Journal of American Studies of Turkey
18 (2003) : 83-84

Book Review

Mad Yankees: The Hartford Retreat for the Insane and Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry by Lawrence B. Goodheart. Massachusetts: U of Massachusetts P, 2003. 218 pages. 34.95 USD. Available from: University of Massachusetts Press, University of Massachusetts Press P.O. Box 429 Amherst, MA 01004.

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In elucidating the story of the Harvard Retreat for the Insane, Goodheart provides not just an insular history, but one that is grounded in the developing field of psychiatry as well as the history of nineteenth century Connecticut and the United States. Opened in 1824, in Hartford, Connecticut, the Harvard Retreat "blended humanitarian ideals and Protestant moralism" (20) in its moral treatment of the insane. Begun with a small grant from the Connecticut Legislature and the fees collected from patients, the Retreat began as a public/private collaboration which was to leave the hospital chronically short of funds. Goodheart, through careful research, demonstrates the financial insecurity experienced by the Retreat as the Connecticut Legislature proved unwilling to provide the hospital with sufficient funds and the fees collected from patients proved inadequate to cover the actual costs of care, particularly as chronic cases came to dominate at the Retreat. Although initially designed for the wealthy, out of its sense of its Christian charity, the Retreat also treated the indigent until the state run Connecticut Hospital for the Insane opened in 1868.

Mad Yankees clearly shows the extent to which the "moral treatment" offered by the Retreat represented a serious advancement in treatment of the insane, previously condemned to almshouses or chained in their homes. However, Goodheart also demonstrates that this approach was not without its problems in that it allowed for overinflation of cures rates and obscured some of the real complexities of mental illness. Furthermore, nineteenth-century psychiatry was also a hostage to the times with violations of morality medicalized as insanity. Women were also particularly vulnerable as misunderstandings of their bodies were often interpreted as

causes of insanity. While Goodheart recognizes the understanding and classification of insanity as one that is deeply cultural, he does not sufficiently explore this theme and its role as a precursor to eugenics despite a brief epilogue on the subject.

The moral treatment of the insane, as practiced by the first superintendent of the hospital Dr. Eli Todd, proved very humane but lacked scientific rigor. Whole categories of illness were conflated into mania and melancholy and all received largely the same treatment. Amariah Brigham, who followed Todd as superintendent of the Retreat, brought a biological belief in insanity to the Retreat and a desire to examine insanity scientifically. Brigham became a pioneer in neuropsychiatry and social psychiatry in the United States and brought a more medically oriented model of insanity to the Retreat. Unfortunately, this section of the book seems largely disconnected from the rest of the text, reading much more like an autobiography of Brigham than a continuation of the history of the Harvard Retreat.

With the opening of the state run hospital for the insane in 1868, the Harvard Retreat was able to remodel itself literally and figuratively as it returned to its original focus on serving wealthy clients. This appears to have resolved many of the problems that had plagued the Retreat, or so it would seem from the abrupt ending of the text. While Goodheart presents an interesting and worthwhile, largely institutional history, he misses a number of important opportunities to demonstrate the importance of this history to the present-day situation of care for the insane. The issue of custodial vs. curative treatment of the chronically insane is abandoned as if it is a problem that disappeared with the nineteenth-century. Furthermore, the theme of the Retreat as a public/private venture and the public policy aspects of care for mental illness are left largely undeveloped. Despite these problems *Mad Yankees* still proves a worthwhile read.