from the Bethlehem Hospital in 1816.

27Scull, Masters of Bedlam, 206-8.

Meranze in *Laboratories of Virtue*, Rush in the postwar years became involved in promoting institutionalization of a wide range of populations within the community. In 1797 he wrote that punishing criminals in public with whippings and stocks, the traditional colonial methods, and parading them through the streets as public laborers, a method associated with the post-revolutionary period, was contradictory to achieving the desired end of lowering crime rates. Onlookers of such public displays of punishment sympathized with the criminal rather than seeing them as an example to avoid, and the criminal gained nothing from the exercise either. In short, "all public punishments tend to make bad men worse, and to increase crime, by their influence on society." In the spirit of humanitarianism, or as Meranze argues, in the spirit of liberalism that ostensibly placed the individual before the collective, Rush suggested criminals be removed from the community, away from the public eye to "houses of repentance" where they could be rehabilitated morally.29

Rush’s approach to the insane was somewhat similar. Rush was in charge of the insane ward at the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia between 1783 and 1813 and like the European moral managers, had come to believe that "disease, political institutions, and economic organization were so interrelated" that change in one inevitably affected the others. During times of social upheaval and political instability, insanity increased. He even echoed Pinel’s theory that revolution was especially likely to increase insanity but gave the theory a particularly American twist. The American Revolution, he thought, had not caused insanity. Quite the contrary. Within the revolutionary American generation, at least those who were Patriots, marriages were more fruitful, women less...

29Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996), 121. Meranze argues that confinement in the late eighteenth century was an attempt by public officials and private reformers “to recast the family and the individual in the likeness of a liberal society.” In their effort to “produce liberal citizens,” they increasingly expanded the subordination of individuals in the process (292, 251, 328).
hysterical, men stronger and more robust. Rather the aftermath of the Revolution was to blame. In his scheme, the excessive liberty that followed upon the heels of the Revolution, like an excess of anything, was a stimulus that inflamed blood vessels and created an imbalance in the brain. "The excess of the passion for liberty...produced in many people, opinions and conduct which could not be removed by reason nor restrained by government." He called this peculiar brand of insanity "Anarchia," an apt description for a period in which many men of substance and influence (like Rush himself) feared social disorder.30

Although Rush was one of the first Americans to embrace moral management theories in terms of root causes, he did not adopt its hands-off techniques as readily. In practice, he was more the medical doctor who clung to the therapies of bleeding, blistering, intimidation and physical restraint. He even invented a particularly odious restraint mechanism equipped with a wooden hood known as the "tranquilizing chair," which totally immobilized the patient and deprived him of all sensory stimulation. Not surprisingly after 24 hours in the tranquilizing chair, most patients became meek and quiet.31 Rush also occasionally allowed vanity to influence his choice of therapies. A good doctor like himself, he thought, could calm an excited patient simply by fixing him with his eyes in a commanding stare.32

30 George Rosen, Madness in Society: Chapters in the Historical Sociology of Mental Illness (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968), 176, 177. See also Gordon S. Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York: Vintage Books, 1991). Some Americans of the period were impatient with comparisons of the French and American revolutions. John Adams, for instance, translated, published, and distributed a pamphlet by a German who refuted the notion the two revolutions were similar or "proceeded from the same principles." (231)

31 Bynum, "Rationales for Therapy," 34.

32 The apothecary at Bethlehem, John Haslem, ridiculed doctors who claimed to be able to calm a patient simply by staring him down. He could not persuade one volunteer among them, he said, to "practice that rare talent tête à tête with a furious maniac." (Scull, Masters of Bedlam, 24).
In spite of Rush's sometimes harsh approach to the insane, his influence upon the treatment of insanity in America was profound. As a professor at the medical school at the University of Pennsylvania for thirty years and as the author of *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind* (1812), a work that would be reprinted well into the middle of century, he introduced many general practitioners in hamlets and villages up and down the east coast to the idea of insanity as a moral as well as a physical disease and to the philosophy of moral management.33

Although Rush popularized the philosophy of moral management in America, American Quakers were the first actually to transform it into a working reality. Quakers had strong ties to their British Friends and many had visited The Retreat in York or read about it in a book written by Samuel Tuke (William's grandson), *Hints on Treatment of Insane Persons*, available in America after 1815. The Society of Friends soon raised funds to erect the Friends Asylum in Frankford, Pennsylvania in 1817 modeled after its British counterpart. The Bloomingdale Insane Hospital, established initially as a part of the New York Hospital, was guided largely by Thomas Eddy, a Quaker, and the Hartford Retreat, while secular, was patterned after The Retreat in York, England as was the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane under the aegis of the Quaker superintendent, Thomas Kirkbride. Momentum for care of the insane shifted from the Quakers to other religious denominations, philanthropist groups, and physicians soon thereafter.34 Indeed "rivalry" among the various groups "stimulated philanthropic giving."

Wealth was not to be squandered indiscriminately, but was to be used instead for the benefit of all. The founding and support of socially desirable institutions such as hospitals, educational institutions, museums, and other philanthropic


enterprises were excellent outlets for expressing such a philosophy of noblesse oblige in a tangible way.

The issue of who would run the asylums—doctor or lay person—was settled rather quickly in favor of the physicians in America and without debate for a variety of reasons. Doctors like Benjamin Rush, for example, already had taken the first step in confining and treating the insane in their hospitals although on a small scale. In this sense they were the original caretakers of the insane in an institutional setting and so took an early interest in any discussions for asylum-building. In addition doctors were the most organized of all the professional and philanthropic groups lobbying for control and the most aggressive in taking a leadership role in establishing asylums in their communities. But most importantly there was no daylight between lay persons, who embraced the philosophy of moral management, and doctors, who did the same. Unlike the situation in Britain, the two groups found nothing to argue about. The Hartford Retreat, largely established and operated by doctors in 1824, became the prevailing model, although treatment fell under the larger umbrella of the moral management philosophy of treating the soul as well as the body.

Many of the asylums erected between 1810 and 1840 held corporate status and initially followed a policy of accepting all patients regardless of ability to pay. The financial burden over time proved unsustainable. While private monies might be sufficient to build an asylum, they proved inadequate to finance operations on a long-term basis. Inevitably such hospitals focused their energies on attracting and treating paying patients, imitating to some degree the private asylums like the one owned and operated by Nehemiah Cutter in Pepperell, Massachusetts, which served only the affluent. The exclusivity of the private asylum and increasingly that of the corporate

35 Grob, Mental Institutions, 50.
asylum created a growing population of indigent patients who couldn't be placed in either type of institution. The first, fully state-subsidized asylum established in 1833 at Worcester, Massachusetts, filled the breach with the charge to accept all patients, paying or indigent. The number of state asylums increased rapidly so that by 1860 every state had at least one public asylum, and in some states more than one, all committed to a combination of moral management and medical techniques in treatment of their insane residents.36

Why was the moral management philosophy and institutionalization accepted and even welcomed in the early 1820s, and why did it gain stature and credibility during the antebellum years in America? One crucial reason was America's close cultural ties to Europe. European and British mores, manners, styles in art, architecture, clothes, furniture, and literature influenced Americans' choices to a large degree, as it did American science and medicine.37 That the treatment of the mentally ill would develop along the lines initiated by the established models provided from abroad does not seem unusual. The "first critical stages of the American lunacy reform movement involved a heavy dependence upon ideas and examples that were borrowed from abroad" with

36Grob, Mental Institutions, 80-81, 85-86, 98. During the 1850s and under the aegis of a younger generation of superintendents unnerved by discouraging cure rates, psychiatric treatment started to lean more toward medical treatment over moral treatment, although it would not predominate until well after the Civil War. See also Samuel Barnett Thielman, Madness and Medicine: The Medical Approach to Madness in Antebellum America, with Particular Reference to the Eastern Lunatic Asylum of Virginia and the South Carolina Asylum (PhD diss., Duke University, 1986).

37The "germ theory" of earlier historiography maintained that all American political, social, and cultural institutions could be traced almost directly to those from Europe and Great Britain. The more likely scenario, as more recent historians have demonstrated, is that a mixture of foreign and vernacular influences came together to create a unique American culture. See Nancy Tomes, A Generous Confidence: Thomas Kirkbride and the Art of Asylum Keeping, 1840-1883 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 35-37 for her comparison of the origins, similarities, and differences between American and English asylums.
corporate asylums "marked at every turn by evidence of European inspiration and influence."  

Yet the treatment of the insane in America was unique as well. While Europe had spent almost a century and a half from mid-seventeenth to late eighteenth century treating the insane in madhouses and arriving at the "retreats" of moral management in the 1790s, America had not incarcerated its mad (or other deviants) during that same period except temporarily as the occasion and the individual might require. Colonists instead had kept their deviants at home or temporarily in jails or almshouses. Even Fauquier’s asylum in Virginia, which mimicked the madhouse of Britain, was never intended as a place of permanent confinement but rather as a way station for folks who had no family or were outsiders rather than locals. In any case the Williamsburg Lunatic Asylum was an isolated phenomenon and in no way set the example for the establishment of madhouses for the country. America rather went almost directly from keeping its insane at home to confining randomly a small number in medical hospitals to incarcerating them en masse in asylums where they might be kept as long as it took to cure them, or if cure was not possible, to keep them indefinitely.

David Rothman in his study, *Discovery of the Asylum*, sees additional differences of a peculiarly American nature. He argues that the post-revolutionary and early republican generations of Americans were eager to disassociate themselves from Great Britain and its customs, the latter of which included harsh punishments like flogging, the use of stockades, and other humiliations. Such methods of maintaining discipline, they felt, had been imposed upon the colonies many years earlier and had "stifled the colonists' benevolent instincts." Still something must be done about criminals and other socially unacceptable groups who roamed the streets causing mayhem, and, indeed, who seemed to be increasing at an alarming rate. If public punishments were abolished, what

---

38Scull, "Discovery of the Asylum Revisited," 144-65.
American social critics and reformers also wondered what caused so many deviants (including the insane) suddenly to multiply so rapidly. By 1820 they could point to a variety of root causes: geographical and social mobility, political agitation, religious ferment, family dissolution, and a market and manufacturing system that often provided opportunity for success but was accompanied by mental stress. All seemed to invite disorder and instability. Reformers looked nostalgically backward at eighteenth-century America when everyone had a place in society, knew it, and was quickly hustled back into line by family and friends if he strayed from his appointed role and responsibilities in the community. Such was no longer the case. The current situation seemed to “lack all points of stability.” How could Americans insure a return to a calmer, quieter, more orderly society?

Thus moral management and institutionalization with its emphasis on inculcating an individual with habits of self-discipline and self-restraint appealed. What a virtuous, stable community and family had once imposed upon an individual could now be performed by the individual himself if he were properly educated to it. Mandatory schooling for children, not only for intellectual but moral instruction as well, would become an integral part of society’s most valued institutions. For others who needed rehabilitation, the state would provide other types of institutions—almshouses, orphanages, prisons and asylums—that confined, isolated, and remolded. Such institutions “represented both an attempt to compensate for public disorder...and to demonstrate the correct rules of social organization.”

Moral management philosophy also appealed to Americans because it

---

39David J. Rothman, Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971). See also Wood, Radicalism of American Revolution for an exegesis of political thought that took Americans from monarchical to republican to democratic ideals and by 1820 left even Jefferson and Adams despairing of a society that seemingly had run amuck (366-67).
complemented a rising optimism among them, that in spite of the seriousness of problems like poverty, criminality, and insanity, they were not so thorny as to be unsolvable. Advances in science and technology that affected lives in a positive way, a vigorous religious revivalist movement that eroded the Calvinistic belief in man's essential depravity, and a general broadening of laws that allowed greater political participation among Americans gave them the sense they could solve their social problems, including the rehabilitation of the deviants among them.\textsuperscript{40} Under the auspices of moral management techniques within the institutionalized setting of the asylum, the insane could learn "self control and respect for themselves and others" and become "better men, more orderly and reasonable"\textsuperscript{41} and rejoin the legions of contributing citizens.

All of this is not to say that moral management theories and techniques were immediately accepted or even understood by everyone. Fear and ridicule of the insane would continue well into the nineteenth century, and institutionalization would continue to carry a stigma for many. As late as 1824, some onlookers were still willing to pay a fee "to be amused by the crazy people" and "to tease them" and some asylum keepers were still willing to let them.\textsuperscript{42} But attitudes about insanity and the new model of moral management as a form of treatment leading to recovery had become part of the national mentalité and would continue to gain legitimacy as a handful of new asylum superintendents began to shape the direction in which moral management of the mentally ill would take.

The thirteen doctors, who founded the Association for Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane (AMSAII) in 1844, as well as the hundred or so

\textsuperscript{40} Tomes, Generous Confidence, 38-43.

\textsuperscript{41} Grob, Mental Institutions, 164, quoting Samuel Woodward.

\textsuperscript{42} Dain, Concepts of Insanity, 51.
physicians who joined the association over the next decades, followed a professional path similar to that of the European mad doctors who had created a new service in response to a new need.\(^3\) In a sense the very men who would condemn the social mobility and fluidity of a changing society as a root cause of insanity would also help to create it. Middle-class, white, and Protestant, they were in their early thirties and forties except for Samuel White, the oldest at sixty-seven and John Minson Galt II, the youngest at twenty-five. Nine of them were New Englanders, two came from the Mid Atlantic states, and two, both Virginians, were from the south.\(^4\) They were men, who as Stuart Blumin describes in his *Emergence of the Middle Class*, were on an upwardly mobile track, part of an American population that was sorting itself out into classes of “men who worked with their hands, and men and families who worked with their heads.” They would set themselves apart from the mechanics and farmers by where they lived, the furniture in their houses, the churches they attended, the clothes they wore, the entertainments they enjoyed, and the values they espoused toward family, work, and leisure.\(^5\)

A common experience shared by some of them was an unstable childhood buffeted by the changing economic realities of the early decades of the nineteenth century. As a youngster, Amariah Brigham of the New York Lunatic Asylum in Utica\(^6\) had lived a vagabond existence moving from one farmstead to another in Massachusetts and then New York as his father tried to scrape a living from the land. Orphaned at


\(^6\)Many of the superintendents discussed here worked in several different asylums during their lifetime. I identify each superintendent with the asylum with which he had the longest association.
eleven, Amariah was sent to live with an uncle, a doctor/farmer, who died a scant three years later, leaving him and his siblings once again on their own and convinced of the "futility of a farming life." Another of the AMSAII thirteen, Charles Stedman of the Boston Lunatic Asylum, also gave up the idea of a career in farming as a youth. Being one of three male siblings made inheritance of the family homestead or even a reasonable part of it impossible. Yet another AMSAII charter member, Thomas Kirkbride of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, never entertained the idea of staying on his father's farm, since he was considered from the earliest age to have "a naturally delicate constitution" not suited to farming.

These three men were typical of many young men of the time, who in the face of a changing economic landscape, left the moorings of their fathers' homes to seek a more promising future elsewhere. Traditional routes to professional success in America had been medicine, law, and the clergy. They trained their sights on a future in medicine. Apprenticeship in the early nineteenth century was the most common way to become a doctor, but in a time of increased educational opportunity, these men believed that academic training and a diploma from the best colleges and medical schools of the time—Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, Bowdoin College, the College of William & Mary, the University of Pennsylvania—would give them a competitive edge. Upon graduation the

47 Constance M. McGovern, Masters of Madness: Social Origins of the American Psychiatric Profession (Hanover: University of New England, 1985), 31-32. McGovern uses a variety of classic biographical sources for her sketches, including American Medical Biographies, Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography, National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Dictionary of American Biography and others. I have added Henry M. Hurd, et al., Institutional Care of the Insane in the United States and Canada (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1916) for cross-referencing and additional information. At times the facts about specific superintendents tend to be contradictory. For instance, the ICIUISC states that all thirteen men came from humble, even poor families, except for Galt, but other sources disagree. Thomas Kirkbride and Pliny Earle, for instance, came from very comfortable and solid circumstances.

48 Nancy Tomes, Generous Confidence, 48.
new doctors expected to establish a private medical practice or obtain a position at a hospital and settle down to making a comfortable and rewarding life for themselves and their families. Their intentions again were thwarted by the new realities of the time. More than twenty-six medical schools had sprung up between 1810 and 1840 and another forty-seven would be established between 1840 and 1875, but a degree from any one of them, as the superintendents were to learn, did not guarantee success. The conditions of supply and demand were more important. The experience of William Awl of the Ohio Lunatic Asylum was typical. After graduating from medical school, Awl opened a practice in several different communities in Pennsylvania but failed dismally in attracting enough patients to make a living. An adventuresome man (or perhaps a desperate one), he hiked 300 miles in 1826 from Sunbury, Pennsylvania to Ohio with only a few dollars in his knapsack, there to try yet one more time to establish a practice. Like Awl, Amariah Brigham, too, made several false starts. He opened a practice in Enfield then Greenfield and finally Hartford but by his own admission, achieved only fair success and more often than not found himself in debt. Frances Stribling of Western Asylum in Virginia had no better luck. He launched his maiden practice in Roanoke, but the small village already supported five doctors and he could not find nor keep enough patients to make a living.49

Older, more established doctors were as vulnerable to the law of supply and demand as were the young medical school graduates. Samuel Woodward had opened a practice in 1809 in Wethersfield, Connecticut, yet sixteen years later found himself vying with six other doctors for patients in a town of 4,000. He supplemented his income by taking on medical apprentices (thus insuring even greater competition in his small village), by serving as a visiting physician to the state prison, and even by opening a general store. In the end he found, as did many of his colleagues, that an asylum

superintendency was the more sure profession by which he "could better himself."50

All of these men had been unable to turn their medical degree to gold, but like the mad doctors of England, they discovered a new niche emerging in the health care field which might satisfy their needs. A profession of caring for the insane would take advantage of their formal medical training and also offer many of the advantages they had hoped for as physician: a steady, regular income, professional status, and a sense of fulfillment.

Most of the superintendents had showed some interest in the subject of insanity previous to their appointment as superintendents. Pliny Earle of Bloomingdale Asylum in New York51 was especially assiduous. He had written his dissertation at medical school on insanity, an unusual choice, considering that neither the University of Pennsylvania, his alma mater, nor any other medical school, offered coursework on insanity at the time. After graduation Earle pursued additional credentials by touring European asylums to familiarize himself with the therapies and techniques of moral management as well as the administration of a large hospital. In addition he published two pieces on insanity in the American Journal of Medical Science in 1838 and 1839. Thus by the time the position of superintendent at the Friends Asylum opened in 1840, he was already known as someone who had both an interest and some expertise in the treatment of insanity.52

On the whole, however, the majority of doctors who became superintendents at America's first asylums, while interested peripherally in the topic of insanity as they were

50McGovern, Masters of Madness, 81.

51Earle worked in four asylums altogether with his last post at Northampton, Massachusetts, where he stayed for twenty-two years. Between 1850 and 1864, he did not work in the mental health field at all. He had left Bloomingdale in a disagreement with the Board over requiring patients to work as part of their therapy.

52McGovern, Masters of Madness, 75-76, 111.
other reform initiatives, had not intended to make it their life's work. Rather they were men who were largely unsuccessful in their chosen profession as general practitioners and had accepted positions working with the insane by default. While a superintendency was "not prestigious or lucrative," paying only $2,000 or less a year in the 1830s (much less than they might have made in a successful private practice), nonetheless, after struggling unsuccessfully for years, the financial security must have seemed irresistible. And it certainly was better than scrabbling and competing for patients like some vulgar fish monger hawking his wares on the streets of the city.

A secure income, while perhaps the initial attraction to a superintendency, was not the only, nor perhaps even ultimately the primary one. Such a position also provided an outlet for the humanitarian impulse each man possessed and had demonstrated in other activities in their lives. Raised as Unitarians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Quakers at a time when the evangelical spirit was sweeping the nation, the superintendents, even if not tent evangelists themselves, were very much caught up by the nation's new spirit of reform. Samuel Woodward's father had impressed upon him the need to help the "wretched and miserable;" Kirkbride often mused on how of all the qualities he admired in his father, he most valued his dedication in working "to benefit his fellow man." The other superintendents had imbibed similar lessons from their family, churches, and community, and all became involved as young men in one reform movement or another. Pliny Earle was an abolitionist, Isaac Ray and Nehemiah Cutter both active in education reform in their respective communities, William Awl and Thomas Kirkbride promoted the establishment of schools for the blind and deaf. Many

---

53 Grob, *Mental Institutions*, 135. While a superintendent's salary wouldn't make him rich, the position offered prestige and contacts that offered an opportunity for other types of investments. Pliny Earle left over $106,000 in bequests at his death, not a small sum of money for the period.

also found virtue in the temperance movement aimed at saving families from a father's drunken dereliction. The superintendents, then, while attracted to the financial security a career in the treatment of insanity would bring, also could find a rationale for changing careers midstream by virtue of the satisfaction and reward they might gain by working with a neglected population of unfortunates.

A final reason for the superintendents' willingness to change careers in midstream had to do with their ambition and the possibility that a directorship at an asylum if handled correctly might bring them as much or more prestige than as physician. Thomas Kirkbride of the Pennsylvania Asylum in Philadelphia is an apt example. Kirkbride had built a relatively successful practice in Philadelphia and had reason to believe that by "following a strenuous routine" he might attain both monetary rewards and prestige. Some of his hope for the future rested upon his appointment as resident surgeon at the Pennsylvania Hospital where he would meet influential people and have a steady supply of referrals from the best classes. But as he waited to hear news of his application he was offered the job at the asylum, and although he had refused a similar office years earlier, this time he accepted. He thought he might have a successful career with less stress and work as well as more time to spend with his family. Too, he may have feared he would never win a position at the hospital, and a superintendency of a large asylum could serve equally as well to fulfill his ambitions.

Very much like the mad doctors of Europe, who had built a profession in response to the demand for services, the new American superintendents found themselves in a precedent-setting position. An established system of care and treatment for the insane did not exist in America nor did standards for their new profession as caretakers to the insane. In 1844 the thirteen men took two important steps in legitimating their new

---

55 Ibid., 34; Grob, Mental Institutions, 134-35.
56 Tomes, Generous Confidence, 68-71.
profession. They founded a professional society, the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane (AMSAII) and established a professional journal, *The American Journal of Insanity (AJI)*.

With these two vehicles of communication in place, the American superintendents began to talk to each other and exchange ideas about insanity and its treatment. Amariah Brigham as early as 1844 offered a definition of insanity as "a chronic disease of the brain producing either derangement of the intellectual faculties or prolonged change of feelings, affections, and habits of an individual."\(^{57}\) As little as eight years later, however, Pliny Earle confessed, that "defining insanity was an impossibility."\(^{58}\) In any case definitions of insanity never preoccupied the superintendents as much as did the causes of insanity which they believed were rooted in America's social and cultural milieu. The new republic with "all the pressures of an urban, industrial, and commercial civilization" was "unnatural to the human organism"\(^{59}\) and created an environment where emotional imbalance was easily triggered, and then came inflammation or lesions of the brain. A compilation from asylum reports in 1852 listed over 176 precipitating factors which might trigger insanity, including loss of sleep, excessive labor, intemperance in snuff, smoking, opium eating, excessive study, preaching six days and nights, excitement over the Mexican war, daydreaming, celibacy, seduction, speculation in stocks, reversal of fortunes, tight lacing, sedentary life, old age, excitement of a lawsuit, political commotions, sudden joy, ecstatic admiration of works of art, being lost in the woods, blowing the fife all night, sleeping in a barn filled with new hay.\(^{60}\) In short, almost any

\(^{57}\)Amariah Brigham, "Definition of Insanity—Nature of the Disease," *AJI* 1, no.2 (October 1844): 97.

\(^{58}\)Dain, *Concepts in Insanity*, 72.

\(^{59}\)Grob, *Mental Institutions*, 156.

event, trivial or profound, common or uncommon, could precipitate madness. Sanity in nineteenth-century America was indeed a precious commodity.

In a sense the superintendents worked backward to arrive at the cause of insanity. The initial diagnosis was based on an individual's aberrant behavior—delusions, hearing voices, nymphomania, depression, anorexia, lack of response to outside stimuli, obsession with an idea, person, or event, talking to oneself, rage, maliciousness, filthiness, vulgarity—and then an event was sought to explain the madness. Dependent as their diagnoses were upon the "symptomatology of the disease," it was inevitable that a patient's behavior would be judged against a superintendent's own "own normative model" and those of his class. One superintendent was quite candid in admitting he sometimes relied upon the standards of others in identifying insanity:

Many patients at the moment of their admission, show no unequivocal signs of insanity; they loudly protest against the measure...Indeed weeks and even months may pass away before such signs are apparent under the closest observations.

Therefore he concluded "the fact of insanity must sometimes be taken on trust" with that trust being placed in the affidavits or testimony of relatives, friends, or local doctors.

To cure a patient of his insanity, the superintendents relied upon creating a calm, pleasant, "proper moral atmosphere." There within the walls of the asylum, located well outside of town, patients could be shielded from "the invidious influence of the community." Wholesome food, exercise, work, amusements, and most of all, a one-on-

---

61 Grob, Mental Institutions, 54-55, 155, quoting Pliny Earle, & 156; Dain, Concepts of Insanity, 6-7.

62 Isaac Ray, "Butler Hospital for the Insane," AJI 8, no. 2 (October 1851): 177. It seems entirely possible that a sane individual confined to a mental hospital for weeks and months without recourse might indeed begin to exhibit signs of madness.

63 Grob, Mental Institutions, 168, 166. The superintendents recommended that asylums be built at least two miles out of town, but never so far away that it was not a short ride to the city. No doubt it was necessary to have easy access to supplies and services for the
one relationship with kindly staff and doctors were designed to help the patient forego and forget the temptations that had brought them to their sad state and replace them with more positive and virtuous habits. A truly progressive asylum would boast private rooms for residents, dining halls, library, game room, lecture hall, museum, chapel, and recreation room. Activities like carpentry, weaving, spinning, gardening, parlor games, reading, concerts, dances, plays, group singing—all acceptable occupations common in the outside world—could be brought within the asylum walls to distract patients from morbid or delusional thoughts and to promote self-discipline and regular habits. The grounds of the asylum, also crucial to a healthy environment, should include flower gardens, "good land for raising all the vegetables required by the household," and idyllic walkways where fresh air and a closer relationship to nature could be established and patients might be "gratified and improved." All of these more homely features were supported by a hidden infrastructure of pipes and vents and flues engineered to insure cleanliness and convenience.

Although everything at the asylum seemed of one piece, patients were often treated differently from one another not only because of the level of severity of their illness, but according, too, to their class, gender, ethnicity or race. Males and females were housed in separate parts of the asylum and only rarely allowed to mingle without supervision. Women were given traditional female tasks of making clothes, ironing, making beds, and assisting in household duties, while on special occasions they might


turn to making dolls, pincushions, baskets, caps, gloves, and purses for sale at a forthcoming asylum fair. Men, on the other hand, worked outdoors often tilling the fields and gardens or indoors at the joiners’ or shoe shop. Class as well as gender was important in determining a patient’s activities. The upper and middle classes were not expected to engage in manual labor in the kitchens, laundry, gardens, or other shops unless they wished to do so, but instead passed "their time in various ways: reading, playing ball, rolling nine pins or in walking and attending school." The working class, immigrants, and the indigent, however, fell into that category of "patients disposed to labor on the farm, the garden, or about the halls and yards, or in the shops." The superintendents thought once a patient recovered she would return to her home, to her old circle of friends and relatives and station in life, be it poor or rich. Therapy at the asylum whether in the form of work or recreation could best aid that transition by surrounding patients with what they knew from their own homes and lives, minus the bad influences or excessive stimulation that had triggered the insanity. The class hierarchy in the asylum, then, resembled very much that of the outside world, and patients were relegated to separate spheres of those who worked with their hands and those that did not, those of the “middling sorts” or “better sorts,” and those of the “lower sorts” or working class.

Class status could also determine housing accommodations. If an asylum had the space, a superintendent might devote an entire building, a wing, or even a cluster of cottages exclusively to paying residents. Such patients were allowed to bring their own clothes, furniture, and if they desired, their own servants.

66 "Brief Notice of the New York State Lunatic Asylum at Utica," AJI, 6-7.

There seems to be no good reason why persons possessing ample fortune and accustomed to all the comforts and luxuries which wealth can procure should not when insane continue to enjoy of many of them as are not likely to prove injurious.68

If class greatly determined how an inmate lived, worked, and played, race was conclusive. Blacks were generally not admitted to asylums, at least not openly. The practice of "placing white and colored insane on the same wards [is] not best calculated to promote the comfort nor the welfare of either party,"69 said one superintendent. Such integration, if were to reach the ears of the middle or upper classes, would be the kiss of death for any asylum hoping to win prestige or paying patients. As a result most superintendents saw "racial segregation as a mark of superior management"70 and proposed separate institutions for blacks. Only John Minson Galt allowed blacks in his asylum, but within its walls and fences, the treatment afforded them reflected closely the status they held in the outside world.

Religious devotion pervasive in antebellum America was also integral to asylum life. At Brigham's asylum,

On Sundays no unnecessary labor is performed, and no diversions allowed; the patients are dressed in their best clothing, and a large majority attend the religious services in the chapel. Several assist in singing.71

Religion, the superintendents thought, promoted "the comfort and welfare of the


70 Gamwell and Tomes, *Madness in America*, 56.

patients" and provided a stabilizing and uplifting force that served to help the insane recover rather than impede it. At the same time, the superintendents guarded jealously their prerogatives and monitored closely a chaplain's activities. Calvinistic sermons dominated by fire and brimstone or harshly judgmental rhetoric were banned as were preachers enamored with gloom and doom scenarios of the hereafter. The "selection of a chaplain to a lunatic asylum requires caution," one superintendent advised. Those who were "too austere, denunciatory, and prone to dwell on the 'terrors of the law'," were not welcome nor were their "discourses...on the exceeding heinousness of sin, the certainty of eternal damnation, and the stern requisites of Divine Justice." Such diatribes had "done good to none, but have increased the sufferings and added to the delusions of many."72

At the other end of the spectrum, the superintendents disapproved equally of quasi-religious movements such as utopianism and transcendentalism which, in their view, promoted licentiousness and too much liberality.73 This attitude among the superintendents mirrored their conservative religious beliefs that encouraged a social gospel of helping the unfortunate but rejected what they considered radical, extreme views that only agitated patients and re-enforced their delusions and obsessions. The superintendents were also wary of clerical incursions into domains they clearly claimed for themselves: the identification, diagnosis, and treatment of insanity. An issue which particularly sparked conflict between the clergy and the superintendents involved the concept of moral insanity, a behavior in which the patient knew the difference between right and wrong but simply could not control himself from choosing the latter. Clergy defined such behavior as sin, not insanity, and felt it fell within their purview to

72"Religious Services in Lunatic Asylums--Duties of the Chaplain," AJI 2, no. 2 (October 1845): 120, 121, 123.

73David Rothman, Discovery of the Asylum, actually compares the new asylums with the new secular enterprises: they "resembled in spirit and outlook the communitarian movements of the period such as Brook Haven and New Harmony. There was a utopian flavor to correctional institutions." (133).
determine. Complicating the conflict were the divergent opinions among the superintendents themselves. The most prominent (and oldest) superintendents like Isaac Ray, Luther Bell, Amariah Brigham, Pliny Earle, and Samuel Woodward supported the theory. Others like John Gray, who was becoming increasingly influential in mental health in the 1850s, did not, declaring "some might think Cain morally insane, but God knew better." Such conflicts never threatened seriously the superintendents' commitment to promoting religious values in an asylum setting, but they did make it more likely they would adhere to Benjamin Rush's dictum, even if unconsciously, that science must be made "consistent with Christianity." 

Perhaps some of the superintendents' eagerness to paper over differences with the clergy and other influential groups in antebellum society derived from their realization that they could not afford to offend. Their position with the public was sometimes precarious and they needed all the support they could muster. They were not oblivious to the opinion some had of their institutions: "even now the prejudice against such establishments [insane asylums] is very great—that they are regarded by a large part of the unenlightened portion of the community, as prisons and dungeons, where men and women are confined in cells, chained, and abused." They also knew that many families were loath to send a family member away to a madhouse for fear of the social stigma that might be attached to them. "Without the financial aid and moral support of the families and friends of patients, the doctor's claim to expertise would have been meaningless" and their new profession made irrelevant. All the superintendents to some extent expended energy in shaping the image the public might have of asylums and used a variety of

75 Gamwell and Tomes, Madness in America, 19-20.
methods in the process, but Thomas Kirkbride was unparalleled in his public relations efforts. His annual reports, written ostensibly for his Board of Directors and legislature, were clearly aimed at a much wider audience. Through them he aimed to persuade the public at large that a madman was best treated away from home in an asylum operated by those like himself with expertise in the illness. He described the asylum in such attractive terms a fellow colleague thought his asylum must be more akin to a resort than a hospital. Kirkbride was able, on one hand, to relieve the family of any guilt in committing their loved one to an asylum and, on the other, to encourage guilt for depriving a loved one of the opportunity to be committed and rehabilitated.\footnote{Nancy J. Tomes, "A Generous Confidence: Thomas Story Kirkbride's Philosophy of Asylum Construction and Management," in \textit{Madhouses, Mad Doctors, and Madmen}, 122, 127-31.}

One useful tool in persuading the public of the efficacy and gentility of the asylum setting was by providing a variety of recreations for the patients. None was more evocative of middle-class ideals than the patients' library. From the superintendents' point of view, it was an opportunity to share that which they themselves most cherished—reading, books, libraries. At the same time it would serve in helping the patient re-orient himself to the world of virtue he had left behind when he lost his sanity, or in some cases, experience it for the first time. Yet, if as Richard Brodhead argues in his \textit{Culture of Letters} that the production of literature in any age grows out of a “distinct social audience,” that is, a specific group or groups within a society that can be identified by its “readerly interests, but by other social interests as well,” how then to make sense of the libraries these superintendents built for their patients? Obviously the insane were a captive audience, and so their libraries were tied more to the superintendents’ milieu and interests than to their own, although it is plain, the two sometimes coincided. The superintendents’ “distinct social character and historical situation,” vis à vis reading, printed materials, and libraries, would drive their ambition to share their love of books.
with patients as well as to integrate them into a program built on moral management principles.\textsuperscript{78}

CHAPTER II
READING IN THE PARLOR, READING IN THE ASYLUM:
THE MORAL MANAGERS AND
PATIENTS' LIBRARIES

In the summer of 1845 Isaac Ray, superintendent of the Maine Insane Asylum, sailed for Europe to tour the great asylums of Germany, France, and Great Britain. Although he found much to admire there, in one respect he felt American asylums were clearly superior. "It appeared to me," he wrote, "that reading was much less common than with us." While not surprised to see books absent in those institutions whose inmates were unable to read, he did think it unusual that "even among the better classes of patients, I saw few books lying about as compared with the abundance usually seen in our establishments."¹

Ray's expectation that books, magazines, and newspapers would be a visible part of any person's environment, but especially those of the "better classes," stands as commentary upon the formation of antebellum distinctions that separated society into

¹Isaac Ray, "Observations on the Principal Hospitals for the Insane in Great Britain, France, Germany" American Journal of Insanity (AJI) 2, no. 4 (April 1846): 362. In this article, Ray makes a number of comparisons between American and European asylums. In one remarkable passage, he explains how the superiority of the American political and social system made for a better madman. British asylums, he notes, are uncommonly quiet as British patients are "quiet, subdued, shrinking" in the presence of their superiors. In American asylums, there is a lot of "shrieking and shouting," because the American patient "recognizes no one better than himself" and when confined behaves like a "newly caged bird."
"men who worked with their hands, and men and families who worked with their heads." ²

By mid-century, books and reading had become indispensable symbols in defining a person of the "better classes" and a means of distinguishing those who were genteel and refined from those who were not. Books, along with other material objects that adorned the middle-class home, like desks, cupboards, dining tables, vegetable dishes, creamers, sugar bowls, pitchers, cups, saucers, wineglasses, decanters, punchbowls, carpets, upholstered furniture, washstands, mirrors, clocks, prints, musical instruments, and all the other consumer goods made common and affordable by advanced technology, were signs of gentility, refinement, and good taste, qualities which had become synonymous with virtue in the minds of the middle class.³

Creating the proper setting for display of such valued items was equally as important as owning them. While not all middle-class homes could afford to set aside an entire room as a library, many had the required parlor which was "free of work paraphernalia and beds and dedicated to formal entertainment and the presentation of the

²The term "middle class" was only beginning to come into use during the antebellum period. Americans themselves were much more likely to use the terms “ranks,” “stations,” or “sorts,” so the term is in some ways an anachronism. For further discussion, see Gordon S. Wood, "Middle Class Order," The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 347-69; Stuart M. Blumin's Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Mary P. Ryan, Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978).

³Richard L. Bushman, The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 228-30. Bushman sees the middle class acceptance of an essentially elite or aristocratic lifestyle in conflict with their values of republicanism which depended upon thrift and industry. One way to resolve the inner conflict was to elevate good taste to a principle of Christian morality (313-52).
family's most decorative possessions.\textsuperscript{4} Here one or more bookcases might be found where a family's treasured books might be displayed. Books had an additional advantage as status symbols, since unlike most other material objects they were portable. In gardens, coaches, trains, and boats, a man or woman carrying a book or engrossed in reading advertised her status as educated, virtuous, and genteel. Such coming together around books, whether abroad or in the parlor, identified the well-bred and genteel to themselves and to each other and created an effective means of generating exclusivity, an essential ingredient of their inner circle dynamics.

Manners were also crucial in presenting a genteel facade to the world. The way one spoke, walked, sat, danced, poured tea, or wrote a letter, in short the "hundred details of behavior that only well-bred persons could adequately comprehend,"\textsuperscript{5} all were part of an unspoken language that communicated a superior character. Here again books played an important role, for they were the most popular medium in teaching people how to behave appropriately. Refined people learned their lessons not only from the many etiquette books on the market but from scenes portrayed in domestic novels or the lithographs of ladies' magazines that portrayed polite society engaged in genteel activities. An 1839 short story appearing in a Delaware newspaper exemplifies how influential the printed word could be in this respect. In the story, the main character, Frederick, a well-educated gentleman, travels to the country disguised as a peasant, but his pretense is uncovered promptly simply by the refined manner in which he asks for lodgings:

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 251.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 291. For additional insight into the intricate dance of etiquette and manners of the antebellum middle class, see John F Kason's \textit{Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century America} (New York: Hill & Wang, 1990); Karen Halttunen's \textit{Confidence Men and Painted Women: The Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).
'Frederick knew it was too late to affect ignorance of literature.' Books had so shaped Frederick's manners that his refinement could not be concealed from a knowing observer, no matter how rustic the appearances.$^6$

In the antebellum world of defining oneself through material objects and behavior, then, books and reading held a favored status. Unlike all other items, books denoted, as did no other material object, an intellectual value and the presumption that their possessor was by association with them intelligent and well-educated. To own books was to own the wisdom and sentiments captured within them and to have mastered their lessons on comportment, home decoration and entertainment, their instruction on American republicanism, democracy, good citizenship, civic duty, thrift, hard work, responsibility, and their guidance toward spiritual enlightenment. In other words, books were the primary road to self-improvement in nineteenth-century America. Children from the youngest age were admonished to "love your books more than your play" and told such devotion would enable them to "command the esteem and respect of all who know you."$^7$

America's asylum directors, as members of a growing middle class with a disposable income, were as wedded to the values of gentility and refinement as any, and they seamlessly integrated these values into their professional work with the insane. Their desire to create architecturally attractive asylums, for instance, sprang from the moral management imperative to provide unhappy inmates with a pleasant, rehabilitative environment, but their idea of what constituted a pleasant environment was driven by the cultural parameters of good taste. Thomas Kirkbride, the leading authority on asylum


architecture, was especially keen on integrating as many genteel components as possible into asylum space: "The building should be in good taste and should impress favorably not only the patients but their friends and others who should visit." Security devices, the most vulgar aspect of asylum life "should be masked." Barred windows, doors, and gates were to be hidden "by arrangements of a pleasant and attractive character," while locks accompanying them "should not be conspicuous and should move without a sound."

Windows, too, need not be forbidding but of a "tasteful pattern and neatly made" no different "than what is every day seen in certain front windows of some of the best houses in our large cities." Architectural features, then, like other amenities enjoyed by the middle class in their own homes, would combine gentility with moral management and produce an asylum environment conducive to a patient's recovery.

The asylum superintendents like their peers placed a great deal of value on the knowledge gained from books and could pay no higher compliment to a colleague than to say he was well-read. The author of Amariah Brigham's obituary published in the American Journal of Insanity found it noteworthy to mention that the deceased had "an extensive acquaintance with books." He held his first job as a bookstore clerk at the age

---

of thirteen, a time

he spent not slothfully nor in idleness nor in the society of thoughtless or vicious companions, but in the constant reading of the books to which he had access. While his reading was doubtless without a definite plan and probably quite miscellaneous, he here acquired a fondness for books and habits of study which ever after constituted a noticeable feature of his character.

Such was Brigham's passion for reading, the obituary continued, that he indulged in it even when traveling. In Europe it was not unusual for him to purchase a ticket admitting him to a reading room or public library where he could spend such portions of his time as were not otherwise occupied. He frequently noted in his journal the authors which he read, the periodicals he found, and the facts or thoughts in either that particularly struck him.9

Indeed visiting libraries, private or public, was de rigueur for any superintendent who traveled. No annual conference of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane (AMSAII), an event that met in a different city each year, would have been complete without a tour of the local library or other institution that housed a book collection. From 1844 to 1860 the superintendents visited an impressive list of libraries that included the Boston Athenaeum, the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, Harvard College Library, the Mercantile Library in Cincinnati, and the Laval University Library at Quebec.10 Indeed in


1851 the AMSAI held one of their working sessions in the Pennsylvania Hospital's "beautiful Library-room." 

The superintendents had embraced reading early in life and had learned well the adage "to love your books above all else." Their textbooks were magazines, newspapers, and books chosen for them by parents and older siblings, private tutors, public school instructors, or a combination of all four. Samuel Woodward, superintendent at Worcester State Lunatic Asylum, like many of his colleagues attended a local district school as a youngster, but more important for his education in Litchfield, Connecticut, was the overall environment "distinguished for its large number of men of literary talent." Such a "literary atmosphere created by the association of intelligent persons" had instilled in him and his friends a "wholesome and aspiring ambition" that was thought would hold them in good stead the rest of their lives.

Pliny Earle, superintendent of the Friends Asylum in Frankford, Pennsylvania, also grew up with books and reading as a daily part of his life. His mother, an inveterate reader, habitually took an after dinner nap in bed, taking with her either a book and newspaper and reading until she fell asleep. She did the same on retiring at night.

So consistent and constant was this habit that it actually affected her physical appearance. She would lie on her left side while holding a book or newspaper extended in her right hand, so that "at the time of her decease the shoulder blade of that side was not more than half as large as that of the right side." 


13 Pliny Earle, Memoirs of Pliny Earle, F. B. Sanborn, ed. (Boston: Damrell & Upham, 1898), 6,7.
She taught seven of her nine children, including Pliny, the alphabet before they were twenty months old, using the New York Herald and the Bible as primers. When her mother-in-law remarked that "with her children she had made it a matter of principle not to call away one of them from reading to set them at work," Pliny's mother responded that should she follow that principle with her brood, "I should never get any work done by them."\(^{14}\)

Attendance at medical school further promoted the superintendents' dependence upon reading as a means of self-improvement. In the early nineteenth century, the lecture hall dominated the medical college curriculum, and experience in the clinical setting although available, was optional and not required for graduation. Rather the ultimate goal for a student was to pass final oral examinations, a goal that required he spend hours in his rooms or the library pouring over the lecture notes, books, and pamphlets recommended or written by his professors. Once a student graduated and set up a practice, books and reading took on an importance of a more practical nature, for "it was a rare physician who did not rely on one or more medical books until he had acquired considerable experience."\(^{15}\) Indeed books were often the only route to knowledge of the diseases and therapies neither studied at school nor seen in a clinical setting. As one book reviewer noted of a particularly good medical reference work, the book was well adapted to be more than a mere remembrancer to a large number of American practitioners, who are educated in a hurry, pressed through a 'course'...of professional reading, [and] diplomated upon the presentation of a matriculate's pass.\(^{16}\)

\(^{14}\)Ibid.


\(^{16}\)*What To Observe at the Bedside and After Death in Medical Cases*. Second
For the asylum superintendents, acquiring education through reading was even more crucial than for the general practitioner. Managing a large asylum, some the size of a small city, and planning a regimen of treatment for its residents was terra incognita for most superintendents accepting their first position, and they had little to draw upon for guidance. Benjamin Rush's work with its dependence upon blood-letting and tranquilizing chairs, while still popular among garden variety doctors, had already by 1849 lost its credibility among some moral managers. As George Sumner, who sat on the original planning committee of the Hartford Retreat, wrote: "We had no other guides than 'Pinel on Insanity' and 'Tuke's History of the Retreat.'"

So influential were the writings of Pinel and Tuke, the two giants of asylum reform, the American superintendents continued to honor them with eulogies and hagiographic obituaries years after they had been dead. In April 1846 Brigham

---


17 John R. Allen, "On the Treatment of Insanity," AJI 6, no. 3 (January 1850): 271-75; Luther V. Bell, "On a Form of Disease Resembling Some Advanced Stages of Mania and Fever," AJI 6, no. 2 (October 1849): 123.


19 "Extracts from the Eulogy on Pinel by M. Pariset Read before Royal Academy of Medicine at Paris, August 28, 1828," AJI 2, no. 3 (January 1846): 207-18; "Memoir of William Tuke, the Founder of the Retreat at York, England," AJI 12, no. 4 (April 1856): 346-51. There was some competition among the superintendents in seeing that both Pinel and Tuke were honored equally. Thomas Kirkbride, a Quaker like Tuke, took the occasion of Pinel's birthday celebration to remind his colleagues that Tuke has arrived independently at the same reforms as Pinel and thus should share in the praise.
celebrated Pinel's birthday at his asylum by decorating the chapel with tri-colored emblems of France and an engraved portrait of Pinel. The asylum choir sang a piece written especially for the occasion that began

Long, long had ceased the heart of man
To feel a brother's woe
When in the holy work of love
The God-like Pinel rose. [italics mine]

Female patients recited an ode to Pinel that praised him for freeing "imprison'd minds" and giving them the song of angels. The ceremony further included memorials sent to Brigham by Superintendents Woodward, Kirkbride, Awl and Ray. Awl, in composing his testimonial, said he had placed "a very fine likeness of that great and good man on his writing desk for inspiration. Such devotion from the superintendents clearly reflected their esteem for a man they felt had changed the course of the treatment of the insane. It also reveals the power the printed page had not only as the primary means of communication and dissemination of ideas but as a medium well-suited to creating cultural icons of mythological proportions. They knew Pinel only through his books (or those written about him), yet the superintendents had elevated him to a hero, even a god, who could converse with the angels and have them do his bidding.

American studies addressing mental disease were scarce in the early nineteenth century (indeed the superintendents would ultimately be the ones to create the body of American literature on the subject), so in addition to Pinel and Tuke they often turned to other foreign sources as well. Yet as with many other educated Americans of the period they desired intellectual independence from Europe and were more than ready to break

---

20 [Amariah Brigham], "Celebration of the Birthday of Pinel," AJI 3, no. 1 (July 1846): 78, 79, 80, 84.
the umbilical cord in fashioning their own native methods of treatment for the insane. Pliny Earle's sentiment in 1852 that "the time perhaps is passed at which foreign institutions for the insane could furnish us much information of practical importance," very much echoed Ralph Waldo Emerson's declaration fifteen years earlier, that Americans had "listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe," and the time had come when "our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close." Both Earle and Emerson wanted more things American, whether it was in the treatment of the insane or in literature they read.

The publishing industry responded to the latter demand. Between 1830 and 1842, of the 1,115 books printed in America, almost 60% were foreign reprints. A decade later, that trend had reversed. Of the 733 titles published in the United States in 1852, 420 or more than 50% were by Americans and only 313 from foreign sources. Magazine editors, too, were beginning to clamour for change. The editor of Godey's Lady's Book, America's most popular women's magazine, openly declared she would publish as much original American material as she could buy and hoisted the American flag even higher by promising to use only paper made in America for all Godey's issues.

---


23Ronald J. Zboray, A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public (New York: Oxford University Press), 3. These statistics were provided by George Putnam Palmer at the Association of New York Publishers conference on September 27, 1855.

The asylum superintendents, as much as they may have wished to break free from European ties, were drawn to foreign works by necessity. Finding "many things that he wanted were locked up in the French language," Brigham taught himself to speak and read French. When he died in 1849, fully a third of his library consisted of titles by foreign researchers and theorists. John Minson Galt's medical library, while probably not typical, held dozens of books published in Paris, London, and Edinburgh authored by the prominent European, asylum doctors and directors Favril, Haslem, Bucknill, Tuke, Georget, Guislain, Morison, Connolly, Esquirol, Hallaran, Browne, and Faret. Knowing more than one language was a desired accomplishment for any genteel, well-educated man or woman who wished to taste the full fruits of philosophy, poetry, and literature. It was especially important for the serious American asylum doctor who had little that was home-grown to consult.

For those superintendents who did not read other languages with facility, translations of important works or a summary of them were often provided in the superintendents' professional journal, the American Journal of Insanity. Of the 107 articles and notices printed in the Journal between 1844 and 1846, more than half were by European authors or about European asylums. Indeed two of the longest articles ever published in the Journal focused on developments abroad rather than at home. Isaac Ray's 101-page "Observations on the Principal Hospitals for the Inane in Great Britain,

25 Amariah Brigham, M.D., "AJI 6, no. 2 (October 1849): 187.

France, and Germany" appearing in 1844 was exceeded in length only by Pliny Earle's 200-page work, "Institutions for the Insane in Prussia, Austria, and Germany" that spanned 5 issues of the journal between 1852-1853. As Brigham noted, "Everything new relating to Europe is eagerly sought for..."27

American superintendents had more choice when it came to periodicals. In 1854-55, of the medical titles received for exchange or review by the editor of AJI, thirty-seven were American products as contrasted with only nine from abroad.28 In addition America stood with Berlin and Paris in the distinction of publishing a journal aimed solely at the treatment of insanity, while Britain had none, which Brigham noted perhaps somewhat smugly was "rather a wonder."29 At the same time, however, Britain did have a lay organization specifically created to award annual prizes to outstanding essays on insanity, a fact which did not escape Pliny Earle's attention. "When," he asked with some exasperation, "will a similar association be formed among the dignitaries of this land?"30 America had arrived on the international stage with its publication of the American Journal of Insanity, but recognition at home for the superintendents' expertise was still lacking. No doubt the contradiction between Brigham's pride and Earle's exasperation derived from their general uncertainty over the status of their fledgling profession, but their reaction indicates they viewed the printed word as an imprimatur that could impart gravitas and authority to their work.

27"Loiterings in Europe," AJI 5, no. 3 (January 1849): 278.
28"Books, Etc. Received," AJI 12, no. 4 (April 1856): i-iv.
In addition to strictly medical titles, a superintendent's library on insanity was also likely to include works of a philosophical turn. Scientific study was not as clearly demarcated from other humanist thought in the first half of the nineteenth century as it would become later and the line separating the two could be exceedingly murky. John Minson Galt's medical library included Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*, Hazlitt's *Essays on the Principles of Human Action*, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Locke's *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding*, Bentham's *Fable of the Springs of Action*, and Aristotle's *De Anima*, all titles of especial importance to one whose work it was to study the mind and its intricacies, but that would have been of interest to any gentleman with pretensions to being well-read.\footnote{John Minson Galt II Library.}

The porous line between medical titles and those that might have appeared in any educated gentleman's library was no more apparent than in the superintendents' willingness to explain the nature of insanity through fictional literature. The characters of Homer, Horace, Molière, Cowper, Byron, Fielding, Pope, Dryden, Rousseau, Madame Roland, Samuel Johnson, and above all, Shakespeare and Scott often helped them understand the real life cases they saw in their own institutions. Asylum directors, who were often unable to define insanity with any clarity in their medical literature, readily found definition in fictional works. Isaac Ray, author of "Shakespeare's Delineations of Insanity," wrote

\begin{quote}
It is a curious fact that metaphysicians whose special province it is to observe and
\end{quote}

\footnote{See Alexander Oleson and Sanborn C. Brown, *Pursuit of Knowledge in the Early American Republic: American Scientific and Learned Societies from Colonial Times until the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) for exploration of the transference of authority from the learned gentleman to the professional man.}
analyze the mental phenomena have shown much less knowledge of mind as
affected by disease, then writers of poetry and romance whose ideas are supposed
to be the offspring of the imagination, rather than a sober observations of fact.

If one wanted to shed light on insanity, he continued, one wouldn't look in Locke or
Stewart, but rather in the "pages of Shakespeare and Scott."  

Amariah Brigham, author of "Insanity, Illustrated by Histories of Distinguished
Men and by the Writings of Poets and Novelists," agreed:

Though both poets and novelists are considered fictitious writers, yet in
everything relating to the passions and emotions of mankind, the most celebrated
of them are the most correct ancients, Shakespeare, Molière of later times, and
Scott and Byron of our own for the most part psychologically and pathologically
correct.

Shakespeare's Hamlet, Ophelia, Lady MacBeth, King Lear, and Scott's Madge Wildfire in
*The Heart of Midlothian* and Clara Mowbray in *St. Ronan's Well* provided as good case
studies as any real persons in depicting an individual's descent into madness. The
circumstances of Clara Mowbray's insanity--the death of her mother, abuse by an
excessively harsh father, her "defective education"34--all conspired to send her into a
profound melancholy, a scenario that both verified and promoted what the
superintendents already believed about the precipitating factors of insanity.

The superintendents were on safe ground in talking to each other about insanity
through literature for they were all part of the genteel, reading middle class, which shared
a common knowledge of the roster of acceptable authors and required reading. Brigham,
Ray, and Earle, the superintendents who most wrote about literary subjects vis à vis
insanity, could refer to Scott and Shakespeare and other popular authors of the day,


34 [Amariah Brigham] "Insanity Illustrated by Histories of Distinguished Men and by
the Writings of Poets and Novelists," *AJI* 1, no. 1 (July 1844): 9.
confident their colleagues would readily recognize their names and be familiar with their work.

A superintendent built his medical library slowly. The new director who "had few if any books on mental illness in his library, so he must buy some" would have been in agreement with Galt's advocacy that such a library "be better paid out of the public purse," although how many were able to do so is unknown. As to the titles that should make up the core of a medical library should a director be able to afford them, Amariah Brigham published a bibliography of the best 100 books on mental illness in the *American Journal of Insanity* to give his colleagues a point of departure from which to work. The earliest title he listed was a 1737 work in Latin by Joan-Henric Schulze, *Casus Aliquot Notabiles Aegrotorum aut Perversorum*, while the most current was the "Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in Lunacy to the Lord Chancellor" published in 1844. Others on the list included the usual prominent European insanity experts with three each by Pinel, Georget, Haslem, Esquirol and four by the British doctor, Winslow. Eight were written in Latin, thirty-two in French, fifty-three in English, and one in German. Only four of the works listed were by the American doctors, Rush, Ray, Brigham, and Earle.


36 The full title is *Dissertatio Inauguralis Medica Sistens Casus Aliquot Aegrotorum Mente Alienatorum aut Perversorum (Introductory Medical Treatise Detailing Some Notable Cases of Foreign and Strange Mental Diseases)* (translation courtesy of James Deffenbaugh, Branch Librarian/Music Librarian, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William & Mary).

37 Amariah Brigham, "Bibliography," *AJI* 1, no. 2 (October 1844): 186-91. Kirkbride had to see this as another slight to Tuke's reputation. While Brigham included titles by Pinel, Pinel's son, Scipion Pinel, and even Pinel's protege, Esquirol, he listed not even one by Samuel Tuke.
In tandem with the belief that everyone should be a reader, the superintendents like many among the genteel classes also thought every man (or woman) might be a writer as well. As reading became pervasive among the middle class, writing became acceptable as a legitimate profession. Authors became minor celebrities whose company was sought after and about whom any tidbit of information was passed on eagerly in parlor conversations or letters to friends and relatives. A writer's reputation alone was enough to catapult a book into multiple printings earning them huge profits. Washington Irving, popularizer of the sketchbook genre, earned $9,000 in 1829 from his work, a large amount of money at the time for anyone, but especially for a writer, while James Fenimore Cooper, whose novels like The Spy sold abroad as well as at home "regularly earned $5,000 a book."38 Women writers or literary domestics, the cadre of genteel educated women like Catharine Maria Sedgwick, E.D.E.N. Southwork, and Susan Warner, found they could make a good living (and still hold onto their respectability) by mastering the new genre of domestic novels.39

Writing and authorship was not just for the professionals but embraced by the amateur class as well. Being able to compose a thoughtful letter or well-crafted poem, even if only for the local newspaper, revealed the author's sensibility and intellect. Composition was taken up by men, women, and children who schooled themselves in the art of the essay, poetry, short stories, and letters, even if their offerings went no further


than their small circle of friends and relatives.

For the superintendents, composition among the lay population was a double-edged sword, and a writer needed to exercise extreme caution in pursuing his muse. A poet's sensitivity under the pressure of adversity, suffering, affliction, and depression might give rise to "great poetical expression," but it could also throw his emotional state out of balance and make him "more liable than any other class of persons to the invasion of intellectual disease." Southey, Cowper, Poe, all men of great genius and creativity, were often mentioned and studied as unfortunate examples of this phenomena. "The eccentricities, caprices, and vagaries of genius and more especially poetical genius have so long been considered analogous to those of insanity, that the fact has almost passed into proverb."40

The superintendents themselves felt sure enough of their own mental stability to try their hand at writing, and some enthusiastically sought out opportunities to exhibit their literary skills to the public. Pliny Earle had some early success as a poet when one of his pieces was published in the Knickerbocker, a highly regarded New York magazine of the time. Another poem, "Soliloquy of an Octogenarian," did not fare as well. Edgar Allan Poe called the poem "beautiful" and promised it would "certainly appear in the first number" of the Penn Magazine, the new magazine he was to edit, but the magazine folded before even one issue rolled off the press, and Earle's "Soliloquy" fell into the slush pile. Earle eventually published a volume of his poetry in 1841 at his own expense, a not uncommon practice among amateur writers, but eventually he turned to medical

journals as a more hospitable venue for his prose, where his professional expertise guaranteed him a publisher and an audience. His work *The Curability of Insanity* first published in 1843 was considered a classic by his colleagues and was still in print as late as 1898. Earle had been unable to connect with the broad middle-class readership with his poetry, but in the small group of readers like himself—professional colleagues and others who might be interested in the topic of insanity—he had found a receptive audience. With them he shared a "group-based world of understandings, practices, and values," and they provided him his niche as a writer.

Many of Earle's colleagues followed his example and looked to establish their literary fame as professionals in the mental health field. John Minson Galt, Isaac Ray, Thomas Kirkbride, and H. A. Buttolph all became regular contributors to the *AJI* as well as other medical journals and there found a satisfactory outlet for their desire to see themselves in print. Probably no one succeeded more in establishing himself as a literary mogul than Amariah Brigham, who founded and edited the *American Journal of Insanity*. In addition to editing the journal he provided much of the filler, including numerous items, notices, and reviews for each issue that he himself composed. To be sure, the amount of time and money Brigham spent in establishing the *Journal* demonstrated his clear commitment to promoting the profession and the cause of the insane, but it seems equally clear that he enjoyed greatly writing, editing, and tending to all the minutiae involved in publishing as well.

The superintendents' commitment to reading and writing in their own lives

---


pervaded their efforts in rehabilitating the insane. Woodward wrote "Next to labor, I consider reading and writing the most valuable employments for the insane." Both activities required the insane individual to fix his attention on a single object, thus,

the mind is made to act in its accustomed healthy channels, the disorder of the mental machinery is for the time removed and its natural action adjusted. Even if this is temporary, it is well, for if one operation of the mind is right and rational, others may become so by association, and the healthy balance be finally restored.43

In this sense, books were as necessary for the patient as any medicine on the apothecary's shelf. A director had an obligation to provide reading materials for his residents and when necessary to take "great care in the procuration" of special books in much the same way he might purchase "an additional medicament to meet some rare, physical symptom." For the most part inmates should have what books they wanted. Those acquainted with foreign languages or those who had an interest in scientific topics should have relevant literature made available.44 For Isaac Ray the matter was more elementary: "A liberal supply of books is scarcely less requisite than a liberal supply of food and clothing."45

As with much else in moral management, the superintendents' belief in the curative powers of reading was not verified in any way other than by anecdotal evidence. One patient offered as an example of the efficacy of reading therapy was said to "read much and systematically, taking notes frequently," and in "this way his mind if not


improved (it probably was) did not become weakened." He stayed at the asylum three years and even though considered very mad, eventually recovered. The superintendent concluded it was important to "cultivate the mental powers to keep them active" no matter how hopeless the case might seem.\textsuperscript{46} Such examples, speculative as they were, formed the basis for optimism in using reading as therapy. Each superintendent, no doubt, could give similar accounts of individual, so that Superintendent McFarland was legitimately speaking for all his colleagues when he wrote that reading "contributed to the recovery of many and the marked improvement of all."\textsuperscript{47}

So confident were the superintendents in reading as a therapeutic good that in the second wave of position papers issued by the AMSAII, the topic of reading stood side by side with the much more practical issues of the treatment of the incurable insane, the relationship between phrenology and insanity, the utility of night attendants, the erection of cottages for wealthy patients, and the classifications of insanity.\textsuperscript{48} John Minson Galt II, assigned the task of preparing \textit{On Reading, Recreation, and Amusements for the Insane}, approached his subject with the proposition that the insane experienced "a nearly identical action from reading" as did the sane. Reading could serve not only as a route to instruction and religious counsel, but as a mode of abstraction from the earth's cares and anxieties as well as a recreation from the monotonous routine of daily life.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} "Insanity Illustrated by Cases and by the Conversation and Letters of the Insane," \textit{AJI} 1, no. 1 (July 1844): 56-57.

\textsuperscript{47} Galt, "On Libraries," quoted from Andrew McFarland.

\textsuperscript{48} "Second Meeting of the AMSAII, May 11, 1846," \textit{AJI} 3, no. 1 (July 1846): 90-91.

\textsuperscript{49} Galt, \textit{Essays on Asylums}, 7.
These four reasons were not so very different from the superintendents' own personal motivations for reading. Moral management theory and genteel values dovetailed in a way that made reading for the insane both a path to mental recovery and a primer for living in middle-class America.

A patient's level of literacy was crucial in the successful integration of reading into the asylum. In the world outside the asylum literacy seemed so widespread that an 1852 British visitor to America claimed "All Americans read and write." A decade earlier, the 1840 federal census on literacy had said as much.\(^50\) In truth, however, literacy was uneven across geographical sections and classes. Northerners were often the most likely to read, for educational reforms had established a public school system and mandatory attendance in many, although not all, of the New England and Middle Atlantic states. In the South the situation was less encompassing. Southern gentry, plantation owners, and even the white middle class depended upon paid tutors and private schools to educate their own children, and largely ignored responsibility for educating the general public. In addition southern laws made it illegal in some states for slaves, a large proportion of the population, "to learn to read or write and for whites to teach them."\(^51\) One historian estimates that 1 in every 16 persons was illiterate in the South compared to 1 in 156 in the rest of the country. Rates of literacy were uneven among the American working class as well, white or free black. Unlikely to have had but rudimentary schooling and having little leisure time, the laborer often could not afford to buy books, the candles necessary for night reading, or the eye glasses to correct poor vision. As in

\(^{50}\)Zboray, *Fictive People*, 36, 83.

other areas of life, the "middle class had access to books in the same way they did other material goods," while the poor did not.\(^{52}\)

The inmates of a public asylum, often a cross section of the society from which they came, possessed varying degrees of literacy. "Some [patients] have never been taught to read,"\(^{53}\) Galt admitted, but that misfortune could be remedied by the establishment of asylum schools. Brigham was the first to do so at the New York State Asylum in Utica with a two-hour morning and afternoon class, where lessons in reading as well as arithmetic, geography, and history were taught. Students were active participants and expected to perform "original pieces, recitations, music, and the performance of original plays and other exercises." Some inmates, he noted with pleasure "have here first learned to read and write"\(^{54}\) and had told him they intended to continue

---

\(^{52}\)Zboray, *Fictive People*, 12-16, 196. There has been considerable discussion and debate over the degree of literacy in nineteenth-century America and the methods used to arrive at literacy figures. Several of the U.S. Censuses for the antebellum period provide literacy status information, but its accuracy has come under increased scrutiny and criticism in recent years. See Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, 55-79 and William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 118-36. See also Joseph F. Kett and Patricia A. McClung, "Book Culture in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 94, no. 1 (1984):97-147 who use the 1840 census in their analysis of literacy, but admit, that at least for their study, "there is no good way to measure literacy;"(114) The same may be true when arriving at national or regional literacy rates with any certainty. For literacy among blacks, see Janet Drutorsman Cornelius, *When I Can Read My Title Clear: Literacy, Slavery, and Religion in Antebellum South* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991) and "We Slipped and Learned to Read": Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830-1865," *Phylon* 44, no. 3 (1983): 171-86; For a comprehensive look at literacy in Virginia, see David A. Rawson, *"Guardians of their Own Liberty:" A Contextual History of Print Culture in Virginia Society, 1750-1820*, 2 vols., (PhD Diss., College of William and Mary: 1998).


\(^{54}\)[Amariah Brigham], "Brief Notice of the New York State Lunatic Asylum at Utica," *AJI*, 1, no.1 (July 1844):6; [Amariah Brigham], “Schools in Lunatic Asylums,” *AJI* 1, no.3
the practice once returning home.

For those patients who could not master reading for whatever reason, they could listen to the reading aloud of their fellow patients and others. This latter method in a pauper asylum and particularly in the institutions of states where education is not general seems quite worthy of more attention than has been given it. Anecdotes in newspapers and interesting tales may thus confer as much pleasure upon those incapable of reading as upon those who possess this accomplishment.55

Reading aloud, however, was not restricted just to those who were illiterate. One asylum patient in New York wrote in his diary that

Monday and Thursday evenings are devoted to reading some new work selected by the officers of the Asylum. This evening we read from an interesting book entitled "Loiterings in Europe."56

Again this pastime was not so different from what occurred in the genteel parlors of the middle class outside asylum walls. Husbands and wives, children and parents, friends and sweethearts often read aloud to one another at home or at social gatherings and parties. Reading was a way of cementing sociability.57 While reading aloud may not have had

(April 1845): 327

55Galt, Essays on Asylums, 6-7.

56"Life in the N.Y. State Lunatic Asylum; Or, Extracts from the Diary of an Inmate," AJI 5, no. 4 (April 1849): 293.

exactly the same cachet inside the asylum, it certainly could maintain the illusion that the moral management environment was a genteel environment.

Some inmates were literate, but "although they have received an education are not fond of reading." Galt recommended the officers offer them every encouragement to overcome their "torpor and apathy" towards books and newspapers, "using due exertions to conquer this indifference." While somewhat coercive in tone, the superintendent's view of reading as a vital therapy made a patient's own desires in the matter inconsequential. It was well to put a book in a patient's hands no matter what. One inmate who carried the same sermon around with him everywhere said, "it was a good sermon and he intended to read it through every day." The superintendent seemed satisfied and noted that for this patient and perhaps others like him "some one book answers a long time." 58

Literacy or lack of it then was not an insurmountable obstacle in bringing a genteel pastime with therapeutic characteristics into the asylum setting. For those inmates who could not read, the asylum took the opportunity to teach them and help redefine their lives. Like a character in a domestic novel they could climb the first and most important rung to a successful life by receiving instruction from books. Those who could not or would not learn to read could still be read to and thus receive the benefits of reading through an intermediary. For those inmates who came from a genteel background where reading was an integral part of their world already, a return to such a familiar activity could only assist in restoring their sense of normality and eventually sanity.

The one hurdle even the most enthusiastic superintendent could not overcome, however, was a patient's mental instability. While those patients who had retained their

---

mental powers could "turn with eagerness to so potent a solace of weary hours," residents on the other end of the continuum,

whose minds are so much weakened and affected that they not only take no interest in reading, but appear not to comprehend or appreciate what they may still possess, the power of articulating in print were hopeless. Galt acknowledged somewhat reluctantly that they were of a group where "reading may be considered perhaps as wholly inappreciable." The same held true for those patients whose minds were "reduced to a state of idiocy of greater or less completeness" or for those caught up in a "paroxysmal state of maniacal attack." Galt's use of the word "perhaps" suggests he could barely tolerate admitting that reading was not a useful adjunct activity for all.

The ability of an inmate to read and appreciate what he or she read was only part of the equation in integrating the most genteel of all activities into asylum life. The type of printed materials provided for the patients was equally important and depended to a large degree upon the particular asylum and its director. The superintendents as well as all of antebellum society were faced with a new, crowded market of an ever-widening array of printed materials both in content and format from which to choose. The high costs traditionally associated with production of books, magazines, and newspapers had fallen considerably owing to a spate of technological advances in the printing and papermaking processes, and in addition a more effective dissemination of goods via railway and river canal lowered costs even more. An aggressive, innovative, although highly volatile, publishing industry took advantage of the new circumstances and flooded America's bookstalls, bookshops, and peddler's wagons with books, magazines,

59Ibid., 8, 9.
newspapers, and pamphlets of every sort. For asylum directors this presented a dilemma. On the one hand, reading was therapeutic for the patients and in any case, one of the most desirable possessions of a civilized, refined population. On the other hand, all "the trashy literature" which was flooding the country was playing a significant part in rising rates of insanity.\(^{60}\) What was a superintendent to do?

Most asylum directors followed Emerson's adage that "Books are the best of things, well used; abused among the worst,"\(^{61}\) and within the parameters of what they themselves might read, were liberal in providing their asylum residents with a great variety of materials. Censorship was largely of the unconscious variety with materials chosen for patients based on the superintendents' own reading patterns and judgments of what was proper, morally instructive, and genteel. "On the whole," Galt wrote, "I do not apprehend that there are many rules applying to the insane with regard to reading which differ essentially from those applicable to the sane."\(^{62}\) It was no accident that Galt linked reading with rules. Like his fellow superintendents, Galt believed that there were indeed rules for reading as for all of life, and boundaries clearly existed which the genteel reader should not cross. In the outside world readers were expected to monitor themselves and adhere to the rules, excluding works from their libraries that were too exciting, unhealthy, 

---


or ripe for "poisoning the moral sense."63 Inside the asylum the superintendents assumed that task for the patients. Materials that were "of an immoral tendency" or had a "pernicious influence" were not welcome.64 Romance novels, as one example, a popular genre despite its many critics, were especially corrupting of youth who might spend undue time "in reading romances and reveling in imaginary scenes of future happiness" rather than attending to a "moderate and rational notion of life and its duties and the firm resolve to discharge them faithfully and timely."65 The insane, already suffering from overstimulated imaginations and a lack of attention to duty, didn't need novels that "excited the emotions," producing just the opposite effect of what a therapeutic course of reading was meant to accomplish inside the asylum. Indeed one book reviewer saw the connection between novel reading and insanity as clearly as did the superintendents, declaring "the novel reader little better than a lunatic."66

The superintendents did not condemn all novels. By the 1830s domestic novels had achieved respectability. Works by women like Maria Edgeworth or Mary Martha Sherwood, well-educated women from the "better classes," were morally instructive and

---


64 Galt, Essays on Asylums, 9.


66 Baym, Novels, Readers, and Reviewers, 55-56, 57; See also Adrian Johns, The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Even in the seventeenth-century novels were associated with insanity. Robert Boyle, the famous scientist, for instance, was advised to read only "learned books," especially mathematics, "not that of the romances," to counter his bout with melancholy. (380-81).
promoted the ideals that made women fit to be wives and mothers. They wrapped the instruction of proper manners, dress, comportment, and above all, virtue, wisdom and gentility around a gripping plot and a dramatic cast of characters thus making the lessons more palatable than those found in etiquette books. A common theme highlighted the "beautiful, gracious, but unrecognized young woman," often poor, who through her own efforts rose "out of obscurity of a village to the bright splendor of the great world."

Children's books such as Goody Two-Shoes, first published in 1765, but still popular in the first half of the nineteenth century, saw thirty-five editions between 1800 and 1850, its plot turning on its humble heroine's rise to fame. Born into poverty, she managed to marry well, primarily by improving herself through, of course, reading.

Once a woman was married and a mother, domestic novels placed a woman in a more advanced role, that of the power behind the throne or to echo the phrase from a popular title of the time, as the "hidden hand" who "mediated moral values" from within the home "to compensate for men's deficiencies in this area." Women were not only the keepers of their own house, but in the many domestic novels that filled the shelves of the antebellum bookshops and booksellers catalogs, the keepers of civilization as well.

Yet women must walk a careful line in assuming their role as arbiter of morality in the home. They had become a major influence of middle-class behavior in some degree

---

67 Ibid., 189. Sedgwick and Sherwood are the only two authors Galt mentioned by name in his litany of acceptable genres of materials for patients' libraries.

68 Bushman, Refinement of America, 283, 311. Zboray in A Fictive People addresses the issue of how some eighteenth-century books had staying power and reflect both continuity and transformation of ideas in the nineteenth century.

because of their role as the purchasers and selectors of the many goods that made a home genteel and a family respectable. There danger lurked, for “women’s moral superiority could be squandered if she played the role of the consumer too aggressively and in service to the wrong ambitions.” Domestic novels with their plots of “free spending wives who ruined their hardworking husbands, and of unhappy young women who married for money and lived unhappy (and usually unhealthy) lives of artificial display,” helped women readers avoid that particular pitfall.70

One of the most important characteristics of appropriate reading matter for the insane was that it should not strain “the attention of the reflective powers; for the insane are many of them incapable of persistent reflection for a long period.” In a voice that was both elitist and egalitarian, Galt added, “indeed this is also the case with sane persons taken en masse.” Instead he suggested the "principal portion of libraries for the insane should be stocked with travels, biography, history, and the many miscellaneous works which form the charming polite literature of the English language."71 Isaac Ray repeated the litany of acceptable genres of materials for the insane and described his own patients' library as having "800 volumes of standard works in history, biography, romance, poetry, travels, morals and religion, besides some hundred more of no commercial value at all, but which serve a very useful purpose."72 In other words the core of a patients' library should look very much like those of a social library (such as the one in Concord, Massachusetts) which were driven by a middle-class desire for self-improvement—or like

70Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 185.


those which graced the superintendents' own family libraries and those of other genteel, well-educated folk.73

Religious works, too, had a place in patient libraries. The superintendents were all Christians who counted members of the clergy among their close circle of friends, who often read or quoted passages from the Bible, and who were familiar with many popular sermons of the day. George Chandler of the Massachusetts State Lunatic Asylum at Worcester, most likely spoke for all superintendents when he said,

perusal of the Scriptures tends wholly to the good for therin is written the law of love and kindness, of justice and truth, and therin is taught nothing that vitiates the conscience, injures the health, or deranges the mind.

The Bible could be given to "all whose disease does not lead them to make an improper use of them," while only a few who used it to "substantiate their delusions" would be better off without. At the same time, the superintendents in line with their entire attitude toward religion in the asylum, were not interested in having gloom and doom, draconian tracts of hell, fire, and brimstone. Nor should religious works of any kind predominate in a patients' library. British asylums it was noted with disapproval had little else but religious works and were notorious for their "deficiency of entertaining works,"74 a model the American superintendents did not want to emulate. John Curwen, superintendent at Pennsylvania State Lunatic Asylum in Harrisburg, noted in a politically adroit statement that the "books sent by Presbyterian Board" although "very good of their kind, they did not suit certain classes of patients." Books for inmates, instead, should be "of an elevated tone, and yet entertaining; instructive but not tedious."75

73See Gross, "Much Instruction from Little Learning."

74Galt, Essays on Asylums, 11.

75Older, "Patients Libraries," 524.
The patients' favorite reading materials, according to the superintendents, were newspapers. William Awl wrote that

the arrival of the mail is always hailed with joy; every newspaper is honored with a dozen readers, passing from hand to hand, and gallery to gallery, in constant service poetry, politics...anecdotes, marriages, advertisement are all read, and re-read while the impressions of the printers types wear out and the fabric itself goes to pieces.

The situation at the Maine Insane Asylum in Augusta was the same. James Bates reported that newspapers were "read so thoroughly they are perforated in a hundred places." The superintendents had no objection to this indulgence and thought newspapers were especially helpful in "awakening a healthy interest in the world," and did their best to meet the demand. The New York State Asylum at Utica "supplied about 50 different newspapers" which were "distributed throughout the building every Sunday morning."

No doubt a substantial number of those fifty papers were penny papers, an innovative newsheet peculiar to the period that departed radically from the traditional business and political newspapers read only by a small select group of Americans. First appearing in Boston in 1830s, penny papers with their "human interest stories and informative pieces written in a brief, easily understandable style," became hugely popular among all classes from day laborer and seamstress to the bon vivant and gentleman farmer. By 1860 America had the highest per capita newspaper circulation in the world with 3,000 newspapers in print, three times as many as in England and France.

---

76 Galt, "On Newspapers."
77"Life in the New York State Lunatic Asylum or Extracts from the Diary of an Inmate," AJI 5, no. 4 (April 1849): 299.
papers were greatly responsible for that increase.

Not all penny papers were equal in desirability, however. The superintendents banned the more sensational of them with their stories of murder, mayhem, and immorality from the asylum, as they would from polite, genteel society, or at least from women and children. Francis Stribling of the Western Virginia Asylum, made it the "business of one of the officers to look carefully over the newspapers before they fall into the hands of the patients" and excise such sensational items. Clippings enclosed with letters to inmates also had to be monitored because friends and relatives sometimes would sometimes send accounts of violent crimes to residents, even marking the more lurid passages in pencil "in order to attract their notice." Galt advised his colleagues to avoid bringing into the asylum "all papers that are filled with horrible suicides and murders," although not all superintendents agreed on this particular. At the 1849 AMSAII conference when James Bates suggested accounts of suicide be kept out of the hands of patients, Brigham and Kirkbride argued they "did not believe that a censorship of the press could be established in this respect." The two men may have felt such materials were relatively harmless, but it is more likely they saw the impracticality of monitoring wholesale every scrap of printed material that might make its way into the asylum.

The superintendents themselves may have read penny papers, even if surreptitiously. Their interest in criminal matters was keen, especially as it related to the insanity defense in court, and they published articles on specific cases in their own role of penny papers will be discussed more fully in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation.


80"Fourth Annual Meeting of the AMSAII, May 1849, Utica," AJI 6, no. 1 (July 1849): 70.
professional journal with frequency. Although written ostensibly to provide information for asylum directors on an increasingly important area of professional expertise, such articles, appearing as they did within the pages of a scientific journal, sanctioned the reading of what most genteel persons would have felt compelled to avoid in the more sensationalist press. Since the AJI was originally established to inform the general public as well as the professionals, the inclusion of such stories may have been an attempt to provide a more balanced view of the criminally insane than that painted by the more vulgar of the penny papers.\footnote{For examples, see Edward Jarvis, "Criminal Insane. Insane Transgressions and Insane Convicts." \textit{AJI} 13, no. 3 (January 1857): 195-231; "Homicide and Insanity: The Case of John W. Layman," \textit{AJI} 14, no. 3 (January 1858): 240-48; "Trial of William Freeman for the Murder of John G. Van Nest," \textit{AJI} 4, no. 2 (July 1848): 34-60. It's possible the proliferation of such articles in the \textit{AJI} may also have been, unconsciously or subconsciously, a marketing tool to sell more subscriptions to the \textit{AJI}.}

The superintendents recognized that reading in addition to its traditional benefits also could serve as a method of benign control within the asylum. Reading "exerts a tranquilizing effect" upon the patient Galt wrote, one as potent as a soporific or drug, and one that helped patients adjust to their strange surroundings and caretakers. Galt hoped patients would come to see the wardens, who dispensed books and held the keys to the library, in a "good light" and as having a "kindly disposition," which would "lull all suspicious feelings" and render them "more manageable by being contented and properly occupied."\footnote{Galt, \textit{Essays on Asylums}, 6. Erving Goffman in his classic work, \textit{Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates} (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1962) is very useful for gaining an understanding of the relation between institutionalized individuals and the staff who tend them. On this particular issue, he writes that patients look at staff as "condescending, high-handed, and mean," while staff look at patients as "bitter, secretive, and unworthy (7)."} No doubt, too, the officers used the distribution of reading matter as a
reward or punishment as well, withholding or giving out books, magazines, and the especially prized newspapers as a way to influence and control a patient's behavior. At least one case of denying a patient his favorite materials and replacing them with more therapeutic reading matter was reported at the New York State Asylum. In an effort to keep a fifty-five year old inmate who thought himself to be the "Prince of Wales and Emperor of the World," from exacerbating his delusions, "political and historical works were withheld from him, and he was furnished with works on natural history." For the bulk of the insane population, however, access to reading materials was provided regularly. A few libraries opened only once a week, but in most asylums "not much system is observed in this respect and the patients have pretty free access to the library throughout the week." Comparing this with the typical academic library of the period, which was open to students for only a few hours a week, asylum policy in this respect was quite liberal.

One recommendation Galt made could have had serious repercussions for the patients had it been followed:

A rule which we cannot but view as highly important is that the superintendent of the asylum should have a complete knowledge of the reading in which each of his patients engages.

His more specific plan recommended providing "judicious oversight and selection" in a

---

83 "Insanity Illustrating by Cases and by the Conversation and Letters of the Insane," AJI 1, no. 1 (July 1844): 56. Unfortunately reading natural history simply redirected this particular patient's attention from "his supreme command of men" to "improving the races of other animals."

84 Galt, Essays on Asylums, 13.

course of planned reading as "contradistinguished from that of a desultory nature." Such a regimen had it become customary in asylums would certainly have had a stifling effect. While some patients might have welcomed a superintendent's personal attention and the opportunity to spend time with him, inevitably such monitoring would have inhibited the free choice of reading matter. A patient might choose titles in which she had little or no interest simply to please the superintendent. Or alternately she might fear her own preferences would earn his disapproval and even influence his evaluation of her mental status and progress, thus delaying her release from the asylum and the opportunity to return home. Most superintendents were probably unable to implement Galt's recommendation, even had they wanted to do so, since such meticulous oversight was unsuited to a large public asylum with hundreds of patients. Even Eastern Asylum which housed 200 to 300 at its peak was too large for Galt to follow his own advice except in the most random of cases.

The superintendents' control over the use of books, libraries, and reading in the asylum when placed in the context of other recreational activities was rather liberal. Games, card playing, dancing, plays, shuttlecock, graces, backgammon, chess, art and music were promoted widely by the superintendents and as with books, it was hoped such recreations would "supplant the place of delusive ideas and feelings and ending by this disuse to their gradual enfeeblement or disappearance." Unlike books, however, amusements were more useful for their ability to arouse "social feelings" than to instruct or educate. Unlike books, too, other recreations were not intrinsically good and could lead to problems in the outside world. Youthful inmates, for instance, were not be allowed to play cards too much "lest a game be taught or encouraged which leads to

---

gambling when they become sane.\textsuperscript{87}

The one area where restrictions for reading were as stringent as with other amusements derived from the superintendents' fear of "direct intermingling" of the sexes. Patients were not allowed to dance with the opposite sex since it might have "a tendency to awake sexual feelings," and theatrical productions were carefully screened for scenes that might excite erotic stirrings.\textsuperscript{88} Patient libraries followed the same principle of separating the sexes and were segregated by gender with the larger asylums having separate libraries for men and women and the smaller ones allowing both men and women to use the same library but at different times.\textsuperscript{89} The superintendents were practical men, however, and looked to the patient's eventual release from the asylum. All interaction between the sexes was not banned, since residents would have to return to a world where both men and women dwelled. It was desirable to "accustom the sexes to the presence of each other" to some degree, so that "by accustoming a person to see and meet the opposite sex continually, sexual feelings are rather lulled than the contrary."\textsuperscript{90} Such contradictory policies reflect the rather sticky problem the superintendents faced in keeping their asylums scandal-free. Sexual intimacy between patients, especially had it involved rape or pregnancy, would have been devastating both for a patient's mental recovery and for the positive image the superintendents wished to project of asylum life. For a while, the superintendents discussed and debated the idea of recommending separate institutions for men and women, an initiative that largely failed because of the

\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., 15, 16, 18.

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{89}Older, "Patients Libraries," 522.

\textsuperscript{90}Galt, \textit{Essays on Asylums}, 19.
costly duplication entailed for services and staffing. In any case, the rules observed in asylums for keeping the sexes separate probably seemed an acceptable compromise, for they did not depart greatly from those of a genteel society where young, unmarried women and sometimes even married women, were often required to travel in groups or with chaperons and were rarely left alone with the opposite sex.

Reading and libraries in the asylum served a function other than therapeutic for the superintendents, that of enhancing their image with the public. They were aware that locked gates and high walls circling the grounds cloaked their asylums in an "aura of mystery" and made them the subject of "gross misconception, scandalous gossip, and even fierce hostility" in the community. The superintendents tried to counteract the negative images of asylum life with their own more positive ones, and patients' libraries, books, and the activity of reading were as valuable a part of that effort as attractive architecture, pleasing interiors, and supervised recreations. William Awl's rhetoric serves as one example. In his asylum, he wrote, there was

no more gratifying exhibition in the institution than the orderly and interesting appearance of the different classes upon a Sabbath morning as parties from gallery after gallery arrive and depart with books of their own selection.

With the use of such charged words as "orderly," "Sabbath," "selection," in his scenario,

---

91G. H. White, "Importance of Establishing Separate Institutions for the Different Sexes of the Insane," *AJI* 6, no. 2 (October 1849): 136-40; John Galt, "On the Propriety of Admitting the Insane of the Two Sexes into the Same Lunatic Asylum," *AJI* 11, no. 3 (January 1855): 224-30. Gender-segregated asylums were not unknown. Several private institutions catered only to female patients.


Awl associated asylum life with self-discipline, religion, and democracy, all value-laden concepts rich with positive connotations for middle-class America. The use of the word "books" was even more powerful in its ability to evoke approval, since as tangible objects books provided a specific, familiar, visual image. This was even more so in the late 1850s as antebellum publishers began to decorate their book covers in designs, colors, and textures meant to attract attention and beget notice. Indeed some, like gift books, were published more to be seen than read. Beautifully bound in the fine leather or muslin, often stamped, tooled, or embossed, printed on high quality paper, and containing steel or copper engravings, gift books became a popular medium to convey affection from giver to recipient, while at the same time identifying both parties to themselves and each other as refined cultured persons. Between 1825 and 1860 over 1,000 different titles were in print as young and old, friends and family exchanged them for birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, Christmas, or betrothals. Standard titles, while more subdued than gift books, were becoming no less visually distinctive. The publishing house of Ticknor and Fields bound their more substantive books in a ribbed, chocolate brown house style, conspicuously stamping the spine in gold with the names of Dickens, Browning, DeQuincy, Emerson, Holmes, Longfellow, Tennyson, or Whittier. In 1856 they adopted a blue and gold cover for their books, and a flash of either color tucked under a reader's arm or lining a bookshelf was immediately recognizable by the cognoscenti.

94 Jeffrey D. Groves, "Judging Literary Books by their Covers: House Styles, Ticknor and Fields and Literary Promotion," in Michelle Moylan and Lane Stiles, eds., Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 75. This development must have been lauded by Herman Melville who lamented the "sad lack of invention in most of our bookbinders."

95 Bush, Refinement of America, 284.

96 Groves, "Judging Literary Books," 76.
The superintendents must have been aware of the evocative nature of a patients' library lined neatly with an array of appropriately-bound, suitable reading materials, and the advantage it provided in winning approval with the public and funding agencies. Yet it was no superficial ploy but rather a marketing of an evocative pull to which they themselves were vulnerable. Their commitment to libraries and books was total. Pliny Earle bequeathed $60,000 to the Forbes Library in Northampton, New Hampshire as well as $6,000 to the town of Leicester to erect "a substantial library." Earle (and no doubt many of his colleagues) thought reading, books, and libraries to have both a symbolic and real value, and he hoped to shape his personal legacy and reputation by associating his philanthropic efforts with them.

Although most asylums were built without a special room for a patients' library, as the efficacy of reading became more valued as part of the moral management arsenal (and no doubt more valued for its public relations value), most superintendents found space for books for their patients. The ideal library was a comfortable, pleasant reading room with some officer or attendant especially delegated to take charge of it...This room should be furnished with books, newspapers, prints, illustrated works, maps, gloves, etc. and it might not be amiss to add also such philosophical toys as the prism, the microscope, and the kaleidoscope. The size of a collection also added distinction to the ideal library. The Maine Insane Asylum by 1859 held a total of 2,000 volumes, while the Butler Hospital for the

---

97Earle, *Memoirs*, 391, 392. Earle said his money could be used to defray all manner of library expenses, including "payment of employees in and about said library." He was quite definite, however, that no part of the money should be expended on "the salary of the librarian...or any part of said salary." Whether he had an issue with the particular librarian at the time or librarians in general is unknown.

Insane in Rhode Island owned 800 volumes. Ray, its superintendent, placed himself in his patients' shoes and imagined what it would be like to be "confined in the house all day with nothing to read but an almanac or newspaper" and collected as many titles as he could. If easy access to books was the standard for the ideal asylum library, the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane came closest. Kirkbride created "a library in each ward for the use of patients and attendants" and contemplated "establishing one in the basement for the use of the domestics" as well. Eventually he hoped also to fit out a room especially for the "more cultivated" patrons that presumably would have housed a collection of works appropriate to their education and interests. As Galt admitted, however, libraries and collections were uneven in quality across the spectrum of asylums in America. Some were so small that they were "hardly entitled to such a name," like the Northern Illinois asylum library, which was nothing more than "an alcove in the women's convalescent ward."99 The lack of uniformity among patient libraries was not from lack of commitment to the idea of reading as therapy, but rather from lack of funding. By 1860 asylums had become financial black holes where funding for heat, food, building maintenance, and new dormitories to accommodate a growing insane population almost always took precedence over everything else.100 Some institutions appropriated a yearly fund for the purchase of books, but the sum was often inadequate to build the type of library many of the superintendents would have liked. The more innovative superintendents, like Brigham, looked to sources outside the regular budget. In 1849 he


100 Gerald N. Grob, Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875 (New York: Free Press, 1973), 192-98; Grob explains that public asylums suffered from their inception from an imperfect financial structure that depended heavily upon state and local subsidies (191-201).
proposed including reviews in *AJI* of the non-medical books he received from publishers as a way "to procure for the patients of this asylum some of the new and valuable works that are published and for the purchase of which the Institutions has no funds." The intimation was that if publishers were to continue to send review copies to the *AJI* they would expect their books to be reviewed. Other materials made their way into asylum libraries as gifts. Religious organizations were always eager to supply their publications free to anyone who would take them and stood as a reliable source to the discomfort of some. At the Boston Lunatic Asylum, the superintendent complained that free materials "were with scarcely an exception, of a religious character, and though excellent in themselves were quite unsuited to the wants of the house." Yet to an antebellum population that was largely religious, no library could be thought complete without some religious materials available, and so it is likely a number of these types of free materials were welcome. Magazines and newspaper subscriptions, too, were sometimes offered as gifts to asylums. Periodicals were ubiquitous in the country with at least 1,500 titles in print by 1840, so that one ebullient editor proclaimed the times to be "the golden age of periodicals."

N.D. Benedict, Brigham's successor at the New York State Asylum, was

---

101 "Notices of Books," *AJI* 5, no.3 (January 1849): 277. Brigham died in the same year he proposed the idea, and the practice was not continued by the next editor.


in an especially advantageous position as editor of the *AJI* to acquire free magazines, since he could exchange copies of his journal for magazines from other publishers. He was able to provide more variety than any other asylum, with titles that included *Knickerbocker Magazine, Columbian Magazine, Biblical Respository, Missionary Herald, Southern Quarterly Review, Western Literary Messenger, Literary World, Southern Literary Messenger, Harper's Monthly, Godey's Lady's Book, Graham's Magazine, Ark and Odd-Fellow Magazine, North American Miscellany, Democratic Review, Whig Review, Mother's Magazine, Methodist Quarterly Review, and Christian Instructor.* Although it may seem incongruous to have sophisticated, literary magazines, political periodicals, and women's magazines like *Godey's Lady's Book* with its lavish illustrations and articles on home decor and fashion, their content was surely seen by the superintendents as a guide to their patients as to the normal order of how things should be. Further such variety amply demonstrates once again that censorship as it existed in the asylum was a reflection of the middle-class readers' values, and rather liberal in its breadth.

Benedict was not the only superintendent to receive free subscriptions from periodical publishers. Many asylums "were liberally and for the most part gratuitously supplied by the publishers."106 Galt called the donors a "noble fraternity, [who] though not often blessed with fortune's goods, continue to send their winged messengers to bear comfort to the hearts of the afflicted and despairing,"107 but it is more likely the noble fraternity was simply combining philanthropy with good business sense. If an inmate (or

---

105 "Books Received," *AJI* 8, no. 4 (April 1852): 387-88.


visiting relative) liked a particular magazine or newspaper, she might when returning home place a subscription. Not unlike the editors of religious materials with overt agendas, the secular publishers, too, used insane asylums a way to market their product.

Private donors also contributed materials to asylums. Indeed in some cases an outsider was the driving force behind the establishment of a patients’ library. Dorothea Dix, the great lay crusader in the reform of asylums and a firm believer in the efficacy of reading for the insane, often promoted asylum libraries. When John Curwen told Dix in 1853 that while nothing would gratify him more than having a library as “a means of moral treatment,” he unfortunately “did not have liberal donors to 'beg' from,” she sprang into action and obtained financing from a charitable organization to build a combination museum/reading room for him. Another small source of funding that helped stock the shelves of asylum libraries was the money patients themselves might earn by selling hand-made crafts and women's fancy work such as dolls, pincushions, baskets, caps, stockings, gloves, bags, and purses at asylum fairs, or by the publication of a newsletter like The Opal at Utica. The newsletter cost only fifty cents a year, yet subscriptions must have been exceptionally strong for in one year the profits “furnished an additional several hundred volumes to the library. In addition, patient newsletters could be used as a medium of exchange with others. By 1851, The Opal had on its exchange list an astounding 220 weekly, four semi-weekly, eight daily, and thirty-three monthly titles. Finally, if all else failed a superintendent living on the grounds of the

---

asylum as many did, could open up his own personal library and allow a select number of patients access to a larger variety and number of reading materials they would not have had otherwise. John Galt and his two sisters from time to time invited patients into their home to supplement their reading with selections from their own large library.

How asylum patients received the efforts of the superintendents and officers to insinuate reading and writing into their lives is difficult to assess. Some patients may have engaged in reading or visiting the patients' library simply as a way to win the approval of asylum officers and superintendents who controlled their fates. That some patients used reading and writing as a means of solace and escape from their everyday asylum life is certain. One female resident asked “what would residence in the asylum be without the occupation of reading!”\textsuperscript{111} It seems reasonable to assume that those who came from a home environment where reading was a well-established habit, continued the habit inasmuch as their illness would allow. As to what the patients read, again they probably conformed to previous habits. Some continued to read the “polite literature" of biographies, travels, and poetry. Others who were religious probably gravitated toward the ubiquitous religious tracts and Bibles made available. Yet others looked farther afield. The superintendents' contention that newspapers were the patients' favorite reading matter rings true. Newspapers were greatly popular with the population at large and there is no reason inmates would not have been equally happy with a format that brought easily readable, interesting, brief stories about the world at large.

\textsuperscript{111}Older, “Patients Libraries,” 519. Goffman noted that some patients in the institution he studied made it a point to participate in every activity and therapy offered, feeling it was a way to "bring the therapist over to their side;" at the same time he calls certain activities such as reading "removal activities," that is they took a patient out of himself for a while and made him oblivious to his real situation (68-70, 225).
Reading was probably also a popular activity with those who needed an excuse to socialize with one another, since group reading or reading aloud to one another was a sanctioned, even encouraged, activity. Most asylums had "reading parties" organized by the institution officers, but not all reading parties were formal and institution sponsored...the convalescent women patients liked to take books to the grounds and read together.112

Women patients then, and possibly men as well, had the opportunity to commune with each other in a personal way and establish friendships very much as they did in the outside world. In antebellum parlors, it was not unusual for men and women to form reading clubs even in the smallest of hamlets to discuss books, play word games, and compose poetry. The habit of talking about books was common and pervasive. The correspondence of the middle class was filled with comments about what one was currently reading or soon to read. The phrase "Have you read..." was ubiquitous, and while the speaker's remarks may have been only "terse declarations of overall reaction, evaluations of usefulness, and scrutiny of the author's character or intentions,"113 nevertheless, they served to display his familiarity with au courant literature making the rounds of the parlors of the learned, genteel classes. For the insane talking about books or magazine articles, and on some occasions at least, pretending to, must have been a welcome respite from the usual round of asylum rules and regimens.

And finally reading was an activity that might give patients a modicum of control over themselves and their environment. The asylum officers, while they might select and

112Ibid. See also Chartier, Order of Books, 19-22.

screen materials for their patients, could not in the end change nor even modify the privacy and deeply personal nature of the act of reading. What images, impressions, and interpretations patients gave to the books and articles they read was theirs alone and not subject to comment unless they wished them to be. Whether or not reading helped to cure patients in the way the superintendents intended is unknown, but that the reading insane, just as other readers, interpreted text according to their own individualized needs and often very differently than the authors, publishers--or superintendents--intended is almost certain. Readers in the asylum as elsewhere must have "picked and chose among a great variety of materials those items, books, passages that most supported their personal vision or reflected their own experience."114 Regardless of how careful the superintendents might have been, patients would take from their reading what they wished or what their own particular form of insanity demanded.

A number of patients just like the superintendents and others in the middle class seemed to enjoy writing. Patients' newsletters provided one forum and while not found in every asylum were common enough. At Hartford the Retreat Gazette, founded in 1837, was managed by an inmate who was an editor and a printer before he fell insane and the Asylum Journal at the Vermont Asylum for the Insane at Brattleboro founded in 1842, was edited by a seventeen-year old printer inmate, who ran a weekly issue on a single sheet with the Latin masthead motto, "We have all, at some time, been mad." This latter newsletter was maintained for four years by a variety of inmates, all of whom eventually

114Zboray, Fictive People, 193. See also Roger Chartier, Order of Books; Cathy Davidson in Revolution and the Word; and Janice A. Radway, Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).
were "considered by the majority of mankind to be sane" and were discharged.\textsuperscript{115} The contents of such newsletters, supervised by asylum officers, probably followed the pattern of the monthly New Hampshire \textit{Asylum Gazette}, with its "original articles" decreed by one reader at least, to be "highly creditable to the writers and interesting to the general reader."\textsuperscript{116} While it is unlikely items were published without the approval of asylum hierarchy who knew such missives would reach the eyes of relatives and friends, nevertheless the enterprise offered patients an opportunity to write and publish poems or essays and to find some outlet for expression while under enforced confinement.\textsuperscript{117}

As in the outside world, patients were encouraged to write. One woman believing herself to be the Virgin Mary (apparently a common delusion among the female insane of the period) wrote twenty pages of lucid prose, "a long, well-written adventure story of her experience as Virgin Mary, healing, performing miracles, etc." Another man, who thought he was dead, wrote an autobiography that included a long string of the various ways in which he had died, "I was killed by a fall on the ice; I died of the measles and small pox, was poisoned, and left with the dead, unburied."\textsuperscript{118} Letter-writing, too, was encouraged, although monitored at least on some occasions by the staff. Letters published in the \textit{AJI} as case studies, whether by the lucid or delusionary, were articulate and stylish, indicating their authors knew well how to read and write and seemingly

\textsuperscript{115}Hurd, et al., \textit{Institutional Care of the Insane}, 1: 250, 251.

\textsuperscript{116}"Asylum Gazette," \textit{AJI} 2, no. 2 (April 1846): 396.

\textsuperscript{117}Goffman believes that while the patient newsletter in the institution he studied was written by the inmates, "it expressed the official view of the functions of the institution." While no doubt true, newsletter activities might also have served as one of the "removal activities" he described earlier in his book (96).

\textsuperscript{118}Pliny Earle, "Poetry of Insanity," 212.
enjoyed both.

Reading may have influenced the behavior of some patients in a more direct way. One female patient whose insanity was attributed to abandonment by her lover, behaved very much like Crazy Kate, a character described in the poem, *The Task* by William Cowper:

A bosom heaved and never ceasing sighs.  
She begs an idle pin of all she meets,  
And hoards them in her sleeve; but needful food,  
Though pressed with hunger oft, or comelier clothes,  
But pinch’d with cold, asks never.—Kate is crazed!"

Like the protagonist in the poem, the patient often roamed the asylum begging pins from all she met, although the superintendent in charge swore she had never seen the poem.119 Was he mistaken? Had the patient read “The Task” and found the protagonist and her predicament so compelling that she imitated the fictional character’s behavior? Or did the poem simply reflect a common hoarding or obsessive impulse common to the patients’ particular mental disorder? Answers to such questions are impossible to come by and remain inaccessible to analysis, since most patients did not voice their thoughts and motivations in written records.

From the superintendents’ point of view, reading and libraries were an important and integral part of their plan in the moral management of the patients and a therapy aimed toward restoring sanity. Their attitude was based on the importance of reading in their own lives and in the world they inhabited, where gentility, morality, and sanity were all part of one whole. Although the superintendents had little real evidence that reading contributed to a patient’s recovery, they believed it to be so, and committed a great deal of

119“Insanity Illustrated by Histories of Distinguished Men and by the Writings of Poets and Novelists,” *AJI* 1, no. 1 (July 1844): 10.
time, effort, and whatever money they could raise to establish patient libraries and encourage reading. Because their belief in reading as an intrinsic and genuine good was so absolute, superintendents were often rather liberal in allowing patients ready access to books and other printed materials, even to the point of meeting special requests when appropriate. They censored materials, for the most part, only inasmuch as they would censor themselves, and as a result patients' libraries often looked much like the genteel collections of the middle-class parlor or the social library. Whether the superintendents' early form of bibliotherapy had its intended result—that of an aid in curing insanity—is unknown, but that reading for some patients was a welcome pastime, making life less tedious, giving them an excuse to socialize, and allowing them a secret, unmonitored private life seems certain.
CHAPTER III

JOHN MINSON GALT II: FAMILY, TRADITION, DESTINY

In 1785 the 27-year old grammarian Noah Webster traveled to Williamsburg on a lecture tour and became the first of many visitors to sound the theme of a village in decline. The capitol buildings were in decay, he noted, as was the city "by reason of the removal of the seat of government to Richmond." Eight years later, Jedidiah Morse, a geographer searching for fresh information for his next book, went even further, calling Williamsburg "dull, forsaken, and melancholy." None, however, was more pessimistic about Williamsburg's prospects than Virginia's native son, novelist and historian George Tucker. He thought it had

very little to recommend it to a stranger...there is neither business without doors, nor amusement within; but all is lifeless as the very Goodness of dullness could wish...it is but a shadow of itself and even that seems passing away.2

In large part, Webster, Morse, and Tucker were correct in their characterization of antebellum Williamsburg. The relocation of the capitol in 1780 had profoundly changed the village, for unlike New York and Philadelphia, two cities which had also lost their capital status,3 Williamsburg had neither a diverse business sector nor a robust seaport

---

1Webster, although still a young man, had already become well-known for his three books on American grammar and spelling which were used in classrooms all over the country.


3Many colonial capitals would be moved inland from their original coastal location during or after the Revolutionary War, in some cases to avoid British invasion and occupation, and in others to satisfy the clamor for greater political representation from the populous western part of the state.
economy to fall back upon. Once the political and judicial machinery that had attracted commerce, jobs, and traffic were gone, so, too, was Williamsburg's position as an influential hub of the commonwealth. Passengers and commerce which had once gravitated toward Williamsburg on steamboats and packets along the James now traveled directly to the ports of Richmond, Baltimore, Norfolk, and Portsmouth.

Yet the antebellum image of Williamsburg as nothing but a dusty road was based more upon the romantic perspective of its visiting chroniclers than reality. By antebellum standards rather than those of its colonial past, Williamsburg was no worse off than many hamlets scattered throughout America, and indeed in some respects was more fortunate, possessing as it did two important institutions, a college and a state-operated insane asylum.

The College of William and Mary, founded in 1693, was a magnet that drew a cadre of well-educated faculty to the village. Following close behind was a student body, made up of young men from elite and wealthy families, who would become one day the Commonwealth's doctors, scientists, ministers, businessmen, governors, congressmen, planters, and governors.\(^4\) The Williamsburg Lunatic Asylum, established in 1773, did not have as long a history as the college but was unique in being the first hospital of its kind in the nation. It boasted several impressive buildings and employed a goodly number of whites, slaves, and free blacks. Both the college and the asylum made the village more varied in its interests and economy than many other villages of equal size and provided

\(^4\) The College's fortunes varied after the capital relocated, both financially and in prestige, at one time having such a small enrollment that plans were made to move it to Richmond. The establishment of the University of Virginia in 1819 was another factor in the decline of the College as many state legislators shifted their allegiance to Jefferson's university. Yet there were always enough influential supporters in the state and in Williamsburg to keep William & Mary afloat through the worst of times.
commerce for a small, but stable, cluster of shops and services. Admittedly the population of Williamsburg grew smaller as a percentage of each generation continued to move west in the decades following relocation of the capitol, yet antebellum Williamsburg was still more than the hidebound town often depicted by its visitors' descriptions. Indeed Williamsburg could be a fine place to live for those families who were properly situated.

John Minson Galt II (1819-1861) came from one such family with more reason to stay in Williamsburg than to leave it. This would influence both how he shaped his life and how he viewed himself. Ensconced in the web of a closely-knit extended family and circle of friends, blessed by a good education, affluence, prestige, and social connections, he would measure all he learned of the world outside Williamsburg against what he had learned at home. Further he would apply this knowledge to the small world he would create for his patients as superintendent of an asylum.

John Minson Galt’s ties to Williamsburg dated back to his Scottish great-grandfather, Samuel Galt, who had settled in the village in 1744 as a silversmith, clockmaker, and local gaolkeeper. Samuel’s children and grandchildren from his second marriage had associated themselves with the Williamsburg Lunatic Asylum from its inception in 1773 and had served in various capacities as doctor, keeper, matron, and steward through the years. Much like the eighteenth-century Monro family of London (and perhaps modeled after them), who from generation to generation had made their fortune as physicians to the insane at the famous Bethlehem Hospital, the Galt family had fashioned the local asylum into a family business which became synonymous with their name.5

Alexander Dickie Galt (1771-1841), John Minson’s father, would hold the longest tenure of all the Galts at the asylum. He had graduated from William and Mary in 1789 and, then, as had his father, John Minson Galt I, had traveled abroad to study medicine. He interned at St. Thomas Hospital in London under the tutelage of the famous Lord Astley Cooper, one of London’s most prestigious surgeons and a man Alexander would idolize throughout his life. When Alexander returned to Williamsburg four years later in 1796, he was still without a degree, but his medical credentials for having studied abroad gave him an advantage over other local physicians who had learned their trade only through apprenticeship. Alexander joined his father’s practice and soon became a successful doctor. He left the village for a brief period at age thirty-nine to live in Boston, ostensibly to recover his health, although while there he may have flirted with the idea of staying permanently. Precedent existed for a Galt to seek his fortune outside of Williamsburg. His brother, William Craig Galt, also a doctor, had moved to Kentucky in 1803 to escape the economic slump then affecting the Tidewater area, as had his sister Sarah Trebell Galt who had moved to Kentucky with her husband, Judge William Browne. Even more important than precedent, however, Alexander had the prerequisite University of California Press, 2001).

Cooper was a well-known doctor among the middle and upper classes on both sides of the Atlantic. His remedy for preventing the common cold was included in the etiquette book, The Lady’s Guide to Perfect Gentility by Emily Thornwell (New York: Deerby & Jackson, 1858), 21, the assumption being his name and reputation would be recognized. For contemporary historians, Cooper seems to serve more as a figure who validates the prestigious education of those who studied with him; he is mentioned frequently as the mentor of many American and British doctors and medical professors.

There is no record of William Craig Galt attending medical school as did his father or his brother. This gap in his formal education is something of a mystery.

"The Galt Family of Virginia Genealogy," GFP I, Special Collections, Earl Gregg
skills needed to succeed outside the confines of Williamsburg. Dr. Syng Physick, a prominent Philadelphia physician, an instructor at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, and but for Benjamin Rush, the most famous of antebellum American doctors, was reported to have regretted that "such a man...should not have settled in a large city, where the world would have reaped the benefit of his great abilities." For whatever reason—family, community ties, his age, his well-established practice—Alexander turned his back on the opportunities of a large, urban venue and returned to Virginia.  

Alexander Dickie Galt’s success as a general practitioner in Williamsburg came to him easily, no doubt a function of both his father’s already well-established practice and his own abilities. In 1809 he treated over 2,000 patients, a number that must have included repeat visits, since the entire population of Williamsburg only numbered 1,400. In 1808 he succeeded his father as attending physician at the Williamsburg Lunatic Asylum, a position offering a variety of advantages. He would receive a steady salary for visiting the asylum daily, but much like the Monro family of London, who were "permitted and expected to treat...hospital duties as incidental to a larger and highly lucrative private practice," Alexander could continue to pursue his private practice. In

Swem Library, College of William & Mary.


11 Ibid., 47.
addition he would benefit from “the prestige and notoriety”\textsuperscript{12} of his position which might provide him with influential contacts and additional opportunities for income. While Alexander's asylum sinecure in tiny Williamsburg certainly never had the same potential for financial advantage as did the Monros' in London, the benefits were ample enough. When Alexander married Mary Dorothea Galt (1786-1858), his half cousin descended from Samuel Galt's first marriage, he consolidated family control of the asylum and warded off any future challenges from outsiders.

By 1841, Alexander Dickie Galt was a wealthy man, at least by Williamsburg standards. Of the 173 taxpayers living in the village, only twelve paid higher property taxes than he. His holdings included two houses, one of which he rented out, an apothecary on the Duke of Gloucester Street, a “plantation” of over 151 acres located a mile and a half southeast of the village courthouse, as many as eight slaves some of whom he hired out, three horses, a two-wheel carriage and a gig (no doubt used on his medical rounds in Williamsburg and James City County). These commonplace forms of wealth in Virginia, Galt might buy or sell as circumstance dictated, but his second set of assets—a gold and silver watch, three silver tankards, plated candlesticks and a silver cup—held a value that transcended mere money. They represented the status symbols of an earlier age when families such as his treasured such objects and passed them from generation to generation. Plate was never meant to be liquidated unless a family fell upon desperate times, but rather to indicate inter-generational wealth and familial distinction. Alexander's third set of assets—a washstand, pianoforte, mirrors, cut glass decanter, carpets, curtains, and clothespress—belonged more to the nineteenth century

display of goods that advertised a man's gentility and his understanding and appreciation of the cultured, good life. They expressed Galt's status and affluence without reference to his ancestors. This hybrid world that Alexander Dickie created and inhabited, a cross between the values of the old and the new, between the stolid, understated traditional display of wealth and status and the more splashy exhibition of antebellum gentility, created a precedent and set a standard for his four children, none more than his second son, John Minson Galt II. John Minson would grow up and become a man in a world that resembled the eighteenth as much as the nineteenth century and within a milieu of village dynamics where life moved slowly but with a purpose and was bound by the customs and closeness of extended families and friends, a world where status, class, race, and wealth counted for much. It would shape his self-image and the way he looked at the world, but as much it would determine how he approached the task of assuming the superintendency of the Eastern Asylum in 1841.

John Minson Galt II, was born in March 1819, the third child and second son of Mary and Alexander Dickie Galt. He already had an older brother, Alexander Galt Jr. (1814-1842), a sister, Elizabeth Judith (1816-1854), and two years later would have a younger sister, Sarah (Sallie) Marie Galt (1822-1880) as well. Alexander Dickie took a great interest in the progress of his children and was "devoted" to them, but he relished

---

13Pickell, Alexander Dickie Galt, 61-63, 65; "Ever Dearer in Our Thoughts": Patina and the Representation of Status before and after the Eighteenth Century," in Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 31-43; Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persona, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 395. Bushman writes that in the south "gentility was to be found in infrequent plantation mansion houses, in the town residences of planters and professional men, and in select neighborhoods in southern cities." For the most part, however, he concludes the south was a "desert sprinkled with a few oases."
his work as a physician and worked long hours away from the home. When he was present, he assumed the role of teacher and disciplinarian, rather than kindly papa. His daughter, Elizabeth, maintained that from her “earliest childhood she could not remember one word of praise” from him. She added, perhaps to soften such a harsh image, that neither was he critical, but rather let his own life serve as an example of good behavior.\footnote{Pickell, \textit{Alexander Dickie Galt}, 36.} Other evidence suggests he could be a demanding, stern father, and a hard man to please. Once when John Minson wrote enthusiastically from medical school about a lecture he had attended on astringents, his father responded archly he was glad John was “delighted” with that “most useless class of medicines” and hoped when the professor addressed botanicals of real utility, John would be equally attentive and “enchanted.”\footnote{Alexander Dickie Galt (ADG) to John Minson Galt II (JMGII), 8 December 1839.} Another time John offered to send his father a work on a new technique to repair hernias. His father replied tartly that he was already familiar with the procedure advocated by “this Mr. Lecturer of yours whose name I could not decipher” and had found it worthless, so “I beg you will not to get it for me.”\footnote{ADG to JMGII, 20 October 1840.} In some ways his response to these overtures from his son was predictable. Alexander Dickie Galt clung to the old ways in his treatment of his patients, insane or otherwise, certainly more in the mould of Benjamin Rush or even John Munro than Philippe Pinel and William Tuke. Nor was Alexander Dickie yet ready to accept the inevitable role reversal in father/son relationships, especially in that area where he had long held authority—medicine. Finally perhaps Alexander's reaction in these instances was simply that of an old man suffering from a variety of painful diseases and only a few years away from death. Yet if...
indicative of his general manner toward his son, John Minson may have found himself often in the impossible position of always seeking approval but rarely receiving it.

If John's father was a disciplinarian and distant at times, his mother and two sisters made up for his aloofness. All three women doted on John Minson. Mrs. Galt, reclusive and perhaps hyperchondriacal as well, was an eccentric woman, whose involvement in her children's life was excessive, even for a time when women were expected to devote themselves exclusively to motherhood. She rarely went out and tried to discourage her children from leaving home even to visit relatives or friends in Richmond or Gloucester. She smothered all her children with attention, but especially focused on John, admonishing him regularly to be careful, to dress warmly, and if he was abroad, to return home soon. She often imagined every manner of dire event that might befall him, and even when John was a mature man going off to Wytheville to give testimony at the trial of a criminally insane patient, his mother warned him to be sure to wear his great coat and heavy flannel socks.17

In addition to his immediate family, John was surrounded by a large, extended family. He had a number of aunts, uncles, and cousins living in Richmond and Norfolk who kept in close contact through letters and annual visits back and forth. Like Alexander Dickie, many Galt relatives were educated and held professional positions. His own brother, as noted, was a doctor, his cousin, William Richard Galt, ran a boys' academy in Norfolk, another cousin, Gabriel Galt, was an Annapolis graduate and a navy officer, and yet another, Alexander Galt, was a sculptor whose work would once day sit

17Sallie Marie Galt (SMG) to JMGII (note included from mother, Mary Dorothea Galt), 20 September 1843; Elizabeth Neal Pitzer, Sallie and Elizabeth Galt: Compliance and Resistance to the 'Southern Lady' Role in Antebellum Williamsburg (masters thesis, College of William & Mary, 1985), 9-10.
in U.S. Capitol’s Supreme Court chamber and the rotunda at the University of Virginia.\(^{18}\)

A number of Galts who John Minson saw on a regular basis lived in Williamsburg. His Uncle William Trebell Galt, his Uncle Dickie, his Aunt Mary Arnet Godwin, and his cousin, William, all worked at the asylum. A cousin, John Galt Williamson, although thirteen years John Minson's senior was his best friend, their relationship more like that of brothers than cousins. Williamson once remarked he could not survive without John Minson, and indeed, he died only a few short months after John in May 1862.\(^{19}\)

John's immediate and extended family provided him with a sense of identity and belonging in the way close families do, but his secure place in the Williamsburg community came primarily from his father's status. Alexander knew everyone in town, and more importantly, everyone knew him. He counted among his close friends and patients the wealthy and politically powerful families of Williamsburg like the Tuckers, Randolphs and Peacheys, as well as prosperous merchants, the faculty at William and Mary, and the clergy at Bruton Parish. Others in Alexander's wide circle of acquaintances included tradesmen, farmers, slaves, and free blacks. His relationships formed a web not easily untangled, none more exemplary in this respect than the ties he shared with Robert Saunders (1805-1868). Alexander knew Saunders as his state senator, mayor of Williamsburg, city magistrate, and city councilman, but also as his kin, Saunders' son having married a Galt. In addition, Alexander saw Saunders as a professional colleague, serving with him on the Board of Directors at the asylum, and


\(^{19}\)Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 48-49, 169. William Trebell Galt was also mayor of Williamsburg.
finally, he saw Saunders in his role as professor at the college and instructor of his two sons.\textsuperscript{20} These kinds of connections tying Alexander Dickie Galt to Robert Saunders were repeated again and again with others in the village and were more the rule than the exception. Such was John Minson's experience growing up in Williamsburg, then, that wherever he went in the village and in whatever activity he might engage, he would meet a patient, colleague, business associate, friend, or relative of his father's. It is likely that for all of his youth and until his father died in 1841, John Minson Galt II was known primarily as Dr. Galt's son.

John Minson's youth revolved around the homely events and activities shared with family and friends. He enjoyed good health and possessed such "agility and strength" that he was always a match for his opponents and "distinguished himself in all athletic exercises." In youth, too, John Minson developed a passion for collecting and studying plant life. Like his father and grandfather before him, he spent "every leisure moment and holiday in the woods and fields in search of botanical specimens," a practice he would continue as an adult, walking the woods always to "return home with a flower of some sort."\textsuperscript{21}

Such familiar boyhood activities with family and friends were punctuated from time to time by more out-of-the ordinary occasions. In October 1824 when John Minson was sixteen, the Marquis de Lafayette visited Williamsburg and, no doubt, the young boy

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{The Galt Family of Virginia Genealogy;} Denise A. Riley, \textit{Masters of the Blue Room: An Investigation of the Relationship Between the Environment and the Ideology of the Faculty of the College of William & Mary, 1836-1846} (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1997), 200-03; Ludwell Johnson, "From Fiasco to Recovery to Disaster, 1846-1862," \textit{The College of William and Mary: A History 1693-1888} (King and Queen Press, the Society of the Alumni, College of William and Mary, 1993), 1:263.

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Biographical Sketches.}
was among the many villagers who turned out to hear him speak. Perhaps as the son of one of Williamsburg's leading citizens, he may have even won an introduction to him. In that same year John Minson experienced excitement closer to home and of longer duration. His father had decided to add a wing to their small, cramped, wood-slatted house on Woodpecker Street. It is likely, that in addition to creating new space for a family of six, Alexander was succumbing also to the dictates of fashionable gentility. A new parlor could provide space to display the family's many new pieces of furniture and other recently acquired accoutrements so necessary to polite living. The remodeling took several years during which time there was much "chaos" in the house and nowhere was "secure from the dust, dirt, and din of bricklayers and carpenters." In the end the extra space proved more valuable than Alexander might have guessed. In 1838 little Thom and Lizzie Galt, the young children of Mary Galt's widowed brother, came to live with Alexander and his family. 

Although John pursued athletics and botany, much of his youth was spent in study. His parents expected studious habits certainly; but perhaps, too, the ancient collection of academic, brick buildings, only a stone's throw from his home, imposed expectations upon him as well. The College of William and Mary, a constant presence in the village for over a century, loomed large in the imagination of all villagers, but especially for men like the Gaits, who had attended school there. They harbored a deep pride in the school's illustrious past combined with an intense hope for its continued reputation as a center of learning, not only in Virginia, but beyond its borders. John

---

22Pickell, *Alexander Dickie Galt*, 64.

23John Minson came to adore the little ones and they him. When he was away from home, the two toddlers would "have a scuffle every meal" to sit in his chair at the dining table. (SMG to JMGII, 20 March 1843.)
Minson must have felt the weight of such communal reverence for a local institution and all it symbolized early on in his life.

Luckily for all who held academic expectations for John Minson, the young boy was a bright child who enjoyed learning and could often be found with his nose in a book, magazine, or newspaper. His early instruction in reading and writing began, as was common at that time among better families, with lessons from his mother, older siblings, and private tutors. John might have attended one of the public schools in the vicinity had his parents chose to send him, for in 1810 the state assembly had created a Literary Fund designed to encourage county governments to establish local schools for white children. But John Minson was destined for a more elite education than the public school could provide and one that would insure the close attention of teachers who would take a personal interest in the progress of the son of one of Williamsburg’s best families. He entered the Preparatory School of Williamsburg with his brother Alexander, Jr., and there came under the tutelage of Headmaster Dabney Browne, a man who one colleague

---

24 Albert Ogden Porter, *County Government in Virginia: A Legislative History 1607-1904* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 219-23; Funding for a public school system had grown to $100,000 by 1843, not an inconsiderable sum for the period, yet the system never really flourished. Few parents were willing to suffer the stigma of enrolling their children in what were considered schools for the poor. Indeed such was the lack of enthusiasm for the public school system that some county governments never applied for funds specifically earmarked for them. For further details on Virginia’s efforts to establish a public school system, see Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class: Literature, Politics, and Economy, 1820-1880* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1998); A.J. Morrison, *The Beginnings of Public Education in Virginia, 1776-1860: Study of Secondary School in Relation to the State Literary Fund* (Richmond: Davis Bottom, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1917); William Arthur Maddox, *The Free School Idea before the Civil War: A Phase of Political and Social Evolution* (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1918).

25 "Biographical Sketches." The Preparatory School of Williamsburg was also known as the William and Mary Grammar School.
described as "pretty much like the old steamboat Columbia on the North River, going at
the rate of 4 miles an hour." Browne, however, was oblivious to any criticism of his
technique and thought "all other systems of teaching besides his own was d----
humbug." John Minson seemed to thrive in Browne's classroom. He had an especially
keen interest in languages and learned them "with little effort." He became so fluent that
in adulthood "with the exception of the Russian and Turkish languages he required no
one to translate for him the tongues of the other nations of Europe." Following a self-
designed course of study, he would even conquer Arabic well enough to read the Koran
in the original.

John entered the College of William and Mary in 1835 and, as in grammar school,
he would find among his professors not only instructors but family friends and a circle of
men who cared about him beyond the classroom. The faculty consisted of five
professors, four of whom were William and Mary alumni, a fact that must have pleased
Alexander Dickie Galt who preferred homegrown teachers to foreign ones. Nathaniel
Beverley Tucker, the son of the famous jurist St. George Tucker, taught law and
government, Robert Saunders, a "genteeel and well born scholar," was professor of
mathematics, and Dabney Browne, John Minson's old teacher from grammar school held
the professorship of humanities. Thomas Roderick Dew, professor of history and political
economy, and president of the college, was the most illustrious and perhaps the most
eccentric of John Minson's teachers: "How interesting Professor Dew was in general
conversation and in the classroom," wrote one student:

---

26Johnson, "From Fiasco to Recovery to Disaster," 261-62.
27"Biographical Sketches."
28Pickell, Alexander Dickie Galt, 43, 44.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
A question would be asked pertinent to the day's lesson and Professor Dew would unwind his long legs, with his hand plaster down his curly red hair, and rising, exclaim, 'An intelligent question young gentleman. I am glad you are thinking.'

His services as a professor were in demand in the decade before the Civil War either because of his proslavery politics or his scholarship or perhaps both. He was offered a position at the University of Virginia and at South Carolina College but refused both. He used his affection for the Wren building to explain his commitment to William and Mary:

'I have made my daily pilgrimage to that ancient building and wandered through her halls for so many years that this habit had grown into routine...my affections are intertwined around that building...which has almost become essential to my existence'.

The last of John Minson's professors was John Millington, professor of chemistry. He had emigrated from England and already had experienced a full if somewhat unconventional life as an engineer, lawyer, and physician. He was said to have "kind and genial manners" as well as "integrity and simplicity of character," a man who his students apparently considered "not only as an instructor but as a friend." This was certainly the case for John Minson, who held great affection for Millington. When it was rumored Millington was under consideration for a post at the Jefferson School of Medicine, John harbored the secret wish he would not get it and have to stay in Williamsburg.

---

29 Johnson, "From Fiasco to Recovery to Disaster," 260-261.

30 Thomas Roderick Dew, "Remarks on Declining Appointment at University of Virginia," Dew Family Papers, Folder 6, Special Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William & Mary.


32 JMGII to ADG, Jr., 7 February 1841.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
The College of William and Mary was enjoying something of a revival when John matriculated. Enrollment had faltered in the previous decade for a variety of reasons, but John's class with sixty seven students reversed that trend. His fellow classmates were the offspring of the most influential and wealthy men of Virginia and included the sons of Robert G. Scott, the U.S. Consul to Brazil, Richard Dickinson, state senator and judge in Prince Edward County, Edmund Ruffin, agriculturalist and later notorious secessionist, Benjamin Harrison, soon to be president of the United States and John Tyler, his vice president. Other well-known Virginian families like the Armisteads, Pollards, Henleys, Pages, Randolphs, Semples, Wallers, Peachys, Carys, Skipwiths, and Tazewells sent their sons to William and Mary that year as well.33

Regardless of their elevated station in life, or perhaps because of it, the William and Mary student body had earned a reputation for disorderly behavior throughout the state. Drunkenness, a reckless use of weapons, even on one occasion the assault of a professor, had become commonplace. By the time John entered, however, a series of newly-established and well-enforced rules were in place that ended the most egregious behavior among students, although occasional outbursts of rowdiness still erupted from time to time.34 Living at home, watched over like a hawk by a doting mother and a stern father, John did not join his classmates in any of these rites of passage into adulthood. He may have been like his fellow students in that he boarded with a local family, but the family being his own, made a world of difference.

33 *The History of the College of William & Mary (Including the General Catalogues) From Its Foundation 1660-1874* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph and English, 1874), 126-31. These students attended school at the same time John Minson did, but some graduated a year before or after him.

34 Johnson, "From Fiasco to Recovery to Disaster," 237-40.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
In his last year at college, John busied himself with his thesis on the Reformation. He almost certainly obtained most of his information and arguments for it from Dew's classroom lectures and writings on the subject. His main theme, the corruption of the Catholic Church and its pernicious influence upon western civilization, proposed that every branch of knowledge during the Middle Ages had experienced the "shackles of Catholic domination." Its repercussions were long-lived, affecting even the current status of countries like Italy which was "sunk in most abject submission" and South America with its constant state of "anarchy, disorder, and ignorance." His "champion," Martin Luther, in tandem with the invention of the Gutenberg press, had dispelled the state of ignorance perpetuated by a hypocritic, vicious clergy and "exposed one dogma after another." Although Dew's lectures on the Reformation were much more sophisticated, analytical, and balanced than John's thesis, their basic themes and attitudes were very much reflected in the young student's work. Anti-Catholicism was not new among Virginian Episcopalians, who feared and loathed the authority of the pope and the influence of the Catholic Church.


36Galt, John Minson, On the Reformation, 16, 22. A variety of sources verify that JMG wrote his senior thesis on the Reformation. The document cited here is not the thesis itself but a draft copy perhaps circulated among the faculty before the final copy was drawn up. There are corrections and additions in handwriting other than Galt's which match up with the initials on the inside of the front cover of the notebook: DB, RS, BT, TRD, JM (Dabney Brown, Robert Saunders, [Nathaniel] Beverley Tucker, Thomas Roderick Dew, John Millington). GFP III, Group II, Box 1, Folder 19.

37See Michael Holt, Rise and the Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 926-29. In the 1850s the animus toward Catholics would be refueled by the rise of the Know-Nothing Party in Virginia.
John's own religious beliefs were influenced by his immediate family. His
grandfather and namesake, John Minson I, had been cosmopolitan in his thinking and had
instructed his son, Alexander Dickie, while in London to be sure to "frequent some place
of worship every forenoon" and learn as much as he could about a variety of churches. "I
would have you visit all," he wrote, "but stick by the old established church--I have tried
all and find that full as good as any--indeed better."38 During most of his life, John
Minson Galt I lived as he advised and was an active member of Bruton Parish Church
and served as a vestryman. His son, Alexander Dickie, did not embrace Episcopalianism
to the same degree as had his father. He was a parishioner at Bruton Parish, but not a very
active one, and chose not to serve as a vestryman, although surely as one of
Williamsburg's most prominent and wealthy men, that must have been an option open to
him. Nor is there any record that he had baptized any of his four children—at least not at
Bruton Parish.39 It is likely that Alexander Dickie, a busy doctor, did not see much value
in church services except occasionally as a social convenience. John's mother, Mary, was
not an avid church-goer either. Indeed she attended services at Bruton Parish so
infrequently that when she did go, her son Alexander Jr. found it noteworthy enough to
mention in his commonplace book. At her death, the rector of Bruton Parish admitted he
had never seen her in person.40 She read the Bible daily, however, and made sure her
son, John Minson, had a copy of the Scriptures "with the hope that he would read it
attentively."41

39 Ibid., 46.
40 Pitzer, Sallie and Elizabeth Galt, 10.
41 Inscription on fly page, Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments (New
Like his parents John Minson never became a regular church-goer, although he did serve on the vestry at Bruton Parish church as well as rented a pew for $22. He attended various social functions associated with the parish church as well and from time to time was recruited to help in various church business. He believed in an omniscient and all-powerful God, and like his mother, a God who often let His will be known through omens and catastrophes. Dreams were particularly important to John Minson, and he once wondered if a person "could not modify...dreams intentionally by reading or thinking of pleasant things immediately before entering into slumber." John Minson's only relief from the morbid fears of damnation as he noted in his journal was to distract himself by immersing himself in activity. After a particularly successful visit to Roanoke in 1855 that included a whirlwind of social engagements, he wrote the "doctrine of eternal punishment often makes us too anxious as to life, whilst it is not infrequently our duty not to give it a thought." He applied the same cure to his fear of omens. The "best policy" was not to think of them but rather "lose sight" of them by busying oneself in activity.

---

42 Lyon G. Tyler, "Vestryman List, 1827-1853," *Williamsburg: The Old Colonial Capitol* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1907), 120.


44 John Minson Galt II, *Commonplace Book*, March 1854. Galt was always intrigued with the meaning of dreams. Dream interpretation was to become fertile ground for psychiatrists later in the nineteenth-century, and reach its zenith in the ground-breaking work of Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*.
activity.\textsuperscript{45}

In addition to the many white relatives that were part of his world, John Minson spent much of his time with the family's black members. Their relationship seemed to follow along the broad lines of paternalism as described in Eugene Genovese's \textit{Roll, Jordan, Roll}.\textsuperscript{46} The Galts extended protection and affection to their slaves, and in return, expected loyalty, obedience, and labor. Arena Baker and "Uncle Aleck" Preston (1791-1873), two household slaves, met their masters' expectations, but at the same time they defined and demanded rights for themselves (within the constraints of such a relationship) that the Virginia slave codes would not have otherwise allowed. Baker and Preston cared for the Galt children well into adulthood and stayed with them even after emancipation. Sallie described Arena Baker "from youth to mature age" as "altogether lovely, blameless, and pure" and said about Aleck Preston "not a more honest and benevolent being lives on earth." She called him "a true Christian and I will say it, a gentleman," high praise indeed from a white southern woman of the period.\textsuperscript{47}

Nothing could change the reality that Preston and Baker and other Galt servants were slaves with all the ugly circumstances entailed by that status, nor that the relationship was one in which the balance of power was profoundly lopsided in the Galts' favor, yet undeniably John Minson shared an intimacy with blacks and they with him that made each an integral part of the other's life. All the most important occasions common

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., October 1855; June 1854.


\textsuperscript{47}Pitzner, \textit{Sallie and Elizabeth Galt}, 19-20. These comments were made by Sallie Galt in 1873.
to the human experience—birth, marriage, illness, death—were shared on some level. When the daughter of the Galt slave, Susannah, died, Alexander, Jr. wrote,

> Poor little Maria died this evening...Her death caused much distress to all the family, both black and white, it is the first death we have had in this yard for many years. She was five years old.48

Celebratory occasions like weddings were shared sometimes as well. The black cook of John Minson's Uncle John Strobia was married in his parlor, "in the presence of a large congregation of colored persons," slave and free. After the ceremony Galt's uncle provided bridecake and sweets, "served up in the most abundant manner." Closer to home, on one occasion Elizabeth Galt claimed that her brother “spent hundreds, almost thousands of dollars to save this good old man's family [Aleck Preston] from distress," although exactly what form this distress took or why John Minson's assistance was needed is not known.49 There is no further mention of the incident, but it does seem to indicate that the Galts, like a number of other southerners, felt bound by an unwritten code that demanded if they were to be slaveholders, they must appropriately support and care for their slaves. In their mind, owning slaves was as much a duty and burden as it was a necessity.50

John Minson's relationship to the blacks in his family circle played out within the context of a slave society and its restrictions. Virginia's manumission legislation gave

48Ibid., 18.

49Ibid., 18-19. Uncle Strobia doesn't appear in any of the Galt genealogies, so perhaps he was simply a close family friend rather than a relative. As to JMG II efforts to help Aleck Preston, one can only guess at the cause for his distress. Was he buying Preston’s family so they could stay together? Was it for medical treatment of some sort for Preston’s family? Was he providing some sort of special housing or land?

50Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 75-86.
slaves an opportunity to buy their freedom or receive it from their master, and they took advantage of it when possible. In James City County and Williamsburg, if the federal census is to be believed, the number of free blacks continued to grow throughout the decades before the Civil War, so that while in 1840 free blacks numbered 507 to 1,947 slaves, by 1850 the number of free blacks had increased by fifty-six and slaves had decreased by seventy-nine. The quality of life for both free blacks and slaves depended upon their situation. Slaves with a skill or trade could often have more independence than their fellows especially in urban settings. In Richmond, slaves might “live away,” or “hire one’s own time,” that is be allowed to arrange for their own housing and employment with few questions asked as long as they paid their masters a percentage of their earnings. Under these largely informal rules, slaves could be found “scattered among tobacco fields and towns, wheat farms and oyster boats, coal mines and iron foundries.” Free blacks, too, laboring under many restrictions in Virginia, nevertheless managed to build semi-independent communities. Williamsburg, although smaller than Richmond or Norfolk and thus providing less opportunity for the enterprising black, probably experienced some of this phenomenon as well. Certainly a number of blacks, free and slave, worked at the asylum, some of them in responsible positions, and

51 1840 and 1850 County Level Census Data: Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research; http://fisher.lib.Virginia.EDU/cgi-local/census/


Minson's own domestic slave, Arena Baker, in a sense "lived away" since she resided with her family in a separate house from the Galts after 1843.

In 1830 the Nat Turner insurrection in Southampton, Virginia triggered a series of draconian new laws and enforced old ones that severely limited activities of both free blacks and slaves. They were forbidden to assemble, even for religious services, to learn to read or write, carry arms, own dogs, sell alcohol, drive a gig too fast over a bridge, run a steam engine, drive horses or hogs, play cards or dice, put on a show or perform in one, and other equally onerous restrictions. And while slaves could still be manumitted, they were required to leave Virginia within twelve months or face being re-enslaved. Obviously since a large population of free blacks existed in Williamsburg this latter statute was not always enforced to the letter. Whites might have turned a blind eye in some cases, or a slave might receive the court's permission to stay if he could prove himself to be "of good character, peaceable, orderly, industrious, and not addicted to drunkeness, gaming or other vice."56

As far as can be determined, the Galts obeyed the law vis à vis slavery. They invited their slaves into their home for Sunday Bible readings, which might indicate they did not allow their slaves to participate in their own religious worship. It's unlikely

55 Dogs travelling with blacks were said to be responsible for attacking sheep, but it is just as likely that dogs, reared by their black masters and loyal to them, were seen by whites as dangerous weapons.


57 Pitzner, Sallie and Elizabeth Galt, 17. See also Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, for discussion of religion used by whites as a method of social control, 183-93.
they taught their slaves to read or write, although not impossible. The Gaits made references to slave letters in their own correspondence, but only one letter from a Galt slave exists and that written in Sally Galt’s hand.\textsuperscript{58} On the other hand, John Minson Galt supported the notion, at least in theory, that the south should “do away with all the laws forbidding the education of slaves,”\textsuperscript{59} a position that may have sprung from his own personal need to employ slaves at the asylum and the great advantage it was to have those who were literate.

The Gaits never freed any of their slaves, and indeed Arena Baker and Aleck Preston, the two slaves with the greatest prospects for manumission by virtue of their closeness to the family, did not gain their freedom until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862. Yet the Gaits seemed to employ a laissez-faire attitude toward their slaves in some respect and allowed Baker and Preston a good deal of independence in their activities. When John, his mother, Elizabeth, and Sallie moved to the cottage on asylum grounds from the Woodpecker Street house, Arena Baker moved into the “Old House” where she would live until she died.\textsuperscript{60}

In addition to the influence of state law regulating antebellum relations between whites and blacks, John Minson learned many of his attitudes simply from observation of

\textsuperscript{58}Pitzner, \textit{Sallie and Elizabeth Galt}, 17, 21. Eliza Baker, Arena’s daughter, said many years after emancipation that she could remember a time when if a slave was caught with a book he would be whipped.

\textsuperscript{59}John M. Galt II, \textit{Political Essays: The Annexation of Texas, Parts I & II, April 10 & 26, 1844, or The Future of Democracy signed by A Voice from Virginia} (Williamsburg, VA: 1852), 34. Galt felt that if the more egregious practices of the institution of slavery were done away with, perhaps the objections of abolitionists would die with them.

\textsuperscript{60}Pitzner, \textit{Sallie and Elizabeth Galt}, 21. Sally Galt stipulated in her will that Arena was to have possession of the Woodpecker Street house kitchens and yard until she died, (Sallie Galt, Will, GFP III, Group II, Box 3, Folder 5).
his elders' behavior. For instance, his father treated a number of blacks, slave and free, as patients. He used the exact botanical medicines and procedures as he did with whites, but his attitude toward them differed on a number of counts. While he never accused blacks of malingering nor making up illnesses, he expected them to convalesce in half the time his white patients did. Betsy, a slave who suffered profoundly from severe headaches, was "well enough to milk the cow" shortly after Alexander administered treatment, while Bob, a slave with a cough and a pain in his chest, was sufficiently "revived this morning" to take up "his usual occupation" after only two days of recuperation. Alexander's entries for slaves in his case files were always brief, perhaps a paragraph, while those for white patients could span several pages. He often included a master's comments that a slave drank too much or indulged himself in other ways, while such asides were rarely if ever mentioned for whites. The lesson John Minson learned from his father's care of blacks was that, while slaves were to be treated medically with all the traditional remedies, they were not to receive the same solicitous bedside manner as whites, nor were they to be coddled. Slaves were to be brought back to health quickly.

61 Alexander Dickie Galt, Practical Medicine Illustrated by Cases of the Most Important Diseases ed. John Minson Galt II. (Philadelphia: Barrington and George D. Haswell, 1843). Alexander Dickie Galt's case histories make compelling, if sometimes gruesome, reading. One black woman, who was having trouble giving birth to her child, presented with her baby's arm dangling from her vagina. Galt was prepared to "hook it and pull it down" or "dissect it" or "pull it by its feet". Fortunately none of these measures were required as the baby "expelled itself" after sometime.

62 When Galt compiled his father's medical case histories for publication, he used the names of black patients while keeping the whites anonymous. The privacy of slaves and free blacks was obviously not seen as important in his eyes.

so they might return to their labors, and they obviously were expected to tolerate illness better than their masters.

Other attitudes John Minson absorbed about slavery came in a more formal way in the classroom. The Nat Turner insurrection had triggered an abolition debate in Virginia, and although freeing slaves and allowing them to stay in the state was never considered a viable option, some among the abolitionists favored exile of slaves and free blacks to Africa under the auspices of the Recolonization Society. That idea faded eventually for lack of support, and southerners ultimately tilted in favor of defending slavery as a positive good and as an institution essential to the southern way of life. Two of the most outspoken and influential men espousing such a position were John Minson's own professors, Thomas Roderick Dew and Nathaniel Beverley Tucker. Dew had long been antagonistic toward the government in Washington, which he felt rewarded northern economic interests at the expense of the southern ones and had argued that position in his essays on the topic of tariffs, but he became best known throughout the south (and the north) for his pro slavery treatise, *Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature, 1831-1832*. In it he expressed the opinion that while Virginia would be better off without slaves and could flourish by relying upon the state's white freeholders for a successful agricultural economy, the deep south with its cotton and rice crops, which required many field laborers, could not. He advised Virginians to sell their slaves to the deep south, thus eliminating slavery in the Commonwealth, while still supporting it as a southern

---

Nathaniel Beverley Tucker called for a political remedy to save slavery. An ardent advocate of states rights and supporter of John Calhoun, he believed Virginia as well as the rest of the south had the right to secede from the Union rather than abandon slavery. In addition to his essays advocating such a course, he expressed his views in *The Partisan Leader: A Tale of the Future*, a fictionalized account of rebellion and disunion set in 1849. John Minson was exposed to Tucker's views not only while in college, but even after graduation when he and his brother Alexander, Jr. continued to take private lessons from him in history and politics for a short time. John Minson's own vigorous defense of states rights and admiration for John Calhoun later in life seems to indicate Tucker's influence on him was particularly enduring.

Nathaniel Beverley Tucker and Roderick Dew's pro slavery arguments were counterbalanced for John Minson by his father and grandfather's more benign views on slavery that adhered more closely to those of Jefferson and an even more local comrade, Williamsburg's St. George Tucker. Unlike his son, Nathaniel Beverley, St. George Tucker decried the evil nature of slavery and expressed a desire for its elimination in his

---


68 Pickell, *Sallie and Elizabeth Galt*, 43.
Dissertation on Slavery with a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of Its in the State of Virginia," an essay John Minson was sure to have read. Caught between two ideologies—slavery as an immoral institution that should be eliminated, and slavery as a positive good which should be protected—John Minson would never quite resolve the issue completely to his own satisfaction.

After graduation from William and Mary, John apprenticed with his father for a short while. John had little desire to become a doctor and under normal circumstances, his older brother Alexander, Jr. would have fulfilled the family destiny, while he might have been allowed to find an occupation more to his liking. But Alexander Jr. had suffered since childhood with a serious respiratory disease, one his father had unhappily, but correctly, diagnosed as "uncontrollable." He had become an invalid so debilitated he could not leave his second-floor bedroom for months at a time. Indeed Alexander, Jr. would die before he was twenty-eight. Under these circumstances, it fell to John to follow his grandfather and father's footsteps, become a doctor, and enter the family business as asylum keeper. His sister Elizabeth made it abundantly clear to him how the family perceived his role:

Remember you are the only Refuge, Hope, and Consolation of our house! And if there be pleasure without allay, it is to see throughout Williamsburg your name written in every heart and your praises on every lip!72

69St. George Tucker, Dissertation on Slavery with a Proposal for the Gradual Abolition of It in the State of Virginia (Philadelphia: Printed for Mathew Carey, 1796).

70Apprenticeship with an established doctor for an unspecified amount of time was a requirement for entrance into most medical schools.

71Pickell, Sallie and Elizabeth Galt, 37.

72Elizabeth Judith Galt (EJG) to JMGII, 23 November 1839.
John was to carry the expectations of the House of Galt on his shoulders, and while such expectations would shape his life profoundly, they were not particularly grand. Yes, John needed to secure the family’s fame and reputation, but only within the confines of the village of Williamsburg, population 1,400.

On October 26, 1839 John and his college chum, John Coke, boarded a ship at Jamestown bound for Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. Unlike his father’s generation, which had found it necessary in 1790 to travel abroad for a medical education, in 1839 John and his friend could choose from a variety of viable American medical schools. The University of Pennsylvania was a favorite choice for most southerners, quite possibly because it was the closest. John’s own Class of 1841 was made up of thirty-two Virginians with forty-two students from Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina and Georgia. In all, almost 60% of his fellow students were southerners, with the majority of the remaining students from Philadelphia.

Philadelphia was a city of opportunity for aspiring doctors. One contemporary wrote:

Consider that there are three flourishing medical colleges in the very heart of the city, and near each other, either of which would stand high in any part of the country. About the first of November from seven hundred to one thousand medical students and strangers are, all at once, to be seen traversing the streets and inquiring for the various medical offices...When comparing these flourishing

---

73 A more negative interpretation theorizes that the University of Pennsylvania Medical School had lower standards than other northern medical schools, thus southerners with substandard educations could gain admittance.

medical schools with literary colleges, law schools and theological schools, the
difference often appears marvelous. What other distinction has this city achieved
except in medical science? But, here, all is enthusiasm--all spirit.\footnote{North, "A Glance at Medicine in Philadelphia," \textit{Boston Medical and Surgical Journal} 26(1842):27.}

John's mentor, John Millington, who had once lived in Philadelphia, would assure
his student of the city's other advantages as well, "I am partial to Philadelphia for its
intellectual qualities," he wrote to John,

for I know of no place that contains a greater number of good and acceptable
libraries, museums, and collections...nor a greater number of kind and liberal
minded men of service.\footnote{John Millington to JMGII, 14 February 1840.}

Yet John Minson was of two minds as he began his journey north. On the one
hand, the exhilaration of being on his own at the juncture of a great adventure was
reflected in his impressions at each stage of the journey. Of his first train ride he wrote,
"the cars moved so swiftly along that it was impossible to observe anything at all--as to a
tree or plant, directly your eyes were fixed upon it you lost sight of it." And on the
steamboat that crossed the Susquehanna, he found great pleasure in leaning over the
railing and gazing "on the foaming waters below which the boat swept along through the
darkness with wind and tide both against her." On the other hand he was unsure of his
desire to be a physician, and he was doubly unsure of his feelings about leaving
Williamsburg.\footnote{JMGII to ADG, 27 October 1839.} In the same letter to his parents describing the adventures of his journey
north, he confessed that he was deeply homesick, a feeling that would not leave him

\footnote{John Millington to JMGII, 14 February 1840.}
during his entire sojourn in Philadelphia nor be mitigated by a natural, youthful drive to enjoy new and different experiences. Philadelphia would prove a strange world for the young southerner. The frenzied activity of the city streets during the day and into the night, the metropolitan architecture of oversized public buildings, the elegant townhouses cheek by jowl with shanties, the diversity of people where lower class whites held menial positions reserved only for blacks at home, and upper class whites often behaved brashly or disingenuously, the dazzling entertainments that he might enjoy but must also guard against lest they corrupt his natural self, all created a sense of displacement that unsettled John Minson on some level and seemed irreconcilable with his own southern village values.

John Minson and his friend John Coke quickly found lodgings near the University of Pennsylvania. His first visit to the medical school must have been somewhat overwhelming. The main building where he would attend classes was barely ten years old in 1839 and huge, with three, large lecture rooms, one that could accommodate as many as 600 students (or a third of Williamsburg's population) at any one time. The chemistry laboratory was fitted out with apparatus "unequalled in extent, variety, and splendour," and another classroom housed the Wistar anatomical collection with its specimens of "dried arterial and venous injections, magnified drawings and models, and anatomical plates, exhibit of organs in their healthy and diseased states." For John who was particularly interested in botanicals, the materia medica collection of illustrations of "painted figures of all the medicinal plants," "dried and living specimens" in their "crude condition" as well as "their commercial varieties" must have fascinated and stimulated his young mind.

Seven full-time professors staffed the medical school. Two of them—Nathaniel Chapman (1780-1853), Practice of Medicine and Clinical Medicine, and William Edmonds Horner (1793-1855), Anatomy—were from Virginia and of his father's generation, but unlike Alexander had moved north many years earlier to make their fortune. Another, Robert Hare (1781-1858), the professor of chemistry, while not from Virginia had taught at William and Mary very briefly in 1818, using the position as a career stepping stone. Chapman was the most well-known of the trio, having been editor of the Journal of Medical and Physical Science and of The American Journal of the Medical Sciences. He had served also as president of the Philadelphia Medical Society, and would in 1848 be elected the first president of the American Medical Association.

Hare and Horner, too, had achieved some national prominence, the former for his chemical experiments that utilized “apparatus of his own invention” and the latter for his dissection skills and as the author of the first textbook of pathology published in America. Ultimately John Minson found their classes disappointing. John Minson took a personal dislike to William Horner almost immediately. Horner was an Episcopalian who had converted to Catholicism the same year Galt arrived in Philadelphia, and John had espied him attending church, writing home that the man “attends mass and confesses” as well. His distaste for him as a person may have spilled over into his evaluation of him as a lecturer: “he is not talented” he noted, and his writings were “thought very poor.

indeed." As for Chapman, John Minson found less and less to like about him as the year wore on. His lectures were very dry, especially in the summer when he left out all the jokes "which serves to make his discourse unbearable." Perhaps Robert Hare was the most disappointing. John Minson regretted that the chemistry professor's lectures were "not better and more of them." Hare had been hired at the medical school more for his eminence as a scientist rather than as a doctor, and he "did not pretend to teach medical chemistry, but confined himself only to general chemistry as taught in scientific schools." Since John Minson had come directly from the classroom of the illustrious John Millington, he was already very well-versed in the basics of chemistry, and must have found Hare's lectures elementary. At the same time John grudgingly gave Hare his due regarding his expertise in chemical experiments: "I have never yet seen him fail in one."

The non-Virginian teachers fared somewhat better in John's estimation, perhaps because he had fewer expectations of them. George B. Woods (1797-1879) who taught materia medica, had "great capability as a lecturer" and his classes were "very well attended and very much liked by the students—even by those who dislike him—and they are many." He noted that Woods fended "affectation" and pronounced words with an unnatural emphasis so that water became "wat-ter," but sometimes "in some words he seems to forget himself and does not do it." Still he was impressed with Woods.

---

80 JMGII to ADG, 5 January 1840.
81 JMGII to ADG, 10 September 1840.
82 JMGII to ADG 16 February 1840.
83 JMGII to "Dear Sir", 27 November 1839. This letter is a draft copy with crossouts and other corrections, probably meant for John Millington.
botanical specimens, both dried and living, some of them "almost trees." Once Wood brought in a two-foot high tea plant and an eight-foot coffee plant.\textsuperscript{84}

Perhaps John Minson's favorite teacher was Samuel Jackson (1787-1872) who taught physiology. Jackson was described by his contemporaries as "small and vivacious with a long narrow head and long light hair, twinkling gray eyes and a fascinating smile," a man who "spoke in a particular chirping voice, with quick nervous gestures."\textsuperscript{85} John found him "pleasant and agreeable"\textsuperscript{86} and may have gravitated toward him because outside the classroom Jackson was a great admirer of literature and the classics, which John too enjoyed, more than the study of medicine. Jackson and his circle of friends read all of the fashionable authors of the day like Goethe and Carlyle and often had lively discussions which pleased and excited the young Virginian.\textsuperscript{87} John Minson visited Jackson's home several times and on one occasion arrived just as the Jackson family was about to leave for an evening lecture. He accepted their invitation to go along, noting at the end of the evening that the audience was "composed of the most genteel and fashionable part of the community."\textsuperscript{88}

He also must have felt that Jackson was the best practitioner on the faculty, for he consulted with him on his health problems, telling his sister that "if a doctor is needed he

\textsuperscript{84}JMGII to ADG, 21 February 1841; JMGII to "Dear Sir," 27 November 1839; JMGII to ADG, 12 January 1840.

\textsuperscript{85}Dictionary of American Biography, 553.

\textsuperscript{86}JMGII to ADG, 5 January 1840.

\textsuperscript{87}JMGII to EJG, 14 January 1841.

\textsuperscript{88}JMGII to "Brother," 18 January 1840. This letter was not necessarily to his brother, Alexander, Jr. He called several of his cousins "Brother" as well.
would call Dr. Jackson." It was during this time that John began to battle a variety of ills that would plague him until his death. He suffered particularly from dyspepsia accompanied by debilitating toothaches and would try various remedies, one time attempting to conquer the problem by "violent exercise and a diet restricted to the borders of starvation." Jackson suggested his toothaches might be related to his stomach problems since he himself was often afflicted with neuralgia in the upper ranges of his body "if his stomach was out of order." Perhaps it was Jackson, too, who first prescribed laudanum to dull the pain of John Minson's toothaches and dyspepsia, a habit that became addictive over time and eventually led to his death.

Alexander Dickie instructed John to attend the lectures on anatomy, physiology, and surgery "with the strictest punctuality from beginning to end." Seize this "golden opportunity," he wrote, to inform yourself on those subjects and be prepared for any circumstances in the future. Alexander's advice to his son was very much like that which he had received from his own father almost forty years earlier when he'd been a student at London, advice which he had kept safe in a letter titled "Father's Instructions." John was dutiful and reported that he hadn't missed more than two or three lectures since arriving and in addition often spent the evening going over his

---

89 JMGII to "Sister," 5 February 1840.
90 JMGII, Commonplace Book, September 1856.
91 JMGII to ADG, 5 January 1840.
92 ADG to JMGII, 3 November 1839.
93 Pickell, Sallie and Elizabeth Galt, 22.
94 JMGII to ADG, 16 February 1840.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
lecture notes. He noted that while he learned what was taught him easily, he didn't try to remember everything, because "after a day of 6 or 7 hours of lectures it would be very difficult and disagreeable."\textsuperscript{95}

Times were changing, however, and a medical program that emphasized lectures was giving way to a course of study that placed as much importance on clinical and hospital demonstrations. John Minson was aware of the trend and approved of it. By his second year he complained the lecture system was "something of a humbug" and would "go down entirely before many years."\textsuperscript{96} As far as he was concerned, with some professors "I believe I could do better in staying at my room and studying than going to hear him."\textsuperscript{97}

There did seem to be some serious flaws in the classroom experience for a young man like John, who wanted more practical experience. Although initially rather enthusiastic about his courses and his professors, he became increasingly disgruntled. Not only were the lectures becoming irrelevant, but the impersonal character of the large classes robbed him of confidence in his professors' ability to evaluate him properly. "As to any standing with the professors this is all fudge for they rarely know a student and even then must necessarily know very little of his capacities or knowledge."\textsuperscript{98} Education at the University of Pennsylvania was indeed different from his experience at William & Mary where the professors not only knew him very well but were family friends.

In spite of his numerous bouts of homesickness and illnesses not to mention a

\textsuperscript{95}JMGII to ADG, 18 February 1840.

\textsuperscript{96}JMGII to ADG, 14 August 1840.

\textsuperscript{97}JMGII to ADG, 10 September 1840.

\textsuperscript{98}JMGII to SMG, 17 December 1840.
crowded schedule of study, John Minson found time to get out and about the city and see many sights he had previously only read about in the books, newspapers, and magazines that inundated the Galt home. In 1839, Philadelphia was a metropolis of the highest order. The streets were noisy and crowded with numerous open air markets and vendors selling “meat, vegetables, fruits, butter, cheese, turnips, coffee, chocolate, whiskey,” while hundreds of “horses, carts, carriages, wagons carrying people, wood, coal, charcoal, bricks, bakers, milk, scissors grinders, fish, cherries, strawberries, hot corn, hot food meals”\(^99\) crisscrossed the main thoroughfares and alleys. Taverns abounded and were usually full even during the day. Fire engines regularly raced up and down the city streets “with bells ringing loudly, two or three firemen having trumpets which they keep bawling through the whole time,” and fire companies engaged in such fierce rivalry to see who would get to a fire first that “they even proceeded to blows.” Each season in Philadelphia, too, brought unusual sights for a young Virginian. In the coldest part of the winter, skaters crowded the Schuylkill for as far as the eye could see,\(^100\) and as unlikely as it may seem, street vendors hawked a variety of “beautiful flowers,” one of them being the Fire Heath which John “had long wished to see.”\(^101\) Christmas in Philadelphia was spectacular. The shops came alive, “most of them fixed up very beautifully exposing to the view some of the most brilliant articles, so that it is like going to a show walking

---


\(^100\) JMGII to ADG, 12 January 1840.

\(^101\) JMGII to ADG, 16 February 1840. Erica Cerinthoides (Fire Heath), a native plant of Africa, was a favorite cultivated species in England at the time. It was notable for its clusters of brilliant, red flowers.
down Chestnut."\textsuperscript{102} All was not glittering lights and fancy shops on the streets of the City of Brotherly Love, however. John Minson noted that "I have often seen it boasted that there are very few beggars in America, but there are a good many here and you may meet them at any time in the street."\textsuperscript{103}

John Minson was especially attracted to the theatre. The New Chestnut Street Theatre was architecturally stunning with its oversized marble arcades, columns, and entablatures built in the popular Italian style of the period. Inside a center dome spanned forty-six feet in diameter, creating a proper setting for an extravagant, sparkling nine-foot wide chandelier. Beneath the dome and within the three rows of box seats, the theatre could comfortably accommodate a house of 2000.\textsuperscript{104} John attended many performances there, including the operas \textit{La Somnambula} and \textit{Norma}, ballets with world-class dancers who "cut a great many capers"\textsuperscript{105} as well as the more popular events like rope dancers and mechanical machines that could play chess (Galt guessed this was done by magnets).\textsuperscript{106} John especially loved to watch dancing, and one dancer in particular, Celeste, completely charmed him, "she seems to be the perfection of grace and

\textsuperscript{102}JMGII to ADG, 24 December 1840.

\textsuperscript{103}JMGII to ADG, 12 January 1840.

\textsuperscript{104}Oberholtzer, \textit{Philadelphia}, 2: 41.

\textsuperscript{105}JMGII to SMG, 13 November 1840.

\textsuperscript{106}JMGII to EJG, 10 December 1840. See Andie Tucher, \textit{Forth and Scum: Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and the Ax Murders in American's First Mass Medium}. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). Tucher talks about the hoaxes the penny press often perpetuated in reporting stories but intimates that hoaxes in general were very much part of the social scene and were a pleasurable challenge and pastime to the public. The "mechanical machine that could play chess" adheres to this particular cultural phenomena.
elegance.\textsuperscript{107} For a boy who had at best seen only amateur productions passing through Williamsburg, the sight of it all must have been dazzling.\textsuperscript{108}

John frequented more unconventional forms of entertainment as well. Very much like his father and his grandfather when they had studied in London, he attended a variety of religious services, as much out of curiosity and for entertainment as for spiritual reasons. In 1840 houses of worship in Philadelphia were almost as numerous as taverns with two Jewish synagogues, eleven Episcopal, fifteen Presbyterian, two German Reformed Lutheran, one Lutheran, five Baptist, two Universalist, one Unitarian, one Dutch Reformed, and eight Methodist churches, ten Negro churches, at least one Roman Catholic church, one Mormon church, and an unknown number of Quaker meeting houses.\textsuperscript{109} John was perplexed by Philadelphia natives who showed so little curiosity in their churches. "I have asked a person to what denomination a church just opposite to their dwelling belonged; they would not know."\textsuperscript{110} He himself made it his business to know and to have an opinion on each. He disliked the Presbyterian services, if not Presbyterians, and would rather go to any other church, simply on account of their lack of

\textsuperscript{107}JMGII to ADG, 12 January 1840.

\textsuperscript{108}See Bruce McConachie, \textit{Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1828-1870} in Studies in Theatre History and Culture edited by Thomas Postlewait (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992); McConachie posits that between 1840 and 1860 the evolution of theatre-going audiences replicated a larger change taking place in social structure and hierarchy. The upper class increasingly co-opted grand opera as their own while the working class increasingly embraced theatre. Theatre as popular entertainment represented a move from "a paternalistic to bourgeois form of cultural authority," 67-68.


\textsuperscript{110}JMGII to Mary Dorothea Galt (MDG), 8 December 1839.
music. He also visited the Mormon and Dutch Reformed churches as well as the Universalist Church where he first heard a seraphin played, "a cross between an organ and an accordion." Quaker services he found intriguing, but of no substance. "The more I see of Quakerism, the more I am disgusted with it," he wrote, and eventually concluded that Quakerism was "evil." This conclusion most certainly was based (consciously or unconsciously) upon the Quaker's close association with abolitionism. He identified that cause almost exclusively with them and noted that he had met no abolitionists in Philadelphia other than Quakers. Also for a young man who was well-read and curious, he seemed to have little appreciation of the tenets of the Quaker religion: "The ladies in mouse color and the men in the ugliest looking brown colored clothes," he wrote, "as if the same mode of dress suited each individual." That their dress was based upon the spiritual principle of eschewing pride and materialism, rather than upon fashion, seemed to elude him. His animus toward the Catholic Church grew while in Philadelphia as well. The Roman service he found unpleasant, with so much "kneeling down about half the time," and he never stayed for the sermons as he found it "quite disagreeable to hear things stated as facts which I full know are utterly false." Yet he returned to the Catholic church numerous times, for in spite of his distaste for its doctrines, he fell in love with its music which had rehearsed choirs, an organ, and other instruments, all of which had a "wildness...which is exquisite." His negative opinion of both Quakers and Catholics was fueled by a friendship he struck up with the Ritchie

111 JMGII to ADG, Jr. 22 August 1840.
112 JMGII to MDG, 24 October 1840.
113 JMGII to SMG, 11 February 1841.
114 JMGII to ADG, Jr., 3 December 1840; JMG to MDG 24 October 1840.
family of Virginia who were living in Philadelphia at the time. John thought them "the most intellectual people I have met in the city." Mr. Ritchie had little good to say of either Catholics or Quakers and as John confided to his sister, "I got a good many new ideas from them on the subject. They are all strong Episcopalians." In the last few weeks of his time in Philadelphia John Minson decided to attend only St. Luke's Episcopal church, "the most beautiful I ever saw" and the only "true church." He acknowledged to his sister, however, that church-going was not a habit he could continue in Williamsburg. "For doctors there were no Sundays," he maintained, no doubt a rationale he had picked up from his father who rarely frequented church services. As well it may have been a warning to his sister, Elizabeth, who was the pious, church-goer of the family, that she needn't expect him to attend services once he returned home.

John Minson continued his interest in politics while in Philadelphia, subscribing or receiving from friends and family the Richmond Whig, Richmond Enquirer, and the Richmond Compiler so that he might understand events and issues from a Virginia point of view. He noted that in Philadelphia "politics is not...so general and absorbing a topic as it is with us," but in this he was mistaken. Political interest was pervasive in

\[115\] Galt is probably referring to Thomas Ritchie, the editor of the Richmond Enquirer and one of the most influential Virginians of his time. He and his family, or at least some members of his family, were living in Philadelphia at the time.

\[116\] JMGII to SMG, 8 October 1840.

\[117\] JMGII to "Sister," 9 February 1840.

\[118\] JMGII to "Sir," 27 November 1839.

\[119\] JMGII to EJG, 30 March 1841.

\[120\] JMGII to ADG, 15 October 1840; JMGII to ADG, Jr., 1 January 1841.

\[121\] JMGII to "Sir," 27 November 1839.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Philadelphia, reaching every social class from the wealthiest banker to the street laborer, and in the fall of 1839, it reached a fevered pitch during the presidential election. The Whigs ran Benjamin Harrison and John Tyler at the top of their ticket, while the Democrats slated Martin Van Buren and Richard M. Johnson.

Like many Virginians in the decades before the Civil War, John Minson favored candidates more for their positions on specific issues rather than for party loyalty. State sectional issues were particularly important, even in presidential elections. By 1816 western Virginia had a population twice the size of that in Tidewater and their economic interests differed, a fact that generated a power struggle over who would control the direction of state government.122

As a rule, the Tidewater region was Whiggish,123 but John Minson leaned toward the Democrats. He supported universal suffrage, a Democratic position, no doubt because he himself as well as other of his young friends in Williamsburg, were disenfranchised under the prevailing system:124 "Young men who have education

122Charles Henry Ambler, *Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776-1861* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1910); For more recent scholarship on the subject, see William G. Shade, *Democratizing the Old Dominion: Virginia and the Second Party System, 1824-1861* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996). One of Shade's main theses is that while Virginia was divided by sectional differences, the evolution of political parties and the establishment of a second party system was very similar to that which was occurring in other states, even in the North.


124The Constitutional Convention of Virginia had extended suffrage to white men who leased land or owned a house but still excluded men of legal age without any property. In
without property are just as fit to vote as many of the citizens of Williamsburg with the sufficient amount of property but undereducated."125 He saw the franchise based on property (rather than education) as part and parcel of a distinction laced with aristocratic pretensions. "In principle I perfectly follow Mr. Jefferson in this as in everything else in the whole political catalogue." To prove his own democratic credentials, he noted that he did not expect nor want to be addressed by the title, "doctor" since such a profession was not "in general sufficiently magnificent."126

At the same time, John Minson could not persuade himself to support the 1840 Democratic presidential ticket regardless of their stance on suffrage. The Whig slate, Tyler and Harrison, were Virginians, both from neighboring Charles City County with an ancestral pedigree dating back to the 1700s.127 Both were family friends and John Minson had gone to school with the Harrison and Tyler boys. Although the two men were Whigs, and John Minson ostensibly a Democrat, he shrugged off his inconsistency saying the leaders of the Democrats were "nearly all men of bad character." He therefore declared himself "rather in favor of Harrison and Tyler than Van Buren and Johnson."128

spite of his father’s wealth, John Minson was no doubt one of the 30,000 white, male Virginians who owned no property and therefore was unable to vote.

125 JMGII to EJG, 24 October 1840. The irony here is that John Minson was writing this justification to his extremely well-educated sister who also was not allowed to vote, not because of her lack of property but because of her gender.

126 JMGII to MDG, 18 March 1841. See Gordon Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution, for interesting insights into how some well-educated gentleman in post-revolutionary America became eager to downplay their own high-born status in the new republic.


128 JMGII to EJG, 4 November 1840.
Later in his life, his affiliation with political parties and candidates would demand more neutrality, since his position as superintendent of the asylum was a political appointment. Yet he must have been seen more as a Democrat than a Whig, for in 1852 two wings of the local Democratic Party offered to run him for the offices of magistrate and mayor, neither of which he accepted.\textsuperscript{129} Perhaps, too, he was seen as his family saw him, as a man "very decided" in his opinions, but one who "never allowed differences on constitutional points to interfere with his private friendships."\textsuperscript{130}

In Philadelphia in 1839, John Minson abandoned himself to the high drama the city afforded its political elections. He wrote to his sister, "...we are in as excited a state here as is the case with you." He watched the many political parades down Chestnut and Walnut Streets and described them in detail to his family. One boasted a two-mile long procession of people in all sort of vehicles, on foot, and on horseback, while "the ladies all waved their handkerchiefs out the windows." The best part was a "goodsized log cabin drawn by 8 or 10 horses," this in support of Harrison who portrayed himself as being born and raised in a log cabin, obviously a plus among those who favored a candidate with humble beginnings. The fact that the parade was attacked by Democrats on two locations along the route only added to the excitement.\textsuperscript{131} On election day John Minson seemed surprised that everything went so smoothly despite high tensions over the

\textsuperscript{129}Dain, Disordered Minds, 153, 155. "According to his sister, he was elected to both [offices], but did not serve in either post."

\textsuperscript{130}"Biographical Sketches."

\textsuperscript{131}JMGII to SMG, 8 October 1840. See William Shade, Democritizing the Old Dominion for interesting insights into the attempt by Harrison, the wealthy, elite planter, to portray himself as a man born in a log cabin for reasons tied to notions of democracy and populism. Perhaps what is most striking is that JMG, who must have known better, did not find this at all odd.
election and noted that while the four voting stations were very crowded with "hundreds of people waiting many hours to vote," they were "all very orderly."\(^{132}\)

Galt had many opportunities to meet a variety of people at professional and social soirees while in Philadelphia, although he confessed to often feeling awkward in such situations. He was not a confident young man when outside the circle of his own family and close friends and often felt that others thought him "inferior"\(^{133}\) and did not care for his company. His relationship to women was particularly ambiguous. He certainly met enough single women, some who expressed an interest in him, and he was not immune to their charms once noting that "there was one of the most divinely beautiful creatures I ever saw"\(^{134}\) temporarily living at his boarding house. Indeed whenever he moved to new lodgings in Philadelphia (which was often), he always noted if there were any women boarders, how many, and what kind. He made excuses for not making an overture to them. On one occasion he wrote he hadn't "made acquaintance...with any of the ladies," because he didn't think it was proper, and anyway "one was engaged which made her uninteresting."\(^{135}\) Another time "I did not get acquainted with any of the young ladies, for I feared lest they might interrupt my studies."\(^{136}\) It's likely that a combination of his shyness, social ineptitude, and a natural reserve with strangers kept him from making advances to the ladies. Perhaps, too, he found northern women too unlike those he knew

\(^{132}\)JMGII to ADG, 15 October 1840. John Minson's fears were valid, since there was a long tradition of violence between the Whigs and Democrats in Philadelphia.

\(^{133}\)Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 70.

\(^{134}\)JMGII to SMG, 13 November 1840.

\(^{135}\)JMGII to "Sister," 5 February 1840.

\(^{136}\)JMGII to SMG, 13 November 1840.
from home in their manners and customs. During a particularly cold snap he remarked that such weather “would hinder southern ladies from putting their noses out of doors,” yet “you may see a number of them [northern women] continually promenading the streets.” Another time, while at a ballet performance, a “lady in black” struck up a conversation and asked him to walk her home, which he did. “What kind of girl is she?” he asked himself later.

In spite of his lack of romantic involvements, he professed to enjoy the company of women more than men, especially married or older women. Perhaps because he had been raised primarily by older women, he felt instinctively comfortable with them. Also, women may have responded to him more like a son than a potential suitor. At age twenty, John Minson still looked very much like a little boy with his pudgy face, rosebud mouth, and large, round, blue eyes, an appearance more likely to arouse a maternal instinct rather than a romantic one. In any case he claimed that men “can talk about nothing but things. The news of the day--commonplace remarks on this, or some stupid joke, and you have the amount of conversation in general amongst gentlemen.”

He struck up a relationship with Mrs. Catherine Harbison Waterman, a writer of sentimental poetry and gift books, who in 1840 had published an edition of Flora's

---

137 JMGII to "Sister," 9 February 1840.

138 JMGII to SMG, 3 September 1840. According to McConachie, Melodramatic Formations, theatergoing was “a predominantly male activity” preceding 1855 (94), so the lady in black, regardless of her intentions, was indeed an unusual woman for her times.

139 "Illustration of John Minson Galt II," Institutional Care of the Insane, plate facing p.32. There is no indication as to the artist, origin, or date of this painting.

140 JMGII to SMG, 22 January 1841.
Lexicon: An Interpretation on the Language and Sentiment of Flowers.\textsuperscript{141} It is uncertain where he met her, but they developed enough of a friendship, so that his sister's friend, Cary Lampert, accused Mrs. Waterman of writing a poem for him in the Southern Literary Messenger and "however the lady may attempt to disguise it, I am sure it is intended for him."\textsuperscript{142} Mrs. Waterman presented John with one of her "annuals," probably a volume from a series of gift books entitled Friendship Offering\textsuperscript{143} which he noted had four pieces "all very fine."\textsuperscript{144} Nothing came of the friendship, however, and but for a brief mention of her in his letters, she disappeared from his life when he returned home. She was married and older, a northerner, and certainly would have been an unsuitable match from the perspective of John's family.

John's family, both black and white, teased John about other purported liaisons. On one occasion Elizabeth wrote that the "hospital servants [slaves] said John had gone to Philadelphia to be married and couldn't be convinced otherwise."\textsuperscript{145} Such teasing may have represented the family's hidden fear of John taking a wife which would have certainly changed his mother and sisters' roles in the Galt home. More likely, in a time when marriage was de rigeur for most, the family may have been anxious to see John

\textsuperscript{141}Catharine Harbison Waterman, Flora's Lexicon: An Interpretation on the Language and Sentiment of Flowers (Philadelphia: Hooker and Claxton, 1839). This title had several editions and publishers and was still in print in 1865.

\textsuperscript{142}Cary Lampert to EJG, 17 August 1840.

\textsuperscript{143}Catherine Waterman, Friendship Offering (Philadelphia: Marshall, Williams, & Butler, 1841-42). This title has an 1841-42 imprint, later than the October 8, 1840 letter in which Galt mentions it, but it is Waterman's only set of annuals, so Galt's copy may have been one of the author's advance copies.

\textsuperscript{144}JMGII to SMG, 8 October 1840.

\textsuperscript{145}EJG to JMGII, 17 March 1843.
Minson happily wed and the father of children who would insure continuance of the Galt line.

In any case, marriage for John Minson Galt was not to be. He daydreamed about it off and on over the years. Parroting his father’s remarks made years earlier, he wrote:

In marrying a woman of wealth, the safest plan to avoid the stigma of fortune-hunting is to refuse having aught to do with her property, leaving its...management entirely to her.146

But he continued to find excuses for not pursuing marriage. When he was forty, he concluded he could not support a wife what with “such a malady as neuralgia.” Nor did he ever allow himself to imagine himself as an eligible bachelor. He seemed surprised when one lady at a social gathering “deemed pleasure” at his attentions and concluded “I was evidently viewed in a different light from my own view as to my age.” As to the physical side of love, he wrote “...to pleasures of all kinds and particularly sexual we should perhaps take pain in making use of the most convenient.”147 How far he may have put his theory into practice is unknown. He seemed particularly scrupulous to avoid any scandal. He was quick to disassociate himself with one particular hospital female servant at the asylum whom he saw as promiscuous:

I told a [director] to oblige me by not mentioning my name in connection with that of [a servant], first because I never had anything to do with any woman hired by the Hospital, and secondly no Gentleman would have anything to do with a parcel of women who either let the male patients have intercourse with them or acted as to cause such a report.”148

146Pickell, Alexander Dickie Galt, 35; this was a paraphrase of Elizabeth Galt’s.

147JMGII, Commonplace Book, May 1855; June 1858; June 1857; December 1856.

148Dam, Disordered Minds, 83.
In any event Galt never developed a stable or steady romantic liaison with a woman, although he dreamed occasionally of doing so, "Dreamt I was married. I felt exquisite pleasure in the idea, but still regret that I had...lost my lifestyle."149

Although Galt did socialize with some northerners while in Philadelphia, he seemed to feel most comfortable with his Virginian friends. He roomed with his longtime friend from Williamsburg, John Coke, for two years, often visited the Virginian Ritchies living in Philadelphia at the time, and eagerly welcomed the company of visitors from home. When the Williamsburg Sheldons came for a week in 1840 he acted as their tour guide taking them to Fairmont Park, to dinner, to church, and on long walks around the city.150 He never wavered in his identification with Virginia and was ever conscious of what he considered the peculiarities of northern customs and their inferiority to those at home. The speeches at the commencement of the University of Pennsylvania's Literary Department were "in general inferior to those at William and Mary,"151 the northern women were "inferior in dignity to women of Virginia," and the men "do not have high or lofty aspect toward ladies as in Virginia."152 Northern speech, too, was disagreeable. While some southerners he knew took "particular pain" to imitate them, he himself took "particular pains to guard against their expressions and idioms so as not to acquire them."153 He also noted, perhaps with some regret, that a duel between a

---

149 JMGII, Commonplace Book, March 1854.
150 JMGII to SMG, 3 September 1840.
151 JMGII to "Brother," 24 July 1840.
152 JMGII to "Sir," 27 Nov 1839.
153 JMGII to "Sister," 28 August 1840.
Virginian and a Tennessean had been stopped by the authorities. "Such things here seem of uncommon occurrence."\(^{154}\)

Probably the most deeply-entrenched cultural baggage Galt brought with him from Williamsburg was his attitudes about slavery and blacks. His trip into northern territory presented him with his first real encounter with a society where whites served in menial occupations almost always occupied by blacks in the south. He noticed the difference immediately. "Most of the sailors were white men,"\(^{155}\) he noted on his trip up the Chesapeake toward Philadelphia. Thereafter he mentioned almost every white servant he saw at his boarding houses or in the homes he visited, and alternately noted the presence of individual blacks, who in his eyes seemed unusual in some way. At a Quaker boarding house, he noted, "a black man--one of the most genteel servants I ever saw,"\(^{156}\) and while visiting Mr. Sully's painting room he commented "one thing I scarcely ever saw painted before--the head of a Negro."\(^{157}\) The northern world for him, just as the southern one, was divided into black and white, but it was a division unnatural and unsettling in his eyes.

\(^{154}\)JMGII to EJG, 10 December 1840.

\(^{155}\)JMGII to ADG, 27 October 1839.

\(^{156}\)JMGII to ADG, Jr., 22 August 1840.

\(^{157}\)JMGII to "Sister," 28 August 1840. Thomas Sully (1783-1872), the American artist, operated Earle and Sully's Exhibition Gallery on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia between 1819 and 1846. The painting Galt mentions was not one of Sully's, or at least there is no record of it being so. The most famous painting of a black man by an American painter up to that time was done by John Singleton Copley, but he painted it while in England many years earlier, and it is unlikely it would have ended up in Sully's museum. In addition, JMG would have been familiar with Copley and probably would have made a point to mention the artist. The most logical explanation is that the portrait was done by one of the many Philadelphian artists who placed their work in Sully's museum.
John's belief in the desirability of the eventual emancipation of slaves began to erode while in Philadelphia in favor of the position of his two intellectual masters from college, Dew and Tucker. He noted to his sister after only a few months in Philadelphia:

Since I came here I have become much less in favor of abolition than before; slavery exists here almost as fully as in the south. In every family almost there are one, two, or more black servants and they are just as degraded...here. This is anything but freedom.¹⁵⁸

His perception of the status of free blacks in Philadelphia was partly true. Despite their freedom to make choices in important matters—marriage, raising families, education, assemblage, and so on—many of their other choices were as severely limited or restricted as in the south.¹⁵⁹ Most blacks were confined to living on the outskirts of Philadelphia in "abominable slums" in "small wooden buildings roughly put together about 6 feet square without windows or fireplaces."¹⁶⁰ They were regularly assaulted by whites and must have lived often in fear for their own and their families' safety. In 1834, only five years previous to John Minson's arrival in Philadelphia, blacks had been attacked in their homes in an effort to drive them out of the city, and in 1842 the same year Galt left Philadelphia, Irish immigrants, who saw blacks as rivals for the same low paying jobs, invaded black districts and for two nights assaulted blacks and burned their church and assembly hall.¹⁶¹ At the same time Galt saw perhaps what he wished to see.

¹⁵⁸JMGII to EJG, 17 November 1839.
¹⁶⁰Ibid., 52, 207
¹⁶¹Ibid., 106-7.
While it was true that black females held a large proportion of domestic jobs available in northern white households (as much as ¾ in Boston, Cincinnati and Buffalo), and black males often found it difficult to find employment using the artisan skills they possessed, in their own communities and among themselves, they built a life rich in its complexity. Family, church, and educational and benevolent institutional ties provided them with a lifeline that was anything but degraded. The black urban culture, in short, was much more diverse, varied, and fruitful than Galt imagined in spite of the white prejudices and discrimination they faced. But Galt was more interested in refuting the abolitionists’ arguments and putting his sister’s fears to rest. It was this attitude that served as the backdrop for all of his criticisms of blacks’ status in Philadelphia. “Slavery exists as much here as it does down south,” he repeated. Every family, he wrote, has servants and they are just as degraded, vicious, and despised as they are with us! If the results of abolition are no greater than these or mere motions of philanthropy, I would go against it.

Pressed for further details from his sister about the state of abolition sentiment in Philadelphia, John responded that he was much too busy to give much thought to the question, but felt there was little need for the south to worry since “the efforts and power of the abolitionists is much magnified I think by distance.” He had not met any abolitionists at all but “directly the reverse, more so even than the enlightened portion of southerners.” The one abolitionist he did observe from afar, David Browne, did not

---


163 JMGII to "Sir," 27 November 1839.

164 Ibid. It is likely John Minson considered himself and his family to be part of that "enlightened portion of southerners" who supported abolition in theory and slavery in
impress him favorably. He imagined that he had a “bad face...very much like a Negro in the lower part [of his face].” He had heard that Browne “might have been elected senator had it not been for the odium acquired by his abolitionist opinions."\textsuperscript{165}

Living in Philadelphia forced Galt to evaluate his previously liberal views on the abolition of slavery. Support for the eventual emancipation of slaves was an indulgence in Williamsburg where the institution of slavery was not threatened, but in Philadelphia, a non-slave society, with its reality of what abolition would entail, he retreated. Many years later he could still write with some sincerity, “some of us in the South think slavery an evil," but as time wore on, such statements became more and more empty. He admitted slavery was inviolable, for “the south would never consent to the abolition of slavery...anything like this would sever the union instantaneously.”\textsuperscript{166} Influenced by the political controversies over the entrance of free and slave states to the Union as well as the John Brown fiasco, Galt would finally drop all pretense of being in favor of abolition and instead try to find a compromise with his conscience. Eliminate the more egregious characteristics of slavery, he advised, including the law against educating blacks and the practice of separating families, but keep the institution itself. He gave up even these modest concessions by the outbreak of the Civil War, when he would confide in his journal there ought not to be any “niggar without a master, when there is, they always have to get somebody to make out for them.”\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{165}JMG\textsuperscript{II} to "Sister," 29 July 1840. In this opinion Galt was mistaken as well. Many northern free blacks followed the abolition debate closely, and some were very active in furthering the cause. See James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, \textit{In Hope of Liberty}.

\textsuperscript{166}Galt, \textit{Political Essays}, 32, 16.

\textsuperscript{167}JMG\textsuperscript{II}, \textit{Commonplace Book}, October 1861. Not only had Galt's sentiments changed
As 1841 drew to a close, John seemed of two minds about returning to Williamsburg. He wanted both to stay abroad and to return home. The city and all its opportunities had touched some deep, hidden part of him, the part that loved the wild music of Catholic services, the brilliant colors of women's mantillas and the "extravagantly long hair"\textsuperscript{168} worn by young men, the dancing dervishes on the theatre stages, perhaps even the dangerous encounter with the woman in black. But he could not find any lasting comfort in an environment so strange from the one he had left. He was an intensely reserved boy and while the sights and sounds of the great metropolis might dazzle and tempt him, in some sense, he feared their allure and longed for the safety of what he knew best.

His experience with boarding houses perhaps best reflects his lack of ease in living outside of Williamsburg. He moved at least six or seven times in the space of two years. Of his first boarding house, he wrote the "boarders seem to be very pleasant and genteel people and I think I shall be contented with my lodgings."\textsuperscript{169} By December he had moved to new quarters which eventually proved too cold with its northern exposure and lack of a good fireplace. Even worse "you had to be one of the family." The demands of this type of familiarity with strangers were too taxing. He moved to Walnut Street where everyone acted as \textquotedblleft in a separate establishment,\textquotedblright an arrangement he liked much better. In addition, it was the boarding house where "John Marshall always put

\textsuperscript{168}JMGII to SMG, 11 February 1841.

\textsuperscript{169}JMGII to ADG, 27 October 1839.
up...and indeed died in one of the rooms."\(^{170}\) After he returned from a two-month hiatus at home in 1840, he moved to yet another boarding house, this one recommended by his friend, John Coke, as "decidedly the most genteel and pleasant one that I have ever been to yet, and from all appearances I think it will suit us as well as anyplace we can get."\(^{171}\) It was not to be. Coke's dream boarding house was "too noisy"\(^{172}\) and inconvenient for Galt. "You had to call for what you wanted from your room window which was disagreeable," and there was only one colored women for twenty-five rooms and not enough waiters. Within days he had moved to a prestigious address on Chestnut Street, located across from Fanny Kemble's home.\(^{173}\) In no time he found this room also too noisy with the constant sound of vehicles passing over the cobblestones.\(^{174}\) His next lodgings was run by a "plain Quaker old woman." "Everything about the whole establishment is always in complete order and neatness" and even better "we have scarcely to do with the family."\(^{175}\) Within a month he moved again, this time to Morris

\(^{170}\) JMGII to MDG, 19 January 1840.

\(^{171}\) John Coke (JC) to JMGII, 1 July 1840. Coke's requirements in a boarding house, as in lifestyle, were dramatically different from Galt's. Coke found Williamsburg "one of the dullest places in the whole world," (JC to JMGII, 6 April 1841).

\(^{172}\) JMGII to ADG, 10 July 1840.

\(^{173}\) Galt might not have been so impressed to be living across the street from Kemble if he had known of the journal she kept while living in Georgia in 1838 that documented the brutality shown toward plantation slaves. Her journal would be published during the Civil War. See Catharine Clinton, *Fanny Kemble's Civil Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

\(^{174}\) JMGII to "Mother," 17 July 1840. In a letter to his brother, he notes that his mother would relish this boarding house: "In our room I do not believe that there are a dozen flies scarcely." (14 July 1840).

\(^{175}\) JMGII to ADG, Jr. 22 August 1840.
House, a rather expensive hotel, but worth it he thought, until he discovered his room to be so cold he had to wear winter clothing when inside.\textsuperscript{176}

Although many of John Minson's complaints may have been valid, the quality of boarding houses being extremely variable in the nineteenth century, they nevertheless also shed light on the restlessness and anxiety John Minson experienced when away from home. He needed the environment only Williamsburg could provide to feel secure and at ease: the warmth of a Virginian climate, the stability of a social system where he not only knew everyone he met but knew what station they occupied, an intimate home life filled with familiar black and white faces with only a modicum of intrusion from strangers, and the kind of quiet, orderliness, and peace available without the constant clattering traffic upon cobblestones and all the activities such a racket implied.

As John Minson approached graduation from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, letters from his family must have made him anxious to be home, for illness had ravaged the Gait family during the two years he was away. His father was seriously ill with kidney failure, and he complained of ulcers in legs and feet that felt "full and heavy," while his mother suffered much from "catarrh." Alexander Jr. was rarely out of bed for he could no longer walk. Elizabeth was stricken with cancer of the nasal passages, and although her "face was improving" John must be "prepared to see some deformity in the pose from the loss of a small portion of the [alar bone?]."\textsuperscript{177}

At the same time in spite of his anxiety, his family's urging him to return home, and his own longing to return to more familiar circumstances, John resisted. He had much more yet to learn in Philadelphia, and wrote, "I never drew a tooth or bled anybody

\textsuperscript{176} JMGII to ADG, 10 September 1840.

\textsuperscript{177} ADG to JMGII, 20 October 1840.
in my life," but "as you all seem so much averse to my staying the time which I intended staying here during the spring, should I pass my examinations, I will endeavor to shorten it—as much as possible."178

John Minson prepared for his exams with both anticipation and trepidation. He bought new clothes, apparently a school tradition, "a full suit of black, the pantaloons and coat being of black cloth and the waistcoat of black silk, double-breasted." He commented that his new suit was "much smaller than my clothes generally are. I don't think the coat is more than half as large as my blue one," but he noted, it was the fashion at the moment. Passing the medical school examinations, however, was not a foregone conclusion. "I shall be free if I get through on the 8th of March. If I should not, I intend to take it calmly and try at the last of March again." He added, perhaps to blunt his family's possible disappointment, that it was easy to graduate, but difficult to get through the exams the first time around. The previous year, a full fifty students had failed in their first attempt, though nearly all passed the second time around. Through all of his anxiety John Minson found some solace. "If I do get through this time it is the last such scrape I ever will engage in again—the most stupid of all humbugs. This is quite a comforting reflection."179

John luckily passed his exams on the first try and should have sailed home directly. Instead he took a mini-vacation to New York, there ostensibly to visit the insane asylums in and around the area. He stayed at the Astor House, enjoyed the beautifully green ocean which dashed the shores "with much wildness and freedom" and frequented the bookshops, where printed materials were cheap and in "a greater variety" than

---

178 JMGII to EJG, 14 January 1841.

179 JMGII to MDG, 4 February 1841.
anything "you meet with in general in those of Philadelphia." In the end though, New York City made him uncomfortable, only renewing his sense of being a stranger in a strange land:

I am now in the very heart of the opposite of Virginia. For in this immense house there is not a black face—all the servants being white. It seems quite strange to me to see so many menial white persons.  

Once back in the City of Brotherly Love, he delayed yet again, spending a few more months to take additional coursework. Eventually, however, he packed his bags and headed south toward Virginia, retracing the route he'd taken only two short years ago.

While in Philadelphia Galt saw much but changed little, and indeed seemed determined not to change. He did, however, make two new commitments that profoundly affected his future. First, he would become a doctor in practice as well as name. "I find myself to have changed very much though imperceptibly in my faith and belief in medicine; for somehow it has exceedingly increased since I commenced to study and as I have gradually gone on." His mother was overjoyed to hear such sentiments from her second son: "I am rejoiced that your faith in medicine appears to be strengthened, and your father appears equally so." John Minson's remarks had so affected Alexander Dickie that even though close to death, he dreamt he was young and robust again and going about his practice as in old days. "His sleep is more refreshing than it has been for years," John's mother confided in him. His prodigal son had finally made the correct choice for a Galt. The young scion would follow in his father's footsteps and fulfill his legacy, take up his place as the head of the family business at the asylum, and build upon

---

180 JMGII to ADG, Jr., 24 March 1841; JMGII to MDG, 18 March 1841.

181 JMGII to ADG, 28 January 1841; MDG to JMGII 3 February 1841.
all that the older man had already accomplished. Alexander Dickie could relinquish his tenuous hold on mortality and die in peace.

John Minson’s second commitment was toward the south, Virginia, Williamsburg, and all their traditions which he had learned held a tenacious grip on him. He vowed never to be away again, “Nothing shall ever tempt me to leave Old Virginia.” He would be perfectly content “to settle down permanently there for life—for from what I have seen and know myself, a calm life is the happiest—at least for me.”\textsuperscript{182} The young man, who as the superintendent of an insane asylum would diagnose and treat his patients in part within the context of the corruption of an urban civilization, would not allow himself to fall prey to the siren call of the metropolis.

\textsuperscript{182}JMGII to MDG, 18 March 1841; JMGII to EJG, 30 March 1841.
CHAPTER IV
JOHN MINSON GALT II COMES OF AGE:
ASYLUM SUPERINTENDENT, 1841-1861

John Minson Galt II was appointed superintendent of Eastern Asylum on June 1, 1841 and moved into the asylum on August 31. While in the last few months at medical school, he had come to accept the idea of being a physician, he was still uncertain about assuming his role as the next Galt to head up the family business at the asylum. He was "reconciled" to the task but nevertheless found himself feeling "quite disgusted at going to the Hosp."1

Galt had spent most of his life in the sheltered, genteel environment of his family and friends, and although as his father's son he must have visited the asylum on occasion, he could not have been prepared entirely for the experience of working and living among the insane. Noise was a constant at Eastern Asylum, as it was in other asylums in America, and of a stranger sort than the cobblestone clatter Galt had once so disliked when living in Philadelphia. One patient, Thomas Fields, would holler "very loudly...down his window at night, making the most dissonant sounds,"2 a habit that apparently was not exceptional among patients. A Galt relative had once written "We

---

1Norman Dain, Disordered Minds: The First Century of Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Virginia, 1766-1866 (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1971), 58, 70, 71. A superintendent's cottage would be built on the asylum grounds within a few years, and he and his sisters would leave Woodpecker Street to live there.

2To preserve the privacy of patients, I have fictionalized all patient surnames. See page numbers to verify patient histories. E99, Thomas Fields, Patients’ Notebook, "Patients in the Eastern Lunatic Asylum, October 1, 1852 to September 30, 1853," Eastern State Hospital Library Archives (ESHL).
have no other reason for wishing not to be too near the Mad house but the cries of the mad people will increase our melancholy."³ Nor could Galt have found agreeable other egregious assaults upon middle class conventions. Women, who in genteel society were prized for modesty and reserve, in the hospital could be "quite vulgar" both in their language and behavior. And patients of either sex were sometimes "slovenly," "neglectful," and "filthy" in their habits.⁴ No doubt Galt expected depressed, delusional, and demented patients to behave differently from the visitors in his front parlor, for indeed he believed that aberrant habits departing from the norms of genteel society could in themselves be symptomatic of insanity.⁵ Yet by his own admission he was "sensitive" and possessed "a natural nervousness,"⁶ so that the asylum experience must have been initially unsettling for him. He would need to make the proper mental adjustments as he traveled from the world of quiet study, polite teas, and mundane conversations about the purchase of a new sofa or set of dinner china⁷ to the other where irrationality and

³Dain, Disordered Minds, 47.

⁴ESH Patient Register, E47, E80, E74, E27.

⁵See Karen Halttunen, Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle Class Culture in America, 1830-1870 (Hartford: Yale University Press, 1986), 97, 110, 114; In the genteel world where "polite people were not to yawn, sigh, spit, scratch, cough, expectorate, or examine their handkerchief after blowing their noses," where all were expected to "keep teeth, hands, feet, linen and boots clean and free from odor at all time," any deviation from these admonitions in middle class folk might be seen as additional proof of an unsound mind. Often admission to the asylum rested upon the testimony of relatives or friends who noted an individual's sudden change of habits.

⁶JMGII, Commonplace Book, September 1854; June 1854. In the polite, middle class world of the nineteenth century, women were thought to be more sensitive and nervous than men, but men, too, could lay claim to a heightened emotional reaction to situations, people, places, and things.

⁷John Strobia (JS) to Elizabeth Judith Galt (EJG), 22 April 1843; JS to EJG, 13 June 13 1843.
unfamiliar habits of language and behavior were often the order of the day.

In addition to being immersed in sights and sounds new to him, the twenty-twoyear old Galt also had to deal with the repercussions of a newly-instituted, hospital administrative structure. The General Assembly, upon creating the position of superintendent and appointing Galt to it, had in the same stroke eliminated the sixty-five year old tradition of a bifurcated management shared by medical doctor and lay keeper. This turn of events almost certainly was rooted in developments in the western part of the state. Western Asylum in Staunton, founded in 1828 to make treatment more accessible for a growing western population, was beginning to flex its muscles. Initially it had been much like its eastern counterpart and, indeed, probably had been modeled upon it. But in 1836 William Stribling, a twenty-six year old physician and an advocate of moral management, was appointed superintendent. He was adept at lobbying Richmond legislators and, no doubt, educated many members in the General Assembly about the new reforms in the treatment of insanity. Increasingly Richmond began to ask questions: did Eastern Asylum administer corporal punishment, and if so, might more humane ways be found to accomplish the same ends; and why did Western State so far exceed Eastern Asylum in its number of cured patients? Pressure mounted for reforms at the older asylum, and in 1838 Eastern Asylum’s Board of Directors took some baby steps toward that end by sending their steward, Philip Barziza, north to observe methods of moral management. Finally the General Assembly in March 1841 decided to institute reforms, the first of which was to concentrate power in the hands of a physician in both asylums. Virginia had entered the age of the asylum.8

Other southern states had done the same, at least in establishing insane asylums

---

for its population. Two were established in Maryland as early as 1816, and one each founded in Kentucky and South Carolina in 1824 and 1827. Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia would come on board within the next few decades as well. The superintendents from southern states which would eventually side with the Union—Kentucky and Maryland—showed up regularly at AMSAI1 conferences and also contributed their annual reports for publication in the American Journal of Insanity.

Attendance by superintendents from farther south was much more spotty. Those from South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana attended the conference only once each between 1847 and 1859, those from North Carolina and Mississippi only twice. Since practically all conferences were held in northern cities, the distance and difficulty of travel may have been the determining factor for their absence, but it does not account for the lack of interest among the deep south superintendents in submitting their annual reports to American Journal of Insanity and thus using a more convenient and available means of communicating with moral managers from the north, west, and upper south.9

In any case, Galt's responsibilities at the asylum would be very different from those of his father or grandfather's. He would be expected to manage not only the medical care of the patients but to oversee all other facets of the asylum as well. At any age this was a daunting challenge, but at the tender age of twenty-two it may have seemed overwhelming, and one he had never expected to confront while studying at

---

medical school only a few months earlier. The Board of Directors and General Assembly legislators who hired him may have had their doubts as well and worried about Galt’s youth and inexperience, although there is no evidence to support such a conclusion. Most likely the Board members were influenced by Alexander Dickie Galt and his important friends in the village, as well as motivated by a simple desire to see the young man, whom they had helped to raise and mold, do well.

In spite of his trepidation, Galt must have also been aware of a first-time opportunity to embark upon a different course from his father. He could build upon the legacy Alexander Dickie had left him in the family business, but he could take it in a totally new direction, away from the methods of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and into the dawn of a modern age with a fresh moral management approach to the treatment of patients. He could fulfill both personal and family ambitions as well as a professional one to make his asylum in the south rival any of those in the north. Yet Galt’s asylum could never be just one more jewel in the crown of the moral management reform movement, for his asylum differed from the large northern asylums in several important ways. His patient base would always be more from the indigent, pauper class than the middle class, he would employ blacks, both free and slave, as staff, and he would support the admission of blacks as patients. And he would allow greater freedom for his patients within the surrounding community than did any other asylum.

---

If the newly-created administrative office of superintendent created both a challenge and some unease for Galt, among the asylum's veteran staff it produced mostly apprehension. Philip Barziza, Keeper and de facto superintendent of the asylum for three years, had been reassigned to the position of Steward, a move he could only have viewed as a demotion. Barziza was a Venetian Viscount who had come to Virginia to assume his inheritance after his grandmother, Lucy Paradise Ludwell, died. When he discovered there was nothing to inherit--Ludwell having died mad and impoverished at the asylum--he married a local woman, settled down in Williamsburg, and found employment at Eastern Asylum. An educated and competent man, he traveled to the north in 1838 to observe the asylums in Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania, and upon his return incorporated some of the elements he'd observed while abroad, albeit within a limited scope. He allowed a few patients to leave the asylum for outings about town, to eat meals with each other, to work on his farm, and to have musical instruments.11 Without a medical degree Barziza could not reasonably have expected to assume the position of superintendent. Still he may have harbored some resentment toward the young John Minson Galt whose only credentials were a degree and his family name. Impatience crept into his demeanor at times. "If you wish the medicines to be

11Shomer S. Zwelling, Quest for Cure: The Public Hospital in Williamsburg, Virginia, 1773-1885 (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1985), 29; George Humphrey Yetter, Williamsburg, Before and After (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 103. In his position in the 1850s as hospital agent, Barziza would travel again to the North to gather data about laundries and gasworks. His report to the Board of Directors was confident, articulate, and well-written; however his social skills were not as accomplished. He once asked with some disdain of the local culture: "How could such beautiful women come out of such hovels?" Elizabeth no doubt was expressing the Gaits' ambivalent feelings toward him when she wrote to her brother who at the time was visiting northern superintendents, "Be sure to deliver the steward's letter; for I'll venture to say that no other institution has a steward who could write such letter, let his other qualifications be what they may." (EJG to JMGII, 13 March 1843).
continued daily, or alternately," Barziza wrote to the Galt during his absence, “please to say so and state the proportions.” He also wanted to know what to do with the letters addressed to the superintendent: should he “answer them or not”? No doubt this was a responsibility Barziza had handled himself when Keeper, and it must have been frustrating for him to have to request permission to perform functions that he had done for years under his own recognizance. At the same time, Barziza seemed not to be a man who wished to undermine the new superintendent, perhaps recognizing that his own future was tied to Galt’s success or failure. As the wiser and more experienced asylum manager, Barziza acted as Galt’s mentor, encouraging him to tour the northern asylums, writing letters of introduction to both Luther Bell and Samuel Woodward and urging him to take advantage of the opportunity: “Should you extend your trip which I hope you will do, you will be pleased with them [Luther and Woodward] and they will be delighted to become your personal friends.” Galt probably welcomed Barziza as an advisor, for any other relationship between them, at least initially, was unthinkable. Barziza obviously knew far more about running the hospital than did he, a fact not lost on others. Dorothea Dix after visiting Eastern Asylum in 1848 wrote, "I think the Steward is superintendent and governor, not the physician. This is not well even supposing him a very excellent person, which certainly I have no reason to doubt.”

Galt also inherited one particular, perplexing staffing problem. His Aunt Mary Arnet Godwin Galt (1788-1854), who had been matron at the hospital since 1814, was

12 Philip Barziza (PB) to JMGII, 11 March 1843.
13 PB to Luther Bell, 10 March 1843: PB to Samuel Woodward, 10 March 1843.
14 PB to JMGII, 11 March 1843.
15 Dain, Disordered Minds, 138.
rather imperious and often disobeyed orders, including those from the Board of Directors. In 1826 the Board placed her on probation for three months for disruptive behavior, and one member even urged dismissing her. She also earned the ire of the Keeper, Dickie Galt\(^{16}\) (1797-1856), who accused her of losing no opportunity "of vexing and harassing him." When Dickie Galt resigned in 1836, Henry Edloe, a member of the Board, took up the post but resigned shortly thereafter, at which time Philip Barziza assumed the position. Such was Barziza's tumultuous relationship with Mary Galt that he had to fend off a physical assault by her son during a particularly virulent squabble. It is unlikely that the young John Galt dealt with Mary Galt any more effectively than did Dickie Galt, Edloe, or Barziza, and even more unlikely that he tried. He declared himself uninterested in the petty squabbles indulged in by his staff and vowed to stay out of them. In 1850 when Mary Galt died, Galt requested that the matron position be eliminated, no doubt having had his fill of his aunt and perhaps fearing yet another like her waited in the wings.\(^{17}\)

Another source of some awkwardness for the young Galt was the composition of the asylum's Board of Directors. This most powerful group was made up of the most wealthy and influential men in Williamsburg, such as Thomas Griffin Peachy, Robert Saunders, Jr., George Washington Southall,\(^{18}\) who were his father's peers and his own elders. One of them, in fact, was his college mentor and advisor, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker. Perhaps it was comforting for Galt to have the friendship and advice of these

\(^{16}\)Mary Arnet Godwin Galt was married to Dickie Galt's half-brother, William Trebell Galt, who served as Keeper from 1800-1826.

\(^{17}\)Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 49, 50, 140, 137.

\(^{18}\)Persons Associated with Eastern State Hospital with Some Material Relating to Them, Appendix IX, 3-42. Galt Papers I, Medical Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.
older, more sophisticated men to lean upon, but how difficult it must have been for him to establish an equal footing with them, to find his own voice, and to assert the authority of his position.

Other formidable challenges faced Galt as well. The hospital in 1841 was in many ways still a warehouse for the insane rather than an institution designed to cure them. Modeled largely at its inception in 1773 after the British madhouse (although with only a 30-patient capacity it was much smaller than anything found in London), Eastern Asylum had been touched little by the moral management reforms sweeping through America's prisons, poorhouses, and insane asylums in the north. Neither the long succession of keepers and doctors nor even the Virginia Assembly, the source of asylum funding, encouraged much change or for that matter imposed any kind of oversight or accountability. Only in 1822 did the General Assembly require the asylum to prepare an annual report, and only two years later did the state's first official inspection committee travel to Williamsburg. With less than fifty patients in residence, the General Assembly displayed little sense of crisis, even though living conditions and medical treatment were outdated and retrograde for the time. The patient's world was small, limited to the four walls of his room, and he passed his day in idleness, occupied neither by work of any sort nor recreational activities. He took meals alone in his room, eating without forks or spoons, and at night was locked away with only a straw mattress on the floor, no heat, and no attendant anywhere on duty in the building. Medical treatment was arcane and depended upon "powerful drugs, moderate bleeding and blistering, plunge bath, and

19 Dain, Disordered Minds, 41-42. In 1838 the Board and General Assembly seemed as intent upon cutting costs as implementing humanitarian reform. While the inspection committee did suggest the need for occupational programs and more recreation for patients, they also thought the calmer patients might be sent to the poorhouse and other patients share rooms rather than be housed individually.
restraints." The Committee report of 1835 described the asylum as a "well regulated prison where the prisoners are well fed and clothed, and excluded from all rational employment or amusement."\textsuperscript{20} The cure rate reflected the conditions. Between 1831 and 1841 only 6\% of the asylum population on average was thought sufficiently sane to return home.\textsuperscript{21}

Alexander Dickie Galt, under whose tenure such conditions existed, was a contemporary and peer of the earliest American moral management asylum reformers. In the second decade of his forty-one year tenure between 1811 and 1822, the McLean Asylum in Boston, the Friends Asylum in Pennsylvania, and the Hartford Retreat in Connecticut were all founded. Yet he did not familiarize himself with the new reforms taking place in those hospitals nor implement any changes in his own. Possibly he saw himself only as a physician meant to assess and treat his patients' bodily ills rather than their mental woes, and in truth he had little authority that went beyond those parameters. He had little time for contemplating asylum reforms even had he wanted to, so busy was he with his own private practice. In the end, perhaps Alexander Dickie Galt simply lacked imagination. As a small-town, tradition-bound, conventional doctor, who had trained in the late eighteenth-century and had no subsequent direct exposure to moral management reform, he did not see a need for change.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20}Shomer, \textit{Quest for Cure}, 25, 21, 26.

\textsuperscript{21}Dain, \textit{Disordered Minds}, 55.

\textsuperscript{22}Eastern Asylum was not totally stagnant during Alexander Dickie Galt's tenure as visiting physician. Four new buildings were erected or enlarged, creating the traditional seventeenth-century European courtyard in the front of the compound and adding more room for patients. Under Alexander Dickie Galt, too, the asylum always received commendations for "cleanliness of patients, absence of offensive smells, comfortable conditions and good general health." (Dain, \textit{Disordered Minds}, 52.)
John Minson Galt II might have continued on in the same manner as his father except that several new variables were in play in 1841. As noted earlier, pressure from both the Board of Directors and the General Assembly to implement reforms was quickening, but in addition Galt's position at the asylum from the beginning required him to oversee both medical care of patients and administration of the hospital and to eschew a private practice. With no private practice (or outside income) to distract him, he had much more time, energy, and incentive than did his father to focus on the hospital and its patients. He established contact with other asylum superintendents within two years after assuming his position and in 1843 traveled north to visit nine asylums.\textsuperscript{23} The northern superintendents welcomed him. Galt wrote that Thomas Kirkbride "was pleasant and agreeable" and "showed me everything," including the Pennsylvania Hospital which was the "most magnificent building, inside and out." An observant man, Galt could not help but notice the difference between his own and northern asylums, although perhaps his Virginian and family pride led him to assert "they are before us in some things and behind us in others."\textsuperscript{24}

Galt extended his contact with the outside world even further by accepting an invitation to be one of the founding members of the Association for Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane in 1843. He attended their meetings faithfully for many years where he heard timely discourse and debate on topical issues of the day: the usefulness of phrenology, the range of duties of asylum attendants, the advantages of steam and hot water in heating, the symptoms of acute maniacal diseases,\textsuperscript{25} and much more, all of which must have opened his mind to the new way of

\textsuperscript{23}Dain, \textit{Disordered Minds}, 75.

\textsuperscript{24}JMGII to Sallie Marie Galt (SMG), 18 March 1843.

\textsuperscript{25}"Proceedings of the Association for Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane," 1843.
thinking about mental illness and its treatment. Galt was well aware of the value he
gained from associating with his colleagues, writing in 1847 that while each institution
was run separately, "the example of one state upon another exerts the most powerful influence." Galt kept up with developments in the great northern asylums until a few
years before the Civil War and often cited their policies and procedures or quoted their
superintendents as leverage in his funding requests to the General Assembly. As early as
1843 he pointed out that the asylum in Worcester payed its chaplain $600, a greater sum
than the combined salaries of the three new positions he was requesting. As late as
1855 he quoted a "distinguished superintendent of a well-known asylum in economical
New England" as saying that "there is no such thing as a just and proper curative or
ameliorating treatment of the insane in cheaply conducted and cheaply managed
institutions." In that same report he cited the fact that the asylums of Pennsylvania, New
Jersey, Massachusetts, Missouri, and New York "all have night watchman," who stayed

for the Insane," *AJI* 5, no. 1 (July 1849): 56-58; 8, no. 1 (July 1851): 85; 9, no. 1 (July
1852): 70; 10, no. 1 (July 1853): 80.

(Richmond: The Hospital). The title and imprint of the Eastern Asylum's annual report
varied slightly over the years and was known variously as *Report of the Directors of the
Lunatic Hospital at Williamsburg, Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Lunatic
Asylum in the City of Williamsburg, Virginia, Report of the Court of Directors of the Lunatic
Hospital at Williamsburg, Report of the Eastern Lunatic Asylum of Virginia*, and so on.
These reports will be cited under the uniform title, *Eastern Asylum Annual Report or
(EAAR).*

27 *EAAR* 1843, 30.

28 *EAAR* 1854-55, 20. In this report Galt gave the North a somewhat left-handed
compliment. He described it as this "section of the nation which its enemies have
stigmatized with the accusation of an inordinate scrupulousness as to monetary
expenditure," but noted that the north had established institutions for the deaf, insane, and
blind "which the world cannot surpass."
at attendance from 9:30 at night until 6:00 the next morning, a situation Galt wished to emulate at Eastern Asylum.  

Even more influential than his contact with other superintendents was his commitment to self-instruction. He assembled one of the best libraries on insanity in the country and supplemented what he learned from his books with material from professional journals, especially the *American Journal of Insanity*. The latter kept him current on a range of issues, including medical jurisprudence, the improvements in the ventilation and warming of buildings, the pathology of insanity, the lack of efficacy in bloodletting, and a host of other themes then influencing the administration of an insane asylum.  

Galt's establishment of moral management techniques at Eastern Asylum was incremental but steady. Within the first five years he painted and repaired the facade of the asylum and removed the window grates, changing the exterior appearance of the asylum from a grim collection of buildings to one that offered comfort and welcome. He provided bedsteads for the patients and brought in simple amenities like rag carpets to cheer the Spartan environment. Within a decade he had established a carpentry shop, sewing and spinning rooms, a shoemaking shop, woodyard, and gardens. He expanded  

---

29 *EAAR* 1853-54, 17.  
31 Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 97. For a Colonial Williamsburg re-creation of a patient’s room after 1841, see photograph in Shomer, 35.  
32 *EAAR* 1846, 29; Shomer, *Quest for Cure*, 32-33, 41. Galt also could claim frugality in implementing these changes. The shoe shop produced 583 pairs of shoes and saved $309.71, while the vegetable garden saved $692.50.
patient activities to include evening lectures, concerts, excursions into town, and games such as dominoes and backgammon. He purchased a spectroscope and musical instruments for the patients' use and established a patient library.33 Galt felt “in amusement as in other matters, the policy seems best, to treat the insane as though they were sane; and moreover not as children, but as men and women.”34 He supported expanded religious services for the patients, too, and in 1843, only two years after taking the helm, welcomed Reverend William Clark as chaplain at the salary of $150 a year.35 Galt thought religion was helpful rather than an obstacle in curing patients and so made “religious services on the Sabbath form a conspicuous portion of the means of treatment.”36 All of these changes were consonant with the moral management strategy of creating an environment that would distract a patient from his obsessions, encourage a clear mind, and promote habits of self-restraint and self-discipline. At the same time they conformed to the standards of a genteel living as well, where the “better classes” slept in beds, amused themselves with dominoes and cards, went to church, and generally kept themselves occupied with productive work of one sort or another, even if it be only tatting or reading.37

33 EAAR 1843, EAAR 1846, EAAR 1847, EAAR 1849.

34 Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 87.

35 Ibid., 97.

36 EAAR 1846, 30.

37 Galt, his brother, and two sisters may have been the first of the Galts themselves to sleep in beds. In 1815 his father listed only one bedstead in his property tax inventory. In addition before he renovated the Galt home on Woodpecker Street in 1835, his family of six lived in only a few rooms. It's hard to believe there was space for six bedsteads, much less musical instruments and other accoutrements of the genteel life. (See the Nelson-Galt house in Colonial Williamsburg for the size of the renovated house and then imagine it only half as large.)
Galt's classification of patients was also more organized and comprehensive than his father's. He divided the male patients into four sections: the quiet and calm, the violent, the demented, and those who could work outdoors. This last group, he thought, improved remarkably, and he saw a "striking change over the past," where "patients previously unmanageable were now easily handled." An officer was placed in charge of each of the four groups of male patients and supervised the servants to make sure they "behave well toward the patients, and keep their wards in order." The caretakers also were expected to "attend to the wants of the patients and seek to engage them in different modes of occupation and amusement." Women patients enjoyed the same attention. In addition to classifying and separating patients with different types or degrees of insanity, Galt depended greatly upon the healing qualities of providing patients with "abundant and good food, and with comfortable clothes and lodging." He kept their minds and hands occupied with labor or recreation, writing that "a primary principle of moral management consists in the endeavor to withdraw the mind of the lunatic from its delusive fancies and diseased feelings by presenting new and varied objects and by arousing the feelings and mental operations which remain undiseased." For many patients he depended heavily upon an array of botanicals, not a surprising tack, considering the study of plants had been his hobby since childhood, and he had written his dissertation on medicinal plants. He appealed to the pleasure principle in getting patients to take opium or sulfate of morphia by mixing the drugs with tobacco or brandy. Other well-established but harsh treatments, he renounced when he could. He

---

38 Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 81-82.

39 *EAAR 1846*, 29, 30.

bled and purged patients infrequently. He rarely used restraints, although he was unwilling to renounce them entirely. "I would never pledge myself to the idea of its absolute disuse," he wrote, but "would prefer dispensing with it except in most rare occasions." Yet he admired the total non-restraint policy enforced at the Lincoln Lunatic Asylum in England and with his complimentary essay about it managed to raise some eyebrows among his fellow superintendents.

Force feeding patients, or as he called it "forced alimentation by the stomach tube," was also "so repugnant a course of procedure" to him that he eventually discontinued the practice. Even with such a drastic measure, he noted, the patient often died, the condition of the intestine so marked that all efforts of this kind were in vain. His records indicate that he was able to "fatten" most patients with eating disorders in more conventional ways by serving nutritious and tasteful meals and by stimulating a

1986). Thielman explores the use of medicine within the moral management setting and concludes that as doctors the superintendents placed much more importance upon medicinal remedies than is usually acknowledged by historians. Galt himself admitted that the treatment of insanity "may be divided into two parts, moral and medical treatment; they...melt into each other, and when we attempt to analyze the effects of their separate agents, we sometimes find them to act in both ways."

41 EAAR 1852, 8.


43 EAAR 1853-54, 22.

44 ESH Patient Register. Galt often used the expression "fatten" when referring to a patient who either had gained weight or needed to do so.
good appetite by insisting patients walk out or ride even when they protested. A few unfortunate souls like Pauline Martin, however, could not be helped and "died after wasting to a shadow." Cure rates increased during Galt's first few years as superintendent, but as time went on, this changed. In 1852 Eastern Asylum discharged only twenty patients in a population of 237. "The time is past," Galt wrote in 1852, "for any institution to claim especial precedence as to the number of recoveries." All asylums he thought had accumulated more and more chronic cases over the years, which inevitably resulted in a declining number of cured patients. In this matter Galt labored under a disadvantage more acute than most superintendents. A problem unique to Eastern Asylum in regard to incurables stemmed from its rivalry with Staunton's Western State Asylum headed up by Francis Stribling. Both institutions were mandated to take patients geographically closest to them and in the order in which they applied. In practice, however, Western State carefully chose its patients, usually only those who were recently ill and thus thought to be more curable. As a result, Eastern Asylum was left not only with its own chronic cases but with Western State's as well. Eastern Asylum increasingly became known as the pauper hospital, while Western State had a reputation for housing more privileged patients. Certainly Western State's more positive image among the public as well as

45 EAAR 1853-54, 22.

46 ESH Patient Register, E103 "Pauline Martin."

47 EAAR 1852, 6. The accuracy of cure rates claimed in asylum reports seems highly unrealistic. Between 1833 and 1845, for instance, Samuel Woodward claimed an average cure rate of 82-90%. Whatever the claims, as the number of patients increased, so did the number of chronic cases, and in this respect, Galt was correct. See Gerald Grob, Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875 (New York: Free Press, 1973): 68, 98, 182-185 for further details on the controversy over cure rates.
Virginian legislators sprang in large part from Stribling's ebullient, dynamic, and forceful personality. Of the two Virginian superintendents, he was much the more effective lobbyist for his asylum. Galt was not unaware of his lack of talent in securing patronage and wondered if he might have won more attention had he publicized the accomplishments of his asylum. In 1858 he lamented, "If I had only sent my reports and other documents yearly to the distinguished wealthy..."

Although Eastern Asylum was home mostly to paupers, often from the agricultural and working class sectors, it was not totally without its middle and upper class clientele. A number of white patients who wanted "a superior order of accommodation" were kept in better quarters, paying $17 a month for the privilege.

The Doric Building, also called the White House, was built in 1850 and designed specifically to attract such a class of patients. Fitted out with amenities the original buildings lacked, the Doric was done in the simplest of the three Greek Revival orders, appropriate to a public building, yet readily identifiable as an icon of good taste and

---

48 Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 105-09, 115, 116-20, 121-23; It was Stribling, who collaborated with Samuel Woodward, initiated the founding of the Association for Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane.

49 JMGII, *Commonplace Book*, February 1858.

50 Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 108.

51 The architect Alexander Jackson Davis was responsible for much of the popularity of the Greek Revival style in the south. He designed many buildings in both Virginia and North Carolina, including the North Carolina Lunatic Asylum in Raleigh, a number of public buildings at Chapel Hill (one of which was called the Doric, too) and six buildings at the Virginia Military Institute between 1848-1861. See Mills Lane, "A. J. Davis in the South," *Architecture of the Old South: Greek Revival and Romantic* (Savannah, GA: Beehive Press Books, 1996), 306-33; Roger Hale Newton, "Greek Revival, 1829-1844," and "Gothic Revival, 1845-1875," *Town and Davis, Architects: Pioneers in American Revivalist Architecture, 1812-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 119-206, 264-94.
gentility. The Doric's location, a premier spot in the front courtyard, also assured it would be visible from the street and attract even more attention as soon as a visitor or potential resident stepped through the gates onto the grounds.\textsuperscript{52} Galt was intimately involved in the design of the new building for his interest in architecture was keen. When the Williamsburg Female Academy was being erected on the grounds of the old Capital building in the 1850s, he urged the builders that since "we are about to occupy a spot sacred in the annals of Virginia," an edifice proper to the location was mandatory. He was quite absorbed by the project and offered many recommendations as to the school's appearance, suggesting a style implementing "Grecian and Corinthian columns."\textsuperscript{53} Around the same time, he was also asked by the Bruton Parish vestry to collaborate with another church member to "draft a plan" and find "the lowest bidder" for the erection of a new gallery at the church.\textsuperscript{54} With such an interest in architecture, it is not surprising that when new buildings were funded for the asylum, Galt took an active part in their design.\textsuperscript{55}

In any case, the Doric building was meant to impress the "better classes" who had the money to pay for appropriate housing for a relative or loved one suffering from  

\textsuperscript{52}It was probably no accident that the Gothic Building, which housed black males and the white demented, was located behind the main asylum compound and across the street. To be fair, however, the style of the Gothic departed dramatically from the other buildings on the asylum grounds, so aesthetics also may have influenced the decision to locate it in an out-of-the-way spot. See "New Buildings," \textit{EAAR}, 1848, 10-16.

\textsuperscript{53}"Report of the Building Committee of the Williamsburg Academy," Galt Family Papers III, Group II, Box 1, Folder 19.

\textsuperscript{54}W. A. R. Goodwin, \textit{Historical Sketch of Bruton Parish, Williamsburg, Virginia} (N.p., 1903), 60.

\textsuperscript{55}See "New Buildings," \textit{EAAR}, 1848, 10-16. Galt comments upon both the aesthetics and the practical functions of various architectural styles, noting Isaac Ray and Bell's approval of the "Tudor-gothic" for asylums as well as it "rising" use in England.
insanity. Galt like other superintendents found nothing amiss in providing different accommodations for wealthier patients, believing that they, as well as those from other classes, were more likely to recover when they lived among their own kind and could pursue similar occupations and amusements. "For these patients," Galt wrote, "...whose mode of life previous to their insanity disconnected them from bodily exertions, reading, different games, musical instruments are provided." 

Possibly owing to the large number of chronic patients eventually finding their way to Eastern Asylum, Galt's thoughts on the causes of insanity broadened as time went on. By 1853 he identified four categories of patients. Some had suffered a physical affliction, such as blow to the head, others had inherited their condition. Neither of these groups could necessarily benefit from moral management techniques but simply needed to be kept comfortable and treated kindly. The last two groups, those who suffered from "excesses of different kinds and of a physical nature...all mostly within the power of the individual to shun" or from "moral causes such as anxiety of mind and grief which can only be withstood successfully by a habit of self-control," were ideal candidates to reap the advantages of moral management. These patients had arrived at their madness through an unhealthy environment and their own susceptibility to it. "This is an excitable age," Galt wrote,

--an age of excitement--a period in which there are multitudinous sources of mental stimulation--a period when there is an eager craving for these stimuli--a passionate disposition to eagerly drink them in as after a parching drought, the thirsty earth absorbs the tumultuous rain.

56 EAAR 1846, 29.

57 EAAR 1852, 16.
Visit any asylum, he advised, and you could observe entire wards filled with the “the results of excessive or misdirected mental excitement.” In former times, “quiet nooks and corners existed” where “the tempestuous waves on the ocean of life came not, and men passed their whole existence in unvarying tranquility.” But now, he continued, “we have annihilated space and time, through steam and the telegraph,” and any excitement arising in the “remotest extremity of the land...and forewith the whole country vibrates to the same potent agency.” Excessive mental stimulation was also derived from widespread contemporary amusements like the theatre or from new cultural habits like the “early release of the young in America from parental control.” Both encouraged a lack of self-restraint. The “blessings of civilization” unfortunately had produced an unwanted consequence: the increase of nervous and mental diseases.58

At the same time Galt also attributed the high number of cases of “a domestic character” at his asylum from a “mode of life in Virginia” which was marked by “a scattered population.” There was a monotony to the daily life of those living isolated from others for

the principal strong feelings which are habitually exercised, are those referable to the family circle; and any misfortune or dissension is less broken in upon and lessened by the action of surrounding events, than would be the case in a crowded population.59

---


Galt’s challenge, then, was to create an alternative both to the busy, chattering world of the new American civilization, perhaps one more in keeping with yesteryear’s “nooks and corners” of “unvarying tranquility,” as well as to build within that environment an ambiance that did not encourage unhealthy isolation. Again Galt must have reflected with some satisfaction upon the salubriousness of Williamsburg. Here was a village lacking the excessive stimulation of the city but at the same time providing plenty of opportunity for interacting with others in a close, community setting. It had all the advantages and none of the disadvantages of both city and rural life—in short, a perfect place in which to reside in terms of mental health.

In spite of much progress at the hospital after Galt’s ascension to superintendent, comprehensive moral management reform was stymied by Eastern Asylum’s many entrenched practices and customs, not a few which were endemic to the southern culture. Lack of appropriate staffing, a problem at all asylums, was particularly acute at Eastern Asylum. Moral management mandated that attendants be of the white middle class, the better to promulgate values of proper behavior. At Eastern Asylum, Galt admitted this was the chief difference between his hospital and northern asylums, for while “they have white attendants...here we have colored.” As a result, Galt felt he couldn’t leave the management of patients to “servants alone” and, instead, assigned most blacks to “all the menial duties” such as doing the laundry, cooking, and cleaning up rather than serving as patient companions and monitors. Occasionally a black gained Galt’s confidence and was given greater responsibilities. At least one free black man, a former patient, was

---

60 See Grob, *Mental Institutions*, 212-17 for an overview of the problems asylum superintendents encountered in recruiting and retaining appropriately trained and educated staff.

61 Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 83, 84.
hired to work with the slave patients.62

Black staff created an unusual dynamic among a white patient population, who in their understanding of the southern social hierarchy, relegated blacks to the bottom rung.63 They refused to assume any kitchen or laundry duties rather than work alongside blacks.64 This same prejudice no doubt prevented white patients from engaging in other rehabilitative activities in close proximity to blacks. One white patient, Washington Smith, was so hostile to blacks that Galt confined him to his room after he made threats to slaves "formerly owned by his family and now hiring in Williamsburg."65 The one group of white patients who seemed not to notice the color difference were the "demented" whom Galt claimed were too irrational to know any better. In any case, Galt had no choice but to use "one of the servants" for this post, since it was next to impossible "to get a white man to stay with these."66

Faced with a shortage of competent white staff, Galt could not be as selective as his northern colleagues, who had a larger pool from which to draw. Jane Clark, the night

62Ibid., 84.

63Whites in the south, regardless of how low a rung they might occupy on the economic and social ladder, still thought themselves better than blacks. See James L. Roark, Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977). He writes that "racial slavery provided every white man membership in the ruling class and also the means by which non-slaveholders could advance," (59); More recent scholarship like Timothy James Lockley's Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001) explores the various types of relationships blacks and non-elite whites shared, which was sometimes beneficial to both. In the end, however, "non elite whites... would have been confident of their own superior social standing solely by virtue of their race," (165).

64Dain, Disordered Minds, 83.

65ESH Patient Register, E159 "Washington Smith"

66EAAR 1843, 8; Dain, Disordered Minds, 83.
attendant, had no evident qualifications other than she was willing to work the night shift. She was "a lone widow with four children entirely dependent upon my exertions for support," and working night hours offered her a "better opportunity" to take care of her children's "necessaries than any other." Dorothea Dix thought she detected a deficiency in the quality of staff in 1848 and remarked that there was an "evident want of competent attendants and nurses, so far as education and mental qualifications are considered." Whether she was exhibiting her own prejudices against a largely black staff or against inappropriately trained white attendants is unknown, but her comments further the impression that of all the problems Galt faced in managing the asylum, finding appropriate help was one of the most enduring. Galt did the best he could with what he had and on rare occasions even recruited patients to help. In 1853 he wrote that Thomas Luther had "become quite useful in the management of the patients in the ward where he is located," and another patient, Sally Mason, was "pretty constantly occupied as a nurse," and "remains useful."

The problem presented by blacks as staff at Eastern Asylum was dwarfed by their

---

67 Jane Clark to JMGII, n.d., Eastern State Hospital Papers (ESHP) Another advantage, no doubt, was the fact Jane Clark could read and write as evidenced by her very articulate letter of application.

68 Dain, Disordered Minds, 82.

69 Dix like other whites in America held negative stereotypes of blacks. She was unsympathetic to the cause of abolition and studiously avoided the issue. "The negroes are gay, obliging, and anything but miserable," she wrote, while visiting North Carolina, and on more than one occasion expressed the opinion that blacks were an inferior race. See David Gollaher, Voice for the Mad: The Life of Dorothea Dix (New York: Free Press, 1995), 75, 236, 269; Thomas J. Brown, Dorothea Dix: New England Reformer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 158, 241.

70 ESH Patient Register, E149, "Thomas Luther," E46 "Sally Mason."
presence as patients. A cause which Galt championed, and in which he had some support from the Board and General Assembly, was that of admitting black patients to his asylum. Free blacks, "perhaps the most friendless of all the mentally affected," had been admitted to the asylum by virtue of a provision of the original charter in 1773. They had "all along" been "placed on the same footing as to the right of admission which was possessed by white persons." Slaves were occasionally admitted as well, but it was only in 1846 after the General Assembly made this de facto policy legal that Galt could admit, "We have had the privilege of aiding all applicants of that race, whether bond or free, male or female, so far as this institution could help them." Two years later the General Assembly asked the Virginian asylum superintendents to report upon the status of caring for "insane persons of colour" and estimating the cost. For Galt the number of black insane was small. The proportionate number of slaves who become deranged is

71EAAR 1853-54, 23.

72EAAR 1848, 18.

73Jane Purcell Guild, "1829, Chapter 176," Black Laws of Virginia: A Summary of the Legislative Acts of Virginia Covering Negroes from Earliest Times to Present Compiled by Karen Hughes White and Joan Peters. (Afro-American Historical Association of Fauquier County, Virginia, 1996), 84; "1846, Chapter 15." Slaveowners no doubt favored admission of blacks to the asylum, since they could be fined up to $50 if insane slaves caused any damage while abroad. ("1824, Chapter 34," Black Laws of Virginia.)

74EAAR 1853-54, 23.

75EAAR 1848, 18.

76Dain, Disordered Minds, 111. Dain estimates that the black population at Eastern State Asylum held steady through the years for an average of 10%. In 1862 it climbed to 13%. Edward Jarvis, a New England reformer interested in insanity, challenged the high number of black insane recorded by the federal government's sixth census. His essay, Insanity Among the Coloured Population of the Free States (Philadelphia: T.K. and P. G. Collins, Printers, 1844) disputes not only the number of free black insane, but the process of collecting the data as well. The government's statistics were fraught with enough documented errors, he wrote, to "destroy all our confidence in the accuracy of the
less than that of free colored persons, and less than that of whites," he wrote, and indeed no more than ten percent of blacks made up the asylum population at any time from its opening. The small number of blacks needing asylum care was the cornerstone of Galt's argument for admitting them. Falling back upon racist stereotypes, Galt saw no reason to fear an inundation of the hospital by black patients: Unlike whites, blacks were invulnerable to "mental excitement" brought about by an involvement in politics or religious cults, nor did they suffer from the anxiety of owning property. They were ever optimistic, never seeing a "cloud on the horizon," which in addition to their hardy constitutions, helped them to fend off insanity. Even their bondage was a blessing. A slaveowner had an investment in the health of his slaves and so would call in a physician "at the incubative stage of the disease," early enough to halt its progress. And finally, even if a slave became chronically and incurably insane, he need not be admitted to the asylum. He could still "pursue his usual avocation" at home, his duties rarely requiring "mental powers." Even so, Galt was careful not to push his audience too far. It was best to keep black patients "in the vicinity of the asylum but not within the same enclosure" with whites, or if they were to be admitted into white wards, care should be "taken in selecting the ward in which they are placed and distributed." 

whole."(10). The number of insane among the free black population was a political issue for anti-abolitionists who saw it as proof that blacks were better off as slaves than as free men and women.

77EAAR 1848, 19.

78EAAR 1848, 19-20. Galt made many of these same comments in the white paper he wrote for AMSAI. Galt's views of blacks were hardly novel for the time. Studies and documentation of white negative stereotyping of blacks is extensive. See Winthrop D. Jordan White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968) as well as more contemporaneous accounts like George Fitzhugh, Cannibals All! Slaves Without Masters, (Richmond: A. Morris, 1857); P.H. Mell, Slavery: A Treatise Showing Slavery Is Neither a Moral, Political, or Social Evil,
The General Assembly, while permitting the admission of slaves to the asylum, insisted that this be done only when there was adequate room. This particular restriction seldom caused a problem, since the asylum was rarely overcrowded. Nonetheless, in 1856 permission to house slaves was withdrawn. Obviously some Virginians could not accept the idea of the two races in close proximity, no matter how much Galt might try to disguise it with his rhetoric. When Galt requested that Mr. Mechlan from Hanover County retrieve his female slave to make room for a white, Mechlan responded, "I really do not know what disposition to make of the poor creature. However there is no alternative but submission to the law." He noted that his slave had been "so much better when distant from her former residence in Richmond that I am unwilling to bring her back" and pleaded with Galt to find her other accommodations. He asked, "Could no one be found in Williamsburg or the neighborhood who would take charge of her and treat her kindly?"  

Although blacks were admitted to Eastern Asylum, they were not treated like white patients. They labored in the kitchens and gardens both for occupational and recreational therapy. The men usually worked outdoors, and the women were given indoor as well as outdoor chores. One "coloured insane of this sex gives much assistance in washing," Galt noted with satisfaction. Yet Galt did seek acceptable accommodations (Penfield, GA: 1844); and many more of the period. It was a matter of white self-interest to believe that blacks by virtue of their race and characteristics were best served by remaining in bondage. See Alexander O. Boulton's "The American Paradox: Jeffersonian Equality and Racial Science," American Quarterly 47, no. 3 (September 1995): 467-92.

79 William Mechlan, Esquire of Hanover City to JMGII, n.d., (ESHP). Although this letter is not dated, it was likely written during the period when Galt began to refuse slaves as patients. By 1860, however, slaves were once again living as patients at the asylum. Robert Saunders told Galt "the law might be stretched" in local cases. (Dain, Disordered Minds, 111-12.)
for blacks. Female slaves, who lived in an outbuilding that was “in a somewhat ruinous condition, it is also too small”\textsuperscript{80} were relocated to a new building that was “handsome and commodious”\textsuperscript{81} in 1854, and black men were housed in the newer Gothic with the demented whites. In his behavior toward the black insane, Galt acted with the same paternalism he showed to his own “servants;” if southerners would own slaves, they must honorably provide for them—even when they became mad.

In spite of his preference for racial segregation on the asylum grounds, Galt admitted that in practice “no particular strictness is observed in isolating the white from the colored patients.” Galt maintained that not the “slightest difficulty” arose from the “presence of two races in the same asylum,” for as a rule white patients “generally look upon the colored patients pretty much in the same light as they do servants.”\textsuperscript{82} When a white patient could not adjust to the situation, as was the case with Washington Smith or Jacob Crane, it was the patient who was disciplined and “removed entirely from the colored patients.”\textsuperscript{83} Yet relations between white and blacks in the asylum were probably not quite as clear cut as these examples may suggest. As much as white patients were thought to loathe being with blacks, many insisted upon sneaking into the black wards on a regular basis, and some simply could not be kept away. If male, their intentions may have been sinister. At least one white male patient had been confined to his room when reports of him surfaced “in connection with two female servants.”\textsuperscript{84} On another occasion

\textsuperscript{80}EAAR 1848, 22, 23.

\textsuperscript{81}EAAR 1853-54, 23.

\textsuperscript{82}EAAR 1848, 21; Dain, \textit{Disordered Minds}, 109

\textsuperscript{83}ESH Patient Register, E53 "Jacob Crane;" E159, "Washington Smith."

\textsuperscript{84}ESH Patient Register, E159, "Washington Smith."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
black female patients were sent to live in an outbuilding with the explanation that they were “thus never in contact, necessarily with white patients.” Sexual relations between white men and female slaves in the south were an open secret, but polite society often chose not to acknowledge this. Rather than give cause for gossip and scandal, Galt needed to assure the General Assembly and anyone else who might find offense that white men were kept away from black women in the asylum setting.

Other asylum superintendents were not as sanguine as Galt about the “mixing of races” in their hospitals. His fellow Virginian superintendent at Western State Hospital, Francis Stribling, refused to admit black patients, free or slave, and northern superintendents criticized Galt for not doing the same as Stribling. For all of the northern superintendents’ humanitarian impulses and even in some cases their abolitionist leanings, they could not escape the racial bigotry of their age. In many cases, misinformation fed to them was swallowed whole. Amariah Brigham repeated a number of outrageous comments he’d heard during his trip to the south in 1848. He noted, for instance, that Josiah Nott of Mobile, Alabama

85 EAAR 1848, 21.


87 Contrary to the northern superintendents' protestations, they admitted some blacks to their asylums, although the fact was not publicized. See Grob, Mental Institutions, 245-47.

88 Josiah Nott was a slavery apologist and used his credentials as a physician and racial theorist to make arguments against the black race.
was of the opinion that the white and negro races are distinct species and inclined to consider the Mulattoes as Hybrids, a degenerate unnatural offspring, doomed by nature to work out its own destruction.

Brigham’s own observations were sometimes worse, as when he compared a young “Bushman” living with an American consul to an “Orang Outang.” He was not surprised that some might regard the youth “as the connecting link between that animal and man.”

If Northern superintendents did not admit black patients to their asylums (and so could look down at their noses at Galt), they in a sense had their own “troublesome” population to accommodate. Increasingly immigrants were flooding the cities of the north, and more than a few would take up residence at the closest state asylum. As just one example, while immigrants made up only 14% of all patients at the Worcester asylum in 1842, by 1851 that percentage had increased to a full 45%. This new circumstance of asylum life generated a variety of questions among the superintendents. What effect did such a large presence of foreigners have upon recovery rates, and what might be done about it? Thomas Kirkbride of the Pennsylvania Hospital and John S. Butler of the Hartford Retreat felt immigrants could recover their sanity as readily as any other patients and under the same circumstances within an asylum environment. Others were not so sure. Immigrants, they believed, especially the Irish which made up the largest group, were ignorant and uneducated, more interested in “rum and tobacco” than in self-discipline and could not benefit from moral management methods. Yet even those superintendents, who were more sympathetic to the plight of immigrants, agreed it was difficult to establish a close therapeutic relationship with the foreign-born with their

---

89[Amariah Brigham], “Editorial Correspondence,” AJI 5, no.1 (July 1848): 69, 72.
90Rothman, Discovery of the Asylum, 283-85.
strange customs, culture, and in some cases, different languages. Such was the immigrant’s suspicion of staff, Isaac Ray wrote, that “modes of address” that worked with native Americans “generally fall upon their ears like an unknown tongue, or are comprehended just enough to render the whole misunderstood, and thereby excite feelings very different from such as were intended.”91 Perhaps, too, the superintendents worried most that the immigrant insane might corrupt the carefully-designed rehabilitative environment of a well-run moral management asylum. As Isaac Ray wrote, “native Americans and foreigners had too much distaste for each other in normal life to get along well in asylums where it was important to have a congenial environment.”92 Just as some superintendents had suggested separate asylums for blacks, so, too, might the same solution might be best for the immigrant insane as well.

In the end, then, whether in Isaac Ray’s asylum in the north or John Minson Galt’s asylum in the south, the promise of moral management for better care and treatment of those afflicted by insanity was exclusive. The northern establishments shunned admitting black patients and, in addition, wished to shunt the immigrant population to separate institutions where someone other than themselves might find a solution to their insanity, if indeed one could be found. Galt, on the other hand, would admit blacks, but paralleling traditional and long-standing southern attitudes toward blacks, would see no purpose in including them in moral management activities except in the broadest sense of providing adequate housing, food, and work. The umbrella of humanitarian reform was only large enough to cover those who most resembled the superintendents in race, culture, and class. In this sense the moral management theory of treatment for the insane hid an inherent design flaw, successful only under the most


exclusive and restrictive conditions, doomed to fail when stretched or expanded to fit the demands of a pluralistic culture.

In the 1850s Galt encountered yet one more problem in the management of the asylum. The Board of Directors had always been in the hands of the Whigs, men from the local hierarchy of old families. The Democrats, in sweeping the state elections in the early 1850s, replaced the Whigs on the Board of Directors. Led by Lemuel Bowden, Robert Armisted, and John Barlow and accompanied by a partisan drumbeat from the Richmond Enquirer, the principle of "to the victors go the spoils" came into play. The Democrats demanded more representation on the Board of Directors. Their request was not frivolous for any type of position associated with the hospital often entailed additional income. W.W. Vest, a Williamsburg merchant, for example, earned only a dollar in salary as the hospital's treasurer, but his meager earnings were more than made up by his contract to supply goods to the hospital. Board members in addition to having a stranglehold on supplying the hospital with goods and services also controlled the hiring and the firing of staff, which gave them the advantage in placing their own slaves on the payroll, collecting as much as $80 a quarter for each one employed there. The ambitious Bowden had even greater designs. He appointed his sister-in-law to the position of matron.93

During the Democratic tenure, Galt had reason to worry about his own position as well as those of others. Rumors of impending dismissal often reached his ears, and he spent many anxious hours occupied by the possibility. In 1854 he refused a salary hike,

93 Dain, Disordered Minds, 146, 149, 152; EAAR 1846, 33-38. Galt opposed the matron's appointment, but once she was installed in the position, he professed "sincere and profound respect and admiration" for her "many excellencies of character." "The selection was a most happy one" for "her eminent qualifications...must render her service of the very highest value to the asylum."(EAAR 1854-55, 34.)
his sister maintained because of his dedication to the asylum, but he himself admitted he feared a larger salary would make him a larger target for dismissal. In the end, perhaps because the Board perceived Galt to be one of them—a Democrat—or at worst apolitical, he kept his position. His beloved cousin John Williamson, who served as assistant physician, was not as lucky. He lost a third of his salary as well as housing at the asylum.

In 1855 yet another political upheaval faced Virginia and the asylum. Henry Alexander Wise, a Democrat, but one who Bowden felt had betrayed the party, was elected governor, and he replaced the Board with members of his own liking at the first opportunity. It was clear where Galt stood: "The Directors should have voted for Mr. Wise and "rejoiced in the opportunity of showing their devotion to a cause, not self-interest." He added that he would have done so had he been in their shoes.

Such political tumult must have caused some disruption in the patients' lives as well as in Galt's, a rather ironic twist considering Galt had tried to build an environment for his patients that was free of the political agitation so common in the outside world and from his point of view so destructive to mental stability. In spite of his best efforts, the storms besetting the wider world had infiltrated the asylum's sanctum sanctorum. At the same time the new broom that swept clean had its positive side as well. The Wise Board

---

94 Dain, Disordered Minds, 153. The Board of Directors gave Galt a $2,000 raise over his objections which they later rescinded upon his request. Galt was not the only asylum superintendent who feared a larger salary would put his job in jeopardy. Other superintendents obviously had the same apprehension and also refused raises on occasion.

95 JMGII, Commonplace Book, June 1855. Wise began his political life as a Jacksonian Democrat (he had even honeymooned at The Hermitage with his new wife), but broke with Jackson in 1836 and became a Whig. Twelve years later he reversed himself again and became a Democrat. Although an ardent anti-abolitionist, Wise often said and did things that made him seem soft on the slavery issue. It was even rumored that he had considered sending John Brown of Harper's Ferry to an asylum rather than the gallows. What an interesting situation that would have created for Galt had John Brown arrived at the gates of Eastern Asylum with a gubernatorial order for his admission.
of Directors claimed "want and gross neglect were clearly visible" at the asylum and that patients were "destitute not only of the ordinary comforts but also of the common necessaries of life." This evaluation was probably more political hyperbole than a true reflection of the reality at the asylum, but it did bring about a rash of repairs at the asylum including new roofs, fresh stuccoing of the exteriors, improved walkways, and other improvements.96

In spite of Galt's inexperience and youth and the peculiar problems he encountered at Eastern Asylum, he grew into the job over the years and was relatively successful on a local and regional level. Had he been more forceful and less provincial, he might have strode across the national stage, becoming one of the country's most radical innovators in mental health, possibly changing the history of the treatment of insanity in antebellum America. In many ways he was a visionary. One of his most forward looking ideas was to de-institutionalize the insane as had the managers of the asylum in Gheel, Belgium and to integrate some patients into the community. Galt hoped that by "placing a number of...patients either on a farm in the neighborhood fitted for the purpose or as boarders with families in the vicinity of an asylum," they would regain not only their sanity but as important their liberty. What the treatment of insanity needed then, he wrote, was not reform but revolution and the abolition of large, forbidding, prison-like asylums.97

Unfortunately while Galt was starting to think innovatively and look at alternate

96EAAR 1860, 6; Dain, Disordered Minds, 159. Political turmoil was not confined only to Galt's asylum. Other superintendents were equally cursed with political interference in asylum business. Isaac Ray suggested in 1852 that "hospitals be located as far as possible from state capitals in order to spare them from the 'political vortex which is eternally boiling and seething there.'" (Grob, Mental Institutions, 142-45.)

97EAAR 1854-55, 19.
ways to treat the insane, his fellow superintendents were not. When Galt’s proposals were published in the *AJI*, they unleashed a barrage of abuse from his colleagues. Thomas Kirkbride portrayed Galt as inexperienced and naïve. The liberty Galt promoted would not be desirable in any institution excepting those of the character of that which he controls. Gentlemen who have the care of few but chronic demented cases have little idea of the restraint really necessary for recent cases or of the restrictions which it is proper to place on their movement and actions.

He added further that anyone who had visited Galt’s institution in Virginia would know why “there is so much liberty permitted between the town-people and the patients which certainly is not seen in any other institution in the country.”

The superintendents also took umbrage at Galt’s description of northern asylums as prisons, a term Galt must have known carried profoundly negative connotations, since the term had been used against his own asylum in the 1830s and had not been meant as a compliment. Kirkbride especially, who had built a large part of his professional reputation on being the authority in asylum design, may have felt he was being attacked personally. Isaac Ray was more worried about the impression it would leave with colleagues overseas: “These things [the journal] go to foreign countries as the statements of a person holding a responsible place, and who may have been supposed to have made a correct observation.”

The superintendents’ defensive reaction was complicated. They felt they had been insulted, yes, but there was more to it than that. Professionally, they believed that the insane could be cured and morally rehabilitated only in isolation from the corrupting

---

98*Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane,* *AJI* 12, no. 1 (May 1855): 43-44.

99Ibid., 46.
influence of their families, friends, and communities; and that required confinement in an
institution, the only environment which they themselves could control meticulously. On a
more personal level, the superintendents must have understood that should Galt’s vision
be realized, their very livelihoods and prestige would be in jeopardy. Without asylums to
run—in some cases, asylums the size of a village—their authority would be greatly
diminished. Like a king without country or castle, the superintendent would become an
exile, perhaps still dispensing orders and advice for treatment of the insane but from a
position lacking in both symbolic and real authority. Once again they would be, as they
had been when young doctors fresh from medical school trying to establish a practice,
reduced to begging for patients and competing with one another rather than collaborating
from a position of prestige, status, and a guaranteed income.

Equally unreceptive to Galt’s idea was Eastern Asylum’s Board of Directors and
General Assembly. Galt was not surprised. He admitted that he neither expected to see
such changes adopted in Virginia, nor did he propose to attempt to introduce them at
Eastern Asylum. As a man who believed in the power of the written word, he seemed
satisfied merely to have put the proposition on paper, hoping his arguments would
persuade by their brilliance and logic and without any aggressive lobbying on his part.
When they didn’t, he employed no other methods for making his vision a reality. Quite
ironically during this same period when he was most interested in de-institutionalization,
Galt succumbed to pressure from the Williamsburg community to end his patients’
excursions into town and close off the asylum with gates so that no one came or went
without a pass. He admitted he was relieved by the new policy. He had been glad to
assume responsibility for his patients’ behavior outside asylum walls, since the
“happiness and welfare of my afflicted charges were so much enhanced” by going
abroad. At the same time he had always feared the repercussions if a patient caused
damage or injury to a villager or his property. This new policy relieved him of "the pressure of a load of responsibility." If he felt any remorse in the turn of events, it was not obvious. The new policy of keeping his patients behind asylum walls and fences and gates, he observed, "did not interfere with my sense of right and of humanity," since others, not he, had sought the prohibition.\(^{100}\)

In 1857, as part of its reform measures, the Wise Board evicted most of the staff and their families boarding at the asylum. The situation had spiraled out of control. With eighty-four staff, families, and slaves living on the grounds, the ratio of patient to non-patient was three to one. One ward officer, his wife, two nieces, and several female slaves occupied three rooms in the Gothic. The matron lived with her husband, three children, and a housekeeper in three rooms, and the night attendant had possession of several rooms for herself, her daughter, and servant. No one made out better than the Steward, who held an apartment of eight rooms in the upper class Doric building where he lived with his wife, children, and 3 servants.\(^{101}\) The situation did not go unnoticed in Virginia, and it became a common adage that the asylum was the place where the "lazy take care of the crazy." The Board may have smarted under such criticisms, but they found the situation intolerable for a much more pressing reason— it decreased the number of rooms available for patients.

It is not difficult to imagine why Galt allowed such a situation to develop at the asylum. Within the walls of Eastern Asylum a sort of mini-Gheel flourished but with a

\(^{100}\) *EAAR* 1854-55, 28, 29. The Board of Directors wanted the gates closed, fearing that visitors came simply to gawk at the patients; Galt worried that such an action would eliminate all except relatives, the one group he thought were detrimental to a patient's health; he also feared the public might think the asylum had something to hide. (Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 86, 93.)

\(^{101}\) Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 158.
twist. Rather than the insane being integrated into the community, the community had been incorporated into the asylum. Extended families, white and black, slave and free, with parents, children, nieces, servants, doctors, a chaplain, and all their visitors coming and going, all engaged in the mundane activities of daily life, were in effect, Williamsburg writ small. Their presence may have provided the normalcy Galt wanted his patients to experience. When staff and families were removed from the grounds, the Board's purpose—to create more room for patients—was accomplished but at a steep price, for it destroyed a unique asylum community that had resembled in some small part the outside world.
CHAPTER V
JOHN MINSON GALT II: A MAN OF LETTERS

I.

John Minson Galt II held a multiplicity of roles during his life -- son, brother, family provider, friend, doctor, esteemed superintendent, renegade superintendent, and much more, depending upon who was looking at him -- but the one constant all agreed upon was that John Minson Galt II was an accomplished man. He thought of himself that way as well. Although he accepted the many roles associated with his particular circumstances in life, some more reluctantly than others, he derived much of his identity from his reading, his books, his writing, and his library. Where others might see themselves as well-educated, he would see himself as a scholar; where others saw themselves familiar with Latin or Greek and French, he saw himself as a linguist mastering not only the "dead" languages, but French, German, Spanish, Italian, and even Arabic; where others saw themselves as amateur writers of poetry and essays, he saw himself as a professional writer with a national following; where others might be committed readers, he would see himself as a literary, political, and professional critic. And where others might collect some books but borrow most, Galt would create personal and professional libraries that were impressive in their compass and content and use them not only for his own benefit but as a community resource as well. John Minson Galt II, in short, was a man of letters.

Galt did not grow into this role separate from his circumstances. His chosen lifestyle insured he would be surrounded by a welter of print materials everywhere he spent
time. At his asylum he dealt with letterheads, admission forms, questionnaires, professional journals, and annual reports; at home he had books, magazines, newspapers, and publishers’ catalogs as well as piles of printed invoices, columned ledgers and notebooks associated with investments and household management. He was a man as much immersed in a sea of print as he was in longhand, and his intellectual activities were shaped daily by the demands of its various formats. Nor did Galt become a man of letters unattended by those around him. He was very much of his time and place, and his association with books and libraries was rooted in his participation in the larger audience of antebellum readers. In this sense, his cultivation of himself as a scholar, a writer, and a learned man was a means of connecting with family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues within the broad understanding of the world of print which they all shared. At the same time his status separated him from others—certainly from the illiterate, from blacks, from working class whites—but even from most members of his own class who did not read in the same way or with the same purposes as did he. Although John Minson Galt II can easily be identified as part of the large, genteel, reading middle class of the antebellum period, still in his personal attention to assuming the role of a scholar, author, and literary critic, he also assumed a role that was far more dependent upon mastery of the printed page than most.

1See Richard Brown, Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) for an overview of the omnipresence of printed materials in the life of colonial elites; See also Christine Pawley, Reading on the Middle Border: The Culture of Print in Late-Nineteenth Century, Osage, Iowa (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001) for how this phenomenon engulfed everyone by the late nineteenth century. “For people of all classes,” she writes, “print was inescapable,” (1).

2See Richard H. Brodhead, Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), for examples
Such contradictions between Galt’s role as middle class reader and elite scholar were mirrored in his equally contradictory status or membership in the large middle class that emerged during the antebellum period. With his privileged status, he would seem to have little association with the “middling sorts.” Certainly in comparison to his fellow asylum superintendents, many who had struggled to shake off the bonds of poverty and secure a better life, he was well off, having inherited his status into the Williamsburg’s upper echelon at birth. Yet a comparison of Galt to his fellow superintendents is not as useful as comparing him to his own father. Alexander Dickie Galt had inherited the good life from his father, too, but he had added to his inheritance by becoming an independent entrepreneur. He owned a large plantation, which apparently he supervised at least to some degree, added rental property to that which he had inherited, invested in bonds, and he was part owner in the local apothecary for a number of years. More importantly Alexander Dickie Galt derived the best part of his income from his private medical practice. In that respect, he was his own man and could set his own schedule and to some degree regulate his own income, restricted only by available time and his notions of

of the way in which writers and readers as members in a particular social milieu create a literary culture peculiar to themselves; Michael Warner, “Franklin: The Representational Politics of the Man of Letters,” The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) for an exploration of how Benjamin Franklin fashioned his identity vis-à-vis the printed word; Drew Faust, A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977) for an examination of a coterie of southern antebellum intellectuals, their view of southern culture, and their place in it.

3See Stuart M. Blumin’s “The Elusive Middle Class,” Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1-16, for an overview of the work of historians and scholars who have attacked the thorny issue of defining and exploring “class” in the United States in the nineteenth
responsibility to his patients. His asylum post was part-time, his duties an extension of his medical career rather than a replacement for it, and in addition it was a position he could use to make contacts and buttress his other economic interests.

His son, John Minson Galt, on the other hand had little skill in adding to the family’s wealth. He attempted to sell off his father’s plantation or, if that wasn’t possible, at a minimum to rent it out to others who might work it. He was uninterested in the duties or status of a planter, nor did he relish acquiring the expertise required in running such a large agricultural enterprise. He held some bond or stock investments and owned some rental property in Williamsburg that supplemented his asylum income, but unlike his father, he did not add to them. Nor did he have a private medical practice, having been denied that opportunity by the same Virginian legislation that had re-organized the asylum structure and created the position of superintendent as a full-time job. In the end John Minson was dependent primarily upon others for his fortune. He was a salaried, state employee whose job security was subject more to the political whims of Richmond rather than to his own efforts. Even the very roof over his head—the cottage on the asylum grounds—belonged to the state, and he would be expected to vacate it when he resigned his position. Galt, then, had little independence in controlling his status in the social hierarchy, at least as it was tied to income, and had even less ambition it seems to century.

4"Notes from Reports” [notebook], 64, GFPI, MsV85. Newspaper clipping from the classified advertisements found in Galt’s notebooks. It reads: “LAND FOR SALE – I wish to sell, rent, or lease my farm consisting of 151 acres, 2 miles from Williamsburg.” Undated. It is accompanied by another ad for the sale of Galt’s “interest” in a house and lot in Richmond.
correct the situation. Even in small matters, he eschewed entrepreneurial adventures. Rather than renting out his homestead on Woodpecker Street, for instance, he allowed his household slave, Arena Baker, and her family to live there. Unlike his father, his grandfather, or his great-grandfather, the business of doing business was not what Galt was all about. He had one advantage, however, which put him in a superior position to his father and which was valued by the new emerging antebellum middle class. His father had found it necessary to travel day and night in his buggy around the county and village and to attend to all manner of patients and perform duties where he got his hands very dirty indeed. Galt was able to dwell primarily in his study or asylum clinic, in many cases directing staff to perform the most unpleasant tasks, while he wrote letters, busied himself with keeping records, or built a library. He mostly kept his hands clean.

John Minson Galt was not the only Virginian of his generation to follow a different path from that of his father. Many young men, descended from a planter/gentry tradition, also lived differently from their eighteenth-century progenitors. By 1840 only one in four of the grandsons of Virginia's original 100 wealthy planter families still held land or farmed. A variety of events had conspired to leave them down on their luck and to cause their fathers to advise them to take a profession and their sisters to marry well as a way of getting on in the world. A class of elites in the Old Dominion still existed most assuredly, but it was made up less of the descendents of the earlier wealthy planter class and more of a new breed of wealthy landowners with no social pedigree. This group was joined in their elite status by a number of wealthy and influential professional men—lawyers, doctors, merchants—who had been willing to re-locate away from their county.
of birth to find their fortunes in the cities like Norfolk or Richmond.\textsuperscript{5}

Galt, too, of course, was a white-collar professional much like the group described above. But unlike the new breed of professionals, he engaged in none of the activities that might have guaranteed his elite position within the changing conditions of the antebellum Virginian world. Slaveholding, for instance, was a widespread way of attaining wealth and class even among the non-agricultural sector of Virginians. Indeed one historian argues that “slaveholding professionals were probably the single most influential class in the antebellum south.” All whites wanted to own more and more slaves as a route to wealth and influence, and most strove toward that end.\textsuperscript{6} Yet Galt seemed satisfied to have enough slaves to help his sisters take care of the household and to minister to his own personal needs, and no more. Nor did he seek political office that might have solidified his standing in the community. Both his grandfather and his uncle had held municipal office, so it was certainly within the acceptable traditions of family, yet when local Democrats ran John Minson twice on their ticket, he refused to accept either office. If John Minson had ambitions to wield power and insure his rightful place within the elitist circle of movers and shakers, he was loathe to show it.

Some historians have defined post-revolutionary Virginia as being in a state of declension. Successive generations of Virginians had lost the civic spirit, ambition, or enterprise demonstrated so ably by men like Washington, Jefferson, Mason, Wythe, St.


George Tucker, Monroe, Madison, and myriad other earlier Virginian luminaries. Virginians had become soft, decadent, idle. While other historians have refuted the declension theory, yet there is no denying something was afoot among post-revolutionary and new republic generations of Virginians that made them different from their grandfathers. Apprehension had worked its way even into the sanctum sanctorum of the Galt household. Elizabeth Galt fretted that her brother, John, would founder on “the rock on which our whole generation split, viz. the want of proper confidence.” Perhaps she was referring to the Galt male family line exclusively or perhaps expressing fear held by others as well for an entire generation of Virginians, but in either case, she saw that her brother must exert himself if he were to maintain the position of wealth, influence, and prestige his father had left to the family.

If Galt cannot be considered as one of the very most elite families, partly from his own lack of ambition to scrabble for wealth and political position, he certainly was not at the bottom of the hierarchy. In any part of the south, that position would be reserved for blacks, free and slave. Nor was he part of the class of impoverished whites, farmers and unskilled laborers who rarely moved from the bottom rungs of the ladder, nor of the entrepreneurial class who made or lost their fortunes behind a counter or desk and found their success was often based on luck, the right contacts, and business acumen. He was instead a white collar professional, college-educated, an asylum doctor, reasonably affluent, a man who worked with his head not his hands—in short a man who in many ways belonged and fit comfortably into the newly emerging middle class in America. If he did not share the struggles of the upwardedly mobile (as had his fellow

---

7 Dain, Disordered Minds, 70
superintendents), he did share their values. On some level, he understood and accepted their behaviors and intentions. Gentility, the new middle class mantra, was his as well. Even as a student finding his way about the strange streets of Philadelphia, he was concerned with being genteel, being seen as genteel, and associating with the genteel. A basic requirement in any boarding house in which he chose to live was that it be genteel or even “the most genteel” in all the city; when he ventured out to lectures or concerts he noticed the makeup of the audience commenting on its gentility or lack thereof. And like others in the middle class, he appreciated and acquired all the material accoutrements that the upwardly-mobile genteel found desirable. Sofas, tea sets, mirrors, and, of course, books formed a steady parade into the little cottage on the asylum grounds. He also enjoyed the same activities of many in the emerging middle class, attending soirees at the neighbor’s house or performing at the cheerful Club literary association, reading voraciously and talking about what he read with his sisters and others. And he had accepted the middle class obsession with morality and virtue that placed industry over idleness, temperance over drunkeness, frugality over extravagance, self-improvement over ignorance. And very tellingly he accepted the notion of an egalitarian, democratic society. Thus he desired not to be called “doctor,” for that was too grand a title. He also readily accepted the farce that his fellow Virginian, the wealthy William Henry Harrison who had become president, had begun life in a log cabin, although he must have known it could not be true. Yet on some level, he believed it should be true, just as did most of the rest of the middle class.

The above portrait of Galt as middle class fits as well into Jonathan Wells’ study that identifies an emerging middle class in antebellum south made up of entrepreneurs,
lawyers, doctors, teachers, and other professionals in the 1840s and 1850s. They embraced modernization, capitalism, and mass education very much as did the north, much of this ideology passed to them from the north from the many books, magazines, and newspapers that were flooding the antebellum south. Rather than a static society often characterized by many historians, Wells believed the south was undergoing dynamic changes during the late 1840s and 1850s that prepared a cadre of southern men for vigorous political and economic leadership after the Civil War.8

In other matters, however, it is difficult not to notice that aspects of John Minson Galt’s character held fast to a rather traditional outlook of an eighteenth-century gentleman. Not only did he assume the mantle of a man of letters and own a library that once would have been found only among the most wealthy elites like William Byrd (and like Byrd invest much of his time and derive much of his self-image from such a habit9), but in small and insignificant matters he eschewed the ways of the common middle class man as well. Noah Webster had declared the irrelevance of studying the “dead languages” of Latin and Greek for the new Republican.10 Galt engaged in a steady drive all his life to become more and more accomplished in these languages so scorned as useless by Webster. If Galt knew what a middle class was, he certainly did not believe he belonged to it.


Such contradictions in John Minson Galt's status are difficult to reconcile, yet can be resolved if considered within an urban/village continuum. In Philadelphia where class was fluid and ever changing—today's farmer could be tomorrow's asylum superintendent—he was an accomplished man, but one who by virtue of his modest income, his salaried position, and his habits, was one of many—a "middling sort." In Williamsburg, however, it was a different matter. In this small hamlet where there was little movement in the traditional social hierarchy, things like family prestige, an above average income, a position as head of a large institution, possession of a college education, the acquisition of libraries and tea sets and mirrors, were rare enough to catapult Galt into an upper-class echelon. In Williamsburg John Minson Galt was recognized as being part of an elite group where only gentlemen dwelled. Along with a small number of affluent merchants, educated college faculty and clergymen, planters with a certain healthy income and political power, and municipal office holders who were the village power-brokers, (some of whom were often one and the same), John Minson Galt belonged to the elite upper class. In this sense as in others, as noted in the outset of this chapter, Galt was often seen in different ways, depending upon who was doing the looking.

II.

Aleck Preston, the Galt's household slave, once claimed the Galt family owned so many books, "there ain't room in the house for the people."\textsuperscript{11} Elizabeth Galt repeated the

\textsuperscript{11}Elizabeth Neal Pitzer, \textit{Sallie and Elizabeth Galt: Compliance and Resistance to the 'Southern Lady's' Role in Antebellum Virginia} (masters thesis, College of William and

comment to friends and family as an amusing anecdote, but she must have seen it as a
compliment as well (if an unintended one), for it characterized her family in a way she
approved: the Galts loved books more than they did comfort. Books epitomized all the
intangible virtues the family valued: gentility and refinement, education, self-improvement, virtue, wisdom, and industry. The overflow of books at the Galt house,
just like the Greek grammar which John Minson self-consciously placed upon the "little
round table in the dining room for occasional reading,"\(^{12}\) portrayed the family to others in
a positive way that their own modesty would have otherwise prevented.\(^{13}\)

The Galt family's attitude toward books departed dramatically from that of their
colonial ancestors, who had lived at a time when only gentlemen of means kept grand
libraries. In the eighteenth century, William Byrd, the wealthy Virginian Tidewater planter,
amassed thousands of books and even had a special building erected on his estate to house
them.\(^{14}\) Books for him were a "form of visible luxury,"\(^{15}\) a means of separating himself out
from the lower classes who could not afford to spend their small incomes on anything but
necessities, and who being mostly illiterate, would have had no desire to do so in any case.

Byrd, an exile in a backwater region of the New World, could entertain the notion that he

\(^{12}\) JMGII, *Commonplace Book*, July 1854.

\(^{13}\) Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959). Goffman looks at the presentation of self in society as if the world is indeed a stage, and individuals and their "teams" are the players. The "use of setting and props" (like the Galts' books and library) are simply part of the dynamics used to convey a desired impression to others as well as create a self-identity.

\(^{14}\) Kevin J. Hayes, *The Library of William Byrd of Westover* (Madison: Madison House, 1997), 37. "The library Byrd built was one long spacious gallery which would eventually house twenty-three walnut bookcases with up to seven shelves per case."

inhabited "the same mental world as the Englishman," even though he had been far removed from England for many years. He imagined his home in rural Virginia as a Horatian haven where isolation afforded a virtuous life rather than a parochial one.16

Alexander Dickie Galt, part of the post revolutionary generation, had no pretensions to the idle life of the educated gentleman. Rather he bought and kept books mainly for utilitarian reasons and always read with a purpose. His medical books gave him an awareness of current medical treatments, the Richmond Compiler and Richmond Enquirer provided him with local and national political analysis from a Whiggish and Democratic perspective respectively, the Norfolk Beacon kept him abreast of the latest business news, and the New York Albion entertained him, his wife, and children with a mix of news and stories.17

His wife, Mary Dorothea Galt, approached reading with more of an eye toward entertainment. She read fiction and non-fiction but especially liked newspapers: "Mama is exceedingly sorrowful about your departure," Sallie wrote to John in March 1843, "but is so

16Brown, Knowledge Is Power, 47, 48. See also Kenneth Lockridge Diary and Life of William Byrd II of Virginia, 1674-1744 (Institute of Early American History by University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1987). Lockridge maintains that Byrd as well as other colonial gentlemen with English educations or antecedents paid a high price for trying to reconcile inner tensions and dissatisfaction: "The dilemma was always that, despite his longing, England never accepted him enough to give the place or marriage he aspired to, while Virginia never seemed to offer the scope he felt his English education and ambitions deserved," (31). He could reach his goal of becoming a perfect gentleman through his books, but the colonial culture provided no one who could appreciate his accomplishment.

17Much of Alexander Dickie Galt's medical library is held by Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
much consoled by her favorite amusement, reading the newspapers." Mary Galt also read the Bible with faithful regularity. When John was in Philadelphia, his sister advised him "Don't trouble to bring anything home but a Bible for Mama like that in which you read, not more expensive, else it will be put in a drawer instead of being used." Mary Galt treated fine books in the same way she treated the family's plate, the silver candlesticks, and bowls. They might occasionally be displayed or brought out to admire, but like them, a fine Bible was to be kept pristine. Its value lay in its possession not in its use.

John Minson Galt and his sisters came of age in the second quarter of the nineteenth century when print matter was becoming abundant and easier to obtain. Reading and book collecting were no longer confined to the more lordly among the community—large plantation owners, college scholars, the clergy—but was being embraced by a burgeoning middle class as a component of the genteel life and republican ideology. The Galt children viewed books and other printed matter not as rare, treasured items to be squirreled away but rather as commodities to be purchased, collected, displayed and kept at the ready for immediate use when needed. Books and reading still provided the same tangible, symbolic displays of education, intellectualism, refinement, and virtue as they had for William Byrd and Mary and Alexander Dickie Galt but within a new cultural context. Books now acted as a mechanism to link a broad base of middle class readers, one to another, rather than to separate a community's elites from their fellows.19

18 Galt Family to JMGII, 12/13 March 1843.

Reading was an important part of John Minson Galt’s milieu from the moment he could first hold a primer. Alexander Dickie and Mary Galt were particularly committed to educate their children, most especially the two boys who were expected to take their place in the professional and social worlds of Williamsburg. Mary Galt neglected “no opportunity for instructing the opening mind of her children” and never wearied “in explaining to them any subject upon which they desired information.” She not only prized but demanded her children’s desire and ability to learn. All four of the Galt children, Alexander Jr., Elizabeth, John Minson, and Sallie, were schooled in French, Latin, composition, arithmetic, history, and the sciences. The children were instructed by local tutors, Leroy Anderson and “Mr. and Mrs. Sanford,” between 1829 and 1831, but eventually the boys would attend grammar school and college, and the girls would be tutored at home. Opportunities for advanced learning were becoming available to elite women in the second quarter of the nineteenth century; the Williamsburg Female Academy was founded in 1839, but the Galt family was not impressed with them. Elizabeth Galt, who was responsible for her younger sister Sallie’s education, thought Sallie better off for having learned her letters at home:

"each item only once for amusement, then raced on to the next." The same seems true for the Galts and the American middle class of the mid-nineteenth century, although purportedly they read for self-improvement as well as amusement.

20 Biographical Sketches, Galt Family Papers III, Group II, Box 3, Folder 9; See also Linda Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (Williamsburg: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 235.

her mental powers were not taught to death and fagged out. In her, and in a young lady finished off in a fashionable Treadmill of the Mind, you would find the same difference between a fresh blush-cluster rose and one made up of glue and colored muslin. She is an intellectual, witty companion.22

Elizabeth took her role as educator seriously and kept a sharp eye on Sallie's progress, expecting and receiving much from her young charge. At the age of sixteen Sallie reported to her sister:

I have adopted a course of reading of which perhaps you will approve, it is as follows: First of all, that is after having read 'good reading' a little in the Tatler, then a Canto in the Lord of the Isles or some other poetry, then Bulwer's Athens and the Life of the Painters, Miss Edgeworth or any borrowed work we have anytime opportunity offers.23

For most antebellum women, however, reading would always be peripheral to their domestic responsibilities. They were expected to be well-educated, the better to carry out their duties as wives and mothers, but at some point reading would need to take a backseat to the more important duties of matron. Cary Lampert, a friend of Elizabeth's, had read a dozen books a week when single but abandoned that habit once married. Instead, she increasingly relied upon her husband for intellectual stimulation:

John [her husband] reads to me everyday after breakfast...while I work, which renders it much more pleasant than it would be to either reading alone, indeed I

22Pitzer, Sallie and Elizabeth Galt, 28; See Barbara Finklestein, "Reading, Writing, and the Acquisition of Identity in the United States, 1790-1860," Regulated Children/Liberated Children: Education and Psychohistorical Perspective (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1979). Elizabeth may have had a point in keeping Sallie at home. Finklestein in her study argues that home schooling by parents or family members among the "high-born" encouraged family identity and close personal relationships, whereas boarding school was depersonalizing and in some cases even included corporal punishment. The public schools for the poor were even more grim.

23SMG to EJG, 28 April 1838.
should scarcely find time for it myself.24

The Galt girls, unlike Cary, were to find their education and reading habits more central to the disposition of their future roles in antebellum Williamsburg. Neither girl married, so both needed to create a place for themselves that was an appropriate alternative to that of wife and mother yet still acceptable to their family and society at large. Elizabeth took over the management of the Galt household when she was in her twenties and apparently did it very well, winning the admiration of her mother, who noted that Lizzy could "transact business better than anyone that I know, male or female, sick or well, and plans and executes all that is like business in this household."25 Elizabeth also served as her brother's junior associate at the asylum, in practice if not in title. She often assumed responsibility for copying, binding, and distributing his reports, and in one case, took on the Herculean task of coloring lithographs for 150 reports. As his secretary and office manager, she also edited and transcribed some of his writings in preparation for publication.26

Sallie found an equally productive way to put her education to use that conformed to the proprieties of the age. By 1852 at age twenty-eight she in collaboration with her brother, John, was managing an informal lending library in her home and serving as its librarian.27

24Cary Lampert to EJG, 27 August 1838; See also Amy Thomas, *Who Makes the Text: The Production and Use of Literature in Antebellum America* (PhD diss., Duke University, 1992). Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, the daughter of a wealthy Georgian plantation owner, read voraciously as a girl, but once married, like Cary Lampert, had little time for reading.

25EJG to JMGII, (note added by MDG), 3 February 1841.

26EJG to JMGII, 17 March 1843; SMG to JMGII, 20 March 1843.

27See Kelly *Reading Women/Women Reading*. Kelly concludes that the "ideology of domesticity during this period served more as a point of departure than as a determining end in the lives of reading women." For those who ventured into teaching, writing, and other
Her regular borrowers numbered well over a hundred. Many were young girls like Miss Susan Bright and Miss Sissie Ewell who may have attended the Williamsburg Female Academy just down the street from the Galt home. The Galt collection seems to have served informally as the school's library, perhaps an indulgence allowed the school, since John Galt served on its Board of Trustees. But Sallie's library was more than just for young girls.

Matrons from well-established Williamsburg families, too, like Mrs. Barziza, Mrs. Semple, Mrs. Saunders, and Mrs. Vest frequented Sallie's library. Men visited less often, but those who did were also well-educated—Dr. John Galt Williamson, Professor Smead, Reverend Denison, Dr. Kitchner. Boys were least represented, although several like Master Christian, Master Robert Bright, and Master Arthur Jones appeared on Sallie’s roster as well. In serving the educational, informational, and recreational needs of the various white communities in Williamsburg, Sallie had created a useful niche for herself that took advantage of her many years of study as a young girl and provided her with an activity both intellectually and morally satisfying.28

John Minson Galt, too, participated in building the family's library, which served as a literary center for the village, but his own education was designed for larger ends. Galt’s education was expected from the beginning to prepare him for a profession. His reading lessons as a child centered on the family's newspapers, the Richmond Enquirer, the occupations, reading was an element of their "self-fashioning."

28 "Books Lent Out and Borrowers," GFPIII, Group II, Box 3, Folder 11. This running list spans 1850-1873 with some interruptions. It represents only those titles borrowers checked out, not a complete account of all the books the Galts owned, yet its compass is impressive. It would make an excellent source document for analysis and study of the print culture of southern readers, especially women readers, within the context of the antebellum period.
Richmond Whig, and the Albion. He was given the assignment to peruse each and summarize the most interesting articles. As might be expected, as a young man he inclined to the most amusing, such as the account that appeared in the Compiler describing the difference between Sunday and Monday in Paris: "The people make more noise and are more gay on Sunday," he concluded, somewhat tongue-in-cheek. Using the newspapers as his primer had another advantage in helping the young John Minson learn his place in society. While honing his reading skills, he was also becoming familiar with a primary and traditional print material he would be expected to read as an adult male as well as the subjects he would be expected to master: politics, the economy, and current events.

Newspapers provided yet one more educational advantage to the young Galt. He could polish his language skills by translating newspaper passages into French, promising his sister Elizabeth at one point to do one or two pages everyday.

Galt's acquaintance with newspapers increased even more during the two years he spent in Philadelphia as a medical student. He had arrived in the city just in time to witness and participate in the phenomenal rise of the penny paper. Hawked by newsboys on every street corner rather than being delivered in the mail by subscription, these newsheets were smaller, cheaper, and louder than any of the traditional papers John Minson had

---

29 JMGII to EJG, 6 April 1837.

30 See Linda K. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 235. She writes that the New Republic culture thought it appropriate only for men to read newspapers, but if so, Mary Galt and her daughters, all avid newspaper readers, departed from this model as did Pliny Earle's mother (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

31 JMGII to EJG, 6 April 1837.
encountered in the Galt household. With their screaming headlines, current local and national news, crime stories, social commentary, advertising, and excerpts from court proceedings and political speeches, they were instantly fascinating to him. He became a connoisseur of the city's many "irregular" papers like The Marketbasket, The Coffeemill, The Scalping Knife, and "others that are continually starting up and going down again." He thought the Public Ledger with a circulation of 20,000 the best of them, one time quoting an article about a riot at a local theatre by "a parcel of long-haired animals entitled medical students."32 He was perplexed, however, that since the articles were often "intelligent and well-written," they yet appealed to the "butchers and market women whom you continually see perusing it in the market stalls."33 In this opinion Galt exposed his lack of contact or familiarity with the white, northern working class. He had displayed a similar obtuseness earlier when remarking that the "common people" who attended Philadelphia's plays or operas could only enjoy the scenery, since the pieces were frequently "above their heads."34

The widespread habit of reading had blurred increasingly the cultural lines among the upper, middle, and working classes in antebellum America, especially in the city, but distinctions among them were still very much alive. Galt's comments were remarkably indicative of the

32 JMGII to "Brother," 18 January 1840. In truth on some days the Philadelphia Public Ledger was nothing more than page after page of advertisements. Founded in 1836, it was managed by an editor who actually lived in New York, but it was one of the most popular of all Philadelphia's cheap newspapers.

33 JMGII to EJG, 1 October 1840.

34 JMGII to Brother, 9 February 1840.
new demarcations being drawn between highbrow and lowbrow culture.\footnote{See Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Levine maintains that in the nineteenth century, middle class and working class attended the same musical performances and plays together, and seemingly both enjoyed these productions. As the century wore on, however, Shakespeare and opera became more the province of the elite or upper class as a way to distinguish themselves from the lower classes. While Galt’s comments bear out this truth, they also indicate that the division of culture into highbrow and lowbrow was already beginning to take shape in the minds of those who considered themselves above the hoi polloi as early as 1840. See also Sidney Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class* and Chapter 3 of Bruce McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1828-1870* Studies in Theatre History and Culture edited by Thomas Poslewait (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992).} A butcher might ape his betters by learning to read, but could he appreciate what he read? Galt, unlike the butcher, was a man who worked with his head not his hands, and even at this young age, he’d had already begun to see himself in the role of an arbiter of taste, especially in literary matters. He was not simply a man among men reading the popular newssheets of the day; he was a man passing judgment upon who else might be qualified to read them.\footnote{See Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1967) and Dan Schiller *Objectivity and the News: The Public and the Rise of Commerical Journalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981). Schudson and Schiller make different arguments vis à vis the rise of the penny paper in the 1830s and 1840s. Schudson sees penny papers as having a democratizing effect, read by an “increasingly varied urban and middle class society of trade, transportation, and manufacturing” (23); while Schiller takes a more Marxist point of view believing the penny press was read mainly by artisans, mechanics, merchants and journeymen and represented not the middle class but “the angry protest of journeymen filtering through the self interest of cheap journals.” (49). John Minson’s account indicates both middle class and working class were reading the penny papers, even though John Minson misinterpreted (or was loathe to admit) how truly engaged the working class was with their city’s new glut of cheap newspapers.}

In any case newspapers became a staple in Galt’s reading life, assuming a much broader role for him than they had for his father. Versatility was their chief virtue. Since they were portable and convenient for travel, Galt did not regret losing one as he would a
book. The content ranged widely, so even those who read rarely might find something of interest that did not require "much application." Galt even enjoyed the advertisements,\(^\text{37}\) reading them as avidly as any middle class shopper might. In one sense he thought they resembled the faces of people he passed on the street, for both hid "myriad hopes and dreams." As if embarrassed by such a fanciful notion, Galt added sternly "in this department, however, there is as much humbuggery as in the real world."\(^\text{38}\)

Newspapers carried an important social function as well for Galt. As a Unionist (at least until the last moment preceding the Civil War), Galt thought newspapers "almost annihilate distance" and so contributed to the promotion of the "sameness of language" and might bind the "several parts of our union together." And finally Galt saw newspapers as historical documents which future generations might consult as a record of the events of bygone times. Even if a reporter or essayist sometimes garbled the facts, the "tone, the undercurrent of feeling which is essential to understanding" would remain true. Galt's analysis of newspapers was studied in many ways and not original with him,\(^\text{39}\) yet his enjoyment of them seemed genuine:

What a pleasing expectation...is every day, or day or two, occurring to those taking a

\(^{37}\)See David M. Henkin, *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). Advertisements were a pervasive and important feature of the penny papers, for editors thought ads could "stimulate the public curiosity and promote sales as effectively as crime stories and social gossip."

\(^{38}\)JMGII, "On Newspapers and Reading," GFPIII, Group II, Boxes 1, Folder 19.

\(^{39}\)In this as in so many instances, it is difficult to know if Galt was expressing his own thoughts or simply paraphrasing or even copying verbatim something he was reading at the time. He took copious notes when reading, and it is possible his remarks on newspapers were taken in part or in whole from another author's account, although he cited no source.
paper; the expectation of the messenger sent for it, and then the moment of opening is free from all care.40

Galt read magazines as eagerly as newspapers. As a young man he'd had ready access to the *Southern Literary Messenger* and the *Southern Churchman*, and he missed both while in Philadelphia, where these titles were "hardly known at all."41 But he also was open to the many new magazines he encountered in the north, like the *Knickerbocker*, *The Casket*, *Brother Jonathan*, *Godey's Lady's Book*, and the *New World*, all of which he sent back home for the family's enjoyment. *Brother Jonathan*42 and the *New World*, both founded during the two years Galt was living in Philadelphia, were innovative magazines for they were the first to carry serialized novels by such popular authors as Dickens, Bulwer-Lytton, and Marryat. They were much in demand as readers eagerly awaited each issue and the next installment of a story they were following avidly. American book publishers like Harper's, realizing the threat to one of their most profitable line of books, met the challenge by working around the clock to get the latest Dickens onto the market before the magazine

40Galt, "On Newspapers and Reading."

41JMGII to ADG, Jr., 10 November 1839; See Terence Whalen, "Fables of Circulation," *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses: The Political Economy of Literature in Antebellum America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 58-75. Poe, the editor of *Southern Literary Messenger*, may have exaggerated the magazine's circulation numbers and subscriptions. Galt's statement that Philadelphia was not familiar with *SLM* lends credence to that argument.

42*Brother Jonathan* was an icon in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century which largely replaced "Yankee Doodle" and preceded "Uncle Sam" as shorthand to the American character. He appeared in literature and on the stage as something of a cartoon character, going through a series of permutations over the years; in the 1840s he often represented the "new American" and his "independent individualism." See Winifred Morgan, *An American Icon: Brother Jonathan and American Identity* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988).
could serialize it. *Brother Jonathan* and *New World* in response dumped their serialization format and added an "entry" containing the full text of an entire novel rather than only part of it. They taunted the big book publishers by proclaiming to the eager reader, "You are not so green as to give a dollar for what you can get for eighteen pence or a shilling—not you!" It was exciting times for capitalism and for the reader who benefited from such cutthroat competition between the new upstart magazines and the publishing houses. Galt, and through him his family, caught the fever as well. His sisters began to demand specific issues of the "mammoth" papers as they were called. On one particular occasion Galt sent a number of the *New World* to Sallie, although he personally deemed "ridiculous" the article, "Miseries of Human Life," she wanted to read. Another time when his brother asked for a copy of *Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine*, John noted the magazine had deteriorated since merging with the *Casket* but sent it to his invalid brother anyway. He was not in the business of censoring materials for his siblings, simply evaluating them. He seemed genuinely pleased to be in a position to fill the requests forwarded to him from his family. "I wish you would mention any work you want particularly. What sort of books does Brother read now?" he asked only a few months before leaving Philadelphia. His eagerness to share books, magazines, and his opinions of them with his family was an important part of his relationship with them, and he seemed genuinely pleased to act in the capacity of provider of print materials to his circle of friends and relatives.

It was in Philadelphia that John Minson Galt probably started to think seriously of

---


44 JMG II to ADG, 16 February 1840; JMG II to EJG, 30 March 1841.
building a large medical library for himself. No doubt he gained his inspiration from a
variety of sources. When visiting the homes of his professors, for instance, he was exposed
to their book collections and must have absorbed the lesson of the propriety of ostentatious,
bibliophilic display. When visiting George Wood, his Materia Medica professor, Galt wrote:

I saw a good many botanical works, the centre tables being covered with them.
Each professor...has I believe his tables covered with books relating to his particular
science. Among these works were Barton, medical botany, Bigelow, Woodville, a
large German work the name of which I could not ascertain...all of them filled with
beautiful colored plates.45

Galt also learned about the practical aspects of assembling a library while in
Philadelphia. He was especially impressed with book auctions as a way to acquire medical
titles: “I believe that they have them several times during the week, but on Saturday night
the books are chiefly medical,” and concluded, “a person might get a good library by going
there once or twice.” He also may have first thought about assembling a large personal
library while in Philadelphia as well. Bookshops, bookstores, book fairs, book stalls, and
book peddlers seemed to be on every corner, although several months passed before he
appreciated the abundance and variety of their wares. Originally he thought the city had little
more than what he might obtain in Richmond. He was unable to find titles requested by his
father and sisters:

I enquired for those books and also Miss Norton’s poems at a large number of
bookstores but without finding them. Nicholas Nickleby you see everywhere—
bookstores and stalls, advertised in large letters and in every possible form. I see also
in some measure of all the works of Boz. In the bookstores here I see a great many
books that I should like to buy; but very few rare ones indeed being principally only

45 JMGII to MDG, 19 January 1840. It is interesting to note that when Galt chose a
book to display on his dining room table, it was a Greek grammar, rather than one
associated with his profession.
the most common, more which might be bought in Virginia.\footnote{JMGII to ADG, Jr., 10 November 1839; JMGII to ADG, Jr., 10 November 1839; JMGII to MDG, 8 December 1839.}

Such unsuccessful ventures were soon forgotten as he became more familiar with the city's bookscape. His mentor, Thomas Millington, may have helped him in that respect. Millington directed him to Dobson's Bookshop on Chestnut Street and to Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell on Market Street, the latter being the source of much of William and Mary's academic collection. You will find them very "fair and reasonable to buy from"\footnote{John Millington to JMGII, 14 February 1840.} Millington assured his young student. A neophyte needed such direction, for the quality of printed materials varied greatly from bookshop to bookstall to peddler. A Philadelphian bookseller of the period described his colleagues variously: one had a "stock not very large, but well-selected," while another was "a very dirty man surrounded on all sides by a collection of old books," and yet another "dealt in books as a grocer deals in sugar and candles, more by weight than from any intrinsic value." One of the most prestigious of Philadelphia's booksellers was John Pennington, the "centre of elite litteraturs." Visitors from every region of the country "were attracted to his store to buy from his fine stock or give orders for European books," but he made most of his sales came from southern book buyers.\footnote{William Brotherhead, \textit{Forty Years Among the Old Booksellers of Philadelphia.} 1891.} Galt was one of his clients, buying an "Anglo-Saxon work," although it is uncertain whether he bought it as a student or later when at home.

Galt soon became a conduit, receiving requests for books and magazines from his family and friends, as well as purchasing titles that would become staples in his own
collection that included Carlyle, Keats, Howitt, Shelly, Caroline Sheridan Norton, Longfellow, Bulwer-Lytton, Goldsmith, and many more. He also discovered a variety of bookshops specializing in foreign language books. He visited these to buy French and German books for his family and friends. In this new role as provider of the printed word for his family and friends back home, he would gain a reputation among the recipients as a young man whose literary savvy others could trust.

Book buying in Philadelphia did have some pitfalls for the uninitiated. Publishers made a practice of binding “diverse works together,” and on one occasion, Galt forwent purchasing the works of Pope and Coleridge, since they were bound with others in which he had no interest. Expense was a factor as well. Galt had to be careful with how he spent the funds his father sent to him. The Panic of 1837 and its ensuing financial turmoil had left Alexander Dickie Galt, while still a wealthy man, with few liquid assets. He was not sure he could raise the $300 or $400 his son had requested, and what money Galt did send to his son was not always easily transferable during a time when banks were at war with one another. As early as December 1839, John Minson wrote to his sister that he had transferred $500 from the Girard Bank to the Bank of North America, since he’d been advised that latter bank was the “safest here.” A year and a few months later, the situation had not improved. Galt asked his father to send him only Virginian money, “for it seems to me that no other banks are trustworthy for any length of time.” Under these circumstances, John Minson kept one eye on his desiderata list and the other on his pocketbook. Book auctions could be particularly perilous. Unlike bookshops with their fixed prices, the cost of titles at a book auction could fluctuate. “The books did not go cheap last night,” he remarked once ruefully.

Another regret he had was for the competitive nature of the auctions: "One thing that increases their price," he complained, was that private buyers like himself were forced to compete with bookstall owners: "I believe that is the only way they get their books."

Periodicals, too, could be expensive, for not all were as cheaply produced as Philadelphia's penny papers. He almost sacrificed purchasing a particular number of the *Knickerbocker*, considering it "too dear," but his desire to read it himself and share it with his sister eventually overcame his pecuniary caution.

Galt, while in Philadelphia, became familiar with a variety of libraries other than the private collections of his professors. He took advantage of the University of Pennsylvania's hospital library for medical works and joined a subscription circulating library for other types of reading materials. This allowed him to broaden his reading interests and at the same time stay within his budget. He frequented one circulating library, which although "there were others in town...was by far the best." Here he introduced himself to the English romantic poet Wordsworth: "The more I read any piece of his the better I like it...as a poet he has no superior in any age or clime." Galt found other incentives to visit circulating libraries as well. He frequented one only because it was owned by a French woman, who was "not at all pretty" or with "fashionable manners," but "merely for the short

---

49 JMGII to EJG, 4 November 1840; JMGII to SMG 13 November 1840; 22 December 1839; ADG to JMGII, 30 December 1840; JMGII to ADG, Jr., 7 February 1841; 7 December 1839.

50 JMGII to SMG, 29 December 1839; By 1839 the British romantic poets were no longer as controversial with literary critics as they had been when first appearing in the late eighteenth century. Indeed, they had become de rigeur reading.
conversations" he could have with her.51

By the time John Minson returned home from Philadelphia, he was a young man who was much more confident in his knowledge of books and all things bookish than when he had left. He knew how books were bought and how they were sold, how they might be used for display as well as for reading, he knew of the richness, diversity, and abundance of the market, and he knew about libraries, personal, private, and public. He had plunged into the world of print in a way he’d never done before and, in the process, added even more substance to the identity he had sketched out so many years earlier when he had picked up his first primer.

Once home in Williamsburg, Galt, ensconced as superintendent of the asylum and with his own money to spend, wasted little time in using his knowledge to put together his medical library. Within a decade he would own one of the best in the country, rivaled only by those of his AMSAlI colleagues, Isaac Ray, Amariah Brigham, Luther Bell, and Thomas Kirkbride. Galt was methodical about his acquisitions and kept an alphabetical list of titles allowing space between entries to accommodate new titles as he learned of them. His list even included student theses (many from his alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania) that related to insanity.52 He had an intense desire to study whatever was available on the

51 JMGII to EJG, 30 March 1841.

52 "Notebook-Lists of Books," GFPI, MsVols, Box 18, MsV90. This list is neither titled nor dated. It may have served Galt in two ways, both as an acquisition list and as a bibliographic compilation of works on insanity, reminiscent of the one Amariah Brigham had compiled (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation). If the latter, this would explain the inclusion of medical school theses, since there was little hope Galt could acquire a copy of these in the days before typewriters, photocopiers, and microfilm. Within this same notebook another writer has entered the titles and bibliographic description of 1,078 works, many of the same ones as those on Sallie’s lending list and in JMGII medical library. It's
subject of his profession, but no doubt he had also been bitten by the collecting bug. Perhaps Galt could understand the sentiment of Philadelphian bookseller and bibliophile William Brotherwood, when he wrote, "The mere pleasure of collecting books is an ecstatic one, even if the contents are not read."\(^{53}\)

Galt's personal, as well as his professional library, grew during his first ten years while superintendent. A perusal of his letters, notebooks, and journal indicates his tastes were wide, and he deprived himself of very little. In 1855 he wrote, "How absurd is the cry in each age against the style of some living author," and again in 1856, "How absurd the cry in each age against the authors of that particular period."\(^{54}\) These sentiments, coupled with the wide variety of titles in his collection, indicate that while he was aware of the fashionable trends in literary circles, he did not necessarily follow them. He would read whatever caught his interest. He continued to enjoy the classics he'd grown up with and even expanded upon those, acquiring the works of Aristotle, Plato, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Thucydides. He enjoyed the Restoration poets, Cowper, Dryden, and Pope, the poetry and essays of the Romantics, Byron, Coleridge, Hazlett, and DeQuincy, the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson, and the more philosophical works of Locke, Goethe, Montaigne, and Carlyle. In addition he built a sizable collection of titles that fell into the travel genre, which included peregrinations around Ireland, Germany, Holland, France, Russia, Siberia, Turkey, Persia, Africa, Ethiopia, and Argentina. Staple biographies included the lives of Webster, Calhoun, Clay, Washington, Hamilton, and Henry. Nor did he neglect fictional works that ranged from Fanny Fern and Bronte to Fielding, Smollett, Scott, Dickens, and

---

\(^{53}\) Brotherhead, \textit{Forty Years}, 80.

\(^{54}\) JMGII, \textit{Commonplace Book}, 28 February 1855; April 1856.
Thackery. Alexander Dumas was a particular favorite of Galt’s, and he purchased more of his work than any other. Perhaps because he was so conversant in French, Galt was able to include a great many more of the French novelists than others could have. He was attracted to the French just as had been his political role model, Thomas Jefferson.

Galt did not shy away from controversial works like Indiana by George Sand and Adam Bede by George Eliot nor the New England writers Oliver Wendell Holmes, Melville, Hawthorne, and Emerson. He also read titles that were less than sympathetic to the south, such as Henry Ruffner’s abolitionist Fathers of the Desert and Harriet Martineau’s anti-slavery essays. Galt also included titles that had personal meaning for him. He owned the fictional account by Samuel Warren, Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician, which provided realistic accounts of disease and illnesses, Lady Alice by Jedidiah Vincent Huntington, who had graduated from the University of Pennsylvania Medical School one year before Galt, and the 1848 Samuel S. Richie vs Moyan Hinchman, Defendant in Error, a court case in Philadelphia that addressed a family conspiracy to institutionalize a sane man at Franklin Asylum. In short, Galt’s library contained a wide variety of diverse materials, many of which any well-educated and well-read, genteel, middle class gentleman might have had—and then some. Moreover, it contained many of the same materials any well-educated northern middle class gentleman might have had. Throughout the 1840s there would be not much difference between the two, as each would read and collect the same titles published by Wiley’s, Harper’s and Sons, Ticknor & Fields and a great many other
Boston, New York, and Philadelphia publishing houses. The same ideas of educational reformers, scientific men, fictional writers, biographers, historians, and other thinkers were digested and largely embraced by both.\(^{55}\) Galt was a man, then, who by occupation was a doctor not a professor, and yet his book collection in size and scope rivaled any faculty member then teaching at his alma mater, William and Mary. Here, too, was a man who was closer to his northern brethren in what and how much he read than he was to the Williamsburg merchant or blacksmith living across the street from him.

A common characteristic of John Minson's personal library and Sallie's lending library (indeed both libraries were probably one and the same) was their heavy dependence upon British titles. British imprints were abundant during the period when they were children, but they continued to buy them even as late as the 1850s. Galt was no Anglophile. Quite the contrary. As a student in Philadelphia, he had derided his fellow boarders for continually talking about British affairs: "They seem to talk here more about the Great Western\(^{56}\) and the British Queen than anything else. You would think that each man had individually something to do with them."\(^{57}\) In addition he supported the idea of establishing an American literary tradition. Yet he and his sisters, like readers in the north, were devouring British books even as they demanded more American material. For the Gaits as southerners, this rather contradictory behavior was even more complicated than might seem


\(^{56}\)The Great Western was a railway line under construction in England that would run between London and Bristol.

\(^{57}\)JMGII to "Sir," 27 November 1839. Galt was always more a Jefferson than an Adams man, and this is reflected in his admiration of France and all things French.
at first glance. By the late 1850s, when sectional conflict dominated southern conversation not only in political circles and public forums but in private drawing rooms, to buy American meant patronizing the northern publishing industry, an increasingly unsavory prospect to the educated Virginian. The southern literati had attempted to establish their own literary tradition, and the Galts had been an eager supporter of that endeavor to the extent it existed. They subscribed to the *Southern Literary Messenger*, a magazine which by its own description, was meant "to stimulate the pride and genius of the south and awaken from its long slumber the literary exertion of this portion of our country."\(^5^8\) Between 1835 and 1837, the *Messenger* was edited by Edgar Allan Poe, Virginia’s native son and a writer whose activities the Galts watched closely. In 1840 John Minson eagerly passed on gossip from Philadelphia to his sister that Poe had a “falling out” with *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine and American Monthly Review* and resigned his editorship, but that he was to start a new periodical which Galt felt sure would be a “capital magazine.” When the *Penn Magazine* failed to materialize, Galt attributed the loss to “the hardness of the times.”\(^5^9\) Other than Poe few other southern authors gained as wide a national reputation.\(^6^0\) Increasingly Galt believed this was by design rather than accident as did many other


\(^5^9\)JMGII to EJG, 1 October 1840; JMGII to Brother, 22 January 1841; JMGII to EJG, 30 March 1841.

\(^6^0\)Other candidates might include William Gilmore Simms, a hugely prolific author who wrote in a variety of genres including fiction, poetry, drama, oration, literary criticism, geography, biography; Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, and William Tappan Thompson, both humorists. The latter man was born in the north, but made his home in the south.
southerners. Edmund Ruffin, the secessionist, wrote that any “southern writer...publishing a book in the south" faced “certain pecuniary loss. A few great publishing houses in the northern cities have a virtual monopoly of the business and they only can sell a book to any profit." Even Poe, as popular with northern readers as with southern ones, complained. He offered Nathaniel Beverley Tucker as an example of a writer of merit who had fallen victim to northern bias. Tucker's *George Balcomb* had received little notice from northern reviewers. Had it been the work of “anyone born north of the Mason Dixon line," thought Poe, it would have received good reviews and sold many copies. Instead:

the manner in which the cabal of the *North American Review* first write all our books and then review them, puts one in mind of the fable about the lion and the painter. It is high time that the literary south took its own interests into its own charge.\(^{62}\)

William Gilmore Simms, a southern author of some stature,\(^{63}\) agreed:

It would be difficult to find a single New England press which has ever accorded the slightest acknowledgements to the publication, or a single New England citizen who has ever read it. It lacked the necessary imprimatur from the banks of the Charles.\(^{64}\)

---


62 Agnes M. Bondurant, *Poe's Richmond* (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1942), 242. The painter and the lion refers to an artistic rendering of man pitted against a lion in which man is victorious. The punchline is that the story would have ended differently if the lion had been the painter.


These attitudes increasingly became Galt's as well, yet as the titles held in the family library clearly indicate, he never ceased ordering books published in the north.

Galt was as methodical in his acquisition of books for his personal library as he was for his professional collection. He kept a list of titles labeled "Books to Be Bought" and crossed out each as he acquired them (or perhaps lost interest in them). A number of these titles surfaced on Sally's lending library list later, so the likelihood is that John Minson was intimately tied to choosing materials for the family library and, of course, conducting the business of placing book orders and settling up the bill. It is also likely that with the exception of John Minson's medical and reference collection, all the Galt books were kept together, for he referred to them in the collective in 1857, "A catalogue of our books seems precious in case of fire." (italics mine)

The Gaits arrived at their books from a variety of sources. Richmond bookshops were numerous in the antebellum period and, since John Minson and Sallie visited the city

---

65 JMGII, "Books To Be Bought" and "Booksellers, Wiley and Putnam, Books Ordered," in "Medical Notes, Drafts of Reports, Lists, and Notes on Administration of Asylum Notebook, 71, 90-108, GFP I, Ms Vols, Box 16, MsV 80; "Books to Be Bought" is a running list of titles, that based upon the imprints Galt provided for some titles and upon my research of others, dates from 1842-1850. While the list lends insight into Galt's library, there is no way to be certain that he actually bought the books on the list or for that matter read them, although such an assumption is likely.

66 JMGII, Commonplace Book, April 1857. Fire was a constant threat to all property in antebellum America but especially to libraries which could not be easily replaced. In 1859 the College of William & Mary suffered the loss of its entire library collection in a severe conflagration.

67 Bondurant, Poe's Richmond, 98. Bondurant maintains that there were at least twenty-two booksellers during the period 1811-1837.
somewhat regularly, convenient. Galt made a number of buys from the firm of J. Randolph, as well as Drinker and Morris, the latter specializing in “law, medical, classical, school, and miscellaneous books.” The firm also offered “bookbinding of every variety, executed in the best manner,” a service which Galt no doubt took advantage as well.68 The inventory at Drinker and Morris, J. Randolph’s, and other Richmond book dealers, however, was too small in size and narrow in scope to fill all of the Galt family needs; excursions further afield were required. Galt’s trips abroad to AMSAII conference sites in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York helped somewhat to reduce his desiderata. In 1843 on his trip to Philadelphia, for instance, sister Elizabeth gave him instructions to obtain “Tennyson for me, a little book for Thom and Lizzie and any book you fancy for Sallie.” She closed that particular letter with “Heaven speed the Books.”69 In the end such brief trips abroad were only supplementary to Galt’s main source: the publishers’ catalogs and book dealers of the north.70 While in Philadelphia he had arranged with Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell to “send him books on insanity from the United States and Britain,”71 and a few years later, opened a line of credit with Wiley and Putnam located on Broadway in New York. Wiley’s quickly recognized Galt as one who would be a steady and profitable customer and regularly sent him lists of “recently rec’d works on Insanity with the prices and dates affixed, many of

68 “Invoice—Bought of Drinker and Morris,” 14 November 1845; also EAAR, 1848. Although by 1850 most publishers regularly sold their books already bound, much printed matter was still issued as signatures which the owner would then bind if he or she so desired.

69 Galt Family to JMGII, 12/13 March 1843.

70 Publishers’ Catalogues, Wiley and Putnam’s, n.d.; Little, Brown, April 1843, GFPI, Box 1, Folder 1.

71 JMGII to SMG, 18 March 1843.
them which are now very scarce.\textsuperscript{72}

Wiley's was accommodating in other ways as well. When their own inventory could not meet Galt's requests, they turned elsewhere. On one occasion when Galt placed a rather large order, Wiley's could only partially fill it. They sent the requested medical works by Stewart, Morrison, Rozier, and Moreau immediately and assured Galt "all the rest we shall order from London by today's steamer." Over the course of time Wiley's agents gained an understanding of Galt's interests, sending him titles they thought he might like: "We have also enclosed a new volume by Williams which we are confident you will be glad to receive." Galt in turn trusted Wiley's recommendations. When Galt was in the market for books on architecture, Wiley's suggested that the titles Galt had requested were "historical and pictorial rather than practical," and that they knew of others that would "suit you better." He promised to send Galt a sample in his next parcel "such as are likely to answer your purpose, which you can return if not approved."\textsuperscript{73} Wiley's was a small firm which "consisted of little more than a bookstore and attached room" and its office staff "no more than a half a dozen people."\textsuperscript{74} Under such circumstances, Wiley's could take a personal interest in their


\textsuperscript{73}WP to JMGII, 30 October 1845; 26 December 1847.

\textsuperscript{74}Greenspan, Ezra, House of Putnam, 1837-1872: A Documentary Volume.
clients' needs and build a close relationship with each. For Galt, living in a small village with no access to bookshops where he could browse and evaluate book titles on his own, this mutually beneficial relationship with Wiley was invaluable. Such business relationships between publisher and book buyer were probably not unusual, and it is likely antebellum publishers were in large part responsible for the character and shape of many a client's library, as Wiley's was for the Galts'. But for Galt, publishers and their catalogs played an additional role, acting as one more agent in his education in all things literary and adding one more visual scrap of credibility to his place as an accomplished man in a small village. The image of Galt pouring over his catalogs and newspaper notices in his study or library would be one that was common and familiar to family and friends.

Initially Wiley's had difficulty in finding a secure method of transporting books to the remote and hard-to-reach Williamsburg. The post office did not accept books until 1851. To make matters more difficult, the railway line out of Richmond only ran as far as Fredericksburg and Petersburg in Virginia. Williamsburg would not have a railway line until after the Civil War. When Galt complained that his books by Falret and Arnaud had not arrived, Wiley's responded they had sent the parcel to Greenways, Henry, and Smith in Richmond in care of Mr. Vest, where Galt was to retrieve it. "We do find not it anywhere in our store," Wiley's re-iterated. The incident made it obvious to both publisher and client that


if Galt were to continue as a Wiley customer, other more convenient and reliable arrangements would have to be made. Wiley would send the Falret and Arnaud "along with the books just ordered to William and Mary College of your city."77 Presumably the college became Galt's point of retrieval for all parcels from Wiley's after that.

Galt purchased his periodicals, like his books, from a variety of sources. He used an agent or sometimes subscribed directly to local papers like the Richmond Whig, Southern Churchman, Enquirer, Saturday Courier, Richmond Compiler, Richmond Times, and the Norfolk Beacon.78 Foreign periodicals like London Quarterly Review, Foreign Quarterly Review, Edinburgh Review, and the Westminster Review he ordered from Bell & Entwhistle, who was an agent for New York's Mrs. Leonard Scott and Co., which Galt had discovered through an ad in the Southern Literary Messenger.79 It is likely he subscribed to Punch and the London Quarterly in the same manner. Acquiring a library was no easy business in the mid-nineteenth century for one who lived in a small southern village. From the first step of identifying desirable titles to last step of making final payment, the acquisition of books must have taken up quite a bit of Galt's time not to mention his money. Galt spent over

77Wiley's to JMGII, 24 September 1845; 30 October 1845. See Ronald J. Zboray, "The Transportation Revolution and Antebellum Book Distribution Reconsidered," American Quarterly 38, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 53-71. Zboray looks at transportation developments as they affected Harpers & Brothers' trade. The south was least impacted by the transportation revolution, since only one line ran north to south. Harper's sometimes had to depend upon other methods that included "cart rides, sea, canals, overland," all of which helps to explain Wiley's predicament in shipping Galt his books.

78JMGII to William Edloe [postmaster], 1 January 1845.

79JMGII to Bell & Entwhistle, 16 December 1846; Galt ordered two periodicals for himself and two for his cousin, John Galt Williamson. The families obviously shared their subscriptions.
$100 alone at Wiley’s in 1848, and an unknown sum at Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell, Little, Brown, Harper’s Brothers, and the Richmond booksellers. In addition he spent at least $20 on periodicals. All totaled Galt spent a sizable amount his disposable annual salary of $1,666.67 on his library, perhaps as much as 13%.81

As a man who read not only as a participant in the great middle class audience of social readers but also as a man of letters, how did Galt read? That is, what did he make of what he read, and what did it mean to him personally?82 In many instances, Galt read simply as a point of reference for his own writing. When asked by someone why he had so many books, he answered, “We want to consult them, but it is rare indeed that a scholar...reads any book entirely through.”83 His reference collection was large and varied and functioned as an

80 Receipts from Wiley’s, 20 April 1848, $11; 11 October 1848, $20; 26 September 1848, $60.15. This is probably a conservative estimate as other bills and receipts may no longer be extant.

81 Norman Dain, Disordered Minds: The First Century of Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg, Virginia, 1766-1866 (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1971), 153. Dain cites Galt’s salary in 1852 at $1,666.67. It may have been somewhat less in 1848. In any case, Galt’s asylum salary was only part of his total income as he received small sums of monies from other investments as well.

82 See Mary Kupiec Cayton, “The Making of an American Prophet: Emerson, His Audiences, and the Rise of the Culture Industry in Nineteenth-Century America,” American Historical Review 92, no. 3 (June 1987), 597-620. Cayton provides an excellent overview of how “audiences....filter what they hear through their own material conditions and social experiences” with summaries of Wolfgang Iser’s The Act of Reading, Roman Ingarden’s The Literary Work of Art, and Stanley Fish’s Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities.

83 “Literary Criticism and Creative Writing,” GFP III, Group II, Box 1, Folder 13 (untitled fragmentary document starting “Are a hundred years old.”). Galt would often use the pronoun “we” instead of “I,” not only in this instance but in his published articles as well.
essential and indispensable tool when he took pen in hand. He believed that “merely with
the books of reference which I possess I can familiarize myself with my subject.” And
indeed his "To Buy" list was rich with reference titles: Dictionary of Gardening, Dictionary
of Mechanics, Engine Work, and Engineering, Coins of the World, Dictionary of Scientific
Terms, Entomology, Rudiments of Zoology, Anatomical Atlas, Physical Geography,
Dictionary of Americanisms, Statistics of Coal, Encyclopedia of Domestic Economy,
Chronothermal Facts, Book of English Epithets, Roget's Thesaurus of English Words, and
many others. For Galt writing was impossible without a ready supply of books available on
a broad variety of subjects. His modus operandi in approaching any subject he wished to
write upon, he admitted, was to “borrow books, consult libraries, buy books.” Book also
served as an escape and form of relaxation for him. Constantly plagued by dyspepsia, he
found reading an especially useful device to drive away his numerous bouts of illness.
When feeling unwell, he would turn to newspapers and novels, which presumably were
not as taxing as more serious works, and at other times when his powers of concentration
returned, he would turn to travel, histories, biographies, and even the Greek classics and
French works, which he considered to be part of his daily commitment to "study".

On some occasions, Galt personalized what he read and used the texts as a way to
find and bring order into his own daily life: “According to Pliny and Lord Addings,” he
wrote, “an hour daily devoted to thought is an excellent plan” or on another occasion,
“According to Lytton's idea I would need for happiness--competency in world's goods, a

84 JMGII, Commonplace Book, March 1854.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid, May 1855
sufficiency of novels for post prandial reading and a sufficiency of occupation." That he expected to find lessons applicable to life is seen in a small list he kept for a short time entitled "Lessons from literature." Some of the entries are rather straightforward, such as Carlyle’s quote, "may the smallest object be a window to look upon the universe itself." Others are more cryptic as with the unexplained entry, "Bill Sykes and Nancy in Oliver Twist." Obviously the parasitic relationship between the brutal Sykes and the loyal and good-hearted Nancy struck a chord for Galt, although he does not give a clue as to why.

Much of the time when reading, Galt was more analytical than judgmental, simply making observations as might a scientist (or doctor) in viewing a specific object of interest, labeling it neither good nor bad. When reading *Adam Bede* by George Eliot in April 1860 for instance, Galt wrote: "...we see the tendency now existing to make the feelings of more importance than intellectual abilities. So often allusion is made to mood." He continued, "*Adam Bede*...proceeds from the class of works, arising from the freedom of religious opinion in the present age." Galt had taken his knowledge of other texts, recognized a pattern, and linked them one to another within the context of his own personal experience. At some specific moment or point in reading *Adam Bede*, he had arrived at an intellectual conclusion about what he perceived to be the erosion of religious orthodoxy, the subordination of logic to emotion, and current literary trends. It is likely he read like this quite often, with one part of his mind engaged in the text and taking it at face-value and with

---

87 Ibid., July 1854; November 1856.

88 Ibid., April 1861.
another part standing aloof, observing, categorizing, and concluding. Such distinctions in evaluating literary content were the stuff of a man of letters.

Galt looked not only to the authors' texts for enlightenment and amusement but to the authors themselves. This new class of antebellum celebrities generated an avid interest among their readers, and Galt was no different in this respect. While living in Philadelphia, Galt often passed on whatever tidbits he might pick up in conversations. He quoted one young lady at a party in Dr. Jackson's home as saying: "Authors rarely...to the idea that we have formed of them from their works." Mrs. Hamilton, she informed Galt, was "one of the ugliest women ever seen," Miss Edgeworth was very "indifferent(?)looking," and Mrs. Jamison had "separated from her husband very shortly after her marriage." To someone reading the books of any of these women, all best-sellers at the time, such savory gossip was eagerly sought after and passed on to the next pair of willing ears.

In addition to the titillation of learning the personal details of an author's life,

---

89 See Adrian Johns, "The Physiology of Reading," *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998): 380-443. Johns asks the question, "What is it that passes from page to mind when someone reads, and how does it have an effect?" For the early Englishman in his study, the answer was quite complicated, but in brief, literary content was interpreted through an individual's "passions." In order to be a "reliable investigator and relater of truth," then, the Englishman must restrain his passions when reading. (386, 442). Galt and his peers looked at reading in a different way. They did not conceive of reading as a two-way street in which the reader brought anything to the table but his intellect. That is, the content of a book acted upon all individuals in the same way, thus the superintendents' emphasis on avoiding "pernicious" materials and seeking out the more edifying "polite literature" both for themselves and for their patients.

90 JMGII to EJG, 17 November 1839. The young lady was probably referring to Anna Brownhill Jameson, the art critic, Maria Edgeworth, the novelist, and Ann Mary Hamilton, the novelist.
especially if it were scandalous, Galt derived serious inspiration from them as well. "Look at Cowper and Defoe doing so much late in life"91 he noted to himself at a time when he was depressed over what he considered his own advancing age. He had found encouragement on the same theme from other eminent writers as well. "How absurd was my idea in not cultivating conversation because of my being old; for the most brilliant conversationalists have been old men as for instance, Goethe, Rogers, Coleridge."92 It was comforting to him to compare his own situation with those whose literary efforts he admired and respected and to use their example as a method to cope with his own personal problems. Like them he was a literary man, and like them he might overcome the anxieties he associated with age and mortality.

Galt was also able to personalize his reactions by choosing texts that resembled and mirrored elements in his own life. For instance, Galt had a close association with men of the sea, two of his cousins having served in the navy as officers. One, Gabriel Galt Williamson,93 an Annapolis man, was father to little Thom and Lizzie Galt, the two children who had lived with the Gaits for several years. Galt might easily have read his copies of Frank Marryat's sea stories, casting Gabriel in the role of protagonist or at least gaining

---

91 JMGII, *Commonplace Book*, October 1861. See Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Casper argues that antebellum readers constructed meaning from reading biography within their own "particular cultural situations, which might include (among other things) religious beliefs and activities, political leanings, places of residence, gender, and stage of life." (17). This certainly seems to have been the case with Galt.

92 Ibid., October 1856.

93 Gabriel Galt Williamson drowned near Pensacola in 1859 at age 56.
some greater insight into the danger as well as the monotony of his cousin's life when at sea.

He may have had a similar experience when reading James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*. His first reading would have coincided with his own boyhood explorations of the forest to collect botanical specimens, a habit he continued in adulthood. The forest was as familiar and as sacred to him as it was to Natty Bumpo, and even if he recognized Cooper's forest settings to be sometimes inaccurate or exaggerated, they still must have sparked a deep sense of remembrance and nostalgia:

> The arches of the woods, even at high noon, cast their somber shadows on the spot, which the brilliant rays of the sun that struggled through the leaves contributed to mellow, and if such an expression can be used, to illuminate. It was probably from a similar scene that the mind of man first got its idea of the effects of Gothic tracery and churchly hues; this temple of nature producing some such effect, so far as light and shadows were concerned, as the well-known offspring of human invention.

Perhaps, too, he might have indulged himself as an adult in the fantasy of living free from the rigid and unbending rules of civilization which bound him and, as had Natty Bumpo, dwelling instead in the pure environment of a forest haven. In reading Marryat and Cooper, and possibly many other works of fiction, Galt could use his real life experiences as context for the imaginary creations of an author's genius.95

The historian and literary critic Jane Tompkins writes that the purpose of the *Last of the Mohicans* was "to work out the rules of coexistence that make human society possible."

94 See Mark Twain's "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences" for a hilarious critique of Cooper's inaccurate, incongruous, and impossible descriptions of places, people, and events. He begins his essay with, "Cooper has scored 114 offenses against literary art out of a possible 115. It breaks the record."<http://users.telerama.com/~joseph/cooper/cooper.html>

95 This was probably true for a great many readers of the period. Most were related to or knew someone at sea, and most, even city dwellers, probably lived only a few miles from the nearest unspoiled forest.
One of these rules was the maintenance of the "traditional lines of distinction between nation, race, class, age, sex, occupation"96 of the period. Did an adult Galt read *Mohicans* that way? As a conservative southerner, he would have understood and approved of a strict demarcation and separation between the races, genders, and classes. Considering his own tendencies to separate blacks from whites, butchers from asylum directors, Catholics and Quakers from Episcopalians, he would have on some level seen Cooper's novelistic context as an orderly and proper setting where all was as it should be. Cooper challenged none of Galt's own predispositions, so Galt could enjoy the *Leatherstocking Tales* simply as a morality and adventure tale, peopled by a cast of interesting characters, virtuous and villainous, without having to be disturbed by a subtext that clashed with his own southern values. And finally Galt may have felt a twinge of recognition in the noble but tragic figure, Bumpo, who had longed to marry but could not. Just as he had returned to the solitary haven of the forest, so too, Galt must remain solitary among his books and scholarly studies.

Galt had a variety of travel books in his library. Unlike his asylum colleagues, Ray and Kirkbride, or even his own relatives who had moved across a continent, or his favorite writer, Poe, or his political friends, the Tylers, once he reached his thirties he traveled rarely outside Virginia. As other Americans moved freely about and took advantage of the new technological advances in transportation, going off to Europe to sightsee or to the city in search of a better career or even to the frontier to start a new life, Galt remained close to home and family. Travel books to exotic places, then, must have held a special meaning for him, not only for what he might learn about foreign countries and cultures, but as a means to

96 Jane Tompkins, *Sentimental Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-
transport himself mentally, if not physically, outside his superintendent’s cottage and beyond the confines of his small village. Visiting other countries through the written word could provide him with all the stimulation of real travel, since his dyspepsia and close ties to Williamsburg kept him from venturing too far afield from Virginia in real life.

Certainly one way Galt used reading was to overcome intellectual isolation. As a man of letters in a small village, whose reading habits and literary ambitions ranged widely, he must have had difficulty finding many with whom he could discuss literary ideas and scholarly matters. His cousin claimed that “John Galt is about the most reading man we have in our community,” and few could match him in the appreciation of “literature” in “this ancient seat of learning.” If this was true, he was similar to other “men of knowledge” in the antebellum south who found themselves adrift in a culture in which they perceived little intellectual companionship. He had sacrificed to some degree a close, personal connection to most of his neighbors for the more aloof position of the intellectual,


John Galt Williamson to William R. Galt, 6 March 1849. This statement is a little disingenuous. Surely the faculty at the College had men who were widely read.

See Faust, A Sacred Circle. Faust argues that William Gilmore Simms, James Hammond, George Holmes, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, and Edmund Ruffin, all southern antebellum intellectuals, or as Faust calls them, “men of knowledge,” became close personal friends based on their alienation from a culture that didn’t appreciate their genius. They tried to create a southern world more sympathetic to them and finally found their leadership niche in the defense of slavery. Galt certainly shared some of their characteristics. Like them, for instance, he suffered from a sense of inferiority. But unlike them, he had strong family and community ties that served as emotional ballast, a profession that encouraged a less arrogant view of others, regular contact with the north and northerners that kept him a Unionist almost up until the end; and he was of such a nature to turn his feelings of inadequacy inward toward himself rather than to flagellate the southern culture or his beloved Virginia for any of his dissatisfaction with life.
and he knew it at least on some level. "I have inserted in my conversation with each individual something beyond his understanding, as speaking of Emerson to Bowden," he once wrote. In such instances, he seems to have taken a secret pleasure in his own versatility and familiarity with authors and books others could not appreciate. If he did amuse himself with such games, he also found other more lasting ways to cope with the lack of intellectual kindred spirits. He had one sure avenue for communing with others of a like mind whatever the time of day or night. "To the educated," he wrote, "by means of books the wise and great throughout all past time and in all lands speak as though face to face." Books provided a presence where he could gain some sense of an interchange with creative geniuses or well-educated scholars, even if the conversations were terribly one-sided. Galt also found comfort, and certainly pride, in his status as someone to whom others might turn to for advice and approval in literary matters. In 1848 his cousin, William R. Galt, sent him his rendition of a French poem with comments on the various difficulties he had encountered in translating it. He wrote: "I have sent you this, as you have been always an encourager of mine, and I hope that when you read it, you will not laugh at my attempt." That John Minson Galt did not laugh and indeed sent further encouragement in the return mail is almost certain.

Galt’s relationship to the physicality of printed materials remains something of a

99 JMGII, Commonplace Book, September 1856; October 1856; April 1857.

100 John Galt, Essays on Asylums for Persons of Unsound Mind: On Reading, Recreation, and Amusements for the Insane (Richmond, VA: Printed by Ritchies and Dunnavant, 1853), 7-8.

101 William R. Galt to JMGII, 19 January 1848.
mystery due to lack of evidence. He was familiar with the composition of books, for he
often found it necessary to repair his own books, writing that he believed the “best time for
fixing books is perhaps at night.”\textsuperscript{102} He also noted the appearance of books and booklike
materials on occasion. While in Philadelphia he wrote to Alexander about a new kind of
notebook that had “become recently fashionable.” It resembled, he imagined, “the tablets of
the Ancients. It consists of several...plates fastened at 1 end by a pin and having a clasp at
the other and is used for taking notes, etc. The one I have has 8 plates 1½” wide and 3”
long.”\textsuperscript{103}

The physicality of books and magazines was also a consideration Galt had to take
into account in housing his collection. Sallie refers to one room in the cottage as a “study”
where bookcases were kept,\textsuperscript{104} but as to the room’s shape and configuration, nothing is
known. Galt was impressed by the recommendations of a “German gentleman” writing for
the Norton Literary Gazeteer, who recommended that a library have three bookshelves of
different sizes fixed to the wall, one each for folios, quartos, and octavos, each being 5’ in
length.\textsuperscript{105} Galt may not have been able to follow the German’s advice, since his guidelines
required fifteen feet of wall space, a scarce commodity in the small superintendent’s cottage.
The only documentation available in his papers, notes two bookcases he bought in 1846

\textsuperscript{102}JMGII, Commonplace Book, April 1858.

\textsuperscript{103}JMGII to Father, 24 Dec 1840.

\textsuperscript{104}SMG to JMGII, 12 June 1850.

\textsuperscript{105}“Hints to a Student,” GFPIII, Group II, Box 1, Folder 19.
made "with extra cornish brackets with lock and pulley." In any case, since Sallie had a steady stream of borrowers, much of the collection or shelf space needed to be located in an accessible and public part of the house and kept in a sufficiently orderly state as to make it convenient for browsing. With the limited space available in the cottage and taking into account Aleck Preston's comment, at some point the number of books must have outrun the bookshelves available, and they were stacked wherever room could be found for them.

Galt's comment in 1858 is telling: "Like 'the man of one book' will not a few books well arranged answer as well as large number not of convenient access." Sallie and John Galt shared their family library generously with others but within certain limits. On one occasion a friend was allowed to keep Stith's *History of Virginia* for almost a year before Elizabeth assumed a no-nonsense approach and ordered the borrower to return it immediately: "Send it over by the first opportunity as a friend wishes to borrow it, and cannot get a copy elsewhere." John Minson was as resolute if less patient. He would retrieve his books after only a month less the borrower's "procrastination should hinder their being sent back." He felt if a book were not returned in thirty days, he was unlikely to ever see it again. Sister Sallie was the most lenient and trusting of the family.

---

106 Invoice for JMGII, n.d., GFP I, MsVols., Box 5.

107 JMGII, *Commonplace Book*, May 1858.

108 EJG to Mary T. Jones, 19 May, 1837.

She kept no detailed records but simply a running list of borrower and title, arranged by month. A checkmark indicated the return of a book. Since very few titles were left without a checkmark, it seems her patrons were conscientious and valued their borrowing privileges.

Libraries in general would fascinate Galt for most of his life. It was yet another domain of expertise a man of letters might be expected to master. Yet it would be no onerous task to him. He felt comfortable around books, having lived the better part of his life with one in hand, and libraries, even the mere contemplation of them, no doubt provided a restful, non-threatening environment for him. He kept a list of over forty American libraries in his notebook and the number of items they owned. Harvard with its 74,000 volumes headed the list. Galt also made notes to himself as to libraries he'd like to visit: Georgetown College, the National Institutes, Columbia, and the Congressional Library in Washington. Additionally, Galt venerated libraries as the key to a robust civilization. "Learned and enlightened" men in all societies—ancients like Dionysus, Plutarch, and Diodorus—used their libraries to shape not only themselves but their cultures. Indeed he ascribed the sad state of American literature to America's "absence of suitable libraries."

Compared to France, Germany, and Great Britain, America could boast a total of only one and a quarter million volumes. Massachusetts might claim exemption from the stigma. Galt pointed specifically to Oliver Wendell Holmes and Rufus Choate, both of whom

---

110 JMGII, Notebook, 78-79.
111 "Literary Criticism and Creative Writing." No doubt Galt derived some of his American statistics on libraries from the U.S. census records that for a brief number of years compiled such numbers.
owned a library of over 1,000 volumes, as well as Edward Everett\textsuperscript{112} with his "beautiful room and well-chosen books." "Is it not a striking coincidence," Galt asked, that with the New Englander's attitude toward building libraries "that she [Massachusetts] stands far above all other states in the Union in literary pretensions?" Toward the end of his life in the 1850s, when Galt became as disenchanted with the north as any Fireater or secessionist, he described the New England poets as "second rate writers of verse" who could derive little inspiration from such a "dreary clime,\textsuperscript{113}" but as a young man, who believed all good writing was preceded by access to a good library, the New Englanders set the standard. Perhaps, too, he used their libraries as a standard to measure his own against. He would match them book for book and become the southern counterpart of Everett, Choate, and Holmes.

Galt did give some thought to how greater access to information through books might be increased for the population of Virginia. He wrote "every county...should have a Chambers' Encyclopedia of English Literature" or "an encyclopedia by the best author of the day." Supplements could be added, "such work [as] being common" and "inexpensive."\textsuperscript{114} Such a proposition was meager indeed for a man who so valued books and reading. He was familiar with the social libraries that had sprung up in Richmond, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Alexandria, and because of his position in the community and his interest

\textsuperscript{112}Everett was something of a nineteenth-century Renaissance man. During his life he served as senator, governor, editor, university president, and in addition was a prolific writer and lecturer.

\textsuperscript{113}"Literary Criticism and Creative Writing."

\textsuperscript{114}"Thoughts and Reflections," GFP III, Group II, Box 1, Folder 18.
in books, was a likely candidate to instigate the formation of one in Williamsburg.\textsuperscript{115} But perhaps he saw Sallie's lending library as functioning like a social library, with the added advantage of having no subscription fee. And like many an elite social library, Sallie's library, if not restricted by cost, was selective. Neither slaves nor free blacks had access, nor did the working class whites with whom Sallie would have had little contact. During the Civil War, her clientele expanded somewhat to include Confederate soldiers bivouacked in the village. Most were captains, lieutenants, majors, and even a colonel, obviously the well-educated sons of the south, but one "Irish soldier" and "sick soldier" were welcomed as well. It must have seemed a satisfactory arrangement in John Minson's eyes, for when he dreamed of building communal libraries, he looked beyond his own small village. He envisioned a national collection of works on insanity "on the largest scale," perhaps housed as a "division of the Congressional Library" in Washington, where easy access might attract "a larger number of intelligent and well rounded minds"\textsuperscript{116} to study insanity.

Libraries and books derived much of their value for Galt because they preceded good writing, and being a writer was an exceptionally important part of his life and identity. John as well as his sisters learned to compose while very young, starting with the most basic skill of holding and manipulating a quill in their small hands and forming cursive letters on paper. Elegant penmanship was valued in the world of the genteel: "...your letter was written in a cramped, ill looking hand as if disguised in liquor," John good-naturedly chastised Elizabeth when he received an especially badly-scrawled letter from her.


\textsuperscript{116} John Minson Galt II, "On Libraries," GFPIII, Group III, Box 1, Folder 1.
Elizabeth was reprimanded by her mother, too, for the same flaw: "You have accomplished your purpose if you intend to write like a person of our acquaintance who puzzles everybody with his letters."117 To improve their handwriting and obtain a beautiful and legible hand, all the Galt girls would practice forming letters and words on scraps of paper. John Minson would write over and over the Shakespearean line, "Oh how this world is given to Lying."118

As for content, grammar, and composition, the girls got much of their practice from letter-writing. With many of their relatives and friends scattered throughout Virginia and as far west as Missouri, they had ample opportunity to take their correspondence seriously.

"This branch of education is so shamefully neglected by most persons," Elizabeth wrote, but is of the greatest importance, especially for our sex; it being seldom necessary for a woman to employ her pen in any other way than writing a letter and females are more over said to excel the bonds of location.119

Using the proper stationary was important, too, in making the correct statement about one's finish and refinement. The Galt girls wrote their letters on white, pink, or light blue "fine satin writing paper" or occasionally a more elegant stationary with a simple embossment in the corner, often of a size that could be folded over and made into an envelope. Each letter was secured with the finest red Habermas sealing wax.120 Cary Lampert, perhaps a more
adventuresome spirit, sometimes sent her missives on bright yellow writing paper, but Mary Tyler, the daughter of Senator John Tyler, trumped all of them in prestigious stationary, using her father's congressional letterhead.\textsuperscript{121}

The Galt children found other ways to use their composition skills in addition to letter-writing. Elizabeth was considered the poet of the family, and she confessed to her friend, Mary Tyler, that "poetry's my world."\textsuperscript{122} She had a few poems of a religious nature published in the \textit{Southern Literary Messenger} and perhaps in local newspapers as well. Closer to home she participated in the extemporaneous writing required of the Cheerful Club,\textsuperscript{123} a local literary salon for young single men and women in Williamsburg, which met weekly in the Galt house in the 1850s. Here among friends Elizabeth was called "brilliant," and her "productions" always received "a warm welcome."

The Cheerful Club was actually a forum where all its members had an opportunity to use their verbal and written skills. The evening's entertainment centered on a variety of word games that kept "so many of the faculties of the mind...in a constant state of exercise." Puns, riddles, and poetry were a staple of each meeting. One evening a brief newspaper

\textsuperscript{121}CL to EJG, 12 March 1839; Mary Tyler (MT) to EJG, 1835.

\textsuperscript{122}EJG to Mary Tyler, 21 April 1835.

\textsuperscript{123}Not much is known of the membership of The Cheerful Club. Attendance was irregular and Elizabeth often recorded only last names like Mr. Smith, Mrs. Ball, Mr. Neal, Miss Christian, common family names in Williamsburg at the time. Marianne Saunders and Selia Saunders were Robert Saunders, Jr.'s daughters; John Johns may have been Bishop John Johns, president of William & Mary, 1849-1854 and Bishop of the Virginia Episcopal Diocese, but more likely it was his son John K. Johns who was about twenty-one at the time; Reverend Silas Totten, a graduate of Princeton and a Yankee, also taught at the college and was believed by some to be "an arrogant and proud man, with an irascible and caustic personality," (Ludwell Johnson, \textit{History of William & Mary}, 279) not a very appetizing personality type it would seem for one attending the Cheerful Club.
clipping about Mrs. Petty, who had committed a crime aboard a French ship crossing the Pacific Ocean, kept the Cheerful Club members engaged for hours as they displayed their command of the English language by stretching, expanding, and manipulating the meaning of the words "petty," "pacific," and "French." Another regular feature of a Cheerful Club meeting required members to drop a slip of paper with a word written on it into a vase and then take a turn explicating in prose or poetry each word as it was drawn from the container. The results were often highly flowery, sentimental, and verbose, such as Galt's response to retrieving the word "woman" from the vase: "Woman—this is a subject as to which one should adjourn out into the moonlight...her smiles are as the flowers of the forest, the ripple of the water on a sunny day." It is likely that Galt was happiest in this forum, for it allowed him to display those talents in which he had the most confidence. It is likely, too, that the scores of mostly unpublished poems and other non-fictional pieces he left behind were created and originally performed for the Cheerful Club and its participants.

Writing pieces for the Cheerful Club was a pleasurable occupation that helped Galt to refine his compositional skills and communicate with others in literary pursuits, the forum in which he was most comfortable. But writing for him would always assume an importance that went beyond an evening's entertainment with Cheerful Club members. By the time he returned home from Philadelphia in 1841, he had acquired the ambition to become a professional writer. He determined he would earn his fame by writing medical books and essays for medical journals. "I should endeavor to succeed by reading in insanity—for in soirees.

this I will rise above all although I fail in other things." He would make himself known by studying and "observation and writing." It is not too surprising, perhaps, that this quiet and scholarly young man, who was best known among his friends and family for his intellect, would aspire to fame through a medium that did not require face-to-face contact nor depend upon gregariousness, a forceful presence, or handsome looks. It was the first bridge he would cross in building his professional reputation as "an accomplished man" among his colleagues.

Galt had some early success in reaching his goal. His first article, "Fragments of Insanity," for the *American Journal of Insanity (AJI)* appeared in the fall issue of 1844. It was really nothing more than a transcription of Shelley's poem "Julian and Maddalo" as a way to demonstrate the effect of music on the insane, but it did mark Galt's maiden voyage onto the pages of his professional journal. Between 1841 and 1843 Galt also occupied himself with editing his father's case studies. He first considered underwriting its publication, but an advisee from New York, G. August Smith, suggested otherwise:

> From my knowledge of the medical book market in this country I am convinced that were you to publish your father's cases in a separate volume you would not only lose money in proportion to the size of the work, but what is worse your object would be marred...for a narrow circulation would of course preclude the acquisition of extended reputation. But were you to have a selection inserted in five...numbers of some periodical your father's fame would be spread and in lieu of paying you might receive something.

---

125 Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 70, 71.


127 G. August Smith to JMGII, undated. Due to the subject matter this letter almost certainly dates from sometime between 1841-1843.
Smith suggested that Galt contact the editor of the *American Journal of Medical Sciences* and mention Smith’s name as way of introduction. Galt may have received a negative response from the journal, for by March 1843 he had returned to his original idea to publish the case studies in book form. He contracted with Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell of Philadelphia, the same firm which had built Millington's college library and from which Galt purchased his medical books. They agreed to print 500 copies of *Practical Medicine Illustrated by Cases of the Most Important Diseases*¹²⁸ for the sum of $363.54 which Galt paid in advance.¹²⁹ Haswell handled much of the work in preparing the book for publication, acting as editor as much as a printer. The firm suggested Galt change the title to something “of a catching character” to which Galt agreed. In addition the firm managed the proofreading. Galt noted “the book was prepared beautifully that it would not require any correcting proofs from myself.” Haswell, Barrington and Haswell also undertook the effort of distributing the book, relegating the task to a bookseller with whom they had a connection “from a distance.” The bookseller would receive a commission for each volume sold, holding the “right of being the exclusive sellers of the edition.”¹³⁰

The sale of this book was meager. Shortly after its publication Haswell warned Galt


¹²⁹ Receipt, “Dr. John Minson Galt on Account of Printing Galt’s Medical Cases” from Haswell, Barrington, & Haswell, 18 March 1843.

¹³⁰ JMGII to SMG, 18 March 1843. In this letter Galt discusses two books he planned to contract with Haswell, Barrington, & Haswell. HBH did publish *Cases*, but not the second one, *Treatment of Insanity*, which Harper & Brothers picked up instead.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
not to be too hopeful for they had sent only a few copies to their agents and the agents had not reordered more. In spite of such bad news, Galt began a new literary project almost immediately. He had found that while reading all the standard medical works on insanity, he had taken copious notes on those sections relating to the treatment of insanity “in order to impress the treatment on my mind, and for convenient reference.” It occurred to him that his notes might be useful to others, since “very few of the writers included in the compilation have been published in the United States.” As a result his 500-page plus book, The Treatment of Insanity, owed “its origin to circumstance rather than to original design.” In it Galt summarized portions of over eighty British and French titles, from the earliest by Johannes Helfrici in 1689 to the latest by Forbes Winslow in 1842, and including Darwin, Haslam, Spurzheim, Combe, Esquirol, and Pinel, as well as passages from the British Encyclopedia, the American edition of Nicholson’s Encyclopedia, and the Rees Encyclopedia. He also included letters from the Americans, Rush, Woodward, Brigham, and Earle, as well as about 100 pages of material about American asylums, noting that “there is a marked uniformity of practice in our institutions,” and thus they did not require extensive coverage. He admitted that he had sacrificed “attention to style,” and that the book had an unusual arrangement: “I am aware that the plan of composition...is experimental, and may appear chaotic and devoid of system; but these are little more than imaginary evils, if a convenient book of reference be so obtained.”

131 Barrington & Haswell to JMGII, 23 December 1843.

The *Treatment of Insanity* is remarkable on several counts. It represents not only Galt's assiduousness in obtaining a copy of each of the titles he summarized, but the hours he spent reading them, translating the French titles into English, and copying many passages from each. The book captures a fleeting glimpse of Galt at a time when he was young and energetic, disciplined, enjoyed relatively good health, and was sustained by a driving ambition. His accomplishment was of a nature that indicates the potential he had as a young man to reach the eminence he had so aspired to in his field.

Perhaps because Galt was unhappy with the small return on his previous book or with Haswell's efforts at handling it, he turned to Harper and Brothers to publish his *Treatment of Insanity*. They agreed to give him 10% of the price of the book after 1500 copies were sold, an offer which both Superintendents Bell and Woodward advised he accept.\(^{133}\) At the time Harper's was close to being one of the largest publishers in the world. Some of its success derived from its embrace of modern technology. Harper's was the first publisher to use stereotyping regularly and probably the first to use steam powered presses. The firm also had an aggressive strategy both in marketing its books and recruiting authors. Its list of publications included both reprints and original work from Poe, Sedgwick, Goldsmith, Prescott, Darwin, Dana, Irving, Simms, Bulwer-Lytton, the Brontes, Thackeray, and Dickens, much sought after writers of the day.\(^{134}\) That Galt had caught Harper's eye was no small matter.

As a rule, Harpers printed its own books at a sprawling complex on Cliff Street in

\(^{133}\) Louis Dwight to JMGII, 24 March 1845.

New York, but in Galt's case they assigned the job to the New York printer, Thomas B. Smith, Stereotyper, through whom all communication between publisher and author would pass. Galt's role in the project was quite unlike the one he had assumed with Haswell, Barrington, and Haswell only three years earlier. Rather than passive observer, he was an active participant in the preparation of the book. The difficulties were considerable. In July 1846 Smith asked Galt to provide an index, preface, and contents for the book. Galt sent off the preface and contents and agreed an index would provide "a considerable improvement in the work." With so many other commitments, however, he requested Smith find "some suitable person in New York at my charge." Smith demurred: "They [Harpers] think you would make the best one and they esteem a good index of considerable importance to the utility of the work." Yet even as Smith was urging him on to finish the index, Galt had yet to receive the proofs from which to work. The proofs were sent. "At the suggestion of Mr. Harper" Smith wrote two months later, "how long it will be before the Index, Preface is ready." Galt had already sent the preface, but it must have gone astray, so he was required to prepare and send yet another. In August, Smith admitted to error on the part of his shop, calling it "a piece of carelessness of my people. We are resetting the type and tomorrow shall mail to you the corrected proof." 135

Harper's inquiries, as to when the index would be completed, was driven by the publisher's desire to have the book "onto the market for the early fall trade," but this was not

---

135 Harpers to JMGII, 16 March 1846; Thomas B. Smith (TBS) to JMGII, 13 July 1846. Galt wrote a draft response to Smith on Smith's letter; otherwise there would be no way to know his reaction to Harper's requests; TBS to JMGII, 21 July 1846; 17 September 1846; 21 July 1846; Harpers to JMGII, 16 March 1846; TBS to JMGII, 17 September 1846; 18 August 1846.
to be. Having missed the September deadline, a new deadline—the first week in November—was set. "Unless we can have the copy immediately, it will now be unprofitable," Harper's warned. Such admonitions of urgency may have been common in the publishing world in the mid-nineteenth century, but they surely must have caused the highly nervous, dyspeptic, and overly conscientious Galt many bouts of anxiety. Eventually the book was published in 1846. Perhaps it did not sell well. It had missed the several fall deadlines Harper's considered crucial, and purchase of it among medical students (and their professors) would be minimal. In addition Galt was not good at promoting his book, just as he had not been in publicizing his work at the asylum. Amariah Brigham noted in the AJI that he had seen a notice in the paper of the book's release yet had not received a copy of it from the author. Whether the book's lack of sales or the stress and intense pressure associated with meeting sometimes unrealistic deadlines soured him, Galt never undertook another such book project.

In 1850 Galt turned once again to writing for the American Journal of Insanity. The journal published his "Report on the Organization of An Asylum for the Insane," in June 1850 and then three years later, an essay "On the Medical Legal Question of the Confinement of the Insane." His most productive years with the Journal spanned 1854-55 when he published four articles in all, which included, "Insanity in Italy" in two parts, "On the Propriety of Admitting the Insane of the Two Sexes into the Same Lunatic Asylum," and "Dr. Galt on Idiocy and the History of Provision for Idiots." The last of them, "The Farm at

\[^{136}\text{TBS to JMGII, 21 July 1846; TBS to JMGII, 17 September, 1846.}\]

\[^{137}\text{[Amariah Brigham] "Notices on Books, Reports, Etc.," AJI 3, no.4 (April 1847): 383.}\]
St. Anne's," argued for integration of the insane into the community and, in the process, referred to some northern asylums as prisons, which instigated a barrage of criticism from his colleagues, most notably Thomas Kirkbride. Galt's reaction was that "as to abusive pieces...I am used to them, rarely read, and never reply to them." In truth, he must have been deeply hurt by the criticism from his peers. He lost the momentum and confidence he had been building as a regular contributor to the journal and wrote only one more article for it in 1856 on hypochondria in the elderly. Galt had identified, as had his colleagues, Earle, Buttolph, Brigham, and Kirkbride, the audience that was most likely to read his material and among whom he might gain a reputation, but that audience had turned on him. He was not, as he had supposed, one of them after all. His notion of himself as a professional writer was shaken, and he must cope with a new image of himself, the naive and dismissed superintendent of a backward southern asylum whose ideas found no respect among his professional colleagues.

Running parallel with Galt's efforts in professional writing were his aspirations to go beyond the topic of insanity. He found dozens of topics that intrigued him: the annexation of

---


139 JMGII, Commonplace Book, November 1855. In spite of his falling out with the AJI, Galt received a letter from the editors "asking for further contributions concerning the Graham case." Galt had testified at an insanity trial for Mr. Graham the previous year. Such an article was never published (or written?), but a piece by Galt on hypochondria did appear the following year. "Senile Insanity--Hypochondriasis," AJI 12, no. 3 (January 1856): 237-44. It was to be his last appearance in the AJI.
Texas, the failures of a free society, the differences between the present and the past, precision in religion, perhaps even a book "published in separate numbers as did Dickens, Thackeray, etc".\textsuperscript{140} Galt put himself on a schedule. He determined to "write a page an hour" which would allow time both "to read sufficiently on the subject written upon and at the same time compose some." He made up a list of rules for himself, such as avoiding repetition of the same words in the same lines, imitating Poe by using words in "procontiguous lines," and using "purposely different modes of expression as to the same ideas or thought." He hoped "to write quickly and without interruption the whole article" and then to attend to rewriting: "there is certainly then great gain as to polish, finish, and other important qualities by each process of rewriting."\textsuperscript{141}

During this period he wrote two political essays on slavery and democracy\textsuperscript{142} published at his own expense. He was addressing a congenial social audience very much like himself--largely southern--although he must have hoped "enlightened" northerners would also read it. His ideas of eliminating the more egregious nature of slavery and annexing Texas were not particularly original but had been written about by others earlier and more lucidly. As was his custom, he derived his arguments from articles and books rather than from his own analysis of the situation. He contributed a number of opinion

\textsuperscript{140}JMGII, \textit{Commonplace Book}, March 1855. His papers at Swem Library contain hundreds of pages covered with Galt's mostly unpublished poetry and prose.

\textsuperscript{141}Ibid., March 1854; February 1856; March 1857.

\textsuperscript{142}John Minson Galt II, \textit{Political Essays: The Annexation of Texas}, Parts I & II, April 10 \& 26, 1844 or \textit{The Future of Democracy} signed by a Voice from Virginia (Williamsburg, 1852).
pieces to the Virginia Gazette and Richmond Examiner, possibly under the pseudonym, Aristides. He also wrote at least one piece for *The Southern Literary Messenger*.

All in all, Galt was very much like any number of educated young men of the period who hoped to gain fame, wealth, and admiration by their pen. And in a sense, he was moderately successful, at least in his professional writing. Yet he never attained the glory that he himself had hoped for in this venture, and it possibly stood as one of the greatest disappointments of his life. At the same time reading, studying, writing, and collecting books was the foundation upon which John Minson Galt II had built a life. His pursuit of books and all things literary, nurtured at every turn from childhood, was as important to him as any of the other values he treasured and any other path he chose to follow, including his medical career and asylum superintendency. Indeed all were woven from the same yarn on the same frame until they had become one organic, wholly-integrated fabric. *What and how* he read was *who* he was, vital to his self-image, his place in the world, and his destiny.

---

143 Undated newspaper clipping saved by JMGII of a letter to the Editors signed Aristides, expressing consternation over a northern professor teaching at William and Mary who was "tainted with abolitionism." GFP III, Group II, Box 1, Folder 19.

144 Galt Papers I, Inventories, Abstract. Mr. White to EJG, 19 August 1841. White refers to proofs for Galt and instructs him to "write his corrections legibly." Thomas Willis White was the editor of *SLM* until 1843; a search of the journal uncovered no article by Galt between 1841-1843. See University of Michigan, "Southern Literary Messenger," [http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moajml/browse.journals/sout.html](http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moajml/browse.journals/sout.html)
CHAPTER VI

"WE HAVE FELT THE WANT OF A REGULAR LIBRARY:"

THE PATIENTS’ LIBRARY AT EASTERN ASYLUM, 1842-1860

Richard Livey Greene first began to behave oddly in 1851 at the age of 17. An intelligent and handsome boy, he suddenly began to dress carelessly, laugh immoderately, talk to himself, and display an “almost wild abstraction from everyone around him.” Livey (as his mother called him) had descended into madness, although the cause was uncertain. Two years earlier, he had suffered from an “eruptive disease” about his head and face, and perhaps that malady was in some way responsible. He had also ingested immense quantities of tobacco and strong coffee for years, a habit that may have affected his mind as adversely as it had his stomach. Or perhaps his family’s unwise leniency was to blame, for he was “a young gentleman...who has had...every wish gratified by the most indulgent and affectionate parents, all his life.”

Such circumstances of physical illness, immoderate habits and over-indulgent parents were cited commonly in the mid-nineteenth century as conditions that made the mind vulnerable to insanity. An individual lacking in self-restraint and self-discipline was open to mental instability in a way that the more stolid individual was not, and any of life’s trials, whether as profound as the death of a loved one, as trivial as exposure to

1To preserve the privacy of patients, I have fictionalized all patient surnames. See page numbers (E) to verify patient histories; “Richard Livey Greene,” Patients’ Notebook, “Patients in the Eastern Lunatic Asylum, October 1, 1852 to September 30, 1853,” E221, Eastern State Hospital Library Archives (ESHL).
newly mown hay, or as in Livey’s case as inexplicable as an eruptive disease, might trigger insanity. In a sense the patient was unprepared for life’s random occurrences, having never cultivated the virtues necessary to ward off the ill effects of large and small tragedies.

Livey came from a large family of eight in Fauquier County. His father, Charles, 58, a preacher, and his mother, Susan, 50, placed a great deal of importance on the fact that their third son, Livey, had been trained in the “fear of the Divine Being” and was of “unsullied morals.” Yet such had not been sufficient to save him from the scourge of insanity. His parents tried several home remedies as well as enlisting the local doctor’s assistance, but when Livey threatened suicide, Charles and Susan agreed he should be admitted to the Eastern Asylum in Williamsburg. It was not the future either had envisioned for their son. Rather they had “indulged the fond anticipation that he would be an ornament to society” and a solace to their “declining years;” instead he must be placed in the care of strangers in a lunatic asylum far distant from their home. In a last attempt to maintain control of her beloved son’s care, Susan Greene advised his new caretakers at the hospital not to deprive Livey of “tobacco and coffee totally” for he had once become “very much prostrated from leaving them off for a time.” In addition she asked they pay “attention to his clothing, as he takes no cognizance of such things, and also if judged best, that he may wear flannel.” She could do no more. Once the gates closed behind Livey at the asylum he would become the responsibility of Superintendent John Minson Galt II and his staff.²

²Ibid; Fauquier County, Virginia Schedule, United States Census 1850.
Not unlike many mid-nineteenth-century families with diagnosed insanity in the family, the Greene's had been persuaded that their son could best be cured in an institutional setting tended by a professional doctor and his trained staff. They accepted the proposition outlined in Eastern Asylum's official circular that "separation from home and acquaintances and the involuntary occupation of the mind by new scenes" was therapeutic. "A total change of place and circumstances" was part of a necessary regimen leading to recuperation. They understood, too, from the circular's narrative and masthead illustration, that all the necessary accoutrements to a proper, genteel environment—amusements, occupations, religious services, attractive rooms, and well-kept gardens—were available. And finally, they had reassurance as to the asylum's fitness to cure their son from the testimonials of such worthy men as the Right Reverend William Meade, a bishop of the Episcopal Church of Virginia, Thomas Dew, the president of William and Mary College, John Tyler, President of the United States, and Amariah Brigham, a national leader in the moral management care of the insane.⁹

Like other asylums in the country, Eastern Asylum had managed to some degree to "overcome the family's distrust of institutional care" and forge a "new alliance between family and asylum."⁴ Such alliances, however, were precipitated frequently by a family's desperate situation, and the balance of power in the relationship was weighted heavily in the asylum's favor. Once a patient was admitted to the hospital, families became almost totally dependent upon the superintendent for news of the progress or decline of their loved one, since they could not easily monitor the situation personally.

⁹Eastern Asylum Circular, (GFPI, Medical Papers, Box 5, Folder 54).

Visitations to the asylum, while not forbidden, were difficult to undertake. Patients at Eastern Asylum came from a wide geographical region ranging as far north as Frederick County, as far south as Norfolk, and as far west as Washington County with many muddy and difficult-to-pass roads in between. Travel to and from Williamsburg in the mid-nineteenth century was no easy matter, and even the Greene’s, affluent and educated though they might be, would find regular visits difficult and even hazardous at certain times of the year. Families, therefore, depended upon correspondence from the superintendent but even in this, were at a disadvantage, cast in the role of supplicant rather than legitimate inquirer. Mrs. Christian’s letter to the Superintendent regarding her son was representative: “I know that you must be much employed and have very little time to spare therefore I am unwilling to intrude upon you. Yet I would beg of you the favour to write to me respecting Captain Christian as opportunity may offer, in so doing you will confer a lasting obligation which will be remembered with gratitude.” Although Galt did spend much of his time corresponding with relatives, he felt it necessary only to communicate with a family when there was a change in a patient’s condition, so months could go by without word. Anthony Jonson of Fairmont did not hear about his wife in over a year: “What is her present condition?” he wanted to know. Martin and Rebecca Miller of East Greenwich waited even longer. Having not heard from their son in two and half years, they were anxious to know “if he is living,” and confided to the superintendent they were “advanced in years” and feared it “don’t look likely we shall ever see him again.” Lucy Blackwell’s request was modest. She didn’t expect a lengthy letter about her brother, “but a line or two to let us know he is alive.”

5C.M.E.Y Christian to JMGII, 9 December 1844 (ESH); EAAR, 1853-54, 12;
At times, even a patient’s death elicited no more than a cursory notification from the asylum. When one patient died, his mother’s solicitor inquired about the circumstances of his death: “how long...was he confined to his bed...and of what disease he died and whether or not he spoke of his mother or any of his relatives during his last. (In a word she wishes to know all the particulars of his sickness and death.) And whether or not...there was a lock of his hair saved for her.” Occasionally a more assertive family member demanded more of Galt’s attention. Richard Winn wrote, “I must beg leave to insist in your writing to me more frequently.” Yet even for one as assertive like Winn, maintaining a relationship with a loved one at the asylum was difficult.6

Patients were allowed to write to family members and friends if they chose to do so. Galt provided them with writing paper which he obtained from a Richmond firm in exchange for the remnants of cotton clothing, “necessarily a large quantity in an asylum.” Relatives, too, were allowed to write to patients, a privilege that some voluntarily forswore. Thomas Hunter wrote to Superintendent Galt of his son: “I forgot to ask you whether our writing would...be a disadvantage to him.” He had enclosed a letter from the patient’s younger brother, but noted that “If you think it will be an injury to him please destroy it, if not seal it and give it to him.” Retrieving a loved one also required a

---

Anthony Jonson to JMGII, 27 February 1845 (ESHL); Morton and Rebecca Miller to JMGII, 8 February 1846 (ESHL); Lucy Blackwell to JMGII, 3 September 1847 (GFPMP).

6Elizabeth R. Yarborough to JMH, 18 August 1854; Richard G. Winn to JMGII, 13 September ? (ESHL).
strong and confident family. "I have thought of taking my wife home...," wrote Albert Shivers, "provided you think her situation will admit of it."  

When Livey arrived at Eastern Asylum in the custody of a sheriff, constable, or perhaps a family member, he might have found the asylum (if he were lucid enough) to be unexpectedly pleasant with its array of symmetrical white-washed buildings\(^8\) capped by steep, slate roofs and cupolas, with open air verandas, covered walkways, and a generous courtyard. In the spring and summer, the many trees, shrubs, and undergrowth obscured the fences and walls, giving the grounds an appearance of a garden more than a yard of confinement. Dr. John Minson Galt, the superintendent, had tried to "avoid as far as possible...any similitude to a prison" and had succeeded in the eyes of some. The state senate committee, which visited the asylum in 1845, thought the institution to be "a charity now worthy of Virginia and of which she had just reason to be proud," one that "no longer presented the gloomy and cheerless aspect of a prison" but rather wore "the pleasing and inviting appearance of comfort." Inside the complex of buildings conditions varied. By 1852 the original building was given over to offices and staff housing, while the newer east and west wings supported single rooms for patients. A separate building, the Doric, or the "White House" as it was often called, was maintained for the better class of patients and was fitted out with well-lit galleries and furnished with such niceties as a "sofa, ottomans, pianos, mirrors." The Gothic building, located immediately behind the

\(^7\)Hunter to JMGII, 13 July 1853; Albert F. Shivers to JMGII, 10 April 1844 (ESH).  

\(^8\)An 1850 photograph shows the main building, once brick, to have been renovated, whitewashed, and given a new Greek revival façade. See Blanton McLean, "Eastern Asylum and the Third Revolution in Psychiatry: Dr. John Galt's Advanced Therapeutic Community, 1841-1862," in *Williamsburg, Virginia: A City Before the State* edited by Robert P. Maccubin. Commissioned by Martha Hamilton-Phillips, City of Williamsburg, 2000.
main complex of buildings, housed the demented and black males, but was also a
destination for villagers and visitors who climbed the towers occasionally to gain a
birdseye view of the surrounding countryside. Tailor, shoe, and carpentry shops were on
the grounds as were the necessary outbuildings for cooking, laundry, and smoking meat.
Always a hallmark of Eastern Asylum, the institution was "neat, clean, and free from
odor."9

If Livey (or his mother) had looked too close, they might have seen signs of age
and disrepair in some parts of the asylum as well as a need for adoption of the more
recent advances available in building design. Unlike many asylums in the north, Eastern
Asylum did not have gas light, so once the sun went down, darkness prevailed throughout
the asylum. In the winter, open fireplaces acted as the primary source of heat. Most
female patients on the coldest of winter nights kept warm by "wrapping and tying
blankets about their extremities," yet frostbite, while uncommon, was not unknown. In
the summer the problem of a lack of a universal ventilation system solved itself, since
Galt believed patients in Virginia had the healthier alternative of spending more time
outdoors than in the north. "Large verandas and spacious courts serve a better purpose,"
he wrote, than an intricate system of pipes, furnaces, and flues. Other conditions at the
asylum, however, Galt admitted needed remedy, and he had requested funds to
implement them. A reliable source of clean water was needed. And a proper drainage
system was a high priority, since the then current system consisted of nothing more than

---

9Norman Dain, *Disordered Minds: The First Century of Eastern State Hospital in
Williamsburg Virginia, 1766-1866* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
disposing “slop and waste water” and other materials against a wall in the woodyard that created a putrid stench, both unpleasant and unhealthy.\(^\text{10}\)

In 1852 at the time of Livey’s admittance to the asylum, the patient population numbered approximately 240. Many of them were wards of the state of Virginia. As Galt had noted, Eastern Asylum was “designed as a hospital for the poor,” and as such many patients were indigent and without property or any other kind of financial support from their families. Galt had launched a campaign to attract paying patients, and indeed, the Doric built in 1850, was a major part of that plan, so that by 1852, the year of Livey’s admittance, a small number of paying patients lived at Eastern Asylum, some from the “better classes” of Virginia and at least eleven from North Carolina and one from as far as Alabama.\(^\text{11}\)

Livey’s fellow patients at Eastern Asylum were more likely to be men than women with a ratio of about three to two, more likely to be unmarried than not, especially if widows and widowers were included in the tally. Ages ranged from the youngest at eleven years to the oldest at eighty, but more than half fell into the thirty to fifty year-old age range. The majority of males were white. About 50% came from Virginia’s population of farmers and unskilled laborers, while most of the remainder were employed in low status white collar jobs or as skilled artisans who made a living as carpenters, shoemakers, carriagemakers, painters, masons, plasterers, stonequarriers, tailors,

\(^{10}\)Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 124, 125, 126; *Eastern State Hospital Annual Report, 1850*, 16.

millwrights, brick layers, and wheelrights. White-collar professionals—physicians, merchants, teachers, students, a midshipman, even an artist—numbered perhaps thirty to thirty-two at most. Some few female inmates had once held positions as workers at a paper mill and a cotton factory, but for the most part women residents were “of no occupation; in general merely keeping house, or performing the usual domestic duties of females.”

White patients were similar in their general appearance. The majority had blue, hazel, or gray eyes with various shades of brown hair, except for the occasional patient with red or black hair. Most of the women were under 5'5", but one (possibly a child) was as short as 4'4", another as tall as 5'7". Men ranged between 5' and 5'8", although a few must have seemed exceptionally tall, towering over their companions at 6'. Corpulence among patients was uncommon, for most tended to be lean, and a few, who would or could not eat, emaciated. Black patients were present at the asylum, too, free as well as slave, but their numbers were small in proportion to whites. In 1850 only twenty-eight free blacks and five slaves were in residence, and as with whites, their height and weight was noted but not their hair or eye color or complexion. Also missing from their records was a description of temperament type assigned to whites: nervous, bilious, lymphatic, or sanguineous. As noted in an earlier chapter, Galt believed that blacks rarely fell victim to insanity, so black patients usually gained admittance only because of dangerous behavior or through the intercession of a white master or mistress. Jane

\[12 \text{EAAR, 1853-54, 5-6, 9; EAAR, 1842 (draft) (ESHL), 8.}\]

\[13 \text{It's possible the shortest among the patients were children. One eleven-year old boy had been admitted to the hospital in 1852, so child inmates while uncommon were not unknown.}\]
Applewhite, for instance, had become so deranged she could not be hired out and thus had become unprofitable to her mistress. When she began “annoying the household” at night, she was sent to stay with a doctor where she became excited, defaced the building in which she was confined, and attempted to escape. She was sent to jail as a lunatic and, finally at her mistress’ request, granted admission to Eastern Asylum. Richard Gardner’s insanity was more hazardous. He had developed a desire to “be employed at all times in cooking, and his use of fire rendered him so dangerous to be left at liberty.”

In spite of both Applewhite and Gardner’s diagnosis of insanity, Livey might have easily mistaken them for asylum staff. All the servants at the asylum were slaves, and white patients generally looked “upon the colored patients pretty much in the same light....” The fact that black patients, when their health allowed, were recruited often to help in the kitchens, the laundry, and attending to the needs of white patients would have only deepened the impression they were servants rather than patients. In spite of their uncertain status, however, for some black patients admittance to the asylum was better than being kept at home. One black female had been “chained continuously for eight years certainly, perhaps for ten or more, and was brought to the institution with a chain on.” Her initial reaction upon removal of the shackles at the asylum was “vehement gesticulation, and pulling up the fragmentary bricks of the court, arranging them in circles.” This behavior ceased shortly, and she became calm and quiet and “one of the most useful patients in the asylum.”

The majority of patients, black or white, started down the road to madness and asylum commitment as had Livey, when they displayed behavior that departed from their usual demeanor. Odd behavior in itself, or eccentricity as it was called, was not necessarily considered symptomatic of insanity. Edward Mead, an artist, for instance, had “all his life been eccentric,” but only during the 3 weeks previous to his commitment “did he exhibit a tendency requiring him to be confined.” He had become “exceedingly restless and excited on the subject of religion,” whereas previously he had not “seemed at all religious.” His family and friends became the most alarmed when he began “to give away property.”

Once admitted to the hospital, a patient was diagnosed as suffering from a variety of descriptive but rather imprecise categories of insanity, some indicating causation, others indicating symptoms. In order of their frequency they were:

- ill health – 92
- mental anxiety – 34
- intemperance – 29
- puerperal – 17
- domestic affliction – 20
- domestic troubles – 18
- disappointed affection – 18
- religious feelings – 16
- injury to the head – 16
- loss of property – 15
- jealousy – 14
- loss of sleep – 2
- study – 1
- exposure to the sun – 1

The degree and course of a patient’s disease was variable, but even the most delusional might be cured and eventually leave the asylum. The year before Livey arrived twenty-two patients had been discharged. A great many more patients, however, were to

---

15 E245, “Edward Mead.”

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
become lifetime residents. They were the chronically ill, or as Galt described them, “the debris of successive years.”

A good number of Livey’s fellows were invisible to him, so rarely was he likely to see or hear them. Some stayed in their room by their own choice, their demeanor marked by a profound inability to communicate with others. Patsy Underwood was described as “entirely silent and exceedingly torpid, rarely moving from one place” and Elizabeth Spicer kept “to her room constantly...is always quiet and silent as for years before.” Other patients were not as retiring. Catherine Gerrity sang Irish songs and was given to making vulgar remarks as she went about her business at the asylum and Patrick Ragsdale was “addicted to masturbation,” often making no attempt to hide his habit. William Jennings sometimes took “his clothes wholly off” and exposed “his person in the yard.” These patients, noisy, even disruptive, were as a rule not necessarily a danger to themselves or others, but some were. Wilson Mayhew, for instance, once ran into the apothecary’s office and before he could be stopped, swallowed a large dose of laudanum “intended for another patient.” Another patient “snatched at the knife on one of the patient’s plate” in an attempt at suicide.

On some days Livey met with the assistant physician, John Williamson or better yet from the patient’s perspective with the superintendent himself, John Minson Galt.

---

16 EAAR, 1853-54, 8; Siske, “Number of Patients Cured at Eastern State Hospital, 1851,” History of ESH, Appendix C, 75; EAAR, 1852, 6.

Galt, “the big doctor,” was generally preferred over the “little doctor.” In addition to seeing Galt make his rounds in the asylum and conversing with patients, Livey would have seen Galt out and about the grounds as well, since the superintendent lived with his sisters only a few steps away in a cottage behind the main cluster of asylum buildings. At age thirty-three Galt had changed little in appearance from his youth. His face was smooth without facial hair, and he had filled out a bit, especially about the chin and jowls, but he still retained a boyish demeanor in the face of a mature man. He had a gentle manner among the patients, a trait that stemmed from his own personal proclivities as well from a professional conviction that the chief principle of moral management must be kindness. “We endeavor to be as kind as possible, to those under our charge both in words and actions,” he wrote, “and to make their situation as happy, as the nature of each individual case, and the circumstances of the asylum will allow.” Kindness, he continued, was “based upon the nature of the deepest feelings of the human heart... a proper course of action, not only in the character of our conduct towards the insane, but also as respects the duties which sane individuals owe to each other.”

Livey, no doubt, would have seen the Galt sisters moving freely about the asylum grounds as well, or at least, the younger sister, Sallie, who visited the asylum and its

---

18 This probably referred to Galt’s position as head of the asylum rather than his stature, since from all accounts he was not a tall man.

19 SMG to JMGII, 12 June 1850; Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 85: Galt would walk among the patients “in his daily rounds, addressing each one, with the greatest respect and listening to their absurd remarks, with as much gravity and respect, as if they had been the utterances of the greatest philosophers. He would converse with them earnestly upon any subject upon which they were able to talk rationally;” Bust of JMGII sculpted by Alexander Galt in 1855-57 is now displayed at the asylum exhibit in the DeWitt Museum at Colonial Williamsburg on loan from Eastern State Hospital; *EAAR, 1845* (Siske), 80.
patients regularly, bringing them flowers and fruit, writing to their relatives occasionally, even if only to announce the unwelcome news of the death of a loved one. Sallie’s older sister, Elizabeth, visited rarely. She suffered from a disfiguring facial cancer and was so embarrassed by her appearance that at one point she would communicate with others only from within the safety of a closet at the cottage. Her illness, too, often required she stay indoors in a darkened room so as not to exacerbate flare-ups.

The Galt family, living on the grounds as they did, going about their business and receiving a number of guests to their home everyday, especially with Sallie’s numerous book borrowers, brought a certain normalcy to the asylum, as did the large staff, whites and blacks, who also lived on the grounds with their spouses and children. The comings and goings of these families and individuals must have made the asylum seem almost like a small village to the patients at times, reminiscent to some degree of their life in better times outside the asylum.

In addition to talking with Livey to assess his progress, the asylum doctors prescribed botanical medications of some sort, the most common being a purgative like calomel or a tonic like quinine, but if the patient was excitable, violent, or suicidal (as was Livey initially), he would have been medicated with laudanum as well. Indeed the latter drug was prescribed so often that villagers spoke of the hospital as “wreathed in smoke.” In the morning or afternoon, staff encouraged Livey to take a walk or at least a

---

20 SMG to JMGII, 12 June 1850; Mary Cundiff to SMG, 18 February, J.H. Strobia to SMG, 2 December 1853; Pickell, 38.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
carriage ride, regardless of his own desire to do so. Galt felt outdoor activity “be never omitted for a single day, however unfit the patient might appear.” It tended to increase a patient’s appetite, which in turn made force feeding unnecessary, a treatment Galt particularly loathed. Outdoor activity, too, like labor was rewarded later in the day so that “instead of passing the night in raving and incoherence, sleep descends upon them in refreshing slumbers.”

If Livey was able, he would take his meals in a common dining hall. Meals were nutritious by the standards of the day and included “vegetables of every description and of the very best kind, and in the greatest abundance.” Meat was served at least once a day, usually a beef or a pork product like bacon. Some patients did receive a special diet. Mary Duncan, for instance, was given lemonade for her scurvy. Others who suffered from diarrhea and intestinal problems, “one of the most frequent and fatal complications of insanity,” were given “crackers and warm broth, buttermilk, boiled bacon or chicken.” Such a diet could not help Betsy Hatten who had a severe case of parasites and was observed shortly before her death throwing up worms and pulling them from her throat.

Evenings might have proven the most difficult time for Livey. It was then that staff retreated to their own quarters and left the patients locked in their rooms alone. Newly-admitted patients must have suffered a gamut of emotions—loneliness, a sense of abandonment, fear, and anxiety. Veterans of the asylum, on the other hand, perhaps was much more prevalent in insane asylums of the period than is usually noted. See also EAAR 1848, 23.

22 Eastern Asylum Patient Register; Eastern Asylum Circular; EAAR, 1853-54, 22; EAAR, 1842, 84; McLean, “Eastern Asylum and Third Revolution,” 87.

23E64, “Mary Duncan;” EAAR, 1852, 6; E3, “Betsy Hatten.”
found nighttime a relief when they might finally be alone, away from the omnipresent staff, other patients, and the demands of the asylum regimen. From Galt’s point of view, the lack of an evening attendant was unsatisfactory and one he had tried to remedy for years. He fretted that “all unusual sounds in the patient’s rooms” might go unheard, that sick patients could not be monitored, and that asylum rules, created for the safety of the patients as much as protection of the asylum, might be violated without a pair of trained eyes present to enforce them. He must have worried as well about the ever present danger of fire, a not uncommon threat to all residences in the nineteenth century, but even more so at the asylum where there had already had several conflagrations, some set by the patients themselves.24

Sundays provided the patients with some diversion from the regular week regimen. A chaplain provided religious instruction “as the Superintendent may on the occasion think expedient” but held religious services regularly. Joseph Guislain, a Belgian doctor, had reflected that “where the patient is prey to violent grief, in consequence of disappointed love, of a loss of fortune, or from the death of a beloved person, then religion becomes a source of most touching consolation,” and Galt accepted that maxim as well. In addition religious services served as a moral management tool, since attendance forced a patient to exercise self-control and to keep his mind diverted from morbid thoughts. At the same time that services were provided and participation encouraged, the minister in the pulpit at Eastern Asylum was not a free agent to preach whatever he wished and in whatever manner. Apparently Galt had been convinced years earlier by Amariah Brigham that religious instruction in an asylum must be watched

24EAAR, 1853-54, 16-17; E191; E208.
closely. In Galt's first asylum report in 1842, subsequently published in AJI, he had included the remarks of the Eastern Asylum Chaplain who recommended that a “patient’s mind should be probed, his religious views ascertained, his erroneous notions dissipated by the light of solid instruction.” Brigham took exception to such sentiments, writing that the Chaplain’s “propositions for the improvement of the insane we think very questionable and should apprehend far more injury than benefit.” Such practices were “improper and dangerous” and would result in “positive harm from thus directly assailing the delusions of the insane.” By 1853 Galt seemed to agree and kept a watchful eye on his minister, reprimanding him at least once for his habit of alluding to “future punishment” and to giving “long sermons.” In any case, in an age when religion was integral to the life of most, it seems likely most inmates would have found Sunday services a solace and comfort, even a distraction. At the same time, religion came with some price for Galt forbade all other amusements on Sundays “unsuitable to the day.”

In spite of the many walls, fences, and gates that hemmed in the asylum, Livey would have found he was allowed a striking degree of freedom. Force was never used as a method to make patients work, exercise, eat, or engage in recreational activities. Galt eschewed all coercion of a physical nature:

> Anything like severity must be scrupulously avoided, if successful management is to be expected. It is hardly necessary to state, that nothing like blows or stripes, is at all admissible, in any case whatever, or on any ground or pretense.

Rather a system of rewards and punishments such as confinement to one’s room or withholding special favors were instituted to elicit proper behavior from the patients. In

---

25“Lunatic Asylums in the United States,” AJI 7, no. 2 (October 1845): 155-56; Dain, Disordered Minds, 89; Galt considered religious services to provide the “sedative influence” usually provided on weekdays by occupations and amusements (EAAR, 1843, 87).
the end, however, if a patient showed a marked preference to remain idle, to stay in his room, to converse or not, he was allowed to do so. The only truly unacceptable behavior was violence against oneself or others. In one case a female patient who had “made threats of suicide” was threatened with having cold water poured on her. “On promise of good behavior, the order was not executed and she has been faithful to her word.”

Freedom also included the opportunity at times to roam outside the asylum. Galt allowed patients “comparative liberty” and depended upon a well-designed custodial and architectural program to keep most from wandering too far astray. More practically, the asylum, located in a small village in the middle of a peninsula with few roads leading in or out of the compound, may have made a greater degree of liberty possible. In any case the alternative of confining a patient to his room went against every principle of moral management: “Shut up a patient in his room,” Galt wrote, “and you remove him almost entirely from every moral influence of value, from occupation, from amusements, from exercise, so necessary alike to the mental and to the bodily health; you leave him to be confirmed in all bad habits that he may have acquired.” Some patients embraced the degree of freedom Galt allowed to great advantage. James Lint, for instance, was hired as a “carrier for the Virginia Gazette,” and although he imagined “himself to be an important personage in connection with the Journal,” nevertheless found an avenue sanctioned by Galt that allowed him great freedom to roam almost anywhere in the village.

---

26 EAAR, 1843 (Siske), 82; E210.
27 EAAR, 1852, 7, 9; E4, “James Lint.”

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Galt was particularly enamored with the idea of patient pledges for controlling a patient’s behavior: "We include appeals to the patient’s sense of honour, granting him certain privileges, upon condition that he will adhere to certain rules of conduct; this peculiarity of management is spoken of ... under the title of pledges." So satisfactory did Galt consider pledges that he often extracted one from a patient upon his discharge from the asylum, finding it especially effective in dealing with those recovering from alcoholism. "The very fact of their taking this pledge at the time of their discharge, tends to impress strongly upon them, the advisableness of such a step: because connected with the idea that those having a practical acquaintance with insanity have recommended it to them." Galt’s colleagues at AMSAII were not as impressed with pledges as was he. At their 1853 conference, Galt’s critics had dismissed his paper on pledges with some condescension, noting that as experienced a doctor as Samuel Woodward had thoroughly investigated the subject and a few years before his death had “very materially changed” his views as to the advantage of “accepting pledges from the insane.”

Indeed pledges were not always useful even at Eastern Asylum. The temptation for some patients to “elope” or escape was simply too overwhelming to resist in spite of any pledge they might have taken to the contrary. Edward Norman, for instance, found a way of “unscrewing the guard to the window” one night and disappeared into the darkness unnoticed. Captain Bucktrout discovered Norman at his farm the next morning.

---

28EAAR, 1843 (Siske), 82, 79; “Proceedings of the 8th Annual Meeting of AMSAII,” AJI 10, no. 1 (July 1853): 78. Galt did not attend this conference, but two of his papers were read—one on pledges and another on the practices of the Lincoln Lunatic Asylum in Great Britain. The first was quickly dismissed as naive, the second was roundly criticized by Kirkbride, Benedict, Stribling, Stewart, and Bell who noted that the “various modes of treatment adopted” by Lincoln were “quite dissonant with the views and sentiments entertained by the Association,” and that Galt’s views on the subject were “rather retrograde than otherwise.”

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
and returned him to the asylum, where he was confined briefly to his room. In due course, he was again allowed to move about freely, although now followed by an "officer delegated to this duty." In spite of this precaution Norman escaped yet again, this time making his way far outside the town limits. Another patient who repeatedly attempted to escape, William Reed, also pledged he would behave but was unable to keep his promise. He was "brought back personally by Mr. Galt" and confessed that he "still thinks only of Amelia and threatens to elope if he can get a chance of doing so."\(^{29}\)

Death at the asylum, while not overwhelming, occurred with regularity as might be expected among any population in the mid-nineteenth century. Sickness and accidents took their toll. In 1851, sixteen patients died. At times a patient had been ill and death was expected. For others as in the case of William Red who "having been to all appearances in good physical health and in a calm state of mind, at 8 \(\frac{1}{2}\) am while sitting in the portico of the steward...suddenly fell down in a convulsion."\(^{30}\)

In spite of the varying degrees of insanity among the patient population, Galt was a firm believer that "beyond the administration of drugs," much could be done to help the insane. "A primary principle of moral management," he wrote, "consists in the endeavor to withdraw the mind of the lunatic from its delusive fancies and diseased feelings, by presenting new and varied objects and by arousing the feelings and mental operations which remain undiseased." Such a notion was enhanced by the popularity of phrenology, a theory which posited that the brain was segmented into different spheres so that while

\(^{29}\) E208, "Edward Norman;" E176, "William Reed," Amelia refers to the patient's home county, not the name of a woman.

\(^{30}\) Siske, History of Eastern State Hospital, Appendix D, "Number of Patients Cured at Eastern State Hospital, 73-75;" E60, "William Red."
some parts of the brain might become diseased, others could remain healthy and functional. This would account for a patient’s lucidity on some subjects and his irrationality on others. Occupational or recreational activities, then, made good therapeutic sense, since distracting the diseased part of the mind could enfeeble or efface its “morbid ideas and feelings” while strengthening the healthy parts and preventing further deterioration of the mind. On any given day patients might be seen working around the asylum. John Meadows was often found “busily engaged in keeping the front yard in order,” James Hall “engaged in tailoring and household work,” and Sally Mason “pretty constantly occupied as a nurse.” The collective results were impressive. In 1853-54 alone the male patients turned out 583 pair of shoes, grew all the produce served in the dining hall, and helped in the construction of any new buildings by clearing the site and digging foundations. The females carded, spun, and twisted all the cotton they then used to make socks, thirty yards of carpet, and most of their own clothes. Not incidentally the patients’ labor saved the asylum as much as $500-1,000 per annum.\

Occupational therapy also accommodated Galt’s commitment to the virtue of industry. Patients who worked were noted as “industrious” or “useful,” while those who did not were often considered less favorably. Polly Hayes remained “entirely averse to work” and laid about all day, “constantly complaining of weakness, asking for snuff.” Edward Johnson was “inclined to be lazy—comes frequently to the corner of the west

---

31 EAAR, 1850, 16; EAAR, 1846; Dain, Disordered Minds, 77; Grob, Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875 (New York: Free Press, 1973): 152-53; Tomes, Generous Confidence, 82: “the profession as a whole accepted the premise that the various faculties of the mind were located in different portions of the brain and that the disordered action of the nerves on specific parts of the organ disrupted or permitted different intellectual and emotional functions;” E15, “John Meadows;” E25, “James Hall;” E46, “Sally Mason;” EAAR, 1853-54, 44; The savings accrued by the patients’ labor is a low estimate and includes proceeds only from the shoe shop and the garden.
wall, probably to avoid work” and Richard Hill’s “habit is to loaf about the yard throughout the day.”

Recreation was part of the resident’s weekly regimen as well. The asylum provided games of various sorts—cards, dominoes, shuttlecock—musical instruments, group singing, and lectures, some which might be pursued at any time of the day by the better classes “whose mode of life previous to their insanity, disconnected them from bodily exertion,” while others had perhaps less frequent opportunities. Reading, one of the amusements most recommended by America’s moral managers, had been notably absent at the asylum for most of its existence. One member from a state inspection committee had noted in 1835 that he saw among the patients only a “piece of an old almanac in the hands of one and the Revised Code in the hands of another.” Galt disputed this claim when he assumed office: “Our patients have all along been furnished by the officers of the institution, to a certain extent, with books and newspapers... We also purchased a few books for the institution, some time ago; and for the last two years, a newspaper and periodical have been subscribed to in the city of Richmond, for the same purpose.” Yet he admitted there had been no purposeful course of action in either acquiring printed materials for the patients or in making any effort to use reading as part of moral management. “We have felt the want of a regular library,” he concluded.

In 1843 John Minson Galt II had set about remedying this particular “want.” Although there is no diary or commonplace book entry that records Galt’s decision to establish a patients’ library, two lists of library holdings which can be dated back to

---


33 Dain, *Disordered Minds*, 54-5; EAAR, 1843, (Siske), 86.
1843-1845 are extant. A set of library rules also are part of the record as well as reference to a catalog that he kept. Together these documents give testimony to the fact that early on in his superintendency Galt had made the commitment to using reading and a library as part of the moral management program at Eastern Asylum. While the library lists cannot be considered a final, comprehensive survey of the patients’ library holdings, they can be studied as foundational titles that would have still been available to the patients between 1846-1860. It is certain that by the time Livey was admitted in 1852, the library had become a well-established part of the asylum regimen. Within the daily round of medication, meals, exercise, religious services, recreations and occupations, within a group that ranged from the melancholy to the suicidal to the delusionary to the withdrawn to the violent to the convalescing, within a village within a village governed by a moral manager and peopled by several doctors, a chaplain, a large staff, their families, and their visitors, Galt provided his patients with access to what was essentially a private library which required only a diagnosis of insanity as the price of admission.

**Galt’s Approach to the Patients’ Library.** Even at the young age of twenty-four, John Minson Galt viewed himself as a man of letters, a student, and a scholar. That self-image combined with his newer identity as asylum superintendent governed the approach he took toward the patients’ library. He employed, both consciously and unconsciously, all he had learned about reading and the lessons they had imparted to him as a boy growing up within a genteel, middle class, southern family, as the son of Williamsburg’s most respected and influential physician, as a student in the classrooms at William and Mary and in the lecture halls of the University of Pennsylvania’s Medical School, as a young man scouring the bookshops, libraries, and book auctions of Philadelphia, and
finally, as a scholar struggling to become a published author in his study at the 
superintendent's cottage.

Equally as influential in his approach to building a patients' library were the 
lessons Galt absorbed from the hundreds of books and journals he collected on the 
treatment of insanity. From his European mentors he learned to use reading as therapy in 
the asylum but to use it cautiously. One doctor would advise him that books and reading 
"may prove beneficial to many, but are frequently of too exciting a nature to be 
allowed."\(^{34}\) From another, that patients should not be given materials with "opinions and 
circumstances which may disquiet him and augment his delusions."\(^{35}\) From Joseph 
Guislain, the Belgian doctor for whom Galt seemed to have a particular affinity, he came 
to understand that while reading was not to be neglected in the moral cure of insanity, 
"prudence is necessary here."\(^{36}\)

Galt found his American mentors and colleagues had fewer reservations in their 
use of reading in the asylum. Indeed it was at their request, when assigned the task of 
writing a white paper on reading and libraries for the AMSAII in 1846, that Galt first 
formalized his thoughts on the topic in a professional forum. He solicited and received at 
least a half a dozen written responses from other more veteran superintendents as to their 
ideas on the use of reading, and he discussed these ideas even further with them during

\(^{34}\) J.G. Millengen, "Aphorisms in the Treatment and Management of the Insane," 
Harpers, 1846), 390.

\(^{35}\) Georget, "De La Folie," _TI_, 115.

\(^{36}\) Joseph Guislain was a Belgian doctor who taught at the University of Brussels not 
far from the asylum at Gheel. In Galt's book, _The Treatment of Insanity_, he includes 
fourty-five pages of excerpts from Guislain's work, far more than from the more famous 
and esteemed Pinel.
his attendance at AMSAI11 conferences. And as he was young and new to the field of moral management, he adopted many of their ideas and modified them according to his own lights.

Galt also extrapolated applications for the establishment of his library in 1843 from the more general principles of moral management explicated in his professional journals and books. The comments his colleague, H. A. Buttolph, the Superintendent of the New Jersey State Asylum, made in 1849 might well have served as a summary of Galt’s mission statement. Buttolph recommended that all activities for the insane be devoted to “occupying, interesting and improving the intellectual faculties, and for encouraging, tranquilizing, cheering and changing the perverted, social, moral, and religious sentiments, and the animal propensities.”37 Nothing could have better expressed the attitude Galt took toward the hospital collection.

The Patients’ Library: Policy and Procedures. In the AMSAI11 white paper on reading, Galt had suggested that an asylum should provide “a comfortable, pleasant reading room” as “a very desirable accompaniment of other facilities.” It seems likely, then, that when he established the patients’ library at Eastern Asylum in 1844, he set aside a specific room for the collection although exactly in which building or area of the asylum is not known. To house the collection, or at least part of it, Galt purchased “two handsome bookcases,” and they, along with the asylum’s telescope, kaleidoscope, violin, flute, 2 fifes, backgammon box, and set of dominoes, might have been kept all together in the library as was common in other asylums. Galt mentions the existence of a movable

37H.A. Buttolph, “Relations between Phrenology and Insanity,” AJI 6, no. 2 (October 1849), 135.
table in relation to the library, too, so perhaps at times some part of the collection (and other amusements) was wheeled about from room to room to entice the more silent and withdrawn patients who rarely left their beds. In addition, books were distributed in wards set aside for the more affluent classes. Galt noted the presence of a whole variety of genteel living accoutrements—carpets, sofa, centre-table, mirrors, books, and a piano—in the female ward for paying patients. In the male section along with games and musical instruments was “a reading room provided with books and newspapers.”

While the upper and middle class patients had some materials provided to them in the Doric, if they wished more variety they must visit, as did the patients from the conventional wards, the hospital’s library. Galt allowed only patients and ward officers to borrow books, although it seems the officers served more as agents for the patients than for themselves. Each ward officer was to be “answerable for every book entrusted to the patients in his department” and for the return of them at “stated periods” or in a later modification of the rules, on Wednesdays at 11:00 in the morning. From Galt’s point of view, such a policy would provide his patients with an opportunity to cultivate regular habits as well as to give them the assurance and pleasurable anticipation of acquiring new books at least once a week. In addition, setting a specific due date


39 Rules of the Library. (Galt Family Papers III, Group II, Box 1, Folder 7). Two lists of asylum library rules are extant, neither dated. However since rules usually become more specific as time goes on to address unexpected problems, it is likely that the more general and flexible list is the first list and the more defined and narrow one is the revised list.
increased Galt’s ability to track down missing or unreturned items before they became irrevocably lost.

From his own experiences as a student at the College of William and Mary, Galt knew such policies were generous. His alma mater opened its library only for two hours a week and then only “at such time as the Librarian may prefer.” In addition the college library administered fourteen rules to govern the use of its books, addressing everything from the number of volumes patrons might check out at one time (two volumes) to the length of time they might keep them (two weeks.) Reference books were not circulated, and any injury or defacement of books drew fines or a requirement to replace the damaged material.  

Compared to college policies, then, that encompassed every possible aspect of the relationship between borrower and library, Galt’s three rather modest rules gave his patients much more accessibility to printed materials.

The procedure for checking out books at the asylum was simple: Galt wrote the name of the borrower and the title of the book on a slip of paper and entrusted it to the officer of the ward in which the patient lived. He then entered the patient’s name in the library catalogue, probably one not unlike the running list Sallie Galt kept for her home library or perhaps the record book kept by the librarian at the college. Galt could use this cumulative list as a way to monitor his patient’s reading habits over time if he so desired. Galt also entered a borrower’s name on a slate, possibly a type of blackboard that served as a second type of record, but one which could be wiped clean from week to week. Galt

---

40 Laws and Regulations of William and Mary College (Richmond: P.D. Bernard, 1851), 12. William and Mary Papers, Folder 6. (Special Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library). Library rules were quite stringent. No one other than the Board of Visitors or the faculty were allowed to “go beyond the counter of the librarian” or “take a book from a shelf” without permission.
also required patients treat library materials gently, having written in his white paper that
“there should be regulations tending to produce a proper degree of carefulness in the
preservation of books; in other words we should seek here that arrangement by which
there is maximum of reading with as little attending wear and tear of materials as
possible.”

Source of Materials. Funding for library materials was not a regular part of the
asylum budget. Galt mentions two specific occasions when he requested money for the
library, but only one is documented by an invoice. In 1848 soon after the Board gave
him authority to “procure the requisite number of volumes to form a library,” he
promptly placed an order with Drinker and Morris of Richmond amounting to $44.62. In
addition to the materials he purchased, gifts from Board members, from “persons in
Williamsburg unconnected with the asylum,” and “from various editors and others”
helped to increase the size of library holdings. Galt saw this route as the one most likely
to insure growth of the collection. Other asylums in America almost without exception,
he noted,

yearly acknowledge the donation of books and newspapers; in some instance
amounting to a great variety and number. Similar donations would be very useful
to the patients of our asylum, and such charity is worthy of the consideration of
editors, and others, who take an interest in the welfare of the insane.

Some Virginian newspaper editors complied with his request and provided the asylum
inmates with a dozen or more periodical titles. A large number of books in the library

41 Galt, Essays on Asylums, 14; Rules of the Library.

42 "Literary Occupations," EAAR, 1843 (Siske), 86; EAAR, 1848, 32; EAAR, 1850;
Dain, Disordered Minds, 88. Dain writes that in 1853 Galt “suggested” $100 for the
library, but there is no record that he received it. It does indicate, however, that Galt
continued to have an interest in the patients’ library and in adding new materials.
were most likely gifts as well. Books were not cheap, ranging anywhere from fifty cents to $3.00 or even more depending upon the edition, and in today's currency represented about $12-70.\textsuperscript{43} The library held at a minimum 188 titles or as many as 226 and, even if purchased at the low end of the price scale, would have cost much more than the $44 he spent. Since Galt specifically mentioned Board members as donors, we might imagine Robert Saunders or Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, both faculty members at the college, as being the source of the library's older, used textbooks of Roman and Greek histories by Oliver Goldsmith and William Grimshaw, as well as its copies of the ancient classics by Sallust, Caesar, and Virgil. Children's books in the library may have been donated by the educated elite among the village townsfolk who had long ago finished raising their families and no longer needed their copies of Goodrich's \textit{Peter Parley}, John Aiken's and Letitia Barbauld's \textit{Evenings at Home}, Thomas Day's \textit{Sanford and Merton}, or the four copies of the \textit{Lady of the Manor} by the most didactic author of children's books, Mary Martha Sherwood. Indeed Galt himself may have plundered his own library looking for older or duplicate titles he simply no longer wanted.

As will be seen, almost every title in the collection filled a purpose or need from Galt's perspective and adhered to the principles of moral management in the treatment of the insane in general and of specific maladies in particular. The size and age of the collection may have been affected by the source of the books, but the character of the

\textsuperscript{43}"How Much Is That Worth Today?" Economic History Services. <www.eh.net/ehresources/howmuch/dollarq.php Accessed 8/2003>. The authors of this service admit that it is chancy to extrapolate money values from one age to another but explain the formula and technique they use is based on traditional and accepted methods of calculation.
collection remained in Galt’s control, as he evaluated each title for its suitability for his patients.

**Restrictions or Requirements.** Galt, in creating the patients’ library and choosing titles for it, needed to consider the restrictions under which he worked. Some were imposed by forces he could not control—a patient’s literacy skills, mental stability, and quality of eyesight—and others by his own set of cultural and professional values that required he consider each title as an opportunity to integrate moral management principles and techniques into his selection process of reading materials.

**Literacy Skills of the Patient Population.** According to Joseph Kett and Patricia McClung, who surveyed estate inventories in Virginia primarily between 1790 and 1830, Virginia had a “poor book culture” with almost 50% of homes owning no books at all. While pockets of erudition existed among the well-educated elite Virginians and especially among individuals in the cities and towns, Kett and McClung found that no widespread print culture existed among the citizenry.\(^4^4\) The study tends to indicate that just as with the general population, many asylum inmates would not have a great familiarity either with books or reading in their everyday lives.

Galt alluded to his reading population among inmates only in the most general terms: “We have nearly always *some* patients who are engaged in study or in teaching,” printed gifts are “fully appreciated by *a number* of our insane inmates” or “most fully appreciated by *a considerable number* of our patients.” [italics mine] On one occasion he

simply noted that “Some of our patients read.” At rare moments he noted the reading habits of specific patients in his medical records. Catherine Anson, for instance, was “fond of reading novels and newspapers,” while Narcissa Wickline was one who “dwells upon the Bible.” Galt provided some proof of literacy among patients, too, from information he gathered about a resident’s educational background. Joel Weed, a farmer, had an “English education,” and Thomas White had “quit school,” and William Wray had “attended college and completed his course.” Articulate letters written by a relative inquiring after their loved one also gives indirect evidence of some patients’ literacy, the assumption being a patient from an educated family would have been taught to read and write.

Precise numbers of literates at the asylum is unknown, although a general percentage can be premised. The 1850 census lists 817,795 whites as literate among a Virginian population of 894,800. The number of free blacks who could read was 43,017. If the asylum population was a strict representation of the general population, one would assume there was indeed as Galt said “a considerable number” of patients who could read. Some patients, however, cannot be counted as readers in an asylum setting even if they had been readers in other circumstances. Slaves, for instance, were forbidden to read by law; as for free blacks, it is highly unlikely that Galt would have allowed them in the library to mix with white patients, nor, as noted in an earlier chapter, would they have


been considered suitable candidates for therapy of moral management therapy based on reading.47

A patient’s county of origin could make a difference as to the likelihood of literacy. As a general rule, during the antebellum period the population in the western counties of Virginia benefited in a growth of literacy associated with “immigration, diversified commerce, gradually growing personal wealth, and literacy dependent occupations,” while those from some of the older eastern counties suffered from lack of literacy associated with “out migration, sluggish commerce, concentrated wealth, and occupational stagnation.”48 In the case of the Eastern Asylum population, however, a patient’s home county explains very little about his or her literacy. Although Galt’s asylum was mandated by law to take patients only from the eastern part of the state, because West Virginia was still part of Virginia, the eastern part of the state extended considerably to the “west” in 1850. As a result patients at Eastern Asylum represented almost two-thirds of current counties in Virginia. One patient hailed from as far west as Washington County, less than a 100 miles from today’s border with West Virginia. In addition, Eastern Asylum often accepted the overflow patients from the Western Asylum in Staunton, which also increased the number of patients from the western part of the state. As a result literacy rates arising from considerations of “east” or “west” in Virginia aren’t necessarily useful in arriving at a number of literates at the asylum.

47 Virginia Schedule, United States Census, 1850.

Occupational status is a useful indicator of patient literacy. Some patients held positions in which reading and writing were essential: the lawyers, physicians, teachers, clergymen, students, the army captain, the midshipman, the printer, the sheriff, the traveling agent for the Bible society, and the patient who had acted in an "official capacity" on a railroad. Small businessmen or merchants, too, like the two tobacconists, as well as the clerks who worked for them, would have needed to read and write simply to be able to order stock, keep an inventory, pay bills, and send out invoices. Skilled laborers and artisans such as the carpenters, carriage makers, tailors, pointers, wheelwrights, bricklayers, curriers, cooperers, millwrights, ship carpenters, plasterers, stonequarriers, and bakers were also likely to have at least rudimentary reading skills, ranging from 58-100%, most especially if they worked for themselves. On the other end of the vocational continuum, unskilled laborers with no particular occupation were unlikely to read with literacy rates of 20-100%. Farmers were the least likely group to read with literacy rates ranging from 0-78% depending upon their county of origin. In this last group, there was a considerable range in levels of educational attainment. A farmer, if from the planter class or an overseer or "agricultural manager," might be very well-educated indeed; a small dirt farmer or hired hand, on the other hand, may have simply planted and harvested using agricultural skills he had learned from his father or employer by rote without a need for reading skills.49

The literacy status of women, who most often had no formal occupation, can sometimes be guessed by the status of their husbands. Alice Rader, for instance, was

---

49 "Occupations for January 1847-October 1853," *EAAR, 1853-54*, 9; Rawson, "Figure 18: Literacy by Occupation and County," *Guardians of Their Own Liberty*, I: 47-8.
married to a state legislator. The wife of such a man would almost surely be educated, no
doubt brought up in an environment very similar to that of the Galt girls, where reading
and writing were de rigueur. But here again it is impossible to be precise. According to
the 1850 census, within the pool of unskilled laborers and farmers and their families,
sometimes a husband could read but a wife could not, or vice versa.\textsuperscript{50}

Galt admitted to the problem of illiteracy by noting that patients were less likely
to read in a pauper hospital such as his, yet the reading population at Eastern Asylum was
probably higher than this sentiment might indicate. The combined groups of white collar
professionals, skilled laborers, and artisans—almost 50% of white, male patients—could
read almost certainly, albeit at different levels, while the remaining 50%, the unskilled
laborers and farmers, still might have had rudimentary skills. The average literacy rate for
the state was 84.8%, but since at Eastern Asylum so many white, male patients came
from the agricultural and unskilled laboring classes, the hospital population as a whole
was probably below the average, perhaps ranging between 60-70%, but still higher than
might be expected at a pauper hospital. In any case even for those who could not read,
reading was not totally out of their reach. The presence of many readers, spellers, and
children’s books in the library suggest a number might have been in the process of
leaning to read and, if that tact failed, “they may listen to reading aloud of their fellow
patients and others. This latter method in a pauper asylum...seems quite worthy
of more attention.”\textsuperscript{51} In the end, however, the varying literacy skills of his population required

\textsuperscript{50} E229, “Alice Rader;” \textit{U.S. Census, 1850}.

\textsuperscript{51} Galt, \textit{Essays on Asylums}, 7; Rawson, \textit{Guardians of Their Own Liberty}, I: 36:
Rawson maintains that while there was a great variability of literacy among specific
counties, overall the average literacy rate of Virginia was 84.8%.
that Galt provide a variety of printed materials that could appeal to both the educated middle class, some who lived at the Doric and had ready access to reading materials kept in the sun room, as well as to the pauper or unskilled laboring and agricultural classes who were most likely to be illiterate and perhaps just learning to read for the first time at the asylum.

Quality of Patients’ Eyesight. Many patients were over forty years of age and probably needed eyeglasses in order to read. No doubt those from wealthy families brought their own glasses with them or were provided for by their relatives. Even so they must have treasured their eyeglasses and watched over them like hawks. New eyeglasses were not easy to obtain. Galt’s own mother, Mary Dorothea, whose favorite hobby was reading newspapers, was hard put to secure a pair of new eyeglasses to replace the ones she had broken. In 1843 John Millington had sent her the only pair of glasses he had left in his stock, writing “If they do not suit the broken pair, they will have to be sent to Richmond so a new pair of lens can be ground, for no one in Williamsburg can do the job.” If the superintendent’s own mother was unable to obtain reading glasses easily, it seems likely that asylum residents, even those who were wealthy, were at an even greater disadvantage. At the same time, Galt must have realized that to read, a patient must see. What was his solution? The answer remains unknown.  

Mental Stability. Patients varied in their ability to focus for long periods on reading and to appreciate what they read. Galt recognized this diversity among his

---

52 John Millington to Mrs. Galt, 30 December 1843; See also Ronald J. Zboray, A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) for further discussion of the problems of poor eyesight and reading difficulties during the antebellum period.
patients, but thought it a characteristic no different than one might find among the general public:

It must not be supposed that all patients are capable of enjoying and understanding what they read, precisely as individuals in a state of sanity: they differ much in this respect; and no doubt some of them do not comprehend fully, much of that which they read....With some, too, here, as with respect to other matters, there is perhaps a strange conjunction of the real and the ideal, in others there appears no difference at all, between their comprehension and interpretation of what they read, and that of the sane.\(^5\)

What Galt needed in the library, then, were materials that might appeal to those who were capable of “enjoying and understanding” as well as to those who “do not comprehend fully.” Depression, delusions, monomania as well as other conditions from which a patient might suffer required a variety of reading materials.

**Characteristics of the Library Collection.**

A traditional way of defining a library collection is to tally the titles by genre, authors’ nationality and/or place of publication.

---

\(^5\) "Literary Occupations," *EAAR*, 1843, (Siske), 87.
Table 1. Eastern Asylum Patient’s Library, 1843-1845

By Genre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Low estimate: 188 titles(^5)</th>
<th>High estimate: 226 titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>13 (9.6%)</td>
<td>13 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's</td>
<td>5 (3.7%)</td>
<td>9 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (6.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>27 (20%)</td>
<td>72 (38.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97 (42.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>18 (13.3%)</td>
<td>18 (9.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21 (9.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How-to</td>
<td>2 (1.4%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 (.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3 (2.2%)</td>
<td>7 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (5.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodicals</td>
<td>4 (2.9%)</td>
<td>4 (2.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (1.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>11 (8.1%)</td>
<td>11 (5.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11 (4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>14 (10.3%)</td>
<td>14 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (6.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>12 (8.8%)</td>
<td>12 (6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (5.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>8 (5.9%)</td>
<td>8 (4.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>18 (13.3%)</td>
<td>18 (9.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 (7.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) In calculating these figures for the Eastern Asylum Patients’ Library, I have arrived at three numbers for each genre. The total number of entries in Galt’s list equals 135, but the total number of titles is far greater because for certain authors, like Maria Edgeworth, Peter Parley, Catherine Sedgwick, Mary Martha Sheraton, and Walter Scott, Galt listed “some of” or “works.” For these authors I have added five or ten titles for a low and high estimate.

\(^5\) For analysis purposes throughout the text, I’ve chosen to use the low estimate of titles as middle ground.
### Table 2. Eastern Asylum Patients' Library

**Date Distribution of Titles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to 1820</td>
<td>114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821-1838</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839-1843</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838-1843</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS:** Published before 1838 - 89 titles or 78%; Published five years after 1838 – 25 titles or 21.9%.

### Table 3. Nationality of Authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Isles</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Date distribution of the entries (not titles) in Eastern Asylum Patients' Library is based on 114 entries out of a total of 135. Twenty-one entries were eliminated for consideration because Galt did not specify an author/title by which the date could be identified, or, "some of" was listed for specific authors who were prolific and whose work spanned many decades. The 114 entries used have a verifiable and certain publication date.
The tables above indicate that Galt anchored his patients’ collection with fictional titles (38.2%), by far the largest genre of his collection. All other genres fell within 1-9.5 point differential: history and travel each (9.5%) followed by reference and instructional materials (7.4%), biography (6.9%), poetry (5.8%), religion (6.3%), children’s (4.7%), science (4.2%), periodicals (2%), and how-to books (1%). If the genres are combined in an alternate configuration, the trends become even more clear-cut. Fiction, poetry, and children’s comprised 48.7% of the collection, almost half, and biography and history another 16.9%. In other words, 65.6% or almost two-thirds of the entire collection was made up of fictional and historical works.

The age of the collection as determined by the original publication dates of 114 entries (not titles) represent a collection that was heavily dependent upon older works. In this configuration, a full 76% of the collection was made up of material that had been published at least five years before 1838. Among those, 36% were published before 1821, many of those the steady sellers on the market that continued to remain popular even though published as much as a century earlier. Forty-one per cent were published during Galt’s father’s generation between 1821-1838, and only approximately a quarter, or 23%, were originally published in or after 1839.

If one assumes the more current titles were recent purchases rather than gifts from a donor’s discards, Galt made an effort to update most of his genres, placing special emphasis on periodicals. A full 75% or 3 out of 4 subscriptions to periodicals were published after 1838. If the current gift subscriptions to local newspapers were included, that number would rise considerably. The one title that came from an earlier period was Joseph Addison and Richard Steele’s eighteenth-century issues of the Spectator. The
authors had published this journal with the purpose of "bringing philosophy out of the closets and libraries, schools and colleges to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea tables and in coffee houses." It was meant to engage "the middle class to reading" or those "who simply had never been accustomed to read." The newer magazines—Family Magazine, Farmer's Register, and the Penny Magazine—could appeal more to farmers and the working class, although they certainly could be enjoyed by the more educated among his population as well.

Other genres in the patients' library had varying degrees of currency: biographical materials (37.5%), history and travel each (27.7%), children's books (50%), (this last figure may be deceiving since Galt had so few of this genre to begin with), religion and science each (12%). Galt added no new titles to his cache of reference materials, but this figure may be deceptive as well, since the library contained a large number of undated generic readers, spellers, dictionaries, and grammars which very well may have been current. In any event, all of these figures indicate that once Galt evaluated the titles he had chosen from donors' offerings, he tried to balance the collection by adding more current materials, first by obtaining periodicals and then by bolstering his history, travel, and biographical sections.

A statistical look at the nationality of authors, both individual and corporate, indicates that while foreign authors trumped American authors at 52% to 48%, American authors outnumbered any one nationality, including those from the British Isles at only 43%. This was, no doubt, a function of the fact that Galt was living at a time when more American authors were available on the market. It also indicates that Galt had embraced

---

the current nationalistic rhetoric not only in theory but in practice. On the other hand, he was clearly wedded to British authors that he had cut his teeth on as a youngster and which his parents' generation had depended upon—as indeed did most reading Americans of the period.

As well as looking at the genre breakdown at the Eastern Asylum Patients’ Library, it helps to look at these statistics in comparison with other libraries of the period. The libraries I have chosen to compare the patients’ library with are a diverse group and includes city and rural libraries, social and private collections, libraries meant for the working class, middle class, and elite, northern libraries and Virginian ones, libraries that were created prior to 1820 and those that were created more toward the mid-nineteenth century.

1. The Concord Charitable Library (ChL) operated between 1795-1820 and was founded by post-Revolutionary Concordians of high social and economic standing. The library’s purpose was to provide useful information as well as promote virtue, but it drew heavily from those materials that had a “sober, highly moral tone.” By 1820 it held 200 works. Although the readership was small, only 100 or so patrons, it ranged in type of patron from the prisoner in the local jail to its elite founders. In 1820 this library folded for a variety of reasons and its collection was absorbed into the Concord Social Library.58

2. The Concord Social Library (CSL) records span 1820-1855. This was a standard subscription library common to the period which by 1837 held at least 600 books. Like its predecessor, it, too, aimed to make useful information and materials

---

accessible to its patrons, largely the "broad, self-improving middle class." Although it absorbed many of the older titles of the Charitable Library, for new books it "deliberately selected" not only useful works but "popular works" of the day as well.59

3. The personal library of Lady Jean Skipwith of Middlesex County, Virginia. Jane Skipwith, the wife of the wealthy planter Sir Peyton Skipwith, had a passion for collecting books, and her husband's wealth allowed her to indulge it. She collected actively between 1788 and 1826 and owned at least 384 titles and 850 volumes, which made her library "one of the great libraries created in America during the age of Jefferson."60

4. Apprentices' Library of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of New York City. Its original aim when founded in 1820 was to "mold young workers into industrious employees, responsible citizens and cultured gentlemen," but by 1842-43 it was run by and for an emerging middle class, so that "any suitable person" artisan or middle class could apply and borrow books. Its readership numbered 1,844. In 1833 it had 17,931 volumes. Statistics are from that year, the one closest to Galt's formation of his library.61

5. The New York Social Library. This urban, subscription library is the only one of the libraries studied that provides statistical compilations of circulation records. It was

59Ibid.


established in the late eighteenth century and thrived well into the middle of the
nineteenth century. Extant records include millions of transactions by over 1,500-2,000
patrons who were largely of New York’s professional and elite class. The statistics and
titles cited in the table below date from Table 15: 1847-49, and Table 16, 1847-49, 1854-
56 (in combined form.) 62

6. The private libraries of Virginians compiled from estate inventories. Joseph
Kett and Patricia McClung analyzed 2,386 estate inventories for evidence of book
ownership for Fredericksburg, Fairfax, Botetourt County, Charles City County,
Petersburg, Lunenberg County, and Allegheny County. The bulk of these date from
1790-1830, although in some instances, the authors examined inventories from as late as
1874. There are many inconsistencies due to the incomplete records—blacks and the
poor are unrepresented, inventories do not always include books even if they might have
been part of an estate, and extant records are not consistently available for all
geographical areas nor for all the same years. Yet in spite of these drawbacks, the
inventories do shed light on the kind and number of books Virginians kept in their
homes. 63

---


Table 4: Eastern Asylum Patients’ Library Comparison with Other Libraries
By Genre Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Comparison</th>
<th>ChL</th>
<th>CSL</th>
<th>EAPL</th>
<th>ML</th>
<th>NYSL</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>Vain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novels, poetry, children’s, plays</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>4.8 - 22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>15.4 - 42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17.84</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>.3 - 8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History &amp; Biography</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27.32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.6 - 16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15.34</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.3 - 3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference (how-to, enc., dictionaries, instructional)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10.1 - 22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (nat. hist., technology, agriculture, medical)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.8 - 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ChL - Concord Charitable Library, 1795-1820
CSL - Concord Social Library, 1821-1850
EAPL - Eastern Asylum Patients’ Library, 1843-1845
ML - New York Mechanics Library, 1833
NYSL - New York Social Library, 1847-1849
SK - Jane Skipwith personal library, 1788-1826
Vain - Virginia inventories book collections, mainly 1790-1830

64 Percentages are combined in some genres for certain libraries to make comparisons possible.
Several conclusions are possible from these tables. A dramatic trend, notable in comparison of the older libraries with the more contemporary—the Concord Charitable Library and Apprentices Library in New York City with the Concord Social Library and the New York Social Library—demonstrates how fiction had become not only an acceptable but a highly desirable segment of any library collection by 1843. Where an earlier generation of the late 1790s had looked upon fiction with a highly critical eye, the newer generation of the 1840s and, even more so, later generations of the 1850s, were intent upon having fiction dominate their shelves. Surely much of this was a simple need on the part of those responsible for acquiring materials to meet patron demand. An unused library was certain to be an extinct library. Concord Social Library patrons, for instance, helped to shape their library’s collection by checking out some materials and leaving others on the shelf, so that the library committee was forced eventually to pack up the latter group of unread titles and place them in storage. Patrons would read what they most enjoyed it seems, regardless of what the town’s elite might stock on their shelves. Galt was very much in tune with this demand among readers for access to more and more fiction and embraced this most popular of all genres as the foundation of his collection. Indeed of all the libraries, save Jean Skipwith’s, his patient’s library had the highest percentage of fiction in proportion to the rest of the collection.

Still all fiction was not equal. While fiction must be entertaining, it must also be at least to some degree morally instructive, uplifting, and fall within the parameters of acceptable mores of the day. If one compares the overlap of specific titles within the libraries (where that information is available), contemporary libraries including Galt’s kept a common stable of acceptable titles, some steady sellers, others more current, but
all of which had earned the imprimatur of being appropriate and respectable. Galt’s patients’ library included ten of the same fictional titles of the combined holdings of the Concord Social Library and Concord Charitable Library: James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans* and *The Spy*, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Bulwer Lytton’s *Last Days of Pompeii*, Harriet Martineau’s *Settlers at Home*, Mary Bonham Howitt’s *Who Shall Be Greatest*, works by Maria Edgeworth, Catherine Sedgwick, and Walter Scott, most especially the latter author’s novels known as the *Waverly Novels*. The Richmond Library company of the same period also held many of these same titles (not statistically available for comparison.)  

Galt matched a number of titles with the New York City Social Library’s holdings as well, the only library among the others that provides statistical circulation records for comparison. The titles which its patrons, largely of the professional class, chose to read represent the preferences of a northern, urban, middle class. Would Galt want his patients to read the same? The answer is a resounding yes. Of the titles in the New York City Social Library that had a ranking of 13 or higher in popularity (many titles were tied for specific ranks), Galt held 6 of the 13 titles most sought after by men and 6 of the 9 titles most sought after by women. For men these included #2 *Waverly Novels*, #10 Prescott’s *Conquest of Mexico*, #10 Cooper’s *The Spy* and *Last of the Mohicans*, #11 Maria Edgeworth’s works, and #13 Irving’s *Columbus*. For women they included #3 *Waverly Novels*, #4 Prescott’s *Conquest of Mexico*, #5 Jared Sparks’ *American Biographies*, #8 Rollins’ *Ancient History*, #9 Edgeworth’s works, and #9 Cooper’s *Last

---


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
of the Mohicans. Although Galt had far fewer books than that of the New York Social Library, those he had were among the most popular.

The location of the library, north or south, then, made little difference in reader preference of fictional titles in the 1840s and with reason. Among the antebellum southern middle class, made up primarily of “merchants, factors, entrepreneurs, and bankers or in professional careers as teachers, editors, ministers, doctors, and lawyers,” enthusiasm for northern reading materials ran high. The publisher Ticknor and Fields of Boston saw a steady increase of southern sales for its publications that grew from $150 in 1847 to as much as $1200 in 1851. And this statistic documents only the records of one publisher out of many. Even in the few years preceding the Civil War, book and periodical sales to the south continued to peak.

Nor were the southerners passive observers of the ideas generated by the northern press. Although southerners “demanded conformity on slavery,” other controversial issues presented by northerners, such as gender equality, Native American status, educational reform, and even dueling, were debated and discussed openly and with some passion in southern lyceums, publications, and private parlors. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that Galt would have included the same popular books in his asylum library as those found on the shelves and in demand at the New York Social Library or the Concord Social Library. A comment, made by one Mississippi doctor advising his son, is instructive: “If you read novels at all, let them be the works of the great masters, of Scott, of Cooper, of Edgeworth,” the very same authors that ranked
highly in the north and were included in the patients’ library as well. Indeed they were the same authors that were held in esteem overseas. John Ruskin, the British philosopher and social reformer, stocked his library with the Bible, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Mary Martha Sherwood’s works, Shakespeare, and Goldsmith, all staples in many British and American libraries and found in Galt’s patients’ library. And not unlike many American readers, Ruskin was an avid reader of Scott, confessing he knew the *Waverly Novels* “better than any books other than the Bible.”

At the other extreme, religious materials as a desirable genre dropped precipitously during the same twenty year period following 1820. While the older library, the Concord Charitable, claimed 36.3% religious materials of its holdings, the newer Concord Social Library had only 3.9%. The New York City Social Library had even less with 1.10%. Galt with his 6% religious titles was closer to the contemporary libraries of the north in direct contrast to the personal libraries of Virginians as indicated in their estate inventories which ranged anywhere from 15.4% in Petersburg to 42.7% in Botetourt County. Not unlike the Concord Social Library which “aimed to steer clear of

---

66 Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class: Literature, Politics, and Economy, 1820-1880* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1998): 8, 10, 28. Wells theory seems to fly in the face of other evidence that argues antebellum southerners had a particular animus toward the northern press and found it to be biased against their writers and culture. However, Wells is characterizing southern sentiment toward northern publications up to the late 1840s before sectional conflict exploded over the issues of slavery, the admission of free and slave states, and tariffs that seemed to favor the north over the south. During that latter period the southerner literati castigated the dire influence of northern publications, but obviously at the same time continued to buy them. For further explanation of similarities and differences between the North and the South preceding the Civil War see, Edward Pessen’s “How Different From Each Other Were the Antebellum North and South?” *American Historical Review* 85, no. 5 (December 1980): 1119-1149.

controversy over both politics and religion,\textsuperscript{68} and which had actually removed pages from Thomas Jefferson’s \textit{Works} that related to questionable religious opinions, Galt also wanted to avoid controversy, perhaps not as much worried over what he perceived to be erroneous theological arguments, but rather to avoid inflaming the passions of his patients and thus retarding their journey toward recovery. In addition, Galt must have known that religion was a volatile topic in Virginia in the 1840s, a time when many diverse sects were vying for converts and the title of being the most spiritually pure. His moral management mandate was to remove all stimulation or excitement from his patient’s environment, and so it is likely he was wary of maintaining a large section of religious materials that might create controversy among his patients, especially among those who were religious delusionaries.

Galt had more poetry (5.8\%) than either Concord Social Library (1.2\%) or New York Social Library (2.12\%). In this he was closer to the Concord Charitable Library (5.5\%) but still lower than Skipwith’s library (9.7\%). He held far fewer biographical titles (6.9\%) than Concord Social Library (17.7\%) or the New York Social Library (15.34\%), and compared even less favorably when history and biography were combined for a total of 16.4\% to Concord Social Library’s 29.3\% and New York Social Library’s 27.32\%. On the other hand he had a much larger division of reference and instructional works (8.4\%) that included dictionaries, readers, spellers, and how-to books, than did these other libraries. While the northern social libraries were intent upon entertaining, enlightening, and morally instructing their patrons, they obviously left the basic education of reading, writing, and learning languages to their educational systems.

\textsuperscript{68}Gross, “Little Reading,” 174.
whether private or public. These libraries were dealing with the patron who could read well. Even the Apprentice’s Library in New York, although ostensibly catering to the working class, had little in the way that could be construed as basic instructional materials, again intimating that patrons who came to the door of that library were literate and had received basic instruction in reading and writing elsewhere. Galt, on the other hand, was dealing with a large population of illiterate or near illiterate patients who first needed to learn to read before they could use the bulk of the library’s collection, and with a smaller group of middle class young men and women who could appreciate advanced schooling in languages, history, and elocution. His larger reference collection and instructional titles were for their benefit.

Comparing the patient’s library with Lady Jean Skipwith’s personal collection requires special attention. Although a southern elite, Skipwith’s choices of reading materials is not so much notable for that fact as it is for suggesting the reading preferences of southern women of the period. Her collection was completed by 1826 when Galt was only seven years old and well before the period when publishers would flood the market with a diverse variety of fiction. Yet her collection had twice as much fiction as any of the other libraries under study in proportion to the rest of their collections. Even if poetry and children’s works are removed from the total percentage of fiction held by Skipwith, she still held far more than any other library. At the same time she had far fewer religious works (1.7%), histories and biographies (10%), and science (0%). If Skipwith’s appetite for fiction and lack of interest in histories, biographies, religious materials were in any way indicative of what women preferred to read, then in comparison, Galt with fictional holdings of 38.2% (rising to 48.7% when
adding in poetry and children’s works), made a sincere effort to accommodate his female patients’ interests although still falling short of the amount of fiction they might have chosen themselves.

The private collections of Virginians as demonstrated in Kett and McClung’s Virginia inventories also require special attention. A comparison with the patients’ library indicates that Galt departed dramatically from his fellow Commonwealth citizens in his selection of materials. While Galt’s collection of genres was almost always closer to the holdings of urban Virginians than to rural ones, yet even among city readers, Galt far exceeded the fictional works Virginians kept on their shelves at home. With a combination of novels, poetry, and children’s works he reached 48.7% matched to 22.2% in Fredricksburg (urban) and a paltry 4.8% in Charles City (rural). At the other extreme, Virginians kept a larger number of religious works than Galt (which almost always included at least one Bible) with a low of 15.4% in Petersburg to a high of 42.7% in Botetourt County compared to the patients’ library at 6.3%. Other genres in Virginians libraries were meagerly represented or not at all. The one exception was the number of reference and instructional books Virginians kept in their personal libraries which in some cases was higher than the patients’ library. Dictionaries, foreign language instruction, and how-to books ranged from 10.1% in Fredricksburg to 22.3% in Lunenberg County compared to Galt’s 8.4%. It may very well be that the reference collections of these Virginian libraries explain the dearth of reference materials in the social libraries of the north, that is, northern patrons like Virginians kept a personal home collection of basic instructional materials and did not count upon their social library to educate them in reading and writing. Galt, however, needed to combine the functions of
the home library with the social library, because for his patient population the asylum was their home. It needed to provide the instructional materials they might find at home as well as the entertaining fictional works in their neighboring social library.

In spite of the large rural population living at the asylum, Galt played more to the interests of an urban, middle class readership. He sought to teach the illiterate population of Virginians within his asylum with his instructional or reference materials, but once they could read he also wished to introduce them to novels and poetry with which they had little familiarity in their own homes. Galt was intent upon broadening the tastes of his patients with printed materials they would also enjoy. His goal was to get his patients reading (for a variety of purposes as will be seen), and this could best be accomplished by providing titles that were appealing and engaging. He kept the amount of religious materials purposely small and politics almost non-existent and instead built upon those genres like fiction, history, biography, and travel that would most likely to be picked up and read. He also provided a smattering of scientific works, some as instructional materials, others perhaps for those few residents who had an interest in such matters.

In comparison to other libraries, old or contemporary, Galt kept a more balanced collection. With the exception of fictional genre, in no case did he exceed the holdings of other libraries in any other genre, but nor did he come in with the lowest percentage in any genre (except for politics which was non-existent.) He skewed toward an older, more traditional collection in some genres and toward a more contemporary one in others, but generally was more in tune with the contemporary libraries of the north. He was well aware of the trends of what middle and upper class Americans were reading and their preferences, and he was likely to provide them when he could if they did not betray moral
management principles in creating a proper environment for the cure of insanity. At the same time his collection would be different from either a strictly social library or from that of a Virginian home library for it must serve a variety of functions.

Beyond those observations what else do the above comparisons mean? That is, how do they mesh with the particular needs of the patient population as Galt interpreted them, and how do they conform to the purposes of moral management approach to curing insanity?

**Galt’s Goals for the Patients’ Library**

**Reading as Therapy.** Reading for Galt was an integral part of moral management treatment. Indeed “an asylum can scarcely be said to meet the requirements of proper treatment at all, unless properly provided with the means of reading,” he wrote. Much like the asylum’s other therapies of occupation and recreation, “the influence of reading consists in the mind’s being thus occupied, to the effacement of delusions and morbid feelings, at least for a transitory period.” Also contrary to what the sane world might imagine, mental instability did not present an obstacle to reading. “If we considered the mind as altogether darkened,” Galt explained, then “we might come to the conclusion that reading was of little importance. But experience by no means coincides with this conclusion.” Many patients, he noted, while deranged on a few issues were quite rational on most others, so that some patients were “capable of the highest intellectual powers in the midst of decided mental derangement.” In short, “insanity doesn’t materially interfere with the process of reading.”
Additionally Galt thought that of all the recreational or occupational activities, reading had the most lasting and encompassing influence in its ability to distract the mind from morbid obsessions:

Reading is...a form of occupation, which is more generally applicable than most of the other varieties: for those who have cultivated this pursuit, will frequently retain a relish for it, after their insanity has become settled and fixed; and those who are unable to read or write, may be employed by having them taught these arts.

In other words, reading was not only useful in the asylum setting for the educated middle class resident but for the pauper as well, for those who would recuperate and eventually leave Eastern Asylum as well as those chronic cases who would spend the rest of their lives there.69

Reading as a Method of Managing Patients. In addition to using reading as therapy to reroute the mind back to the road of rationality, it served a practical purpose for the staff as well. Reading served "to fill up time," to furnish an "agreeable employment," and to provide a pleasant way for patients to pass their day. For these reasons, Galt thought, reading exerted "a tranquilizing effect over an individual." It affected a patient's perception of the staff:

Books...offer a mode of exhibiting our good feelings to a patient, by the mere act of lending them to him; and thus bear along with their presence in an asylum, a great additional means of management, by increasing our power of carrying out the law of kindness—which we have shewn to operate so successfully and so beneficially.

Since staff often needed to exert their authority over patients at other times in ways that patients resented or resisted, at least in providing a patient with books, they could in this one instance be seen as friends rather than as wardens, or so Galt theorized. Ultimately,

69EAAR, 1847 (draft), 28; EAAR, 1843, (Siske), 86; EAAR, 1850, 25.
too, although not expressed, control over the distribution of books and other printed materials could have been used within the larger system of rewards and punishments as a way to mold patients’ behavior, for it gave staff the power to withhold or dispense that which a patient might want dearly. For all these reasons, reading made patients manageable, and manageability was literally the most common descriptor used by Galt and his staff in their medical records to describe those inmates who were considered to be stable, if not necessarily progressing.  

Reading as Intellectual Instruction. Education in the asylum served a variety of purposes, not the least of which was the cultivation of “the intellectual faculties.” At the same time, schooling like all other activities engaged in by the insane required moderation, lest they do more harm than good. The New York doctor and professor, C. B. Coventry, told the cautionary tale of the aristocrat Lord Dudley, who as a youth was pushed too fast too far in his education, so that his “brain was stimulated at the expense of bodily power and health.” He had gone mad. Galt certainly had patients like Lord Dudley, who it was thought had broken under the strain of obsessive studying, and he himself was more than familiar with the stress involved in spending many hours reading, taking notes, and memorizing passages from his books. Yet still he was especially keen on establishing a school in the asylum and cited Kirkbride’s efforts at the Pennsylvania Hospital as well as those of the staff at Bicetre where “there are schools, which between two and three hundred of the patients attended.” His own desire to teach might have been especially acute. The role of teacher, after that of physician, was a traditional one for the Galt family. Several of Galt’s closest cousins managed their own private academies and

---

70 EAAR, 1843, (Siske), 86; EAAR, 1850, 26.
one even taught at the university in Charlottesville. And Galt himself had once attempted to enter the teaching profession by applying for a professorship at William and Mary. While that particular venture had run aground, he found other ways to be a part of the village’s educational milieu. He sat on the board of the Williamsburg Female Academy and followed with great interest the establishment of other secondary schools as well. He was especially proud of the growing opportunities for formal education in his village, writing in 1852 that the two new academies in Williamsburg had made the town “a very desirable residence for persons having children to educate.” A desire to school his patients then derived from his own personal proclivity toward teaching (and learning) as well as from his middle class mandate for self-improvement and his moral management mandate to occupy the diseased brain with wholesome rather than morbid thoughts.71 Galt could legitimately indulge in his desire to teach residents without the need to trot out lame excuses, for among the patient population of his pauper asylum there was a large number who could not read well or at all. Teaching these patients to read could be justified easily by the premise that education was beneficial for them not the least reason because it facilitated one of the best routes to moral education and thus to recovery of their sanity.

As late as 1854 the Board of Directors was still mulling over how Galt’s recommendation to provide the patients with schooling might be made part of the asylum regimen without expending extra dollars. They ordered Philip Barziza, by then the asylum’s general agent and supervisor of gas works, to “act as teacher for the patients if his other duties permitted.” They also thought the female night guard might “teach

---

71C. B. Coventry, “Physiology of the Brain,” AJI 2, no.2 (October 1845), 206. EAAR, 1843 (Siske), 87; JMGII to William C. Galt 13 January 1852.
classes for women patients during the day at the discretion of the superintendent."\(^{72}\)

Although there is no evidence that these events transpired or that Galt actually established a regular day school in the asylum, teaching did take place at least on an informal basis and quite a bit of it.

The library had ten first reading books, five spelling books, two English dictionaries, and John Hall’s Reader’s Guide, an elocution and rhetoric guide, all materials that would be suitable for use in teaching those patients who could not read or could read only slightly. For other patients, who could already read with facility but required more advanced lessons (perhaps like Livey whose college education had been interrupted by his disease), Galt kept French and Latin dictionaries and grammars, including the classic, Thesaurus Linguae Latinae Compendiarius, by Roger Ainsworth (or more likely the abridged version of it known simply as Ainsworth’s Dictionary, English and Latin) and John Mair’s Rudiman’s Rudiments Syntax to Latin. All could be used to complement lessons in Sallust, Caesar, and Virgil of which he also had several copies. Also on the asylum library shelves were copies of Pike’s Mathmaticks, Jeremiah Day’s Introduction To Algebra, Almira Hart Lincoln’s Familiar Lectures on Botany for the Use of Seminaries and Private Students, and Timothy Flint’s Lectures upon Natural History, Geology, Chemistry, the Application of Steam and Interesting Discoveries in the Arts. Several books, like Oliver Goldsmith’s Roman History and History of Greece and Salma Hale’s History of the United States had been formatted by their authors especially for use in schools, and William Grimshaw’s History of the United States and History of France was even accompanied by a question book that could be used to quiz students.

\(^{72}\)Dain, Disordered Minds, 88-9.
Such historical titles not only held value for their content and use in instruction, they were also particularly suitable for the insane. The British doctor, Andrew Combe, noted that in hypochondriacal cases...nothing is so useful, in point of mental discipline, as the study of a regular course of history, the leading events being distinctly written out, with proper dates.” His colleague, Forbes Winslow, agreed and wrote that “adopting a course of reading [was] likely to fix the mind and withdraw it from the delusions under which it is laboring. A course of historical reading has been found to be most useful in these cases.” Thus in addition to the titles mentioned above, Galt also kept in the library Emma Willard’s History of the United States, Adam Ferguson’s History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic, William Prescott’s History of the Conquest of Mexico, four copies of Charles Rollins’ Ancient History of the Egyptians, and three copies of William Russell’s History of Modern Europe.73

Reading as Moral Instruction. In describing the illness of Eastern Asylum residents in 1843, Galt wrote that “causes may be divided into moral and physical...but many of the physical causes can be traced as owing their activity to indulgence in some propensity, and therefore may be considered in many cases, as in part, moral causes.” Drunkenness, for instance, was of this “double character,” both moral and physical in nature, for while alcohol deteriorated the mind, so did the patient’s lack of restraint in overindulging in it. “Under this mode of consideration,” Galt wrote, “the number of cases attributable to moral causes, is increased greatly.” The acquisition, then, of a moral code, complete with a proscribed set of virtues was integrally intertwined with the cause and cure of some forms of insanity. That being the case, many of his patients would need

treatment to support their attempts to overcome bad habits and gain control over their own passions in order to recover their wits. Reading must contribute its share of lessons.74

Galt used almost every genre as a tool to morally instruct his charges, for a title, regardless of the subject matter, could serve a variety of purposes. While formal reading books and spellers taught the patient to read and write, they also with their content provided moral instruction. Noah Webster's speller, for example, with its hundreds of didactic sample sentences, meant ostensibly to teach the correct spelling and use of words, also taught the reader that "Anger is a tormenting passion, and so are envy and jealousy. To be doomed to suffer these passions long would be as severe a punishment as confinement in the state's prison," or "A good son will help his father," or "Careless girls mislay thing," as well as hundreds of other such aphorisms.75

Vocational works, too, could be employed for a like purpose. John Rees' manual, The Art and Mystery of a Cordwainer, or an Essay on the Principles and Practices of Boot and Shoemaking, of which Galt had four copies, was ostensibly meant to teach young men how to make shoes, and indeed the bulk of the publication accomplishes that purpose in great detail. Yet in the final moments of the manual, Rees turns to advising journeyman upon the virtues he must acquire if he is to achieve success for himself as well as to contribute to the public good. "Be punctual," he tells them, be a "regular sober hand," and avoid the "one great evil" of drinking. Be honest and avoid using cheap or shabby materials. "To be so disappointed, think how you would like it."

74 EAAR, 1843, (Siske), 77-78.

75 Noah Webster, The American Spelling Book (Wells River, VT: Ira White, 1843), 29, 33, 136.
he added. This publication, of course, was written for British journeymen rather than American artisans, and Rees’ rather extensive tirade against trade unions reflects his disapproval of the rowdy working class demonstrations, some violent, that were sweeping London and other cities in the early part of the century. Yet his advice for developing personal virtue was applicable to young Americans entering the shoe-making trade as well. Galt must have also been impressed further with Rees reference to “Dr. Franklin’s” adages on hard work, thrift, and honesty, as well as his recommendation that young journeymen read Franklin’s “The Way to Wealth” and “Advice to Young Persons Intended for Trade.”

Vocational materials for the farmer or agricultural worker also served a dual purpose. Practically they could guide a patient in the fields at home or in the gardens at the asylum. But they could also instill pride and respect for hard work. For these residents, Galt provided the magazines, the American Farmer and older issues of the Farmer’s Register. The latter title was written and published by the secessionist Edmund Ruffin. In its time the Register “was acclaimed by leaders of the agricultural press as the premier organ of this type,” although by 1842 the magazine had folded for lack of subscribers. Ruffin had begun to use the pages of the Register as a forum to excoriate the nation’s banking system and northerners and, in the process “neglected questions of husbandry.” His subscribers complained “the Register has abandoned agriculture for political diatribe.”


comprehensive, its scope aptly described in the subtitle, *A Treatise on the Situation, Soil, Fencing, and Laying Out of Gardens, on the Making and Managing of Hot Beds and Greenhouses, and on the Propagation and Cultivation of Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits, and Flowers.*” This book was not meant for the common farmer, who could read haltingly, but rather for an educated farmer, an overseer, or perhaps even a planter, who could appreciate not only the instruction on specific topics, but the structure and strategy of agricultural practice in general.

For female residents, Galt provided Mary Randolph’s *Virginian Housewife,* which instructed a matron how to cook and preserve food herself or direct a household of slaves how to do so. It was the only how-to title in the library aimed directly at the female population and certainly addressed the role women would have known best in the outside world. Thrift was the virtue most touted in this cookbook, whether it be in procuring, preparing, or presenting the products of a well-run, efficient kitchen and larder. Perhaps, too, there was some immediate practical value in the title for some few white female patients may have found their way into the kitchens, although generally cooking was left to the black staff or black patients. It seems unlikely, however, that either black or white cooks were ever requested or allowed to prepare any of the more exotic recipes, like fricando of veal, eggs ala crème, Spanish gazpacho, cream cakes, Naples biscuit, or the like, for asylum residents.

Galt was able, then, to take a variety of instructional materials and use them not only for the purpose they were meant—to train his residents in intellectual or vocational skills—but to instill moral virtue as well. Other genres were employed in a similar manner. Nature books, for instance, which opened the reader to the interesting world of...
flora and fauna, also included strands of moral instruction and found a ready audience among antebellum readers. Nature themes had begun to make their way into spellers, children’s books, religious works, textbooks, and other genres early in the century, but by the 1840s were a full-fledged market on its own. In addition to being entertaining and instructive, nature was considered “morally pure” and so could provide lessons to young and old readers. Birds and insects, who built their nests carefully, were portrayed not only as birds and insects who built their nests carefully, but as examples of diligence, perseverance, and cheerfulness that humans might emulate. Nature books also were most often the type of printed material to carry an abundance of illustrative engravings and lithographs, always a popular feature among readers.° One of the first and most popular of the period’s lavish nature books, Charles Wilson’s American Ornithology with its illustrations of over 200 species, was by the author’s own admission designed to attract “the economic and cultural elite,” those who were “persons of wealth and taste.” Published over seven years beginning in 1808 and costing $120 for twelve volumes, the set’s best selling point was its uniquely American character—American naturalists observing native species in their native habitats. By 1843 it had been in print many years, often abridged, and at a much more affordable price than the original set.°

°Interestingly the engravings found in many antebellum nature books were derived often from the same one source, so that engravings first published by the Society of Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in its publications were later found in Samuel Goodrich’s Peter Parley books, the Harpers Family Library, the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, Lady Godey’s magazine, the Albion, as well as flower books, biblical natural history books, and textbooks on botany or zoology. See Margaret Welch, The Book of Nature: Natural History of the United States, 1825-1875 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 137-38.

°Welch, Book of Nature, 32-48; It is likely Galt provided one of the cheaper abridged editions of American Ornithology available in 1831 or 1840.
Galt also looked at his biographical works as a route to moral instruction. Biography was very much a mainstay of "polite literature," although the genre evolved considerably during the antebellum years, both stylistically as well as in the author's approach toward his subject. Before 1820 biographies had focused on an individual's public character. After 1820 the focus was placed as much upon his private character. Indeed biographers of the new style redefined the meaning of the word "character." Where once it had been restricted to virtues of a civic and public nature, character now came to include "virtues that were increasingly private and interior." Biographies came to be seen as an appropriate vehicle to guide the antebellum reader toward "habits of thrift, industry, temperance, piety."

As the form and style of the genre changed, so, too, did readers' expectations of what they might encounter when selecting a biography. The best biographies were the most "authentic." Narratives should be based upon facts and documentation, taken not only from newspaper accounts or the personal observation of the subject's contemporaries, but from an interpretation of the subject's own writings. Among the most prolific practitioners who pioneered the new style of biography was Jared Sparks, owner and editor of *North American Review* between 1824 and 1831 and well known among the literati of the time. Sparks was perhaps America's first bona fide scholar/historian. He had collected and edited both Benjamin Franklin's and George Washington's papers in two multi-volume sets, an accomplishment that would have impressed a man of letters like Galt. Galt chose Sparks' biographies of George Washington and Benjamin

Franklin (which included his autobiography) for the patients’ library over the more traditional and standard versions of Washington’s life by the esteemed Virginian, John Marshall, and the even older classic by Parson Weems. In addition to Sparks’ lives of Washington and Franklin, Galt also included in the patients’ library the ten volumes that comprised the first series of Sparks’ *Library of American Biography* published by Harpers between 1832 and 1838, a set held by thirty-three of forty-eight other libraries of the period. The biographies in this set were primarily of New England revolutionaries, men like Ethan Allen, Israel Putnam, John Stark, Robert Montgomery, which effectively even if not purposely, all but eliminated the role Virginians had played in the Revolution. In a sense Galt had little choice but to choose among the lives of northern luminaries. In 1843 when Galt was assembling the patients’ library, few biographies of southerners were available for purchase. In the almost thirty years between 1834 and 1861, the *Southern Literary Messenger* and the *Southern Quarterly*, the south’s premier magazines, reviewed fewer than twelve biographies by or about southerners, a good indication that southern biographies were few and far between. Yet the Sparks biographies, regardless of their subjects’ origins, promoted the kind of virtues Galt wanted his patient’s to emulate. Courage in the face of challenge, temperance, thrift, industry, self-discipline, self-education were all part of an ethic middle class southerners had adopted and emulated from their northern counterparts and one amply demonstrated by the lives found in the *Library of American Biography*.  

Galt did include southern biographies when he could find them. He had a volume each of the life of Patrick Henry, Henry Clay, and John Calhoun. Galt did not mention

---

81Ibid, 47, 143, 179. See also Wells, *Middle Class Emergence in the South.*
the specific titles of these biographies in his library list, but a good case can be made for specific editions. The Henry biography was most likely the classic by Virginian William Wirt. The Clay and Calhoun biographies were probably "campaign biographies." These would have had the advantage of being current, plus both were written by the subjects themselves. Although Galt normally avoided placing political materials in the patients' library because of the controversy and excitement they might engender, campaign biographies were not necessarily perceived by Galt or his contemporaries as political or partisan but as "part of the biographical genre rather than crass attempts to influence voters." The two parties, both Whigs and Democrats, took the same approach in portraying their candidates as "relatively ordinary men whose industry, rather than natural superiority, had elevated them to candidacy." In that sense campaign biographies weren't really very different from apolitical biography that also extolled the virtues and wisdom of its subjects. Readers could absorb their lessons and apply them to their own lives, and indeed, diaries of the period indicate overwhelmingly that readers did just that, often confiding their desire to emulate the lives of those they had just read about. And as has been seen, Galt's own journal documents the fact that he read biographies in this way, drawing examples from them of how he might improve his own life and behavior.

Sparks' biographies would have been appropriate in the patients' library for two additional reasons. They were cheap and had been designed by Harpers to be so, and they were written in language a less well educated reader might enjoy. Sparks particularly aimed to create "personal narrative that read briskly" without lengthy scholarly extracts or narratives. Both the pauper sitting in his cell in one of the asylum

---

\(^{82}\)Casper, *Constructing American Lives*, 104-5.

\(^{83}\)Ibid, 142.
wings and the middle class professional lounging in the sun room in the Doric could enjoy them. Although asylum residents would have little opportunity to perform on the same public stage peopled by senators, revolutionaries, inventors, or scientists, they could strive to attain the same habits of temperance, self-discipline, thrift, and industry, and, in short, build a private character similar to American heroes. At least that must have been Galt’s hope.

Galt did not eschew totally the older style biography. He included Wirt’s *The British Spy*, a series of stories about American lives seen through the eyes of an Englishman, plus Plutarch’s *Lives*, Voltaire’s *History of Charles XII*, and Washington Irving’s *A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. The mix between the two biographical styles was not at all unusual among libraries of the period. Among the forty-eight library catalogs surviving the period from 1832 to 1838, Sparks and Wirt often sat cheek by jowl with one another. Yet it is also true that readers were increasingly demanding newer rather than older biographies and voted with their library cards, leaving the older biographies on the shelves gathering dust until the librarian or other custodian decided to remove them and pack them away.\(^8^4\)

Galt also included a biography of Marquis de Lafayette, a man most Americans revered for his support and participation in their country’s struggle for independence. A variety of Lafayette biographies were available in 1843, but Galt probably chose Robert Wain’s *Life of the Marquis de la Lafayette*, a title found in a variety of other libraries of the period. Another contender, however, is *Lafayette in America* which devoted a great

---

\(^{8^4}\)Ibid, 83.
many pages to the Marquis' visit in 1823 to Virginia and particularly Williamsburg. Galt would have had fond memories of the occasion, for as a young boy he had been present to see and hear the esteemed general when he passed through his small village. Galt also included a biography of Martin Van Buren in the patient's library, most likely *The Life of Martin Van Buren, Heir Apparent to the "Government" and the Appointed Successor of General Andrew Jackson* attributed to Davy Crockett but actually written by a ghost writer, Augustin S. Clayton. Crockett had a particular animosity toward Van Buren (as did Galt and other Virginians)\(^5\), and although his biography of the former president was essentially a hatchet job, the author went about his task in a comedic, humorous style. This may have assuaged any doubts Galt might have had in including a title that on this one occasion flew in the face of his pre-occupation with prudence in the selection of library materials.

Other biographies in the patients' library were of men perhaps not as well known among the residents as were the Americans. *The Lives of Eminent Persons*, another production of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, included the lives of Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Mahomet, Wolsey, Edward Coke, Lord Somers, Caxton, Blake, Adam Smith, Niebuhr, Christopher Wren, and Michelangelo. All of the biographies mentioned were in some sense hagiographies, regardless of their author's protestations to the contrary. They depicted their subjects in the best light and showed them not only as men of achievement and great talent but as men who overcame hardship and

\(^5\) Nathaniel Beverley Tucker had portrayed Van Buren as a "corrupt politician" in his futuristic novel of sectional conflict, *The Partisan Leader;* Galt had argued against Van Buren's presidency in 1840 describing the Democrat leaders as a "nearly all men of bad character."
disappointment and attained great success due to their fortitude, courage, perseverance, and good character. In providing these sorts of books Galt was offering, as he did with so many of his other library choices, a standard by which patients might measure themselves and a goal to which they might aspire.

Fictional selections made up the largest genre in Galt’s library, an indication that Galt knew the type of material patients were most likely to pick up and read, and so could act as an influential genre in the quest to reform the patients’ character and restore his sanity. He relied primarily upon popular library staples: Defoe’s survivalist tale, The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, James Fenimore Cooper’s adventure stories, Last of the Mohicans and The Spy, and Walter Scott’s Waverly Novels, all titles chosen from among each author’s oeuvre for specific reasons. Robinson Crusoe was more suited to his patients than Moll Flanders or A Journal of the Plague Year, also best sellers by Defoe. The Plague involves quite a bit of death and illness. A sane individual of strong character might be able to withstand such drear content and even find it titillating or pleasurably horrifying, but for the patient already depressed and fearful, such raw subject matter would not be helpful. Moll Flanders, too, was not subject-appropriate. It follows the lives and times of a great many characters involved in whoring and thieving. Galt’s goal of reading therapy was to undermine a patient’s destructive habits not to re-enforce old ones or worse yet create new ones. The Last of the Mohicans on the other hand carried many of the themes most valued by Galt and his fellow superintendents—the goodness of nature as opposed to the insipid corruption of the city, characters who are stoical, self-reliant, altruistic, and honest counterbalanced by those who are not, plots, and resolutions that conform to rather than challenge the established order of the
antebellum social hierarchy. As for Scott's *Waverly Novels*, they were simply the most popular fictional titles among all and no library of the period could be considered complete without them.⁸⁶

Galt included current fictional titles in his library as well as the steady sellers. Charles Dickens was all the rage in the 1830s and 1840s on both sides of the Atlantic, and Galt made sure to see he was represented, if minimally, on the shelves of the asylum library. He chose the cheerful tale, *Pickwick Papers*, which follows the adventures of the lovable Mr. Pickwick and his three comrades on their travels around England. They encounter a variety of characters with names like Mr. Winkle, Mr. Jingle, and Mr. Wardle and experience a variety of humorous, farcical situations. Just as it was not an accident that Galt chose Crusoe over *Moll Flanders* or *Last of the Mohicans* over other Leatherstocking Tales, it was not an accident that of Dickens' work he chose *Pickwick Papers* rather than *Oliver Twist*. As Dickens had developed as an author, he quickly became more the social satirist with an edge, demonstrating the dark side of civilization set in the underbelly of city life rather than the salubrious air of the country. In a sense after *Pickwick Papers*, Dickens crossed the great divide between innocuous entertainment that cheered, and biting commentary that emphasized and condemned the social ills of the day. While *Oliver Twist* might be appropriate reading for Galt, he could not find a role for it to play in his plan of recovery for the insane.

Other fictional pieces had the same dual character. Popular and well-liked by the public, they also carried subtle and sometime not so subtle themes of morality, lost and

⁸⁶See Emily Todd's *Walter Scott and... Waverly Novels*. Readers would "binge read," working their way through all of the *Waverly Novels* and then starting over again. Apparently they did the same with Cooper and Edgeworth.
then recovered, or if not recovered, paid for handsomely by the unfortunate protagonist of the novel. *The History of Sanford and Merton* by Thomas Day, a book that had been in print almost sixty years by 1843, was one such type of book. Tommy Merton, the good-natured, spoiled son of a rich planter in Jamaica meets Harry Sanford, the saintly son of a simple, but successful, farmer. In each chapter, Harry teaches Tommy by example the advantages of acquiring the desirable qualities of honesty, thrift, kindness, consideration for others, respect for his elders, and self-discipline. The whole is interspersed with short fables that reinforce each moral Harry demonstrated earlier in a real life situation.

Although a children’s book, as were others like John Abbott’s *McDonner*, John Aiken’s and Letitia Barbauld’s *Evenings at Home*, Samuel Goodrich’s *Peter Parley* stories, and Frank Marryat’s *Masterman Ready*, it provided the type of lessons Galt wanted in his library. At the same time, the reading level was such as to be easily comprehended by his less literate patients or those who did not “comprehend fully, much of that which they read.” In addition Thomas Day’s commitment to moral education was well known even on the American side of the Atlantic. He was part of a small group of British educators that included Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Joseph Priestley who theorized that children might be trained in a way that would not undermine their unspoiled, innately Godly nature. Their ideas were indeed so popular in America they managed to penetrate the hinterlands of North Carolina at a small Hebrew school in Warrenton.

---

87 *EAAR, 1843* (Siske), 87.

Day, like other educational reformers of the day, was particularly committed to French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau's notions that children were born as a tabula rasa. In order to cultivate virtue they must be brought up in an environment very much shielded from the corruption and contamination of an urban society. Day went a step further than his peers and actually adopted two young orphan females with which he hoped to test his theory. The experiment failed for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the two little girls insisted on behaving like children rather than automatons in an educational experiment. Day ultimately applied his educational theories to his young wife, a more willing pupil. She agreed to forego society as well as her ample inheritance and move to the country, there to live humbly in a dilapidated country cottage tilling the soil and cleaning house much as an importunate maiden might. In any case, Day's educational notions were the driving premise in *Sanford and Merton*, and they seemed to appeal to parents and perhaps children as well who up until that point had very little written for them specifically. The small book became an instant success upon publication in 1795 and remained a steady seller well into the nineteenth century. Galt no doubt had read *Sanford and Merton* himself as a child.

Although children's books such as *Sanford and Merton* could be given to the more uneducated among the patient population or even used by them as a text in learning to read, such titles were used also by their targeted audience, children, since the asylum had at least one child as a resident and possibly more. Tommy Graves was eleven or twelve at the time of his admittance, although he had showed signs of insanity as early as

---

eight years of age, being “melancholy and difficult to restrain” and “dangerous with small children.” He was an “exceedingly wild and thoughtless child” as well, so a book like *Sanford and Merton* might introduce the boy to more appropriate behavior and its rewards.

For adult readers, especially women whose insanity was perceived as stemming from “domestic troubles” or “domestic problems,” Galt provided works with themes that addressed parenting, spousal relationships, and domestic responsibilities, most notably the novels of Maria Edgeworth and Catherine Maria Sedgwick. Edgeworth, who had lived most of her adult life in Ireland, earned great acclaim and a large readership in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Her stories were a “combination of education intention, moral fabulation, and description of manners and customs,” a formula which sold very well with the public as well as with her publisher who would pay as much as 2,000 pounds for a single work from her pen. Edgeworth was particularly influenced by her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, who like his dearest friend Thomas Day (of *Sanford and Merton* fame), was committed to educating children in a rural environment free from the contamination and corruption of a decadent society which valued material goods and artificial manners more than it did virtue. One of the first literary endeavors by Maria Edgeworth was a two volume set, *Practical Education*, written in collaboration

---

90 "Tommy Graves."


92 Richard Edgeworth eventually broke with Rousseauean theory of human nature, thinking it had “little practical relevance, if indeed it was workable at all.” He joined the Lunar group, a circle of British reformers who believed education should have a practical end, very unlike Rousseau’s sentiment that “we should educate for mankind, not for a profession.” See Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, 61.
with her father, that addressed among other topics, children's toys, the necessity of assigning tasks to children, obligations by and to servants, obedience, truth, as well as more traditional topics of grammar, classical literature, and geography. Indeed hardly any subject connected with the upbringing of children was left untouched by the two Edgeworths as they strove to instruct not only the child but the adult who was responsible for the child.

As much as Edgeworth admired both Thomas Day and his book *Sanford and Merton*, she found it much too theoretical and wrote her own children's book based on her observations of how real children thought and behaved. She lived much of her young adulthood with and among several younger siblings from her father’s third marriage, and as they progressed from childhood through adolescence through their teen years, her books would reflect lessons that she thought they might be able to comprehend. In 1800 she tried her hand at her first novel for adults, *Castle Rackrent*, which also enjoyed critical and the public approval. Whether writing for adults or children, however, she never abandoned basing both her plots and characters on lessons of morality. She set about this specific agenda very deliberately, often plotting out a novel with only a particular moral lesson in mind: in one instance she wrote in her notes for a new book, “to show that those who have the habit of procrastinating may lose fortune, fame, friends, and happiness.”

---

93 An interesting aside is that Maria’s father forbid her to publish her first work until after Thomas Day died; in spite of Day’s alleged progressive thought, he believed women should not write nor do anything else other than be wife and mother.

Maria Edgeworth’s influence went far beyond the British empire for she would serve as the inspiration for the first generation of American female novelists writing between 1820 and 1840, all of whom as young girls grew up reading her novels. Catherine Maria Sedgwick was one of these and a particular admirer of Edgeworth’s, so much so she dedicated his first novel, *A New England Tale* to her. Indeed there were many similarities between the two women. Like Edgeworth, Sedgwick would become famous, popular with both critics and the reading public, and earn a steady salary for her work. Like Edgeworth, Sedgwick wrote didactically, using her characters, who were either good or bad but could never be both, to teach the difference between the two. And like Edgeworth, who sometimes wrote of controversial issues like the harsh treatment of Irish peasants, Sedgwick wrote of intermarriage with Indians, illicit love, and fallen women. She was able to escape the disapproval often surrounding such topics by her rather non-committal approach to them. Indeed such was her unconscious commitment to remain moderate in her fictional approach to societal issues of the day that even as a supporter of the gradual abolition of slavery, her one attempt to write about the topic ended in failure. The ill-fated novel remained unfinished and unpublished at her death.95

Galt did not name specific titles by either Sedgwick or Edgeworth in his library list but rather noted the inclusion of “some of” the works by these two women. It is likely that he included children’s works from both of them as well as novels. Galt must have appreciated the fact that they were established and popular writers with solid credentials who could tell a good story in a charming way without arousing animus. And

---

finally very much in keeping with some of his other choices like Bunyan and Cowper who portrayed the insane sympathetically, Galt may have been responding to Sedgwick’s inclusion of characters like Crazy Bet, the wandering madwomen, in her novel *A New England Tale*. Crazy Bet met all the accepted criteria that triggered insanity—"a fine genius, excess of sensibility, a neglected education, and a severe disappointment of heart."

Another female British writer, Mary Botham Howitt, who attacked domestic issues in an acceptable manner, was also amply represented in the patients’ library. Her novel, *Who shall Be Greatest*, fictionalized Guislain’s advice that patients suffering from a concern with materialism be shown where “true happiness consists,” that is in “health and a moderate fortune.”96 She follows two women from youth to young adulthood through marriage and motherhood as each attempt to outdo the other in their acquisition of worldly goods and accomplishments—houses, clothes, community status, husbands, children. The competition between the two women leave both unhappy, dissatisfied, unfulfilled, poor and makes clear the foolishness of investing too heavily in the activities of worldly acquisition. Galt had several others works of Howitt as well, *Hope On, Hope Ever* and some of her stories from the series, *Tales for the People and Their Children*.

For patients with drinking problems, Galt heeded the advice of Esquirol, Pinel’s protégé, who recommended they be given “articles on temperance” to read.97 Galt had no problem in finding a profusion of such literature in America. In August 1836 the American Temperance Union had met at Saratoga and endorsed “prose fiction as

96Joseph Guislain, “Traite sur L’alienation Mentale, etc .,” *TI*, 144.

weapons in the crusade against Prince Alcohol." The gauntlet had been flung down, and dozens of writers responded to the challenge. Timothy Shay Arthur led the legion of temperance writers into battle. Known as the father of temperance fiction, his most popular work *Ten Nights in a Bar Room* included all of the stock characters of "imploring children, sweetly entreating women, and dying mothers." Galt included in his library an earlier work by Arthur, *Temperance Tales or Six Nights with the Washingtonians*. Its message was simple: No matter who you were or from what class you came, to drink excessively was the fastest and clearest route to ruin, and possibly, to insanity.

For patients who had been too easily influenced by unsuitable companions or the corrupting temptations of civilization in their outside life, Galt could again rely upon the popular steady seller *Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe, stranded on a deserted island, must depend upon his own wits for survival, and against great odds, find food and shelter as well as overcome a variety of dangerous, life-threatening situations. In the course of his adventure, he learns that very few of the comforts he had pursued at home were necessary or even desirable. Rather he comes to value the virtues of determination, industriousness, perseverance, patience, and most of all self-reliance. The conclusion of the novel sees Crusoe rescued both in the physical sense from the island but also morally and spiritually from his previous lack of character. Although *Robinson Crusoe* has a definite moral

---


99Even Walt Whitman would write a temperance novel, *Franklin Evans*, although he confessed he wrote it with the help of a bottle of port.

lesson to teach, it is well-integrated into an entertaining plot, which accounts for its continuing popularity among the general public for centuries. It was “devoured by folks who had only 2 or 3 years of schooling” in Britain, and in both America and Britain it was one of three books that would always be found in the home, the Bible and Pilgrim’s Progress being the other two in the triumvirate of staples. In this case as with others, Galt would have agreed with Maria Edgeworth’s father when he wrote, “instruction in the dress of innocent amusement is not denied admittance amongst the wise and good of all ranks.”

Patients suffering from depression or despondency required more than just didactic readings to correct mental problems. A change of heart was needed as well. Samuel Woodward, the veteran of American asylum keepers, had written that for “the melancholic there is no present enjoyment, no hope, no confidence, everything wears a gloomy aspect, every contemplation is sad, and nature with all its loveliness, is somber, darkened, and cheerless.” William Connolly agreed with this grim assessment and thought it necessary “to cheer and console the depressed” and “to interrupt the unhappy thoughts of the more disturbed with the association of innocent diversion and joyousness.” For this Galt could turn to poetry. Rufus Griswold’s Poets and Poetry of America, which included the work of over 100 poets, contained themes primarily devoted to nature, nostalgia, historical events and characters, patriotism, democracy, God, romanticized love, the pleasures of home and family life, and the spiritual triumph over

---

101 Altick, English Common Reader, 68.

misfortunes and death. As Griswold himself admitted, his chief criteria for selecting a poem for the anthology was to include as many American poets as he could find with no particular motive to analyze any of them with a critical eye.103 Yet this suited Galt’s purposes for it gave him a great many short poems with a variety of style if not necessarily sentiment, and it provided his patients with a positive or, at least, an inspirational message as an alternative to their depressive obsessions. Even those poems that touched at the very heart of a patient’s despondency were designed to placate or offer the balm of resignation to relieve sadness. One example among many might be Lydia Sigourney’s “A Butterfly at a Child’s Grave:”

A butterfly bask’d on an infant’s grave,
Where a lily had chanced to grow;
Why art thou here with thy gaudy dye?
Where she of the bright and the sparkling eye
Must sleep in the churchyard low.

Then it lightly soar’d through the sunny air,
And spoke from its shining track;
I was a worm til I won my wings,
And she whom thou mourn’st, like seraph sings—
Would thou call the blest one back?104

For Galt, such poems might support his specific as well as general goals and easily be seen as supplemental to his own efforts with the patients.

103Rufus Wilmot Griswold,” in John W. Rathbun and Monica M. Grecu, eds., American Literary Critics and Scholars, 1800-1850, Dictionary of Literary Biography, v.64 (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1987): 154-58. Griswold is best known today as the “infamous literary executor of Edgar Allan Poe,” but during his own lifetime, he was respected as an “arbiter of literary taste.” His American Poets and Poetry might be considered as part of the nationalistic movement to publicize American writers. At the same time he did discriminate against regional writers, including only a smattering of southern poets. Edgar Allan Poe had to “talk his way into being included.”

In addition to the anthologies of poetry, Galt also singled out specific poets to include on the library shelves, including William Cullen Bryant, Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Campbell, and James Thomson. One poet, William Cowper, was especially dear to Galt, as he was to other asylum superintendents. They considered him a poetic genius, who had had the misfortune to suffer from insanity for much of his life. His biography was a textbook case for the moral managers, strewn with almost every condition thought to precipitate insanity, many of which Galt saw (or thought he saw) at his asylum every day: the untimely death of a mother, harsh treatment at a young age (in Cowper’s case attendance at a particularly brutal boarding school), disappointment in love, mental anxiety at career prospects and marriage, and last but not least, despair in achieving spiritual salvation. The poem Galt included in the library was The Task, a poem critics today find difficult to classify, but one that is admittedly autobiographical. The task Cowper speaks of is primarily that of finding spiritual salvation, but other tasks are also addressed, for instance the task of being useful, finding an occupation even if it be only “raising cucumbers.” Several other themes run through the poem as well that Galt could use to help his patients: the superiority of country life and nature over the corrupt city, submission to God over worship of materialism, temperance over drunkenness, industry over sloth, and so on. The Task is not an easy poem to read and so probably was aimed at the more advanced reader, nevertheless, the lesson it imparted, that of man victorious in the face of temptations, doubts, and despair, made it eminently


suitable for the asylum. Again, too, the inclusion of Cowper's *Task* demonstrates once again Galt's attraction to writers who themselves suffered from bouts of melancholy (like Bunyan) or whose relatives suffered from madness (like Thomas Campbell's son) or who included characters in their work who were mad (as did Sedgwick.) In Cowper's case, not only was he insane himself, at least at times, but in *The Task*, he made famous a madwoman, Crazy Kate, who asked for pins of everyone she met, the very same behavior Amariah Brigham had described in one of his female patients who claimed never to have read the poem.

In addition to gauging printed materials for the depressed patients in accordance with their level of difficulty, Galt also heeded their suitability in accordance with a patient's stage of insanity. The famous French doctor, Georget, had advised that care be taken to avoid materials in which a patient might find opinions and circumstances that could "disquiet him," and instead, allow reading only "very late" in stage of insanity. Perhaps that in part accounts for the presence of *Hope On, Hope Ever* by Mary Botham Howitt, a novel with a rather tragic plot. Her characters meet one disaster after another including the death of children, mothers, and fathers. In one passage she vividly describes the emotional reaction of a father to the death of a son by drowning:

> he saw the child he loved so well and from whom he had so lately parted, lying dead before him; when the cap, half-filled with crabs, which had been found near the water, was brought in and the bag of books laid on the table, and the key taken from his pocket—with every one of which some association of love and obedience was connected, and entwined, as it were with the strings of the heart....

---


Such scenes might be thought to aggravate the grief-stricken patient, who herself had lost a child, but the important lesson in this book is the manner in which the fictional characters handle their grief—with unrelenting fortitude, submission to the will of God, courage, and hope for a more peaceful and contented future. Yet it is likely that with these sorts of books, Galt followed Georget’s advice and provided them only to patients who were convalescents rather than to those recently admitted and suffering from an acute stage of insanity.

In contrast to depressing pieces, humor might have helped in uplifting spirits, but Galt had little of this in his library. *Pickwick Papers* was one such title. The only two other titles were sketchbooks, Washington Irving’s *Geoffrey Crayon* and Augustus Baldwin Longstreet’s *Georgia Scenes*. The sketchbook was initiated and perfected by Washington Irving, but many other authors took readily to the formula. Whereas Irving located his story in an urban setting, Longstreet in the rural south, Caroline Kirkland in the frontier west (*A New Home*), Harriet Jacobs in the slave quarters (*Narratives of a Slave Girl*), and the Lowell factory women in the urban north (*Voice of Industry*), yet all were using the genre (even if they didn’t know it) as a way to “assert a regional cultural identity and simultaneously contribute to a national marketable literature.” Each of these authors, as different they were from one another and as was their position in mainstream

---

109Mary Howitt, *Hope On! Hope Ever!* (Sedbergh: Dale Historical Monographs, 1988) Reprint of 1840 edition with illustrations from 1857 edition, 26. One feature of *Hope On! Hope Ever!* that might have perplexed the insane reader stems from the dialogue in which Howitt captures the dialect of the inhabitants of Dentdale, the location of the story. Such conversations require a fair bit of concentration: “Matthey o’Rivelin kna’s what good for him…a varra weel-considering man is Matthey! H kna’s that winter neeights are lang, and that two par o’hand rid mair wark than ane. Ay, she’s a bonny lass, and all Dentdale is taling o’her…”
society, defined an aspect of the autonomy of his or her culture although set in the larger perspective of being part of America.\textsuperscript{110} If Galt did not articulate his thoughts about his choice of \textit{Georgia Scenes} in such a self-conscious way, he surely must have understood it on a more instinctive level.

On the face of it \textit{Georgia Scenes} is simply a humorous rendition of social mores and customs of backwater Georgia in the early part of the century. But some of the stories seem of questionable merit for a population of the insane, most notably “The Fight.” In this story, a description of a fist fight involves biting, clawing, and gouging. The author ends the story with a short paragraph condemning such brawls, calling it “a disgrace to the community” and one which Christian religion, schools, colleges, and benevolent associations had reduced to one of “rare occurrence.” In Galt’s mind, was that caveat enough to offset the previous five pages of brutality? Or did Galt perceive that \textit{Georgia Scenes} had redeeming characteristics that overrode other concerns he may have had about “The Fight.” Written by a southerner, it was filled with the events and characters a patient at Eastern Asylum might recognize. Certainly some of the more instructional tales were specific to southerners and provided lessons they would not receive from Sedgewick, Edgeworth, or any northern writer. “The Charming Creature” for instance, which addresses a failed marriage due to the character flaws of the wife, could only take place in a southern setting. Undisciplined and spoiled, the main character’s inability to manage a household effectively is portrayed almost exclusively through her lack of control over lazy and thieving slaves, a flaw which eventually leads to

\textsuperscript{110}Kristin Hamilton, \textit{America’s Sketchbook: The Cultural Life of a Nineteenth-Century Literary Genre} (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998): 87. As can be seen by the titles Hamilton uses as examples of the sketchbook, her definition of the genre is much broader than is usually understood.
driving her husband to excessive drinking and financial ruin. Perhaps this odd situation of condemning a woman because she was not harsh enough to slaves, along with other gruesome stories of gander pulling, fox hunts, shooting matches, horse trading, and fist fights, was simply a reflection of the reality some rural patients, and to a lesser degree, Galt, knew in their world outside the asylum. Thus such stories seemed not so much unpleasant as they were instructive in how to avoid behavior that was decidedly lacking in gentility.

And as noted, Georgia Scenes was considered primarily a humorous work, much to Longstreet’s chagrin who was disappointed that his book was so “misapprehended” by the public. He had meant it to be a historical piece and a “realistic look at life in early Georgia.” But even the most astute critic of the day, Edgar Allan Poe, admitted he laughed “immoderately” while reading Georgia Scenes and found more value in its humor than in its history.\footnote{Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, Augustus Baldwins Longstreet’s Georgia Scenes Completed: A Scholarly Text edited by David Rachels (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), lvii, xlviii.} That was an advantage to Galt. How better to drive away morbid delusions or relieve the tedium of the asylum regimen than by coaxing a smile from an unhappy patient. Still, with only three books in the collection that could be considered humorous, Galt seemed once again to adhere to Guislain’s advice: “elation and hilarity are highly necessary...in the cure of the melancholy,” but too much joy and gaiety were as bad as too little, “even death has been the result of such feelings.”\footnote{Guislain, “Traité sur L’alienation Mentale, etc .,” 146.} Once again prudence was the byword.

\footnote{Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, Augustus Baldwins Longstreet’s Georgia Scenes Completed: A Scholarly Text edited by David Rachels (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), lvii, xlviii.}
While Galt made many of his library selections based upon content, he had also to be concerned with the patient’s inability to concentrate for long periods and his lower levels of reading skills. Genre choices like fiction helped to bridge that gap greatly in enticing a patient to pick up a book, but format was also important. Brevity was a virtue. Newspapers, almanacs, magazines, and travel books were especially suitable in meeting this particular requirement.

Newspapers were sought after in asylums as they were outside the asylum. Galt recognized this fact but saw newspapers as particularly suitable for engaging the insane mind:

For here there are a number of subjects entirely distinct from each other, and each comprised in a short compass, so that the restlessness of insanity does not materially interfere with the process of reading. This is sometimes otherwise in the continuity necessarily implied in most books.\(^{113}\)

In addition, “the short articles, the many small items, and the great variety found in these publications,” Galt wrote, appealed to a variety of patients, and even those who could not concentrate for long periods “will peruse with facility and pleasure the short pieces.” In addition to the accommodating format, the content of newspapers was broad in its appeal and had “something for every taste and disposition.”

In spite of Galt’s great enthusiasm for newspapers, he did retain some reservations. Guislain’s “prudence” was an ever present consideration in his evaluation of materials, and in this particular case, Galt worried that the calm life he wished for his patients, one of regularity and predictability away from the “hustle bustle” of the outside, might be endangered. He admitted newspapers could have a “tendency to excite.” Yet

\(^{113}\) *EAAR, 1850, 25.*
he was able to overcome his apprehension in bringing newspapers into the asylum by
deciding that the “very expectancy of having the news of the day regularly” was in itself
a way of imposing regularity into the asylum regimen. That advantage, plus all the
others, would more than counterbalance any negative possibilities. Patients could be
trusted to take an interest in the “external matters” or “leading topics of the day” written
about in the pages of a newspaper, a decided advantage he thought, but to react “as a
spectator merely takes in any scene” rather than as a participant. The final coup de grace
that convinced Galt of the efficacy of newspapers in the asylum was his belief that of all
the printed materials in the library, newspapers provided the most tangible proof of
reading as a valid therapy: “I verily believe, that in some cases which have recovered in
this asylum, a portion of the successful treatment has consisted in giving them
newspapers.” The asylum had a variety of newspaper titles from around Virginia: the
Wheeling Argus, Warrenton Reporter, Christian Advocate, Richmond Herald, Richmond
Christian Advocate and Herald, Richmond Times, Petersburg Republican, Scottville
Times, Harrisonburg Register and Republican, Abingdon Virginian and the Democrat,
Fincastle Valley Whig, Lewisburg Chronicle, Charlottesville Jeffersonian. A few out-of-
state editors also sent their newspapers to the asylum: the Boston Olive Branch,
Charlestown Free Press, Wilmington Chronicle, St. Louis Probe, and New York
Observer.†14 With these papers, Galt could satisfy his patients’ desire for the popular
newspaper format but still protect them from the sensationalist penny papers that “bore

†14EAAR, 1850, 25; EAAR, 1847, (draft) (ESHL), 28; EAAR, 1843 (Siske), 86. Many
of the local newspapers listed above must have had an extremely small circulation and
perhaps were short-lived as well as most left no bibliographic trail.
the stamp of the metropolis in which they were produced.\(^{115}\) The local newspapers might occasionally include material that was unsuitable or controversial, but none were likely to approach the screaming, degenerate headlines and stories found in city penny papers.

Almanacs were very much like newspapers in format and filled the same purpose at the asylum. Easy to read, containing some fiction, some fact, short aphorisms, and weather predictions, almanacs could appeal to a variety of the residents as they did among the general population. Magazines which might also be expected to do the same, on the other hand, while current were few in number at the asylum, possibly because subscriptions were expensive. Galt had spent over $20 for just four magazines in his own library (and indeed had had to share the cost with his cousin), but he couldn’t expend a similar amount of money for his patients’ library. Instead Galt invested in cheap issues of the *Penny Magazine* published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), collecting even those issues that were no longer current. In including this magazine Galt was specifically catering to the laboring and agricultural classes among his patient population. The SDUK, founded in 1826 in London for skilled workingmen and their families, expected the *Penny Magazine* would be purchased by “the common reader, whose formal education likely had ended at twelve or fourteen, if not much earlier.” It would serve as “a home university course.” History books and advanced Latin texts might serve to advance the education of the middle or upper class patients like Livey, but for the bulk of Galt’s patients who one day might return to their farms or manual

occupations in the city, the *Penny Magazine* might provide a different kind of education that did not require the formal classroom of a university or college. The magazine, for all its lofty goals, folded in 1845, for “the public remained stubbornly faithful to the rousing products”\(^{116}\) of the more provocative street newspapers. Yet in 1843 when Galt was assembling his library, the *Penny Magazine* had a number of virtues to recommend it.\(^{117}\)

Generally the *Penny Magazine*’s articles addressed natural history, art, sculpture, antiquities, travelers’ narratives, biographies, language, and only the “established facts” of statistics and political economy, all accompanied by a variety of woodcut illustrations. More specifically, articles bore titles like the “Icelanders,” “The Mocking-Bird,” “Butter,” “Goats as Wet Nurses,” “Adventures in Mesopotamia,” “The Fossil Elk of Ireland,” “The Bishop’s Throne in Durham Cathedral,” “The Silk Trade of France,” “Schools of Art,” “The Porpoise,” and “The Interior View in the Grand Mosque of Sultan Achment at Constantinople.”

The Society’s stated goal of their *Penny Magazine* was to prepare a useful and entertaining Weekly Magazine, that may be taken up and laid down without requiring any considerable effort; and that may tend to fix the mind upon calmer, and it may be, purer subjects of thought than the violence of party discussion, or the stimulating details of crime and suffering.

After the completion of the first volume the editors wrote with some satisfaction that

\(^{116}\)Not all readers felt the same about the *Penny Magazine*. One working class reader said that “he’d go without sugar in his tea to obtain new issues.” See Richard D. Altick, *English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* 2nd ed. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1957), 337. See also Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 629-30. Johns notes that SDUK materials were criticized as both too “anemic” by radicals who thought the editors wanted only “to stuff our mouths with kangaroos” and too dangerous by Tories who thought any kind of reading by the proletariat would lead to insurrection.

\(^{117}\)Altick, *English Common Reader*, 262, 271, 293, 334.
there has never been a single sentence that could inflame a vicious appetite; and not a paragraph that could minister to prejudices and superstitions which a few years since were common. There have been no excitements for the lovers of the marvelous—no tattle or abuse for the gratification of a diseased taste for personality—and, above all, no party politics. The subjects which have uniformly been treated have been of the broadest and simplest character.

For Galt the *Penny Magazine* matched perfectly his requirements for inclusion in the patients' library. The articles were designed "to awaken reason" and lead "the imagination into agreeable and innocent rains of thought" (a proper direction for those whose imaginations were steeped in delusion), and it was affordable, always a consideration. The *Penny Magazine* would not excite a patient unduly, and its quality was of an acceptably high standard. The Society assured its readers on this last point, writing that because the publication was "so cheap as to be accessible to the lowest class of readers," it had not fallen "into the hands of the lowest class of writers." This was a penny magazine unlike most other penny magazines of the period, and one Galt could safely place in the hands of his patients.\footnote{118 *Penny Magazine Online*, March 31, 1832, no.1-October 31, 1835, no. 229, www.history.rochester.edu/pennymag/ad2.htm}

Like newspapers, almanacs, and magazines that provided short pieces or vignettes to hold a patient's attention, carefully selected books could do the same. The most useful among these in the patients' library was the *Harpers Library of Entertaining Knowledge*. The entire set ran over a hundred volumes (although Galt had only some of them) and was rather like an encyclopedia, thus affording the reader both short and interesting entries. The library's collection of travel books had the same attractive characteristic. The titles Galt chose in this genre had formats that allowed, even encouraged, the briefest of reading sessions. *The Stranger in China, or The Fan Qui's Visit to the Celestial*
Empire by C. Toogood Downing, for instance, although two volumes in length, was divided into hundreds of mini-chapters.\textsuperscript{119} Chapter One, spanning twenty-five pages, has thirty-six mini-chapters, many less than one page, and indeed some as short as a paragraph. The patient could easily skip over topics of little interest—perhaps “China Trade Restricted to Canton,” or “Pula Sapata” (a strange combination of words which surely was unfamiliar to most patients)—and jump to the more promising subtitles of “Typhoons,” “Dragon Flies,” “Dress of Fishermen,” “Chinese Bed,” and “Pillow.” In addition each mini-chapter was often self-contained. They had no particular dependency upon the material that came before or after it, except in the broadest sense, and thus could be understood in one sitting without requiring the patient to have retained anything from a previous reading in the same book. Travels in North America, 1834, 1835, 1836 by Charles Augustus Murray had this same advantage, and in addition, it included visits by the author to Virginia and specifically Williamsburg. It gave a generally positive account of the area and did not introduce any untoward ideas that might upset contemporary stereotypical notions of the institution of slavery and black inferiority.

Among European moral managers, travel often was prescribed for wealthy patients suffering from “loss of property, of a friend, of a relative, or of high station.”\textsuperscript{120} Although in American asylums travel was never considered a regular part of the moral management regimen for patients, still reading about travel might provide some of the same benefits without the cost or inconvenience. The patients’ library housed a variety of travel titles: Calvin Colton’s Four Years in Great Britain, 1831-1835, John Leslie’s

\textsuperscript{119} Using rubrics as a way of summarizing a chapter’s contents was usual for many non-fictional works of the period, but worked out especially well for Galt’s purposes.

\textsuperscript{120} Guislain, “Traite sur L’alienation Mentale, etc .,” 145.
Narrative of Discovery and Adventures in the Polar Seas and Regions, Samuel Laing’s Journal of a Resident in Norway, during the Years 1834, 1835, and 1836, Josiah Conder’s The Modern Traveller, John Lloyd Stephens’ Incidents of Travel, W.S.W. Ruschenberger’s A Voyage Around the World, and for those who might prefer exoticism of a less remote area, James Hall’s Notes on the Western States, Eliza Steele’s A Summer Journey in the West, and Edward Stiff’s The Texan Emigrant.

One genre on the shelves at the patients’ library—religious materials—were designed to impart moral instruction without subterfuge. Religion played a large role in the life of most of the antebellum population, and it is likely many patients had a genuine interest in religious materials as a source of solace and comfort as well as moral instruction. It seems clear, too, that if a family were to own any books, they would be of a religious nature, for “the overwhelming majority of families in every state possessed at least some religious books.”121 This was nowhere more true than in the Commonwealth where religious materials made up as much as 42% of personal libraries in some counties. Within this context, Galt’s religious collection was indeed paltry at 6.3%. It was certainly not because such materials were expensive or hard to find. The American Tract Society alone distributed over nine million, free or moderately-priced, pamphlets and books during the 1840s and 1850s.122 Rather in the restriction of religious materials Galt was exercising once again the prudence that his European mentors so recommended. Pinel was precise, writing that patients “deranged from a religious cause have their disease


122 Ibid.
perpetuated by keeping their books of piety, and thus may even be rendered incurable.”

In antebellum Virginia this admonition was particularly relevant. The revivals of the 1820s and 1830s had created great competition for converts among the many churches then sprouting up all over the country, causing a great deal of “interdenominational tension.” Religious rhetoric was often highly inflammatory whether found in oral sermons or on the printed page. In addition religious reformers held, almost as an article of faith, that printed materials could profoundly affect the minds and behavior of those who might read them and “have powerful, direct, instantaneous, almost magical effects on the reader.” It is quite likely Galt felt the same way and wished to eliminate any source of excitement.

On the other hand, Galt was too much a man of faith himself to eschew all religious materials for his patients. He must simply be careful in his selections. He included The Episcopal Manual: A Summary Explanation of the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, a irregularly published handbook that defined the Episcopal denomination. In the “new and improved” 1841 edition, chapters included the constitution of the Episcopal church, a list of its bishops, the seminal writings of four reformers, various catechisms and doctrinal exegesis, a declaration of doctrines, and a book of homilies. The closest the handbook came to controversy was in its arguments justifying the Anglican break with


125Nord, “Religious Reading and Readers,” 245.
the Catholic Church during the Reformation. Even here, however, with very few Catholics in residence at the asylum, such sentiments would not have been seen as controversial but simply a statement of truth. For most the handbooks would be used as a reference book or an instructional manual.\(^{126}\)

Galt placed most of his focus, when providing his patients with printed religious instruction, on the one particular title he knew best and trusted explicitly. The Bible was the primary route to sound religious principles,\(^{127}\) and in spite of the many patients who suffered from religious delusions, Galt felt the Bible had a beneficial effect on the diseased mind: “The belief which the religion of the Bible is calculated to implant in the human heart, tends far more to prove a preventive to insanity than any perversion of scriptural tenets tends to act in a causative manner.”\(^{128}\) At one point the library had as many as eighteen Bibles, some kept in the library and others placed in the wards.

Other religious materials in the library were derivative of the Bible. *Gems from the Work of Travellers*, for instance, a production of the British Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, provided “extracts from narratives of travelers who have recorded the customs of the oriental nations,” thus explaining the “allusion to manners and customs” mentioned in the Bible and providing the reader with a “a clearer perception” of


\(^{127}\) Galt was not alone in this belief. See Nord, “Religious Reading and Readers,” 255-56. For most reformers, however, the Bible required that the reader acknowledge that “reading is difficult, that is requires skill, exertion, and patience.”

\(^{128}\) *EAAR*, 1843 (Siske), 78.
the Scriptures. For those who already knew the Bible well, the book was a geography lesson and travelogue of the Middle East; for those who did not, it might encourage an interest in reading the Bible itself.

*Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, too, depended heavily upon references and allusions to the Bible. Bunyan himself had been embroiled in the religious controversies of the seventeenth century and was a committed Calvinist, a dissenter from the Anglican Church, and one who spent many years in prison for his beliefs. A foe of Catholicism, Quakerism, Latitudianarianism, and other religious “isms” of the period, he did not allow his own controversial theological views to creep into his book. His sense of narrative was more finely honed. Rather *Pilgrim’s Progress* is a simple, allegorical story of a Christian (also the name of the protagonist), who in a foot race to win his salvation, meets with many hindrances before successfully reaching and entering the Celestial City. *Pilgrim’s Progress* was one of the steady sellers in the antebellum era which had retained its popularity for centuries among Christians and the most read of all religious books among believers of all denominations. It was not uncommon in America, regardless of the location, to see “neighbors gathering regularly on Sundays to hear chapters from

---


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Pilgrim’s Progress read out loud.

Pilgrim’s Progress also had a long history in the United States by 1840. It had been employed by various groups and individuals with an axe to grind. William R. Weeks found Pilgrim’s Progress to be “an ideal weapon with which to attack the writings and institutions in his own time that he regarded as dangerously heretical.” But others, too, wrote parodies of Pilgrim’s Progress that railed against slavery, transcendentalism, avant garde scientific theories, and unorthodox theological arguments. Its theme of pilgrimage and salvation was found even in the fictional works of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Blithedale Romance and The Scarlet Letter. Often put to use as a conservative tool in support of the status quo, whether cultural, religious, or economic, its millennial theme, delineated by a pilgrim’s difficult journey to redemption, made it the perfect vehicle for proselytizing. In addition, it was a familiar and beloved book. In both Britain and America if folks were to have only three books, one would be a Bible, the other a copy of Robinson Crusoe and the third—Pilgrims Progress. From Galt’s point of view, Bunyan’s work, then, was a safe choice for the patients’ library. For patients it represented a friend from home and a book that could be read and re-read numerous times.

Pilgrim’s Progress probably appealed to Galt on one more level. Bunyan himself suffered from melancholic episodes throughout his life as did many of Galt’s residents, and just as Bunyan (as well as his protagonist) had survived his struggles with despondency and despair, so, too, might they. Galt’s choice of works that were by or

131 Nord, “Religious Reading and Readers,” 269.

about those who suffered from insanity formed a consistent pattern throughout the titles among the patient’s collection.

Galt also placed especial importance on encouraging patients to pray as a means to consolation, recovery, and moral restitution. He included in his small cache of religious materials, Thomas Wilson’s *Sacra Privata: The Private Meditations and Prayers of the Right Reverend Thomas Wilson* and William Jay’s *Prayers for the Use of Families or the Domestic Minister’s Assistant*. The latter title was especially fitting from Galt’s point of view, for Jay understood that “a prayer is distinguishable from the repetition of a creed, or the annunciation of a system of theology; how much more then from the sparring and reflections of controversy.” Jay’s prayer book, then, was ecumenical. It addressed the everyday concerns and challenges Galt’s readers faced. The first part served as a spiritual anchor to a believer’s day-in and day-out activities, containing morning and evening prayers for weekdays, the Sabbath, and special occasions like Christmas Morning or Thanksgiving. The second part addressed more specific real-life threats asylum residents might encounter in the outside world. Prayers asking for rain, for fair weather, for a bountiful harvest would have resonated with Galt’s large number of Virginian farmers and their wives. Prayers for the safe return from a journey or for the return of a friend from sea might appeal to the father, mother, or wife whose loved one was absent from home. Prayers for recovery from sickness or for deliverance in childbirth were universally understood. In a world where individuals, sane or insane, were often beset by life and death events over which they had little control,
supplication to a powerful God for protection was simply an acknowledgement of their very real fears and their hope for rescue from them.\textsuperscript{133}

Jay’s prayers also acknowledged a reality of evangelical belief, most especially that of the Methodists, who placed “laity and clergy on equal footing, rejected formalistic theology and emphasized the individual’s personal understanding of the Bible.”\textsuperscript{134} Jay voiced that same sentiment: “the preservation and spread of religion should not depend exclusively in a particular order of men [ministers], however important their function may be.” Rather a personal commitment was necessary on the part of the man of the house: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Such sentiment also further validated a belief in the social hierarchy that coincided with Galt’s view of the world and probably many of his patients as well. Jay placed the father as the head of the household and directed him to act as minister to his own small flock, his family. It was his responsibility “to rule well your own households; to dwell with your wives according to knowledge; to train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Word.” Every member of the family must know his or her place in the larger world as well: they must be “respectful toward their superiors, obliging towards their equals, and

\textsuperscript{133}William Jay, Prayers for the Use of Families and Their Jubilee Memorial Commemorating the Reverend William Jay’s Fifty Year Ministry at Argyle Chapel, Bath (Harrisonburg, Va: Sprinkle Publications, 2003) Reprint of Prayers for the Use of Families or the Domestic Ministers Assistant with an Appendix Containing a Number of Select and Original Prayers for Particular Occasions (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1834). See also Robert Darnton, “Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose,” The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History (New York: Vintage Books, 1984): 9-72. Fairy tales or folk tales helped the eighteenth-century French peasant make sense of his world, one often marked by “raw and naked brutality.” Jay’s prayers written in the same century did the same.

\textsuperscript{134}Shade, Democratizing the Old Dominion, 30.
condescending towards their inferiors." In the antebellum world where evangelicism was slowly dismantling the hierarchical structure of the established church, it would not do to undermine the established social hierarchy as well.  

In the end, perhaps the predominant message in Jay's prayer book resonating most with Galt was his recommendation that individuals submit to the will of the Lord in this life, not "murmuring and repining because all our wishes are not indulged." Such sentiment was not much different than the credo Galt himself espoused: "a resignation to the will of Providence, with the calm conviction that all that happens to us in this world, springs from the one great cause, and is to answer some good purpose."  

Galt kept six copies each of both Methodist and Baptist hymnals in the library. Shortly before leaving Philadelphia as a medical student, Galt had proclaimed the Episcopal church to be the only true church, but in spite of that youthful proclamation, in his asylum library he proved to be tolerant of other Protestant sects. More to the point his patient population included a great number of Methodists and Baptists which by 1850 were the two largest denominations in Virginia and made up almost 50% of all churchgoers. In addition Galt may have found the music of the Methodists and the Baptists more melodic and likeable than others, just as when a student in Philadelphia he had preferred the music of the Catholic services, even though he deplored their doctrines. He approached his hymnals pragmatically. Sound musical composition trumped sound theology. The only other hymnal Galt kept in the library was Andrew Broadus' Virginia

---


136 *EAAR*, 1843, (Siske), 78.

137 Shade, *Democratizing of the Old Dominion*, 25.
Selections of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs which was "designed for free, social singing" as well as for church services, and so may have been used by residents who came together regularly to sing as recreation. Even in this, however, Galt was being mindful of avoiding controversy among his patient population, noting that groups must be given religious rather than secular songs to sing, since some individuals had "a religious dislike of anything like ordinary songs," and care must be taken not to offend them.

Reading As Entertainment

The above conclusions may seem to indicate that Galt went about the business of choosing titles very self-consciously, separating each volume into tidy piles of genres that might accomplish this, that, or the other goal. The more likely truth is that he made his selections as part of an organic process in which decisions were based instinctively upon his knowledge of the literature from his personal familiarity with them. One guiding factor, as indicated by many of the titles he chose, was that printed materials serve as a form of entertainment and distraction, for if a patient were not to pick up a book and to engage with it, all other purposes would be defeated. In this Galt needed no persuasion for he was well aware of the solace and comfort the activity of reading intrinsically held. "What a comfort," he wrote, "is found in this resource...as a mode of abstraction from the earth's cares and anxieties, as well as pleasant recreation in the monotonous routine of daily life."\(^{138}\) To further his goal of having books that were read rather than simply left unopened from one Wednesday to the next, Galt tried to cater to his residents' interest when they did not contradict his own. In addition to providing sought after

\(^{138}\)Galt, Essays on Asylums, 7.
genres like fiction and formats like newspapers, he would also include books that particularly interested individual patients. Surely when he chose to include *Two Years Before the Mast* by Richard Henry Dana, the *History of the Navy* by John Frost, and the *Naval Annual* by Frank Marryat on his library shelves, he took into consideration the number of seamen he had as patients, especially the one young midshipmen from Annapolis.

**Censorship of Books.** Galt’s general behavior of allowing “comparative liberty” in a patient’s freedom of movement, his own liberal proclivities as demonstrated in supplying his sisters and brother with whatever materials they desired regardless of his own opinion of them, and his own wide reading habits that often strayed from those approved by literary critics of the day would seem to indicate that he would have accommodated most patients’ reading requests. Indeed he was very specific in his belief that the insane should have no more restrictions placed upon their reading than should the sane. Yet a number of critical circumstances and conditions legislated against the liberality Galt professed.

Galt was personally involved in distributing books to his patients, at least in the library’s initial stages, and his presence almost surely had an effect on a patient’s autonomy in choosing materials. A resident’s whole world, indeed his very survival, depended upon Galt and his staff. If the superintendent inadvertently raised an eyebrow at a request for a certain book, perhaps a patient might learn over time what to take and what to pass by. This would be especially true with convalescing patients, who were in better condition than the deeply delusional to notice subtle facial expressions or than the depressed who might notice but could not care. In addition to this unintentional
intimidation factor, Galt may have influenced a patient’s access to some materials in more overt ways. The illiterate or those who could “not comprehend fully” might be denied books requiring advanced reading skills. Patients with filthy habits denied any books at all in order to prevent unnecessary “wear and tear” of library materials. And any patient might be denied “publications of an immoral tendency” (assuming that contraband was smuggled in through the porous boundaries of the asylum and the outside world).139

But there was an even more serious obstacle to the free access of library materials by patients: Galt’s own moral management therapeutic philosophy which dictated that a superintendent should have “complete knowledge of the reading in which each of his patients engages; it is singularly important that no part of the treatment here should escape his notice.”140 This particular belief, no doubt, came from his reading of Pinel and Haslem, both of whom believed that the director should know each of his patients intimately. As Pinel wrote:

Sagacity, ardent zeal, continued and indefatigable attention are necessary qualities in watching narrowly each case, in seizing the curious features of the insane ideas, and the particular character of the derangement; for by age, constitution, habits, the complication of madness and other diseases, and the degree of lesion of the mental faculties, what varieties are created!141

Guislain was even more exact in his proscription for monitoring a patient’s reading: “The choice of the works should be based on the character of the disease, the literary education, and the ruling ideas of the patients.” No doubt Galt heeded these

139 Galt, Essays on Asylums, 9.

140 Ibid, 14.

141 Pinel, “Traite Medico-Philosophique sur L’Alienation Mentale,” TI, 44.
words, at least in terms of keeping those patients with specific obsessions or delusions away from inflammatory reading materials. At the same time, in this way he may have been very intrusive in helping patients to choose their reading matter, encouraging or steering patients in the direction of specific titles, dispensing his books for content in the same way he did their medications according to their need as he perceived it. Some, like the young or unschooled, might even be subject to a "judicial oversight and selection," since a planned course of reading was more beneficial than "that of a desultory nature."^{142}

Evidence does not exist that Galt actually undertook to acquire "complete knowledge" of his patients reading habits, nor that he implemented a planned reading course for his patients. He never mentions in his medical records (or any others for that matter) prescribing specific books for specific patients. Surely if he had inaugurated such a program, he would have indicated so in his records with notes as to its effectiveness, just as he did with medications and other forms of therapy. And he would have wanted to share his very original findings with his colleagues, perhaps in an article for the AJI or for a pamphlet. What seems more likely, then, is that like many of his own personal ambitions (writing a Dickensian novel or lecturing like Coleridge), a closely-planned course of reading for specific patients was more theory than practice with him, an idea that he found intriguing but which never saw the light of day. Even if he had been sincere in his desire to do so, within a few years of taking office, he would have realized his superintendent's duties (not to mention his own personal habits of reading, studying

^{142}Joseph Guislain, "Traite sur L'alienation Mentale, etc.," TJI, 140-41; Galt, Essays on Asylums, 14.
and writing twelve hours most days) left him with little time to do much more than a cursory scanning of what his patients were reading.

When compared with Galt’s attitude toward other amusements at the asylum, it is also possible that some part of the asylum population escaped even a cursory scanning of their choice of reading matter. For instance, chronically ill patients who were “destined to pass their lives within the confines of an asylum” were allowed to play cards as often as they liked, whereas the young who still had the prospect of release were watched more closely “lest a game be taught or encouraged which might lead to gambling when they became sane.” Galt may have taken the same attitude toward chronically ill readers and allowed them greater latitude. With these patients he was more likely to emphasize the manageability factor he associated with reading, or even the entertainment value of reading that might rescue lifelong patients from the ennui of captivity. Perhaps moral instruction vis à vis reading only made sense in the context of an environment where the onset of insanity was a constant threat as in the outside world, or when it was but a temporary condition while a patient moved toward convalescence. For those with no hope of recovery, reading might be used primarily as “a source of comfort that beguiles many a lonely hour in the long and monotonous track of life’s drear journey…in the cloistered retirement of the asylum.”

A more certain form of censorship of materials came in Galt’s selection of some materials and the exclusion of others. With a library of only 188-226 titles, or less than one book per patient, the print world of the patient would of necessity be a small one. Yet

---

143 Galt, Essays on Asylums, 6, 18.

144 This type of censorship exists in all libraries, even the largest of them, for eventually all must eventually submit to the restrictions of space and money.
his guidelines were well-drawn. For titles chosen from a donor's basket of books he could rely easily upon his own knowledge of them, but choices made from a publisher's catalog of newer books would not present difficulties either. He need only look among the titles being read by the sane world outside the asylum and pare away the most unsuitable. It was all of a piece. While the sane group read the domestic novels of Howitt, Edgeworth, and Sedgwick, the biographies of famous men, the inspirational poetry of Cowper or Bryant, the travelogues and histories—indeed all the "polite literature" of society—to stave off insanity, the other group, those who were mad, read the same books to recover their sanity. Book advertisements of the period attest to the fact that it was not a stretch for Galt to find appropriate materials for his library on the open market. Howitt's Popular Tales, for instance, was advertised as

manifestly designed to cultivate the noblest and domestic and social virtues—thrift and fidelity in employment; exemption from needless worldly anxiety; assiduity in the path of duty; trustfulness and hope; the connection between work and the reward; the advantages of uprightness, simplicity, and a straightforward estimate of worldly things; and the encouragement to persevere in well-doing. Writers and editors also lent a hand in helping Galt make the proper selection of materials. Charles Lane, editor of an 1839 edition of Arabian Nights, scrutinized the text for inappropriate material and modified it accordingly before it was delivered to the print shop: "I have thought it right to omit such tales, anecdotes, etc. as are comparatively

---

145 Books were neither written nor published expressly for the insane. Although the publishing industry catered to many groups—children, the religious, young women, matronly women, businessmen, hobbyists, physicians, scientists, teachers—they did not see the insane as a niche market, although by the mid-nineteenth century patients numbered many thousands. The moral managers who might have created a demand for such materials found the normal trade more than suitable to their needs.

uninteresting or on any account objectionable.” He gave yet a later assurance that “certain passages...in the original work...of an objectionable nature, I have slightly varied.”

Censorship, then, when it came to the patients’ library, arrived dressed in a variety of moral management mandates, middle class assumptions about virtue and education, and aided and abetted by a wide range of authors and publishers. Yet in this as in many other things, Galt was more like his fellow superintendents than not, and inasmuch as he loved reading and books, he tried to share that pleasure with his patients whether they be rich man or pauper.

Evaluation of the Patients’ Library Collection

The antebellum years were a time when for a variety of reasons reading became de rigueur among the burgeoning class of educated professionals and middle class. But it was also a time when the working class was discovering the delights of reading as well, via the fascinating ubiquitous penny papers of the urban streets or even among the more sober printed materials prepared for them by well-meaning societies like the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. A proliferation of publishing houses both created and satisfied the public’s growing demand for more and more books and periodicals to read, and as diaries and letters of the period demonstrate, readers would often beg, borrow, buy, and generally go to great lengths to obtain books and magazines to satisfy their voracious appetites. Printed materials were a way to educate oneself, to express a newly-acquired gentility, to publicize one’s membership in the middle class or aspiration to it, and most certainly a way to entertain or distract oneself whether alone or when

acting in concert with a community of like-minded individuals. Many like the Galt family collected books assiduously, building their personal libraries upon a foundation of "polite literature" drawn from the generally-accepted genres of history and biography, travel, domestic and secular fiction, poetry, and religious works. Children’s books, various magazines and newspapers, instructional materials like spellers and readers, and reference books like French and English dictionaries had their place in a family library as well. Social libraries such as the Concord Social Library, the New York Social Library, and the Richmond Social Library catered to the professional classes with their fictional, biographical, and travel titles, while in the great northern urban areas, libraries such as the New York Apprentice’s Library aimed at bringing artisans and the working class in from the cold with its shelves of history and technological materials. Public libraries were beginning to make an appearance as well and competed with the more elitist social libraries, thus opening their doors to more and more types of patrons and more variety of materials.  

148 Academic libraries with their long tradition of providing for small coteries of scholars only grew larger during this period, their ever-expanding size and scope often a bragging point for the individual institutions. In short, libraries—private, social, public, and academic—were flourishing and the number and kind of antebellum readers growing.

Within that context, the patients’ library at Eastern Asylum resembled rather a mish mash of the many types of libraries then existing—and for good reason: it was an eclectic library meant to meet the needs of a variety of patrons and at the same time fulfill

the function of an asylum moral management tool. It must teach the illiterate, engage the educated, improve the degenerate, and entertain the bored. And in addition to all that, it must meet the needs of an exceptional group of people beset by mental instability, sadness and melancholy, monomania, delusions, obsessions, and paranoia.

In many ways, in kind if not in degree, it resembled a social library or any library an educated, middle class family might own. Indeed it was much like Sallie’s lending library only a few steps away from the asylum. Steady sellers, mostly from Great Britain, were a prominent part of the collection with a staple collection of Goldsmith, Scott, Defoe, Bunyan, Shakespeare, and Robert Campbell. It had representatives from all the major genres, even if some were more generously represented than others. And all titles, or almost all, regardless of subject matter, had a definite moralistic cast as did so many other library collections of the period. All were products of and inextricably bound up with the great reform movements of the antebellum period that addressed the moral education, proper behavior, and, when necessary, the rehabilitation of its citizens. Such was the stuff of the average family and social library.

Yet the patients’ library had substantial differences. The Galt family library, for instance, was characterized by abundance with more of everything—more domestic novels by at least twenty different female writers, more classics by philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Horace, more intellectually challenging works by authors like Carlyle and Goethe, more au courant and sophisticated periodicals like Punch, London Quarterly, Blackwood’s, Harper’s, and the most sought after of all, the Godey’s Lady’s Book. There was also more variety of genres with dramatic plays by Racine and Moliere and with lavish gift books like the Pearl, the Token, Gem, and Forget-Me-Not.
Currency, too, was important to the Galt library, whereas in the Eastern Asylum library that value was not as much in play. As a young girl Elizabeth Galt had exchanged dozens of letters with her friend, Cary Lampert, who never missed an opportunity to ask the familiar question “have you read” this or that new piece on the market. And John Minson, while a student in Philadelphia, was constantly on the lookout to add new titles to the family collection from the many bookstalls and book auctions he frequented.

Outside the asylum the Gaits were reading whatever was new and talking about it in letters, at social gatherings, at the Cheerful Club, in their own parlor. Inside the asylum time stood still. A full 73% of all titles in the patients’ library had been published before 1838. No doubt this was in large part a function of the type of age and inclinations of the village donor most likely to rummage among his bookshelves looking for surplus books—the educated and wealthy elite of Williamsburg closer to Alexander Galt’s generation than John Minson’s. Yet the result was a collection that looked backward instead of forward, not only in the age of the collection but in the age it represented.

Perhaps an even more substantial difference between the asylum library and Sallie’s library was that while most of the acceptable genres of a middle class library were present, the content was pale in contrast to their counterparts in the outside world. Galt chose titles for their lack of offensive or provocative matter, for their ability to keep the patients calm and undermine their delusions, obsessions, or bad habits, for their efficacy in providing lessons that might cure moral insanity, and for their ability to provide a few hours, or in some cases, a few minutes of entertainment and distraction. Even among those titles published between 1838 and 1843, and therefore the most likely to have been purchased, the selections were cautious, timid, safe, and “prudent.” Fiction
titles included the overly moralistic Maria McIntosh's *Conquest and Self-Conquest*, Howitt's *Hope On, Hope Ever*, and *Who shall Be Greatest*, Shay's *Temperance Tales*, and the children's book, Frank Marryat's *Masterman Ready*. In addition to the moralistic nature of his fictional choices, Galt also concentrated on acquiring new titles from the most uncontroversial of all the genres—travel. A full 27.7% of the newer titles belonged to that category. It was safer for patients to visit strange, exotic places like China, Yucatan, the Azores, and Turkey, or even the frontiers of the American West than to dwell in the more dangerous fantasy worlds they had created for themselves. The newer titles in the patients' library also included the only two poetry anthologies in the collection, one British and one American. These large tomes of short poems about patriotism, nature, domestic homilies, and courage in the face of disaster were only as provocative as the half or quarter page allotted to them.

Having the opportunity, then, to infuse the collection with more variety, possibly the more intellectually provocative materials and current commentary that was being published in the early 1840s, Galt declined to do so. He had his reasons. Galt faced a peculiar dilemma in assembling his patients' library. This literary man, who spent much of his day in his own study with a book or magazine in hand or who self-consciously posed a Latin grammar on the front parlor table for every visitor to see and perhaps remark upon, who poured over publishers' catalogs and book notices, was more than familiar with the depth and richness of the literary market. Yet he must somehow take that knowledge and accommodate it to moral management mandates and principles for the treatment of the insane. He must follow closely the advice of his European mentors in practicing prudence in selections for the collection and eschew all controversial
materials that might upset, excite, titillate, anger, or depress, or in short provoke any strong feeling or doubt. Rather he must choose printed materials "for occupying, interesting and improving the intellectual faculties, and for encouraging, tranquilizing, cheering and changing the perverted, social, moral, and religious sentiments, and the animal propensities." Within this narrow, utilitarian scope, the library became a product of Galt's pragmatism as he maneuvered between the seductive lure of the wide world of books, magazines, and newspapers and the responsibility he felt as a moral manager to use books as medicine. Vocational books complemented the farmer and artisan's work at the asylum, spellers and dictionaries and histories instructed the illiterate and the advanced student, anthologies of selected poetry or a humorous piece or two distracted the depressed from their morbid thoughts, travel books took the obsessive patient out of his own small, delusionary world and set him down elsewhere. And fiction, the largest genre in the library and no doubt the most sought after, taught patients morality while it entertained them on a level of readability they could digest. Just as Galt had disguised the bitter taste of laudanum by mixing it with alcohol or tobacco for his patients, so, too, he made his soporific lessons of morality more appealing by disguising them with interesting plots and characters for those who would swallow them no other way.

In a sense the patients' library was a bare bones version of any of the libraries then available in the outside world. The staples from all genres were present, but the abundance, depth, and currency was missing. In comparison with the great asylum libraries of the north, it was lacking. Isaac Ray's library held over 900 volumes that included all the "standard" works of history, biography, travel, religion, romance, and poetry, as did Thomas Kirkbride's. Amariah Brigham claimed to have as many as 800
literary, religious, and political periodicals in his asylum library. In their ability to build large libraries, Ray, Kirkbride, and Brigham were competitive with anything in the outside world—be they private, public, or social libraries—at least in size. Next to these, the Eastern Asylum patients’ library was but a pale replica. Looked at in this way, the patient’s collection resembled a fleshless skeleton draped in the bulky cloak of respectability. It provided the asylum with a layer of gentility and normalcy and extended the pretence that patients were not patients at all but visitors at a pleasant resort or spa. When patients walked out on Wednesday mornings to collect new books for their week’s reading, they appeared to be no different in many respects from the sane person who visited his or her closest social or public library.

To leave it there, however, would be unfair. It seems quite plain that Galt, when he could, made an effort to balance the collection to suit the needs of a diverse population in their levels of education and literacy and their various mental ailments. In addition, he recognized the preference of his readers for fictional works and their need for a format that was not especially taxing, the need to provide for the educated professionals and well-educated among his patients as well as those with less book learning from Virginia’s farming and laboring communities. Added to that agenda was his drive to introduce even the farmer or laborer and their wives to types of reading materials they had never encountered before. In many ways the collection taken in toto is very much a tribute to the virtuoso performance Galt performed, juggling on one hand a tiny library budget, a variety of diverse needs among his population, and on the other his desire to make reading and the library work as an integral and functioning part of the his asylum’s moral management program.
The collection at the Eastern Asylum patients' library had at least one unique characteristic. Galt had stamped it with his own personality. He almost surely had read everything in the library at some time in his life, probably as an enthusiastic and impressionable young man, and so in some way, the library represented his own biography and values in shorthand. In this sense Galt used books as a means to connect with his patients in the same way he had used them to reach out to his family, his community, and his professional colleagues. In addition to making contact with his patients on his rounds, in his clinic, and in his conversations with them, Galt bridged the chasm between himself and his patients through their library. He shared his gentility, his social values, his morals, his belief in the value of literacy and self-education, his intellect—and his great love of reading and his faith in it to edify, instruct, and entertain. He also shared a more hidden part of his character, one not so willingly acknowledged, that was cloistered, protected, inhibited, careful, proper. A polite façade hid the personal insecurities, the many physical illnesses, the griefs and disappointments he suffered. The patients' library wore a façade, too, that papered over the problems and challenges of the broader society from the residents inside the walls of the asylum. At a time when political participation was increasing in America, becoming so contentious that blood might be spilt on any election day in Philadelphia, and when sectional conflict was beginning to crack the foundation of unionism and separate the North from the South, political commentary of any kind was glaringly absent from the patients' library other than what might be gleaned from unsophisticated local newspapers. At a time when new religious sects were springing up and old ones dying or changing character dramatically, when evangelicism was transforming the religious landscape, and strange new philosophies like
Transcendentalism, Millerism, and Utopianism were provoking a new secular spirituality, religious materials in the patients' library were tame and made up of reliable, traditional standbys like the Bible, eighteenth-century sermons and prayer books, and practical-minded hymnals. At a time when magazines were available everywhere and ranged from the elegant, thought-provoking literary magazines like the Knickerbocker and the Southern Literary Messenger to the gaudily-illustrated Godey's Lady's Book to the seediest, sensational newssheet, Eastern Asylum patients were limited to farmers' magazines or the Penney magazine published by a British reform organization, in which every article could be transported easily to the back parlor where children played. Even literature that might have espoused the southern cause was disallowed in this oldest and most traditional of southern villages, acceptable only if it were cloaked in the code and subterfuge of a Walter Scott novel, the humor of Georgia Scenes, or the mythological setting of Swallow Barn. Never was the term "polite literature" so pregnant with meaning as in the Eastern Asylum patients' library.
CHAPTER VII
DISSOLUTION:
JOHN MINSON GALT II,
HIS WORK, HIS LIBRARIES

Moral management as a method of treating the insane appeared in Europe and Great Britain late in the eighteenth century. By the early nineteenth-century its promise of humane treatment and legendary cure rates had crossed the Atlantic and was embraced by social reformers as far north as Maine, as far south as Virginia, and as far west as Ohio. There it fit comfortably within a larger pattern of reforms aimed at curing the thorny problems of crime, poverty, and ignorance, in an antebellum culture yearning for stability and safety during a time of political, economic, religious, and technological change. The insane would be incarcerated in the controlled, monitored environment of the asylum and placed under the exclusive care of professionals. A new day would dawn and the mad would recover their wits and become contributing, morally-disciplined, responsible citizens of the new democratic republic. By 1842 moral management of the insane in America reached its zenith when the superintendents from the thirteen largest asylums founded a professional society, the Association for Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane (AMSAII), and launched an accompanying quarterly professional journal to spread the gospel.

Within only a dozen years criticism of moral management’s effectiveness began to surface. Cure rates were going down, costs were going up, and worse, insane populations were increasing. Even from inside the exclusive AMSAII circle, one of its own, John Minson Galt, called for nothing less than a “revolution” in management of the
insane. By 1864 in the wake of a cataclysmic and costly Civil War, dissatisfaction had reached a critical mass, and state bureaucratic agencies assumed control of asylums with the primary purpose of cutting costs. This centralization not only changed the structure of care for the patient and weakened the authority of the superintendent but also represented a retreat from the optimistic notion that the insane could be cured, replacing it with the tacit belief that many patients, or as Galt had called them the “debris of successive years,” were doomed to spend their lives in an institutional setting without hope of recovery.

For a brief moment in 1870 an alternate vision seemed possible. Merrick Bemis, superintendent of the Worcester Hospital, introduced the idea of establishing Gheel-like communities as a way to treat the insane—just as had Galt. But unlike Galt, Bemis put theory into practice. He obtained 300 acres at his asylum and built a series of cottages that moved patients farther and farther away from the main institution until they were in many respects living on their own with only unobtrusive oversight from the asylum. Bemis’ experiment, however, fell upon deaf ears among AMSAIII members. The architects of the moral management movement in America—Earle, Kirkbride, Curwen, Bell, and Ray—continued their opposition to the idea of re-integrating the insane into the community. It would not be until the twentieth century, more than a hundred years after Galt had first proposed the idea of mainstreaming the insane, indeed long after his name was associated with the idea, that integration of the insane into the community would become a national reality.¹

While moral management had a life span of only 35 or 40 years in most states, its flame burned even more briefly at Eastern Asylum. In this, the oldest of all American insane asylums, moral management was implemented only in 1842. From its inception

and for most of its existence, Eastern Asylum had been run very much along the lines of the madhouses in Britain and Europe and by a series of doctors who very much resembled the mad doctors of Britain and Europe. Yet by 1855, John Minson Galt, the same superintendent who had introduced moral management at the asylum, was calling the incarceration of the insane a failure and offering yet a newer and more innovative system. Nothing was to come of his suggestions to the AMSAI1 or to his own state legislature while he was alive, and after the war when the south lay in ruins, Eastern Asylum largely reverted to what it had been most of its existence. A caretaker facility once again, it struggled to maintain its integrity under the direction of thirteen different superintendents in about as many years. In retrospect, the rise and fall of moral management at Eastern Asylum greatly paralleled John Minson Galt’s own biography.

II.

Although John Minson Galt had not chosen the career of asylum superintendent voluntarily but more for his father’s and family’s sake, once ensconced as head of the asylum, he threw himself in to the job with enthusiasm, thinking both to improve the lives of his residents and to make a name for himself as a thinker and scholar in the profession. Through his voracious professional reading and from his close association with AMSAI1 during the 1840s and early 1850s, Galt II came to resemble his northern colleagues in a number of important respects. Like them he believed the pressures of urban, modern living were a major cause of the increase in insanity (although ironically his own asylum was filled with patients who had spent little time in the city), and like them too, he embraced the notion that asylums could cure the morally insane by rekindling virtue or establishing it anew among those who had never known it. And like

---

his colleagues he embraced the values of gentility, sensibility, and self-education, and found it easy initially to integrate these values within a moral management framework of treatment. Above all else he was one with his northern colleagues in the belief that reading was an essential element in helping his residents fight off their mental demons and inculcate habits of thought and behavior that were recuperative—the same as it had for him. One of the first initiatives he took at Eastern Asylum was to build a library for his patients, demonstrating in a tangible way his solidarity with other asylum directors. Very much like Kirkbride, Brigham, Ray, Buttolph, and others, his own personal devotion to and dependence upon reading translated well into the asylum setting and the moral management philosophy. Carefully chosen genres of biography, travel, domestic fiction, sketchbooks, history, and poetry could add a dimension to the rehabilitation of patients by distracting them from their morbid delusions and depressions, making them less hostile to the asylum staff and easier to manage, and generally creating an atmosphere where moral self-improvement was encouraged. In addition reference and instructional works, both vocational and academic, could teach the illiterate to read and to expand their intellectual horizons. The efficacy of reading, books, and libraries then was part of a worldview the superintendents held themselves and one they attempted to share with their patients. If this be social control of the insane via books and reading, it was a prescription no more restrictive or coercive than what they embraced for themselves, for their families, their friends, and their society at large.

In addition to their optimism and enthusiasm for moral management, Galt and his colleagues also shared the same problems, in degree if not in kind, in managing their institutions. The public did not always understand the goals they were trying to accomplish and, worse, often saw the insane as objects of ridicule or fear. Money for the asylum was never as much as it might have been nor as much as was needed. Political
interference was a constant source of aggravation as state legislators tried to micromanage asylum affairs from afar. Perhaps the most profound problem Galt and his colleagues shared (although they didn’t recognize it) was the inherent flaw in the moral management system that could not accommodate the increasingly pluralistic society in which they lived. For the northern superintendents, an influx of immigrants threatened to upset their noble experiment. For Galt, a southern society that condoned human bondage strained the parameters of a system built to cater to a homogeneous population. The dilemma was acute. While Galt was committed to a system of treatment designed by Pinel and Tuke for a white population of patients and administered by a white staff, in his world blacks were omnipresent. Blacks and whites lived and worked together intimately on a daily basis, even if on very uneven footing. To erase all presence of blacks from the asylum was not only unrealistic and unattainable, but from Galt’s on-again, off-again views of the desirability of gradual abolition, unworthy. Slave-owners, Galt felt, were obligated to care for the insane black, even if that treatment be of a radically different nature than which the white patients received. He argued for the admission of blacks, he also hired the sane black, free and slave, as staff.

Yet in Galt’s failure to apply the precepts of moral management as a method of treatment for all Virginia’s insane, just as in the northern superintendents’ failure to make it work for an immigrant population, he did not grasp that the problem lay not with the unsuitability of the patient but rather with the system itself. If treatment were to be based upon the notion that the insane were just like the sane, that principle must include the belief that all patients were the same in all ways: white, Protestant, Anglo, liking the same foods, dressing in the same garb, engaging in the same life rituals, holding the same worldview, pursuing the same goals, and dreaming the same dreams of what constituted personal success in a democratic republic. Individuals and families, whether living in the
city or on the farm, could be brought back into the larger fold, for they shared a culture that made moral management therapies of occupation, recreation, religion, and moral instruction effective. When that proved not to be the case—when the superintendents encountered patients from different racial and ethnic groups—moral management proved impotent.

This lack of recognition of the flaw in moral management points up vividly, and most importantly, how alike the superintendents and Galt could be. In a nation heading towards a civil war that would persuade many that North and South were fundamentally opposed in culture as well in labor systems, there was little difference in their analysis of insanity and their treatment of patients. Or in their inability to accurately evaluate the moral management system and their own preconceptions and prejudices that prevented them from making the system more flexible in a changing pluralistic society.

If Galt shared much with his northern colleagues in the operation of a moral management asylum, there were elements that separated him from his fellows as well. He believed in pledges as a viable way of extracting desired behavior from his patients—they did not; he believed, in theory if not in practice, in a no-restraint policy—they did not. He believed blacks could live in the same asylum both as patients and as staff—they did not. And finally in the latter years of his life, he wished to send his patients back into the community where they might live more normal lives—again, they did not. In a sense his conservative frame of mind and ties to tradition drew him back to the illustrious past of eighteenth-century Williamsburg when the word “liberty” was pregnant with meaning and an integral, even crucial, part of the revolutionary rhetoric. Even the insane must be free, or at least, have as much freedom as their illness would allow. And because of his

---


4Galt had a variety of reasons for wanting to experiment with the Gheel model, not
own unique status in Williamsburg, perhaps he did not see his superintendency in the same way as did his northern counterparts—as the sole source of his prestige and social standing; he also did not perceive the demise of the asylum, as it was then defined, as personally threatening.

Galt differed from his brethren in another important way, one more personal. Kirkbride, Brigham, Ray, Bell truly were self-made men. They had climbed aboard the puffing, steaming antebellum engine of entrepreneurship and individualism and carved out a niche for themselves by the very force of their personalities. They were larger than life. Like a Colossus they had stamped their imprint upon their newly-established profession and their individual asylums. Galt was cut from different cloth. He was not a man of action but rather shy, reserved, and scholarly, a man who preferred studying about the management of insanity rather that engaging in it. Largely unsuited for a position of authority, he lacked confidence in himself and ultimately in his own ideas, imaginative and innovative though they might have been. He possessed neither the oral skills to persuade nor the charisma to charm others, and he disdained the ungentlemanly art of self-promotion that might have won support for his innovative ideas. He disliked confrontation of any sort, so generally retreated from any opposition from his staff, the asylum Board of Directors, and the General Assembly. As a result he was never as effective a superintendent as he might have wished nor as influential in his profession as he might have hoped.

Yet his temperament, while perhaps unsuitable to leadership, provided a great advantage to him in his interaction with patients. Mild in manner, kindly, and bound by a dedication to Duty above all else, he seemed to have had a personal understanding of the least of which was that he thought asylums were unhealthy places to live, but he was also breaking with a tradition aptly described by Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* of doctors who looked at the insane as the Other.
mentally-disturbed Virginians who were in the grip of depression, delusions, or mental
demons, many incarcerated against their will. Perhaps one of the most interesting signs
of Galt's metamorphosis as superintendent was his evolving relationship with the
patients. While once he had been "disgusted at going to the Hosp.," by the 1850s he
would walk among his patients "in his daily rounds, addressing each one with the greatest
respect and kindness of manner, often stopping to chat with them." He evolved his relationship with the
patients. While once he had been "disgusted at going to the Hosp.," by the 1850s he
would walk among his patients "in his daily rounds, addressing each one with the greatest
respect and kindness of manner, often stopping to chat with them." His gentleness and
empathy with patients were frequently noted. In Galt's opinion, the mad were in most
cases very much like the sane, differing in degree rather than in kind; in a very real sense,
they were very much like himself. His own neuroses and battle with personal demons
gave him an understanding of his charges that went beyond medical training and moral
management theories. Perhaps he even derived his conviction in the efficacy of moral
management techniques in part, because he himself found them useful in fighting his own
obsessions and fearfulness. "In occupation hope arises and bad thoughts are interrupted
equally with memories," Galt wrote about his own situation, just as if he might have
done had he been explaining the usefulness of employment for the residents of his
asylum. He invited patients into his home as if they were friends, where "they were ever
welcome partakers of his hospitality" and "constituted an element in his domestic
circle." Galt's mother and sisters did the same. They often mentioned patients by name
in their letters to each other and kept in touch with recovered patients, the patients
seemingly as eager for continued contact as the Galts. One patient was so attached to the
Galts that she confided her wartime fears to Elizabeth for "your Dear Brother and

---

5"Biographical Sketches."

6JMGII, Commonplace Book, July 1854.

7"Biographical Sketches."
Cousin" whom she thought faced "daily danger." Another patient actually came to live with Sallie after the war. "I have a very good lady living with me," Sallie wrote, "She is one of my Dear Brother's recovered patients, and having lost all of her friends has no home, and I tell her she must make my house and home as much hers as mine...."

During his tenure Galt also introduced a variety of features into the asylum that improved the patients' quality of life. While he left no lasting legacy outside Williamsburg, he made a positive contribution to the patients living under his care during the 20 years he was superintendent.

In the mid-1850s Galt began to lose his enthusiasm for his job. His episodic discontent with his duties, his frustration over partisan meddling in the institution, his inability to confront dominating personalities like the Steward Barziza or his Aunt Mary, and his fear of losing his position took a greater and greater toll. As the lifelong bachelor approached forty and struggled with ennui, he adopted a policy he had imposed upon his patients by making pledges time and again to fulfill his duties. In 1856 he wrote, "I have lately been much under the opinion that I should seek with extreme diligence to do continuously and at all times my whole duty as superintendent." A year later he was still scolding himself, "Ought I not now to busy myself especially about the asylum and asylum matters generally," and again a few months later, "I have thought lately a great deal about attending to my duties at the asylum above all other things." At the minimum he hoped to accomplish a roster of essential activities. "Four letters daily, the record

8John Minson Galt II, Civil War Diary, 1 March 1862.

9Elizabeth Neal Pitzer, Sallie and Elizabeth Galt: Compliance and Resistance to the 'Southern Lady' Role in Antebellum Williamsburg (masters thesis, College of William and Mary, 1985), 65. After her brother died, Sallie Galt continued to have close contact with Eastern State patients. "The sane and insane minds are analogous, what is good for me is good for the other. I intensely enjoy the patients visiting me, and have many friendships and warm attachments in my circle of insane friends."
book, diary, and hospital entries," he wrote, "should go on...independent of considerations even as to meals, health, close pursuit of other things." The following month he was still grappling with this resolution: "The fact is that I should seek to finish off four letters a day, my records, and diary systematically and without delay...to give me more time for other things." Yet Galt was rarely idle. He studied almost twelve hours a day, although his "wretched dyspepsia" sometimes interfered with this rigorous schedule. Much of his study was actually related to his job: reading "medical and psychical" literature, composing articles about insanity, and writing and preparing lectures for the patients.\textsuperscript{10} By throwing himself into tasks he enjoyed and that were part of his duties, Galt could neglect those aspects of the job he most disliked. He also did copious amounts of letter-writing, "a class of labors which consume a part of the leisure which I am able to husband from more pressing matters and the daily routine of duties." Such letters included responses to requests from other asylum superintendents or lay persons for information as to the management of his asylum and responses to patients' relatives inquiring about their loved ones.\textsuperscript{11} Yet he felt he had kept his pledges no better than many of his patients; he stood condemned in his own eyes as irresolute and procrastinating: "How often...I neglect the continuous pursuit of these resolutions, first dropping this, and then that, mixing them irregularly." He tried to relax more and to "reflect as Brother Gabe instructed that I might now enjoy myself after work for so many years." But relaxation came hard for a man driven by duty and demons and plagued by uncertainty: "I must work constantly because of my position being so uncertain--my future as far as I can see is evidently hard work."\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} JMGII, \textit{Commonplace Book}, June 1856; January 1857; June 1857; September 1857; October 1857; May 1854; January 1856; February 1856.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{EAAR} 1853-54.

\textsuperscript{12} JMGII, \textit{Commonplace Book}, April 1857; July 1858; October 1861.
Galt accomplished more at Eastern Asylum than perhaps he was willing to allow. Yet in an ironic twist, some of the advances that other superintendents might have taken as proof of accomplishment—the growth of the hospital from 125 to 283 patients, the increase of buildings from five to nine—may have been an indication of failure for him rather than something to brag about. His dream, of integrating the insane into the community and giving them a measure of liberty rather than life locked behind gates and walls, was farther away after twenty years at the helm than it had been when he was a twenty-two-year-old neophyte. In one of the few passionate and emotional entries Galt wrote in his journal, he summed up his tenure at Eastern Asylum:

As to my position, so help me God! I value it but little save for...views which I entertain as to Duty; to the effect that God had given us faculties to be exercised not alone for our own good, but to benefit our fellow creatures. I accepted and have continued to hold the post which I occupy because it confers on me a wide field of exertion, a subject demanding much study, as well as much practical action. I did not seek the office of superintendent, nor have I sought to retain it, nor will I seek hereafter to retain it...I only endeavor...in so many points to do my Duty...trusting...to God's forgiveness for all shortcomings and weaknesses.13

At approximately the same time as Galt was losing his enthusiasm for his work at Eastern State, his inner life, too, was sustaining a serious crisis. An accumulation of disappointments became a heavy burden to carry as he mulled over the choices he had made in life. Even as a young man he at times regretted his foreordained career as an asylum superintendent. As early as 1848 he applied for a position at the College of William and Mary. At the time the College was experiencing internal turmoil that led to the resignation or firing of much of the faculty.14 Seizing on his alma mater's troubles,

13JMGII, Commonplace Book, January 1856.

14For a full explanation of the problems the college experienced during this period,
Galt apparently saw an opportunity to escape into a scholarly and studious career more in keeping with his proclivities and talents.

Should no eminent man offer or accept the professorship in William and Mary College, recently vacated by Mr. Holmes, I should be willing to fill his place, giving up the lucrative and equally as honorable position which I now hold under the state.

He added "I feel fully competent, with but a moderate previous preparation, to take charge of the duties required by either of the moral professorships." For whatever reason Galt didn't send the letter, or else his application was rejected; nothing came of it. Still his desire for escape to a different life surfaced from time to time over the years.

When his position at the asylum came under fire in the 1850s and he heard "rumors of my losing my situation," he entertained the idea of quitting to make a living by his pen. "Lately I have considered that by selling off our property I could board out, and my mother and Sallie could live comfortably enough." But this sort of fantasy was dependent upon his self-image as a man of letters, and that image increasingly came under assault as the decade progressed. His published works had not made the impression he had hoped. He briefly considered returning to a role as editor and working with other peoples' when "personal antagonisms, points of honor, religion, politics, and family connections" brought the college almost to a complete halt, see Ludwell Johnson, "From Fiasco to Recovery to Disaster, 1846-1862," *The History of William and Mary, 1693-1888* (Society of the Alumni, College of William and Mary, 1993), 1:265-290. In this, Galt may have misjudged the life of an academic. Given William and Mary's internal conflicts, he may have found the political turmoil at the college more trying than what he had at the asylum.

15JMGII to unknown recipient, undated except for the year 1848. Galt wrote he was content in his present job and was only offering his services because they might be of help in "a critical condition." He requested the recipient return his letter of application if his offer was not needed. This may be why the letter is in Galt's collection of papers.
words, but this thought went no further than the page of his journal.\textsuperscript{16} Even worse than his waning desire to write was his erosion of interest in reading. While once he had written that books were "to knowledge and ideas as light to the universe, revealing so many beautiful objects,"\textsuperscript{17} by 1855 a lack of faith in the supremacy of the printed word began to infiltrate his thinking: "After all how much of the trashy and flashy there is generally in books; how little we learn in them of the depths of things as compared with human life."\textsuperscript{18} Perhaps the lack of success in the forum of the printed word had discouraged him from that medium as an appropriate outlet for his literary talents, and he channeled his energies as a man of letters into a new activity. He discovered the pleasures of conversation. In 1856 he made (or renewed) an acquaintance with the Capron family, and his many conversations with them gave him both confidence and "great fluency."\textsuperscript{19} At the age of thirty-seven, "I now find conversation sufficient for happiness and purposely indulge in it." He determined to give up "on the policy of reading of any sort in order to devote the whole of my attention to conversation." His activities on one particular summer day of 1857 hints at his new life: he attended a Baptist concert early in the morning, then a reception at Mrs. Pleasant where he walked in the garden with Clara Minor, later in the afternoon he walked Lizzie Sewell

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{JMGII, Commonplace Book}, January 1855; March 1857; January 1856.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{GFP III, Group II, Box 1, Folder 18}. This isolated item is undated, but the wording is similar to that which Galt used in his college thesis on the Reformation; if Galt did not write the entry in 1839, he certainly embraced such sentiment as early as then.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{JMGII, Commonplace Book}, December 1855.

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid.}, October 1856; I was unable to identify the Capron family with any certainty. They are not listed in the 1850 or 1860 federal census indexes for Virginia or in any of the usual Virginia genealogy sources. They were most likely the children of Sarah Trebell Galt Capron, Mary Dorothea Galt’s cousin.
home, and finally in the evening after a soiree at Mrs. Saunders, walked home with Anna Grotten.20

As with his writing he tried to plan the particulars of his new activity. Spontaneity was not his long suit. He resolved to introduce "one object of interest" into his conversations with others "in order to leave a pleasing impression on the company." Another time he asked himself, "would not compliments be worth composing and keeping for suitable occasions on which to give them utterance."21

In the last few years of his life, Galt made the leap from social conversation to preparing lectures for asylum inmates. Lectures for the insane were common in asylums in the north where the Lyceum movement had its roots, but they had less of an auspicious history in the south.22 Still Galt had been sufficiently exposed to the notion of public speaking from a variety of sources: his reading of lecture notices in magazines and newspapers, his contact with northern superintendents who already had established lecture programs in their asylums, his time in Philadelphia where he noted that over twenty organizations sponsored public lectures, and from the well-publicized lecture circuit in

20JMGII, Commonplace Book, January 1856; October 1856; 1857.

21Ibid., September 1856; October 1856; April 1857.

22See Carl Bode, The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956). Bode attributes the lack of success of the lyceum in the south to a high illiteracy rate, the lack of large cities, and to the planter class who held a grip on a stagnant culture in the south. See also Waldo W. Braden, Oratory in the Old South, 1828-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970); Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America," Journal of American History 66, no. 4 (March 1980): 791-809. Jonathan Wells in Emergence of Southern Middle Class makes a sustained and documented argument that lyceums were alive and well in Virginia as well as in the rest of the south, and that they were the training ground for southern leaders who would reign during Reconstruction and beyond.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Richmond that had brought both Thackeray and Poe to the city to speak. After sufficient preparation, Galt thought, he might make a good lecturer and exclaimed "Now I could lecture like Coleridge!" His hopes were high: "If successful in my lectures what a pleasant mode in passing spare time, employing it for the public, in polishing these compositions."

This was a good alternative to reading and writing without return, and in some instances, it provided as much prestige as having a byline. "If successful in lecturing then could I devote my spare time most profitably indeed."\(^{23}\)

Galt's off-again, on-again disillusionment with reading and writing as he grew older stemmed from a variety of reasons. His close-knit family, the primary source of his inner strength and resolve, had grown weak. His beloved sister, Elizabeth, had died in 1854 and his mother in 1858, leaving him with an "inexpressible...grevious, piercing affliction."\(^ {24}\) The stability of his world, held together by a doting mother and beloved sister for more than four decades, was coming undone. Galt's use of laudanum also must have eroded his desire to read and write with the same intensity as when a young man. He knew of the drug's peril as well as its attraction, writing in 1855, "by means of certain earthly means as opium or hashish we can taste of exquisite pleasures. But how dangerous and transitory are these inefficient means."\(^ {25}\) He struggled to keep the habit under control, writing in 1854 of "the difficulties and suffering occasioned by abstinence from O_____." Yet as late as 1858 he was still taking it regularly and possibly in large doses. On one of those many occasions

\(^{23}\)JMGII to MDG, 31 December 1840; JMGII, *Commonplace Book*, May 1858.

\(^{24}\)JMGII, *Commonplace Book*, December 1857.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., April 1855; Galt thought prayer provided more, long-lasting pleasure.
when his job was in jeopardy, he wrote of his fear in being unable to procure the drug. He thought he might say that he "intended setting up particularly to treat maladies and hence purchase the more laudanum."\(^2^6\)

His own fearful and pessimistic nature worked against an enthusiasm for reading and books, too, once he felt his youth was spent. He saw his life constricted by time and mortality:

What a difference between 35 and 38. In the former you are within a few years of being quite a young man...at the latter age you have become within a year or two of being an old man. In the one all hope still lives before you. In the other it's too late to change one's profession.

No doubt, too, after a self-imposed, rigorous schedule of study often entailing twelve hours a day, he was simply becoming tired of it all. "Ought I not sometimes to change a room...simply to avoid ennui in studying,"\(^2^7\) he asked himself. The boy and young man, who had so eagerly spent hours engrossed in his reading, now needed to change rooms simply to maintain a modicum of interest in the many books he had so assiduously collected.

No doubt his lack of success in reaping the rewards from twelve hours of grueling study a day had begun to wear thin. Not only had he not won the fame and prestige he so desired, he had earned instead the scorn of those he had most hoped to impress. The severe criticism he had received from his colleagues over the St. Anne's article had made him a pariah. Perhaps, too, Galt may have seen himself as the latest victim of northern bias and saw no reason to believe his future efforts would be received with any more enthusiasm.

\(^2^6\)JMGII, *Commonplace Book*, April 1854; March 1858.

\(^2^7\)Ibid., June 1858; April 1856.
Certainly he indicated that his gravitation toward lecturing as an outlet for his ambitions was due, at least partly, to his unpleasant experiences as an author and editor: "In lecturing I am giving scope to individual talent apart from subofficials, apart from editors, publishers." He voiced discontent with the local newspapers as well: "Lectures to patients are requisite, moreover, because we no longer have an opportunity of practice[ing] writing so as to please the peculiar taste of the newspaper." On the podium, in front of the insane residents of his asylum, a captive audience, he would escape all opprobrium. Indeed he would be well-received if the patient who had called him "her sugar plum" was at all representative of the audience.

Yet Galt never totally abandoned reading and writing. He had dwelled too long under their spell. Even as he bemoaned the onset of old age and stymied ambitions, he still occasionally dreamed of reviving his literary efforts: "Suppose I write a wholly original, comparatively brief and highly polished novel?" Suppose, indeed, for Galt had little left of the drive and discipline that had characterized those days in 1846 when he had worked so steadily on Treatment of Insanity. The man of letters had for all practical purposes closed his books and put them away.

In May 1862 when Union forces marched into Williamsburg and took control of the asylum, John Minson Galt's proclivity to nervousness was never more of a disadvantage to him. In a state of anxiety he self-administered a dose of laudanum. After that the course of events are murky. One account had it that he suffered from an

---

28 JMG II, Commonplace Book, February 1858; April 1860.

29 Ibid., September 1858.
apoplectic fit, and another doctor not knowing Galt had already ingested laudanum, gave him yet more, thus triggering his death. Other local accounts hinted at suicide, while a former colleague openly declared it. John Gray, then president of AMSAAII and sent by Lincoln to inspect Eastern Asylum in 1863, commented that “soon after the war the accomplished superintendent of the asylum, Dr. Galt, committed suicide.” Whatever the facts of the events surrounding Galt's death, Eastern Asylum entered a new chapter in its history. For all practical purposes, moral management at the hospital had already ended with the onset of the Civil War, but with Galt's death all vestiges of it were erased.

The fate of the various libraries the Galts had accumulated is unknown for the most part. Sally Galt became the heir of her brother's medical books upon his death, one of the few assets she retained. Reduced to poverty she had asked Dorothea Dix to find her a position at a mental institution. She confessed she could not apply at Eastern Asylum for a variety of reasons, not the least because “perhaps I may not like to serve where I have resided.” Indeed taking a position at Eastern Asylum would have been humbling, for she would have gone from lofty benefactress and sister of the superintendent to a status no better than a servant, equal in rank to other staff who at one time would have been considered her social inferiors. At the same time she could not have considered seriously the idea of leaving Williamsburg. Nothing ever came of her request. She lived out the rest of her days in Williamsburg and somehow found a way to survive and carve out a niche for herself. She continued to receive patients in her home, noting that she gave them “books and flowers” and “they all looked bright and happy.”

30“Summary,” AJI 20, no. 3 (January 1864): 350.
In spite of her reduced status, she didn’t sell her brother’s medical books but instead bequeathed the collection to the asylum. When she died in 1880, for some unknown reason the request was not honored. She also bequeathed the Galt family library to the son of William Richard Galt, the same cousin who had turned to John Minson Galt II for encouragement in translating French poetry in 1848. 31 As to the patients’ library upon which Galt had lavished such attention as a one means of moral management, its fate is unknown. It is likely that over the years following the Civil War it felt into disrepair and was eventually dispersed and ceased to exist as a collection.

Without testimonies, diaries, or letters from his patients, whatever success Galt might have achieved with his asylum library in reaching beyond the delusions and sadness of the insane mind, is shrouded as much in obscurity as is the fate of the books themselves. Yet the collection of titles Galt carefully drew together in 1843 for his patients and the rules he formulated for their use, suggest that however the patients may have looked upon the fruits of his labor, he did in fact create a print culture to meet the needs of the insane as he perceived them. In doing so, he argued for the inclusion of the insane as legitimate participants in that part of the antebellum culture where everyone was expected to pick up a book and begin to read.

---

31 Sallie Galt, Will, GFP III, Group II, Box 3, Folder 5. Part of Galt’s medical collection fell into the hands of a third cousin, John Minson Galt, who eventually passed them on to his son, Francis, and then into the hands of an M. Henley who donated them to Swem Library’s Special Collections in 1944. Another part of the medical collection is held by Special Collections, John D. Rockefeller Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Sallie also requested in her will that the manuscripts of both her sister, Elizabeth, and her brother, John Minson, be published, using funds from rental monies of the old homestead. As far as I can determine this request was never fulfilled.
APPENDIX A. Methodology in Compiling the Bibliography of Titles in the Patients’ Library at Eastern Asylum

John Minson Galt II drew up two lists of titles for the Eastern Asylum patients’ library which I call List A and List B. Both lists are part of the Galt collection held at the Special Collections Division, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William & Mary.

Neither List A nor List B is dated. List A includes William Prescott’s *History of the Conquest of Mexico* first published in 1843. List B includes *John Tyler: His History, Character, and Position* first published in 1843 and Timothy Arthur’s *Temperance Tales*, published first in 1843 (although this was an edition of an earlier book with a different title.) The obvious conclusion is that neither List A nor List B could have been made before 1843. It is reasonable to assume the lists were drawn up no earlier than 1843 and no later than 1845.

There is some duplication of entries between the two lists, about one-third of the total, but most titles appear only once on either list. List A has two curious entries: “Emerson, Webster, or Cobb,” (three spelling books by different authors), and “Smith, Keith’s, Davie, or Green’s Arithmetic” (arithmetic primers by different authors). The use of the word “or” would seem to indicate that Galt, rather than preparing an inventory of what was on the premises, was making up a list of books he might like to have. This same list also includes a number of items like quill pens, pencils, ink, grinding organ that furthers the impression this may have been a shopping list. I initially concluded, then, that List A was a “to-buy” list and List B were books that were actually on the premises. Yet the “Or” books on List A do not appear on List B so such a conclusion is, well, inconclusive. Rather on List B the same type of books (primers and spellers) were listed generically: “5 spellers,” and “6 first reading books.” In the end, I decided that it
probably didn’t make that much difference. Together both lists represented books Galt either had or wanted to have and as such, for the purposes of this study, it was somewhat immaterial. As a result I collapsed the two lists together as one and eliminated duplicate titles. It is this list that became the contents of the bibliography.

Both List A and List B have a number of inconsistent and incomplete entries. Sometimes an entry is nothing more than a title, sometimes nothing more than an author. For instance, on one list Galt lists simply “2 Shakespeare,” but gives no titles. Did he mean two sets of Shakespeare’s works or two copies of one Shakespeare title or two different Shakespearean titles? Did he mean plays or sonnets? On another occasion Galt lists *The Smuggler*, a title that could refer to books by a variety of different authors available at the time. Which of them did he mean? Likewise when Galt listed “Life of Lafayette” or “Life of Clay” or “Life of Calhoun,” which of the books written by a variety of authors available on the market did he mean?

My procedure was to examine each problem title individually rather than making a one-size-fits-all decision, and take into consideration the circumstances surrounding each. With the Shakespeare entry I chose an edition of complete works of his that were available at the time. Galt, as other superintendents, was an avid reader of Shakespeare, even using his plays to explain insanity in their professional journal, so I felt it was likely Galt had a complete, or nearly complete set.

With *The Smuggler* I decided on John Banim’s *The Smuggler* (1831), a fictional work, as opposed to Jack Rattenbury’s *Memoirs of a Smuggler* (1837). Either could have been in Galt’s collection, but Banim’s *Smuggler*, an anthology of Irish fictional stories by an author who confessed to writing in the style of the popular Walter Scott, was the more
likely. I thought since Scott was a hugely popular writer with the antebellum reader, it would probably follow that anyone who wrote in the same genre would be of interest to the antebellum reader as well. In addition, if Galt had meant Rattenbury’s *Smuggler*, he would have been inclined to modify the title with “memoirs” or “life of.”

With the lives of Lafayette, Clay, and Calhoun, I included those titles that actually included “life of” in the title and were available in 1843, a purely arbitrary decision, I admit, but a necessary one if these titles were to be included at all.

All entries with uncertain specific editions are marked with an * in the “Eastern Asylum Patients Library Titles by Genre” and accompanied by a NOTE explaining the circumstances.

On some occasions, Galt modified a title with a description, such as “Harper’s Family Library, some of.” This particular set had many volumes. With no way to know which specific volumes or titles Galt chose (or was given,) I simply listed the whole set in the bibliography. The same kind of problem occurred with Galt’s listing of “Miss Edgeworth, some of,” or “Peter Parley’s works, some of” or “Mrs. Sherwood, some of.” These authors were prolific writers, but with no way to know which of the titles Galt actually had, I listed the author’s collected works if they were available. Illustrative of this method, “Mrs. Sherwood works, some of” in the Galt list becomes Mrs. Sherwood’s *The Works of Mrs. Sherwood, Being the Only Uniform Edition Ever Published in the United States* (1820) in the bibliography. And “Miss Edgeworth, some of” becomes Maria Edgeworth’s *Works* (1813-1825.) Within the “some of” titles, I also provided a low and high estimate of the possible number of titles. For instance, Galt lists “Edgeworth’s works, some of.” Considering her prolific output I interpreted this entry
with a low estimate of 5 titles and a high estimate of 10 titles. To list the entry as only one title would have drastically reduced the number of titles Galt actually had in the library and would also skew the total genre count. The only way to make the absolute count of entries represent more accurately the probable or even possible number of titles was to make a low and high estimate. All of these entries are marked with * in the bibliography and each accompanied by a low and high estimate as well as a NOTE explaining the circumstances.

Only in one case did I eliminate a Galt entry altogether and that was for the listing for “Brewster.” There were at least ten authors with the surname of Brewster writing between 1700-1842, and a good argument could be made for at least a half a dozen of them. With no other clue as to the identity of Brewster (or the title of his work,) any one author I chose would venture way too far into the speculative mode, so I simply deleted Brewster from the list.

Galt listed thirteen titles generically. For instance, he noted “French grammar,” “10 first reading books,” 6 Baptist hymn books,” “almanacs,” “arithmetic books,” and so on. I made no attempt to speculate on the specific titles or editions of these entries, but simply included them under Untitled Works.

Only one problem remained: List B had a considerable portion of the left side of the sheet torn which resulted in approximately twenty titles missing. A few words from the end of some of the titles were still visible, so I was able to salvage enough information to identify some of them, but for the rest they are lost, unless they had been included on List A and thus made it into the Bibliography that way.
Happily the majority of titles on both lists were easily identifiable either by title or title and author. My main source for identifying these titles was the online bibliographic databases, WorldCat and OCLC (really one and the same database, but with a differently-arranged display format and requiring a different search protocol). Even with only a fragment of the title I had little trouble in finding the various editions that were available. When I ran into a problem, I turned to the more traditional sources like Sabins\(^1\). If I still could not track down a specific author or title, I went online and used various search engines to see if any scrap of information was available that might provide a clue with which to re-tool my search of the above-mentioned bibliographic sources.

I felt (and have argued in the dissertation) that many if not most of the titles in the library were gifts that were most likely old books no longer wanted by the donors. That being the case it would have been pointless to select an arbitrary date as to the specific edition held by the library. A more fruitful direction to follow I thought was to try to find patterns or trends within the collection that might be provided by determining when the books were first written and/or published as well as later editions. In other words, was the title a steady seller written and published many years earlier but still popular, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)? Or was it written and published only within the last twenty years, such as the four copies of Mrs. Sherwood's *Lady of the Manor* (1820) and possibly an indication of its donor's generation and reading preferences? Or was it relatively recent, such as William Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* (1843), thus indicating a new purchase? I devised three time periods, 1650-1828, 1829-1838, and 1839-1843 and identified at least one edition that was available during each of those time periods. This

has been helpful in dating the age of the contents of the collection as a whole and in
discerning specific patterns among the various genres.

The final Bibliography represents only the titles found on the two extant lists. Galt may have well continued to buy or receive donations of titles (and I suspect he did), but there is no record of them. This particular bibliography of titles, then, must be seen primarily as a list of titles at the Eastern Asylum patients' library in 1843-1845. As the years passed these became the foundational titles for the collection, but represent only a partial list of the library's total holdings and must be considered less reflective of the whole collection by 1860.
APPENDIX B

Patients' Library,
Eastern Asylum, Williamsburg, Virginia
1843-1845

This bibliography is based on two undated library lists from the Galt Papers held by the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary. For more information on the lists and the methodology used in compiling this bibliography, see Appendix A: “Methodology and Purpose in Compiling the Bibliography of Titles in the Patients' Library at Eastern State Hospital.”

Each title is listed in a series of editions. The first entry in each series is the earliest known edition of the work. The second indented entry is of an edition published between 1820 and 1837, if one was available. The third indented entry is of an edition published between 1838 and 1843, if one was available. Some titles may have more or less than three editions listed depending upon its publication history.

An asterisk (*) in front of a title indicates the specifics of this entry are uncertain; for a NOTE of explanation, see “Title by Genre.”


Sermons, To Which Is Prefixed a Short Account of the Life and Character of the Author. London: Allman, 1840.


Hartford: Published by Silas Andrus, 1824.


Hartford: W. Andrus, 1842.

*Caesar, Julius Gaius (100 BC – 44 BC).*


Baltimore, Maryland: J. Robinson, 1823.

Concord, NH: L. Hamilton, 1842.

Coe, Joseph. *The True American, Containing the Inaugural Addresses, Together with the First Annual Addresses and Messages of All the Presidents of the United States from 1789 to 1839...and a Variety of Other Matter Useful and Entertaining.* Concord, NH: I.S. Boyd, 1840.


Philadelphia: Bennet & Walton, 1825.

*Crockett, Davy, and Augustin S. Clayton. The Life of Martin Van Buren, Heir Apparent to the "Government" and the Appointed Successor of General Andrew Jackson, Containing Every Authentic Particular by Which His Extraordinary Character Has Been Formed, with a Concise History of the Events That Have Occasioned His Unparalleled Elevation, Together with a Review of His Policy as a Statesman.* Philadelphia: R. Wright, 1835.


Day, Jeremiah. *An Introduction to Algebra, Being the First Part of a Course of Mathematics, Adapted to the Method of Instruction in the American Colleges.* New Haven: Howe & Deforest, Oliver Steele, 1814.


Philadelphia: Smith and Peck, 1843.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


*Fenelon, Francois de Salignac de La Mothe. The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses. London, 1699.

The First Eight Books of the Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses. Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1832.

The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses. Philadelphia: J. Locken, 1841.

Ferguson, Adam. The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic. 3 vols. London: W. Strahan, 1783.


Philadelphia: Thomas Wardle, 1824.


Flint, Timothy. Lectures upon Natural History, Geology, Chemistry, the Application of Steam and Interesting Discoveries in the Arts. Boston: Lilly, Wait, Colman, & Holden, 1833


Foote, Henry S. Texas and the Texans, or Advance of the Anglo Americans to the Southwest Including a History of Leading Events in Mexico from the Conquest by Fernando Cortes to the Termination of the Texas Revolution. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait & Co., 1841.


Galland, Antoine. *Arabian Nights Entertainments, Consisting of One Thousand and One Stories Told by the Sultaness of the Indies to Divert the Sultan from the Execution of a Bloody Vow He Had Made to Marry a Lady Every Day and Have Her Head Cut Off Next Morning, to Avenge Himself for the Disloyalty of His First Sultaness, etc.* 2 vols. London: Printed for Andrew Bell, 1706-1717.


Ithaca: Mack, Andrus & Woodruff, 1842.


*Goodrich, Samuel Griswold. Peter Parley's Works. 1827-1859. (some of)


Philadelphia: Grigg and Elliott, 1841.


Philadelphia: Grigg and Elliott, 1841.


Philadelphia: Moss, 1842


Hale, Salma. *History of the United States of America, with a Brief Account of Some of the Principal Empires and States of Ancient and Modern Times, for the Use of Schools and Families.* Keene, NH: John Prentiss, 1823.

*History of the United States, from Their First Settlement as Colonies, to the Close of the War with Great Britain, in 1815.* New York: C. Wiley, 1825

*History of the United States, from their First Settlement as Colonies, to the Close of the War with Great Britain, in 1817.* New York: Harper’s & Bros., 1843

*History of the United States, from their First Settlement in Colonies, to the Close of the War with Great Britain in 1815, to Which Are Added Questions, Adapted to the Use of Schools.* Cooperstown, New York: H. & E. Phinney, 1843.


Hartford: Robins & Smith, 1843.

*Harper's Family Library.* New York: Harpers, 1840-1848. (some of)


Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1831.


New York: Dodd & Mead, 1834.

New York: M.W. Dodd, 1843.


Leslie, John, and Robert Jameson. *Narrative of Discovery and Adventure in the Polar Seas and Regions, with Illustrations of Their Climate, Geology, and Natural History and an Account of Whale Fishery.* Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1830.


Lincoln, Mrs. [Almira Phelps Lincoln]. *Familiar Lectures on Botany, Including Practical and Elementary Botany, with Generic and Specific Descriptions of the Most Common Native and Foreign Plants, and a Vocabulary of Botanical Terms.* Hartford: H. & F.J. Huntington, 1829.


Mair, John. *An Introduction to Latin Syntax, or An Exemplification of the Rules of Construction, As Contained in Mr. Ruddiman's Rudiments, without Anticipating Posterior Rules...to Which Is Subjoined, an Epitome of Ancient History from the Creation to the Birth of Christ...* Edinburgh: Printed for T. and W. Ruddimans, 1750.

New York: Printed by W.A. Davis for T.S. Arden, 1804.

Edinburgh: Printed for Bell and Bradfute, 1827.


London: C. Knight, 1842.


*Abridgement of the New and Complete System of Arithmetick, Composed for the Use, and Adapted to the Commerce of the Citizens of the United States, for the Use of Schools, and Will Be Found to Be an Easy and Sure Guide to the Scholar.* Worcester: Printed at the press of Isaiah Thomas, 1793.


Philadelphia: A.S. Barnes, 1843.


Many editions available by a variety of publishers between 1683-1841.

New York: Harpers, 1841.


Baltimore: Plaskitt & Cugle, 1843.


Ruddiman, Thomas. *Ruddiman's Rudiments of the Latin Tongue*. Belfast: Simms & McIntyre, 1838. (See also entry for Mair, John)


*Sallust, Gaius Crispus (86 BC – 34 BC).


6 vols. New York: Charles S. Francis, 1843.

30 vols. Harpers, 1831-

*Sedgwick, Catharine Maria (1784-1867). Works.


Sherwood, Mrs. [Mary Martha Sherwood]. *The Lady of the Manor Being a Series of Conversations on the Subject of Confirmation Intended for the Use of the Middle and Higher Ranks of Young Females*. Baltimore: S. Young, 1820.


*Tales for the People and Their Children.* New York: Appleton, 1840-1868. (some of)


*Virgil, Publius Maro (70 BC – 19 BC).*


Wiggins, Francis S. The American Farmer’s Instructor, or Practical Agriculturist, Comprehending the Cultivation of Plants, the Husbandry of the Domestic Animals, and the Economy of the Farm, Together with a Variety of Information Which Will Be Found Important to the Farmer. Philadelphia: Orrin Rogers, E.G. Dorsey, Printer, 1840.


New York: Appleton, 1841.


Untitled Works

Almanacs
Arithmetic books (2)
Bibles (18)
Grammar, French
Grammar, Latin
Dictionary, French
Dictionary, English (2)
First reading books (10)
Hymn books, Baptist (6)
Hymn books, Episcopal (6)
Hymn books, Methodist (6)
Prayer book, Episcopal (6)
Spelling books (5)
APPENDIX C

Patients' Library
Eastern Asylum, Williamsburg, Virginia
1843-1845
By Genre

This bibliography is based on two undated library lists from the Galt Papers held by the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary. For more information on the lists and the methodology used in compiling this bibliography, see Appendix A: "Methodology and Purpose in Compiling the Bibliography of Titles in the Patients' Library at Eastern Asylum."

Each genre lists number of entries, and where appropriate, a low and high estimate number of titles.

Each title is listed in a series of editions. The first entry in each series is the earliest known edition of the work. The second indented entry is of an edition published between 1820 and 1837, if one was available. The third indented entry is of an edition published between 1838 and 1843, if one was available. Some titles may have more or less than three editions listed depending upon its publication history.

An asterisk (*) in front of a title indicates the specifics of this entry are uncertain; each is accompanied by a NOTE of explanation.

Biography – 13 entries; 13 titles


NOTE: Galt listed a number of biographies simply as “life of Calhoun,” “life of Clay,” “life of Henry,” etc. Although a variety of biographical works about each of the subjects he mentions were available in 1843, I chose those titles that actually had the “life of” in the title when one was available. A characteristic of this particular Calhoun title which made it suitable for the library was its brevity (only 16 pages) and the fact that it was autobiographical.


NOTE: Several campaign biographies were available of Clay in 1843 in anticipation of the next year’s presidential election. This one was #4 in a series known as the Junius Tracts which addressed issues like tariffs, abolition, and the annexation of Texas. It was brief (only 16 pages) and was written by Colton, an author whom Galt liked well enough to include in other genres. See under "Travels," Colton, Calvin, Travels in Great Britain.
*Crockett, Davy, and Augustin S. Clayton. *The Life of Martin Van Buren, Heir Apparent to the “Government” and the Appointed Successor of General Andrew Jackson, Containing Every Authentic Particular by Which His Extraordinary Character Has Been Formed, with a Concise History of the Events That Have Occasioned His Unparalleled Elevation, Together with a Review of His Policy as a Statesman.* Philadelphia: R. Wright, 1835.

NOTE: Several biographies of Van Buren were available in 1843. Crockett, who was said to have “a pathological hatred” of Van Buren, collaborated with a ghost writer to produce this hatchet job of the ex-president Van Buren, but it was written in a rather folksy and humorous style, so may not have been considered unnecessarily controversial. Galt disliked Van Buren and had once called him a “man of bad character,” so it seems unlikely he would have included one of the more sympathetic campaign biographies distributed by the Democrats.


NOTE: Lafayette retained his hero status after the Revolution and many biographies about him were available in 1843. One work tracked his visit to America in 1823 that included a long section on his tour of Virginia and Williamsburg which Galt had personally witnessed as a youth. It does not include “life of” in the title and has very little biographical material in it, so it seems an unlikely choice for the patients’ library. The entry above is an arbitrary choice based only on the fact it was published in Philadelphia and might have been the easiest of the Lafayette biographies to obtain.


Many editions were available by a variety of publishers between 1683-1841.


Hartford: E. Strong, 1842.


NOTE Several biographies of Henry were available in 1843, but Wirt’s was a classic and a steady seller.

**Childrens’ Books - 5 entries; (low estimate of titles – 9; high estimate of titles – 14)**


*Goodrich, Samuel Griswold. Peter Parley’s Works. 1827-1859 (some of); (low estimate of titles – 5, high estimate of titles – 10)

NOTE: Goodrich, writing under the pseudonym Peter Parley, published dozens of titles in innumerable editions for children about nature, science, history, religion, arithmetic, and geography, as well as spellers, readers and magazines. It’s impossible to know which of these Galt included in the patients’ library, but it is likely they were randomly chosen among gift books from donors and patrons of the asylum.


**Fiction – 27 entries; (low estimate of titles – 72; high estimate of titles – 97)**


NOTE: Galt includes only the title *Smuggler* on his list. Two books with that same title were available in 1843, the one listed above and John Rattenbury’s *Memoirs of a Smuggler* (Sidmouth: J. Harvey, 1837). An argument could be made for the inclusion of either, but Banim, described himself as Ireland’s Walter Scott, and that may have been a deciding factor for inclusion of his work in the patients’ library, considering the popularity of Scott with Galt and other antebellum readers.


*Edgeworth, Maria. *Works.* 33 vols. London: R. Hunter, 1813-1825. (some of); (low estimate of titles – 5; high estimate of titles – 10)


NOTE: Edgeworth was a prolific writer of children’s and adult fiction. It’s impossible to know which specific titles Galt included in his patients’ library so the above collected works serve only to represent the presence of “some of” her writings.

*Fenelon, Francois de Salignac de La Mothe. *The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses.* London, 1699.

*The First Eight Books of the Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses.* Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1832.

*The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses.* Philadelphia: J. Locken, 1841.
NOTE: In listing this book, Galt writes on List A "Telemachus" and on List B "Telemaque." This opens the question to whether he had the English or French version. The former would have greater circulation among patients, and since the *Adventures of Telemachus* is a story of advice to a young prince about morality, it would be desirable that as many patients as possible have access to its contents. On the other hand Galt had a number of French dictionaries in his library, so this might indicate the presence of Telemaque rather than Telemachus for the use of his advanced student-patients.

*Galland, Antoine. *Arabian Nights Entertainments, Consisting of One Thousand and One Stories Told by the Sultaness of the Indies to Divert the Sultan from the Execution of a Bloody Vow He Had Made to Marry a Lady Every Day and Have Her Head Cut Off Next Morning, to Avenge Himself for the Disloyalty of His First Sultaness, etc.* 2 vols. London: Printed for Andrew Bell, 1706-1717.


NOTE: *Arabian Nights,* also known as *A Thousand and One Nights,* had been in circulation for centuries and was based on Arabian folk tales. It was widely read and available in a variety of editions in 1843. The above entries are purely arbitrary choices and serve only to provide a representation of the type of editions that were available between the earliest and latest publication dates.


London: C. Knight, 1842.


NOTE: Many editions of Scott’s individual titles were available in 1843. In writing “Scott’s works,” Galt may have been referring to a collection of individual volumes or to one large set. I included the above edition of collected
works only as a means of representing this popular antebellum author in the patients’ library.


30 vols. Philadelphia: Harpers, 1831-

The *Waverly Novels* by various counts includes as few as fifteen or as many as twenty-six titles in all. The earliest book entitled *Waverly* was published anonymously. Successive novels were also anonymous, but published under the authorial rubric of “Author of Waverly,” and thus collectively came to be called the *Waverly Novels*. Some Scott’s most popular works such as *Guy Mannering*, *Rob Roy*, *Heart of Midlothian*, *Bride of Lammermoor*, *Ivanhoe*, *St. Ronan’s Well*, and *The Betrothed* are considered part of the set.

*Sedgwick, Catharine Maria (1784-1867). Works. (low estimate of titles – 5; high estimate of titles – 10)

NOTE: Galt does not list specific Sedgwick titles, but notes only “Sedgwick’s works.” Sedgwick was a prolific writer, many aimed at the children’s market, so it is unlikely Galt had her complete oeuvre.


NOTE: Shakespeare’s collected works were in print continuously by many publishers from 1709. Galt did not list individual titles or set of works, but since he, as well as other superintendents, were great admirers of Shakespeare and even used his work to define and describe insanity in their professional journal, it is likely Galt had a complete or nearly complete set of his works.

Sherwood, Mrs. [Mary Martha Sherwood]. *The Lady of the Manor Being A Series of Conversations on the Subject of Confirmation Intended for the Use of the Middle and Higher Ranks of Young Females.* Baltimore: S. Young, 1820. (4 copies)


NOTE: Galt lists only "Mrs. Sherwood works" and does not give a specific edition.

*Tales for the People and Their Children. New York: Appleton, 1840-1868. (some of)

NOTE: This series of books included about 100 titles, some of which had been published earlier as separate works and others which were expressly written for the series. Many were meant for a juvenile audience, but not all. Rather it seems the titles were chosen for their ability to appeal to both children and adults. Galt named some of the works from this series by title, such as Mary Botham Howitt's *Who Shall Be Greatest* and *Hope On, Hope Ever*, Harriet Martineau's *Settlers at Home*, and Frank Marryatt's *Masterman Ready*. It's possible when he listed "some of Tales for the People and Their Children" he was referring to these few titles rather than the whole set.

**History – 18 entries; (low estimate of titles – 18; high estimate of titles – 21)**

*Caesar, Julius Gaius (100 BC-44 BC).* (low estimate of titles – 1, high estimate of titles – 2)

NOTE: Two major works are attributed to Julius Caesar: *De Bello Civili* (Civil War) and *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (Commentaries on the Gallic War). Since Galt lists only "Caesar," it is unknown if he had one or both of these titles. In 1843 a variety of editions were available both in Latin and English.

Coe, Joseph. *The True American, Containing the Inaugural Addresses, Together with the First Annual Addresses and Messages of All the Presidents of the United States from 1789 to 1839...and a Variety of Other Matter Useful and Entertaining.* Concord, NH: I.S. Boyd, 1840.


Philadelphia: Thomas Wardle, 1824.


Ithaca: Mack, Andrus & Woodruff, 1842.


Grimshaw, William. *History of the United States, From Their First Settlement As Colonies, to the Cession of Florida.* Philadelphia: Stereotyped for the author by J. Howe, 1824.

Philadelphia: Grigg and Elliott, 1841.


Philadelphia: Grigg & Elliott, 1841.
Hale, Salma. *History of the United States of America, with a Brief Account of Some of the Principal Empires and States of Ancient and Modern Times, for the Use of Schools and Families.* Keene, NH: John Prentiss, 1823.

*History of the United States, from Their First Settlement as Colonies, to the Close of the War with Great Britain, in 1815.* New York: C. Wiley, 1825.


*History of the United States, from Their First Settlement as Colonies, to the Close of the War with Great Britain, in 1815, to Which are Added Questions, Adapted to the Use of Schools.* Cooperstown, New York: H. & E. Phinney, 1843.


Sallust, Gaius Crispus (86 BC – 34 BC). (low estimate of titles – 1, high estimate of titles – 3)

NOTE: Several works are attributed to Sallust: De Coniuratione Catallinae (Cataline Conspiracy), Bellum Jugurthinum (Jurgurthine War), and the Histories covering 78-67 B.C. Since Galt lists only “Sallust,” it’s unknown whether he had one or all of these titles. Many editions were available in 1843 both in Latin and English.


How-To-Books – 2 entries, 2 titles


Baltimore: Plaskitt & Cugle, 1843.


Instructional & Reference – 14 entries; 14 titles


Bolmar, A. [Antoine]. A Collection of Colloquial Phrases, on Every Topic Necessary to Maintain Conversation, Arranged under Different Heads, with Numerous Remarks on the Peculiar Pronunciation and Use of Various Words, the Whole So Disposed As Considerably to Facilitate the Acquisition of a Correct Pronunciation of the French... Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1830.
Philadelphia: Lea, 1843.

Day, Jeremiah. *An Introduction to Algebra, Being the First Part of a Course of Mathematics, Adapted to the Method of Instruction in the American Colleges.* New Haven: Howe & Deforest, Oliver Steele, 1814.


Philadelphia: Smith and Peck, 1843.


Hartford: Robins & Smiths, 1843.


New York: Printed by W.A. Davis for T. S. Arden, 1804.

Edinburgh: Printed for Bell & Bradfute, 1827.


*Abridgement of the New and Complete System of Arithmetick, Composed for the Use, and Adapted to the Commerce of the Citizens of the United States, for the Use of Schools, and Will Be Found to Be an Easy and Sure Guide to the Scholar.* Worcester: Printed at the Press of Isaiah Thomas, 1793.


Philadelphia: A.S. Barnes, 1843.


Untitled Instructional & Reference works:

Arithmetic books (2)
Dictionary, French
Dictionary, English (2)
First reading books (10)
Grammar, French
Grammar, Latin
Spelling books (5)

Miscellaneous – 3 entries; (low estimate of titles – 7; high estimate of titles – 12)

*Harper’s Family Library. New York: Harpers, 1830-1843? (some of); (low estimate – 5; high estimate – 10)

NOTE: This set included over 150 volumes and addressed topics like biography, histories, natural history, science, travel, religion.


Untitled miscellaneous:

Almanacs

Periodicals – 4 entries, 4 titles


NOTE: This set was in continuous publication by a variety of publishers after its original publication as a periodical between 1711-1714.

Poetry – 11 entries; 11 titles


Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1832.


Philadelphia: Bennet & Walton, 1825.


Philadelphia: Moss, 1842.


Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1831.


6 vols. New York: Charles S. Francis, 1843.


New York: Harpers & Bros., 1842.

*Virgil, Publius Maro (70 BC – 19 BC).*

NOTE: Several works are attributed to Virgil, but it is likely Galt was referring to *The Aeneid*. Galt does not indicate if this title was in Greek, Latin, or English.

**Religion – 12 entries; 12 titles**


London: Baynes & Son, 1823.

*To Which Is Prefixed a Short Account of the Life and Character of the Author.*

London: Allman, 1840.

Broaddus, Andrew. *The Virginia Selection of Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, from the Most Approved Authors, Adapted to Public Worship and Social Meetings.* Richmond, R. I. Smith, 1836.


Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come, Delivered under the Similitude of a Dream, Wherein Is Discovered the Manner of*

Hartford: Silas Andrus, 1824.


Hartford: W. Andrus, 1842.


New York: Dodd & Mead, 1834.

New York: M.W. Dodd, 1843.


New York: Appleton, 1841.

Untitled religious works:

- Hymn books, Baptist (6)
- Hymn books, Methodist (6)
- Hymn books, Episcopal (6)
- Prayer book, Episcopal (6)
- Bible (18)

Science – 8 entries; 8 titles

Same, 1834.

Same, 1839.


Baltimore, Maryland: J. Robinson, 1823.

Concord, NH: L. Hamilton, 1842.

Flint, Timothy. *Lectures upon Natural History, Geology, Chemistry, the Application of Steam and Interesting Discoveries in the Arts.* Boston: Lilly, Wait, Colman, & Holden, 1833.


Lincoln, Mrs. [Almira Phelps Lincoln]. *Familiar Lectures on Botany, Including Practical and Elementary Botany, with Generic and Specific Descriptions of the Most Common Native and Foreign Plants, and a Vocabulary of Botanical Terms.* Hartford: H. & F.J. Huntington, 1829.


Wiggins, Francis S. *The American Farmer's Instructor, or Practical Agriculturist, Comprehending the Cultivation of Plants, the Husbandry of the Domestic Animals, and the Economy of the Farm, Together with a Variety of Information Which Will Be Found Important to the Farmer.* Philadelphia: Orrin Rogers, E.G. Dorsey, Printer, 1840.


**Travel – 18 entries; 18 titles**


Leslie, John and Robert Jameson. *Narrative of Discovery and Adventure in the Polar Seas and Regions, with Illustrations of Their Climate, Geology, and Natural History and an Account of Whale Fishery.* Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1830.


Stiff, Edward. *The Texan Emigrant, Being a Narration of the Adventures of the Author in Texas, and a Description of the Soil, Climate, Productions, Minerals, Towns,
Bays, Harbors, Rivers, Institutions, and Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants of That Country, Together with the Principal Incidents of Fifteen Years Revolution in Mexico and Embracing a Condensed Statement of Interesting Events in Texas, from the First European Settlement in 1692 down to the Year 1840. Cincinnati: G. Conclin, 1840.

Total number of entries – 135

Low estimate of titles – 188

High estimate of titles - 226
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Earl Gregg Swem Library, Special Collections, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia

Galt Papers, I, II, III.

John Minson Galt II Library.

*Eastern Asylum Annual Reports*, 1843-1860.

*Dew Family Papers.*

Eastern State Hospital Library Archives (ESHL), Williamsburg, Virginia

Letters.

Eastern Asylum Annual Reports (draft copies).

*Patients in the Eastern Lunatic Asylum, October 1, 1852 to September 30, 1853.* Notebook.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia

Galt Medical Library.

Galt Papers.


"Asylum Gazette." *AJI* 2, no. 2 (April 1846): 396.


Bell, Luther. "On a Form of Disease Resembling Some Advanced Stages of Mania and Fever." *AJI* 6, no. 2 (October 1849): 97-121.

"Books, Etc. Received." *AJI* 12, no. 4 (April 1856): i-iv.

Breckinridge, Lucy. *Lucy Breckenridge of Grove Hill: The Journal of a Virginia Girl*, 1862-


[Brigham, Amariah]. "Editorial Correspondence," AJI 5, no. 1 (July 1848): 63-86.

[Brigham, Amariah]. "Insanity Illustrated by Histories of Distinguished Men and by the Writings of Poets and Novelists." AJI 1, no. 1 (July 1844): 9-46.


"Brigham, Amariah M.D." AJI 6, no. 2 (October 1849): 185-92.


Coventry, C.B. "Medical Jurisprudence of Insanity." AJI 1, no. 1 (October 1844): 134-44.

College of William and Mary Library. Laws and Regulations of William and Mary College. Richmond: P.D. Bernard, 1851.


"Extracts from the Eulogy on Pinel by M. Pariset Read before Royal Academy of Medicine at Paris, August 28, 1828." *AJI* 2, no. 3 (January 1846): 207-18;


General Catalogue of the Medical Graduates of the University of Pennsylvania with an
Historical Sketch of the Origin, Progress, and Present State of the Medical


"Insanity Illustrated by Cases and by the Conversation and Letters of the Insane." *AJI* 1, no. 1 (July 1844): 52-57.

"Insanity in Connection with Great Mental Powers: Mental Derangement of Sir Isaac Newton, Charles Lamb, and His Sister, Mary Lamb." *AJI* 5, no. 2 (October 1848): 65-78.


Laws and Regulations of William and Mary College. Richmond: P.D. Bernard, 1851.


"Loiterings in Europe." *AJI* 5, no. 3 (January 1849): 278.

"Lunatic Asylums in the United States." *AJI* 3, no. 2 (October 1846): 182.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


"Summary." *AJI* 20, no. 3 (January 1864): 350.


Secondary Sources


Bondurant, Agnes M. *Poe's Richmond.* Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1942.


Chartier, Roger. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the*


Cornelius, Janet Duitsman. “‘We Slipped and Learned to Read’: Slave Accounts of the Literacy Process, 1830-1865.” *Phylon* 44, no. 3 (1983): 171-86.


Goffman, Erving. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other*


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


Pitzer, Elizabeth Neal. *Sallie and Elizabeth Galt: Compliance and Resistance to the "Southern


VITA

_Bettina Jean Manzo_

The author was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania on November 14, 1943. She graduated from St. Patrick’s High School in June 1961. Bettina Manzo received her B.A. at Marywood College in 1973 with a degree in English. She received her MLS in Library Science in 1975 at Florida State University and her M.A. degree in History at the University of Wyoming in 1983.

In September 1992, the author entered the College of William and Mary in the American Studies Program. Bettina Manzo defended her dissertation in 2004. She is currently working at the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary as a reference librarian.