Introduction
Asylum Periodicals and the Discomfort of Ambiguity

'Almost every class or clique in society has its representative in the "fourth estate." And why should not *we* [emphasis in original]?'[1] With these words, *Excelsior: or, Murray's Royal Asylum Literary Gazette* was launched in 1857 as a platform fighting the stigma of mental illness. It was not alone in representing patients and their institutions. Asylum periodicals first appeared in the 1830s and became particularly popular in the United States, Scotland, and England. By *Excelsior*'s launch, over ten similar publications had been issued from British and American mental institutions. Many more followed, as the practice spread, reaching Spain, Canada, British Guiana, South Africa, and Argentina. These periodicals were produced under various circumstances. Most were written and edited at least partly by patients. Some relied on the services of local printing offices, while others were printed in the asylums themselves by patients who had publishing experience or who acquired the necessary skills during their stay. Asylum periodicals self-identified as newspapers, gazettes, journals, or magazines and appeared weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually; some of them openly refused to commit to a regular rhythm of publication. In their pages, readers could find a variety of contents: reports about the periodicals' host asylums and other institutions; reflections on insanity and its treatment; news and commentary about contemporary political, cultural, and social events; autobiographical pieces; poetry; jokes; anecdotes; and travel writing. The size and visual layout varied between titles. The majority adopted a two- or three-column layout, but some, such as the *Morningside Mirror* of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum and the *York Star* of York Lunatic Asylum in Bootham, were single-column octavos.[2] Most titles were distributed outside their respective institutions for profit or in exchange for other publications. Through them, patients communicated with each other and participated in social life beyond the walls of mental institutions.

This is the first book length exploration of asylum periodicals. It outlines their beginnings, traces their transatlantic and global spread,

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and reflects on their purposes, exploring the cultural processes and interpersonal relationships that shaped them. Most of the research on asylum publishing comprises individual case studies, which do not capture the exchanges and connections that facilitated the emergence of these periodicals. A broader exploration is needed to identify general patterns in their production, dissemination, and use by patients and institutions. Referring to previously overlooked titles and existing case studies, this book disentangles the web of cultural influences, individual actors, and publishing and medical networks to further understanding of nineteenth-century mental institutions, publishing, and literary culture. Crucially, it highlights the agency and creativity with which people deemed to be mad navigated their reality through printing and literary work. It portrays them not merely as patients but as active participants in institutional life and wider cultural exchanges who, despite the limitations on their liberty, found individual and communal representation and agency through publishing.

The sensitive topic of mental health at the core of this book requires a note on terminology. In the pages that follow, words such as 'mad', 'insane', and 'lunatic' appear along with 'mental patient', 'sufferer', and 'inmate'. This is not done lightly. In recent years, mental health and patients' rights activists such as those involved in the Mad Studies movement and *Asylum* magazine have reclaimed madness from its negative biomedical representations.[3] There is also a consensus among historians of psychiatry that refraining from contemporary language in scholarly work is 'not only anachronistic but also does not reflect the complexity that these culturally charged words convey'.[4] It automatically erases a major aspect of the history of madness – the mutability of the language, approaches, and treatments of insanity throughout time. Under these conditions, I have allowed myself to employ the terms used by nineteenth-century physicians, writers, and patients themselves.

Nineteenth-Century Publishing and Medical Contexts

The appearance of the first asylum periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1830s and 1840s was shaped by the medical and publishing landscapes within which they emerged. The nineteenth century was a time of an unprecedented proliferation of print. Population growth, rising literacy rates, and improving living standards in both Britain and America caused a steady increase in the number of readers. Innovations in printing technology such as the steam press and stereotyping allowed publishers to cater to these new readerships, producing print faster and

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cheaper. By the 1830s, periodical publications of various frequencies were assuming a central place in social life. In 1861, there were over 1,000 British newspapers and nearly 500 periodicals in circulation.[5] The 1860 census of the United States counted 4,051 active periodical publications of all descriptions.[6] More affordable, catering to diverse audiences' tastes and needs, and crossing vast distances, the periodical press became a major information channel and a platform for public discussion. Asylum periodicals should thus be seen as part of the ever-growing nineteenth-century print markets.

When these publishing projects were first started, psychiatry was still in its infancy, seeking recognition as a medical discipline. From the late eighteenth century, insanity underwent a redefinition as an affliction of the brain and nerves that could be relieved in institutions designed exclusively for that purpose. Pioneered independently by the French physician Philippe Pinel (1745–1826) and the Quaker founder of the York Retreat, William Tuke (1732–1822), the moral treatment of insanity came to dominate therapeutic regimes in the first half of the nineteenth century. The new approach relied on individuals' self-regulation and aimed to restore their sanity by engaging them in socially acceptable behaviours. Proponents of the new method spoke against physical restraint and advocated the use of attentive supervision and a regular routine provided in institutions especially designed for the purpose. The lunatic asylum became the designated space for treating insanity, and dozens of new institutions were built with the explicit purpose of housing the mad, offering spaces of withdrawal from the world that caused mental disturbance – hence the reference to these places as asylums or retreats. In England, over sixty institutions were constructed and opened between the passing of the Lunacy Acts in 1845 and 1890; twenty-nine asylums opened in Scotland from 1781 to the end of the nineteenth century.[7] The proliferation of asylums was even more dramatic in the United States: 121 new institutions for the insane appeared between 1840 and 1880.[8] The very architecture and interior of these buildings was meant to conduct recovery, by containing the mad in a space where safety mechanisms were concealed behind the aesthetic of Victorian domesticity.[9]

In the early 1800s, it was common for asylum directors, such as Tuke at the York Retreat, to lack special training. Over time, however, the lay activity of comforting the mad became a distinctly medical project of curing them. Madness was redefined in firmly medical terms too. Prominent American physician Dr Amariah Brigham described insanity as 'a chronic disease of the brain producing either derangement of the

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intellectual faculties, or prolonged change of the feelings, affections and habits of the individual'.[10] Advocated by medical professionals themselves, this definition shaped treatment, urging the appointment of medical men as asylum superintendents. By the 1830s, British and American asylum managers expressed a clear preference for medical professionals over laymen as governors of mental institutions. The Lunacy Act of 1845 obligated English and Welsh asylums to appoint resident physicians, thus legally redefining the mad as patients.

The medical specialism of treating insanity was further established and developed through communications in existing medical journals, the launching of new specialist periodicals, and the establishment of discipline-specific societies. In Britain, the Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane (the predecessor of the Royal College of Psychiatrists) was founded in 1841 and started issuing its *Asylum Journal of Mental Science* in 1855 . The year 1844 saw both the formation of the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane and the launch of the first psychiatric journal, the *American Journal of Insanity* (now known as the *American Journal of Psychiatry*). Consuming these internationally circulated publications enabled practitioners to stay abreast of new developments and interact with each other through the correspondence columns, further solidifying existing professional bonds and forging new ones. Publishing books, treatises, and articles in medical journals was also becoming a milestone of asylum superintendents' career development and one of the prerequisites to professional respectability and authority. So was belonging to a medical society and studying or working with reputable practitioners.[11] Medical intelligence inhabited both the specialist journals that mushroomed throughout the century and lay periodicals. In fact, as Sally Shuttleworth and Geoffrey Cantor have suggested, 'the general periodical press was perhaps the most influential medium for spreading views and information about science'.[12] While medical journals often had limited readerships, information related to medicine reached much wider audiences through non-specialist publications, either directly (via notices, thematic articles, or reprints of asylum reports) or indirectly (embedded in poetry and writing on other subjects).[13] These communications were sometimes crucial for the development of early psychiatry. For instance, Megan Coyer has highlighted 'the practical usefulness of the *Scots Magazine* for encouraging philanthropic giving towards the Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum' and traced 'the extensive coverage of the campaign in the magazine', which drove the establishment of the institution.[14]

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Distributed beyond their host institutions, asylum periodicals themselves contributed to the perpetual exchanges in the press that shaped early psychiatry.

Asylum periodicals also embodied the progress of psychiatry as a medical science by showing the benefits of work and entertainment in applying the moral treatment. The new mental institutions engaged patients in a variety of occupational and recreational activities, selected in accordance with patients' class, gender, and race. In theory, the aims were therapeutic: to distract patients from their afflictions, dispel boredom, and prepare them to re-enter society by replicating socially acceptable behaviours. According to physician John Minson Galt, who superintended the first American institution built especially for the treatment of the insane, the Eastern Lunatic Asylum in Virginia:

> The general theory conventionally recognised as to the utility of amusements and recreation in the treatment of insanity . . . is, that by means of them we supplant the place of delusive ideas and feelings, tending by this disuse to their gradual enfeeblement or disappearance. The healthful influence of the hilarity attending such engagements, both upon the mind and upon the body, must also be allowed its due weight, and the general contentment ensuing from a continuous occupation of pleasant character.[15]

Accordingly, proponents of the moral treatment strove to provide patients with a variety of activities, such as sports, games, concerts, educational lectures, theatrical performances, and excursions.[16] Asylum libraries were widely spread, providing 'healthy' reading material that promoted restoration through balanced mental stimulation or distraction from morbid thoughts.[17] In theory, work had similar functions of occupying patients' minds and bodies, though underfunding and mismanagement often resulted in exploitation of patients' labour. Fieldwork and gardening in the vast land that usually surrounded asylum buildings were the most popular forms of labour. Institutions often housed workshops where patients could practice different trades, such as shoemaking and carpentry. For women, domestic work such as sewing was considered most suitable. Ideally, the job had to match the patient's previous professional experience, creating a sense of familiarity and ease in the unknown space of the institution.[18] The careful selection of activities shows that the an asylum was a space where social divisions were reflected in both the institution's architecture and its regime. Patients were physically divided along the lines of class, gender, and race, and their treatment, including the activities in which they were encouraged or pressured to engage, was also shaped by these factors.[19] Involving a mix of intellectual and physical activities,

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publishing was a unique kind of endeavour, capable of bridging institutional divisions and offering both work and recreation to inmates.

Asylum Periodicals and the Disputes Over Psychiatry

By providing occupation and amusement, asylum periodicals fit neatly into the new system of the moral treatment of insanity. The official justifications for launching publications foregrounded the benefits such projects would have for patients: by engaging their minds in selecting or producing material for publication and then reading the finished product, asylum periodicals were to promote recovery and alleviate the tedium and distress of asylum life.[20] The external circulation of the publications, however, meant that they also served as marketing tools, advertising asylums as humanitarian social projects deserving of public attention and financial support.[21] Asylum periodicals' duality of purpose has fed into the historically persisting distrust towards psychiatry and mental institutions.

From the inception of the asylum system, claims about the humanity and therapeutic potential of mental institutions were contested. The asylum became a symbol of psychiatry – a semi-mythological two-faced embodiment of both hellish imprisonment and heavenly relief from suffering. Therapeutic optimism and self-righteousness rang from asylum managers' and superintendents' reports. These accounts clashed with the assessments of the Commissioners of Lunacy in Britain, which regularly exposed vast discrepancies between theory and practice, noting defective ventilation, heating and sanitation, abuses of restraint and seclusion, and inadequate availability of occupation and amusement in many institutions.[22] The press and fiction also impacted public perceptions of asylums.[23] Periodicals, such as Dickens's *Household Words*, criticised institutions for offering inadequate care or abusing the mentally ill.[24] In an article for *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, Harriet Martineau describes both pauper and private asylums as sites of 'idleness, moping, raving, exasperating infliction, and destitution of sympathy'.[25] Following closely the developments in mental institutions, the press also praised superintendents' innovations and humanity whenever it deemed suitable: both Dickens's magazine and Martineau commended Dr John Conolly and the Hanwell Lunatic Asylum under his governance.[26] Literary portrayals of asylums were less nuanced. Sensation novels reaching both British and American readerships, such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), forged oppressive images of asylums in the public imagination. Using none other

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than Dr Conolly as the real-life prototype of its fictional corrupt physician, Charles Reade's *Hard Cash* (1863) was a particularly influential attack on the asylum system, feeding anxieties about wrongful confinement and sparking the indignation of asylum managers and superintendents.[27] Former patients themselves published their stories, often ridden with suffering, violence, and injustice. An 1879 anonymous publication is exemplary in its bitter description of 'the death-in-life of a lunatic asylum'.[28] In 1845, a group of ex-patients founded the Alleged Lunatics' Friend Society. During the eighteen years of the organisation's operation, it advocated the improvement of the admission process and the treatment of inmates, drew attention to instances of malpractice, and supported wronged patients to regain their liberty.[29]

Twentieth-century challenges to psychiatry and theories of the insidious ways in which power operates have cast a shadow even on more positive accounts. According to Erving Goffman's depiction of 'total institutions', mental hospitals deprive patients of their liberty, connection with wider society, and sense of self, while failing to fulfil their promises of rehabilitation.[30] Foucault has argued that the establishment of asylums in the late eighteenth century was only seemingly humane: 'fear no longer reigned on the other side of the prison gates, it now raged under the seals of conscience'.[31] In place of the physical chains and bars of the madhouse, new, subtle, and immaterial mechanisms of control operated in the asylum. Though critical of the claims that psychiatry was purposefully oppressive, sociologist Andrew Scull has maintained that the asylum was nevertheless 'a cemetery for the still breathing' and a 'convenient place to dump inconvenient people' – a depository for those who could not meet the ideals of rationality and productivity characteristic of late eighteenth-century bourgeois capitalist mentality.[32]

The portrayal of the institutionalisation of madness as an unstoppable movement towards more pervasive, insidious means of control, however, erases the possibility of individual agency. Michel de Certeau has warned that the 'elucidation of the [repressive] apparatus by itself has the disadvantage of *not seeing* practices which are heterogeneous to it and which it represses or thinks it represses'.[33] In response, he has drawn attention to the hidden 'ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong' in everyday life.[34] The surge of 'medical history from below' following Roy Porter's work has also revealed, as Porter himself predicted, 'something much less monolithic'.[35] Studies of individual experiences of madness, institutionalisation, and social reintegration, which rely on previously neglected sources (such as patients' correspondence), have presented a

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more nuanced representation of asylums and their inhabitants.[36] Flurin Condrau has warned that the accumulation of disparate histories of people and asylums results in little general insight or methodological innovation.[37] However, recent interdisciplinary explorations of patients' stories and institutional life suggest that the uncovered diversity of experiences is a valuable finding. They have also challenged the idea that case studies, especially those revealing more positive accounts of asylum life, emphasise unusual rather than 'typical' experiences. Jennifer Wallis shows that patients did not merely bear doctors' treatments, but sought, resisted, and/or participated in the process. She warns against excessive scepticism: 'There is a tendency, when describing historical instances of patients exercising agency, to suggest that such individuals were exceptional – but it is a stance that becomes less tenable as these instances multiply.'[38] Sarah Chaney's exploration of voluntary boarding in Bethlem Royal Hospital in London has shown that individual experience was shaped by multiple factors. Consequently, she questions the very existence of a 'typical' patient and suggests that, despite institutional regulations and prevalent theories and practices, medical encounters remain highly personalised experiences.[39] More recently, Liana Glew has applied the lens of paperwork studies to asylum archives to explore 'archival excess', or the discrepancies between bureaucratic standard procedures and actual documentational practice as a result of the inevitable impotence of the institutional apparatus to capture fully or accurately patients' experience and narratives. The numerous instances of archival excess are the 'inevitable productions of a system that is fundamentally incoherent and full of friction'.[40] The fragmentation and diversity of accounts thus emerge not as the results of methodological weakness but as the defining feature of a more accurately captured social reality.

Within this context, asylum periodicals have already received recognition as sources for exploring the intricacy of institutional relationships and patients' experiences. The *Morningside Mirror* is a key part of Michael Barfoot and Allan Beveridge's study of a patient's 'adaptation to asylum life through his creative activities, and the way the Asylum staff responded and adapted to him'.[41] Studying the same title, Christopher Holligan argues that 'the *Mirror* endorsed feeling, belonging and human connection amidst a climate of separation and loss'.[42] Likewise, Chaney uses evidence from *Under the Dome* of the Bethlem Hospital to highlight patient's agency and communal feelings among members of the institutional population. She has shown that the insane could actively participate in the construction of their status as patients, and that asylums could be experienced both as

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prisons and as retreats from the pressures of reality.[43] Asylum periodicals have also received significant attention in recent systematic studies of the role of cultural engagement and art in British asylums. Exploring music's role in nineteenth-century asylums, Rosemary Golding has shown that asylum periodicals are invaluable records of the recreational programmes of the institutions that produced them.[44] In her analysis of reading in asylums, Laura Blair has argued that asylum periodicals embodied contributors' exemplary engagement with the regime and offered new opportunities for connection between patients. The publications provided readers with 'perhaps the best reading in form of content and in terms of inspiration for their own engagement with the system in place'.[45]

Beyond these examples, using asylum periodicals in historical research is approached with hesitation, clearly evident in their omission from Chris Millard and Jennifer Wallis's recent guide on studying the history of psychiatry.[46] Likely reasons for this exclusion are that not all institutions produced periodicals, that the publishing projects involved a presumably limited fraction of the patients (i.e. those who were literate and deemed to be mentally stable enough), and that the publications were subjected to unknown degrees of institutional supervision. The first two concerns are not unique to asylum periodicals: archives are often fragmented, incomplete, and inconsistent, so historians must consider the gaps. Asylum periodicals' dual purpose – to represent both the institution and the patients – seems to be the greater obstacle. Allan Beveridge directly vocalises such concerns, observing that the *Morningside Mirror* emphasises 'the sunny side of the Asylum', which is in contrast with the 'condemnatory rather than laudatory' portrayal of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum revealed in the collection of unsent patients' letters.[47] Discussing the positive image of the Grahamstown Asylum in South Africa conveyed through the *Fort England Mirror*, Rory du Plessis recognises that this portrayal might be an accurate depiction but only of the experiences of the paying patients.

Asylum periodicals' perceived inauthenticity should not discourage enquiry. Exploring how the artifice of these publications enabled them to achieve their purposes as literary texts and as print objects circulating within and beyond mental institutions can offer further insight into asylum life and patients' experience. Instead of an obstacle to historical research, the literariness of the periodicals should be seen as an important instrument with which people in the asylum navigated and engaged with institutional contexts. In recognition of that potential, literary scholars have led the way in studying these publications, focusing their efforts on

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four nineteenth-century titles: the *Opal* of the New York State Lunatic Asylum; *Under the Dome* of Bethlem Hospital; the Scottish *New Moon* of the Crichton Royal Asylum in Dumfries; and the *Morningside Mirror* of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum.[48] The resulting case studies show that these publications convey the complicated experience of institutionalisation through a plurality of voices, which at times sound harmoniously and at others clash, contradict, subvert, or outpower each other.

The asylum periodical text emerges out of the existing research as defined by both ambiguity and ambivalence. Contrasting asylum periodicals with former patients' autobiographies, Emily Clark has likened the periodicals to asylum tours that invited the public inside institutions in order to dispel anxieties about mistreatment and corruption. Her argument is that periodicals, like the tours, revealed nothing but 'a sanitized version of the truth'.[49] In these seemingly polished accounts of asylum life, she and other scholars working with the *Opal* of the New York State Asylum (so far the most intensely studied title) have identified subtle acts of resistance and subversion hidden between the lines, avoiding the censoring eye of the physician.[50] Consequently, Benjamin Reiss has proposed to understand the asylum periodical as 'a space in which authority and its subjects spoke to each other and to the outside world on heavily unequal terms: the former in confident, ringing tones; the latter often through linguistic masking, anonymity, and double talk'.[51] Emily Jessica Turner applies that idea to the *New Moon* of the Crichton Institution in Dumfries, arguing that patients' writing should be understood as a '"negotiation" of institutional ideology and patient autonomy'.[52] These interpretations have reinforced the perception of asylum periodicals solely as products of unequal conflict – between patients' restrained free will and physicians' oppressive agendas – in which the marginalised patient is defeated and subdued.

The insistent focus on patients' compromised position at the mercy of institutional pressures and ideologies contrasts with portrayals of the cultural engagement of other similarly confined groups. Studies of literary activity in nineteenth-century prisons tend to represent existence with limited freedom as one of resistance, rebellion, and resourcefulness. Like patients in asylums, convicts were also perceived as problematic readers, whose reading habits required encouragement as well as regulation. Remarking on the widespread presence of the *Leisure Hour* in prisoners' cells (alongside the Bible and prayer books), Jenny Hartley observes the positive, socially elevating effects of reading serialised fiction in the magazine: 'The world of this and other serials in the *Leisure Hour* opens onto a

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field of gentility, which readers are invited to enter, assured they can belong to it at a tangent. While they read they can be part of that civilized and civilizing atmosphere.'[53] She also notes that borrowing books from the prison library was 'one area where prisoners could exercise choice, hence the energy they devoted to it'.[54] In his study of literary activities of prisoners on board of convict ships, Bill Bell draws on de Certeau's idea of the reader as a 'poacher' to illuminate prisoners' hidden tactics of exercising agency. He argues that, regardless of literacy levels, convicts 'were to use a range of cultural practices for their own ends'.[55] As key reformative activities, reading and writing constituted 'sites of contested difference', in which prisoners could subvert, resist, or counteract imposed regulatory agendas.[56]

Recent studies of asylum literary culture have also questioned patients' passivity and endorsement of institutional ideologies. Critical of Reiss's emphasis on repression, Jessica Campbell's doctoral thesis has acknowledged the possibilities of expression that periodical publishing offered, despite the institutional control that was exercised.[57] Exploring the literary personae and uses of humour in the *Morningside Mirror*, she describes the asylum magazine as 'a cultural and discursive space that simultaneously affirmed and reflected *and* challenged and reversed the relationship between madness, the asylum, and society, offering a platform for a wide variety of forms of literary expression, positive or negative, explicit or implicit'.[58] As to reading in asylums, Laura Blair also argues that patients were participants in 'the burgeoning reading culture, and many made an active effort to include themselves by consuming – and producing – written culture'.[59] She has also shown instances of undisciplined reading habits, as well as examples of reading experiences defined by collaborations and care between physicians and patients.[60] Other studies have disrupted the doctor–patient dichotomy, by recognising the regulatory role of other agents, such as patients themselves.[61] This book joins this scholarly effort to interrogate models of repression that obscure patients' agency and resourcefulness by reflecting on the meanings of asylum periodicals to individual patients and physicians, as well as institutional, local, and international medico-professional communities.

The obscurity enshrouding asylum periodicals is reinforced by the challenges posed by the archive. Most titles had patchy histories, and their copies are scattered in various repositories: medical, university, and small local libraries and archives; historical societies' collections; and larger national institutions such as the British Library and the National Library of Scotland. Asylum periodicals are barely represented in online databases,

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and only some are openly accessible online.[62] Locating and consulting copies of most of these publications has consequently been a challenge throughout my research. Even if repositories that hold asylum periodicals are identified, few titles have been preserved in their full runs.

Another complication arises from nineteenth-century physicians' competitiveness. Keen to promote the innovations they introduced in their institutions, asylum superintendents rushed to advertise their publications as the first of their kind. For example, in 1845, Dr William Mackinnon of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum advertised the *Morningside Mirror* as the first periodical to be printed in-house, unaware of the existence of the internally circulated *Chronicles of the Monastery* of the Glasgow Royal Asylum in 1842.[63] Dr Mackinnon likely corresponded with his colleagues in Scotland and had access to the annual reports of the Glasgow institution, which mention the acquisition of the printing press and the launch of the periodical: annual reports were widely shared at the time, especially among medical professionals, and the Royal Edinburgh Asylum Physicians Library, founded in 1843, holds copies. The fact that Mackinnon was ignorant of the *Mirror*'s predecessor (or pretended to be) shows the difficulties of piecing asylum periodicals' history together.[64] It is hardly surprising that, despite the continuous efforts to list and describe these publications, factual errors have persisted: for instance, the *Chronicles of the Monastery* has been repeatedly misdated.[65]

Curiously mirroring the disjointed history of asylum periodicals, scholarly discussions of asylum periodicals have missed opportunities to speak with each other and further broader understanding of the genre. For instance, in addition to the recurrent 'censorship' narrative, the representation of communal feelings within and beyond nineteenth-century mental institutions in asylum periodicals has been a theme in the existing studies of these publications. McMillan has shown that the *New Moon* sought to foster a sense of community the 'primary benefit [of which] was healthfulness'.[66] Emily Jessica Turner makes similar observations about *Under the Dome*, depicting the periodical of the Bethlem Hospital as 'a collaborative effort between hospital staff and a wider support team, as well as between both former and current patients'.[67] Though also analysing the *New Moon*, Turner does not consider McMillan's work, emphasising the difference between the periodicals of the Crichton Institution and the Bethlem Hospital over their similarity.[68] Completed almost simultaneously, Turner's and Curlic's theses on *Under the Dome* both use Jane Hamlett's work on domesticity in asylums to explore representations of the home and family in the magazine.[69] Though Curlic also refers to the *New Moon*

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and the *Gartnavel Gazette* of the Glasgow Royal Asylum, she does not engage with them closely. Though invaluable in laying the foundations to future research, these studies have left room for further discussion of the asylum periodicals as a genre.

A more extensive exploration drawing on primary sources from a transatlantic archive is necessary to examine and develop existing ideas about asylum periodicals. Informed by book history and periodical studies, this book traces the early history of these publications. It focuses on the contexts that facilitated and encouraged their production and looks for shared patterns in nineteenth-century periodical publishing in asylums. It seeks a middle ground between the two main approaches applied so far – the list and the case study. It does so using examples from multiple asylum periodicals, as well as adding several detailed case studies of previously overlooked publications. The book features a bibliographical component too. Over forty pre-1900 titles have been identified to date. Though the book does not attempt to examine each, it features an updated chronological list of asylum periodicals that is particularly mindful of dating their runs and will hopefully inspire and support further research.

Interrogating Ambiguity: Patients as Agents in Literary Networks

The following study of asylum periodicals disrupts the perceived social isolation of asylum inhabitants and challenges the antagonistic doctor–patient model, by recasting patients as active agents in the literary market. Other scholars have begun situating these publications in wider literary culture, noting parallels with influential literary periodicals. The mimicry has been interpreted as a survival strategy: it created structure for an ever-changing pool of contributors. It also affirmed asylum periodicals' own value and their contributors' worth as thinking, rational subjects.[70] The longevity of each title was determined by many factors beside the successful adoption of literary conventions, but the borrowings from other publications enabled asylum periodicals to exist despite the pressures and limitations of their production, such as the stigmatisation of mental illness. Following this interpretation, Benjamin Reiss has concluded that 'the *Opal* functioned not as a magazine but as a "magazine," a what-if experiment in which patients were allowed to address the outside world as if their voices mattered'.[71] Treating asylum periodicals as wholly derivative of mainstream culture, however, is misguided, as it perpetuates representations of patients as passive, voiceless victims of medical discourses. It omits a crucial aspect of asylum periodicals' history: patients who printed, edited,

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and wrote for these publications were often publishing professionals or contributors to the press prior to their admission into asylums. The asylum periodical could serve as an extension of patients' publishing or literary careers, providing a source of recognition, empowerment, and connection to local community and literary culture.

In this study of the international, cross-institutional, and interpersonal exchanges and interactions that sustained asylum periodicals, the network emerges as a key theme. While only one of the chapters addresses it directly, the rest of this book has been infused with a consciousness of the interconnectedness of asylums, their publications and inhabitants, and the rest of the world. In existence as an observable structural principle since the early nineteenth century, the term has been growing in popularity in scholarly discussions, including periodical and literary studies and book history.[72] Robert Darnton's discipline-founding communication circuit model of print production is fundamentally network-based, encouraging engagement with the collaborative aspects of publishing and the constellations of actors that publishing involved.[73] In periodical studies, Laurel Brake advocates treating 'the material networks of media as discourses in themselves' and tracing the connections between various types of human and non-human actors in periodical production.[74] Likewise, Reichardt, Schaefer, and Schober have argued for the immense potential of the network to open up new opportunities for literary and cultural studies: 'the network offers a model to map the relationships between texts, including their intertextual, intermedial, and inter/transcultural dimensions, as well as the relations between authors, texts, and readers, including processes of distribution and value-formation'.[75] As a flexible structuring model composed of actors and the relationships between them, it brings up both new perspectives and new subjects of study. The system of relationships surrounding the production and distribution of asylum periodicals invites such an approach, which will make connections more visible and intelligible.

Prioritising structures and relationships, networks also have subversive power. The boundaries of the individual, the nation, or, in my study, the institution and its population give way to what ties them together.[76] In the words of Reichardt:

> this shift [from individuals to structures] also implies a movement away from an at least implicit 'methodological individualism' to a systemic approach that looks at interactive, relational, distributed, and recursive movements. It involves a move away from the focus on isolated objects or things; rather, these are understood relationally as well, as parts of ensembles or assemblages.[77]

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The emphasis on the interconnectedness of actors allows us to 'move from centered, hierarchical, and substantialist approaches to decentered, distributed and interdependent perspectives'.[78] A network analysis of asylum periodicals' history therefore also enables moving beyond the doctor–patient dyad by looking at the multidirectional exchanges of power and resources in periodical publishing.

Institutions themselves are more easily imagined as networks than indivisible, infallibly operating entities. Though highly regulated in theory and governed by procedures embodied by forms, reports, and other documentation, asylum operations depended on complex interactions between staff, managers, patients, patrons, suppliers, contractors, and other agents. These exchanges were not fixed but dynamic, always open to renegotiation, deviation, and reform. In Liana Glew's words, the asylum as a bureaucratic institution is 'not a perfectly oiled machine, but rather, the result of a collection of workers who have a variety of interests, motives, and interpretations of the work that they do'.[79] As such, it inevitably is 'fundamentally incoherent and full of friction'.[80] While she does not engage with the network model, Glew's approach contributes to the deconstruction of the monolithic oppressive image of the asylum. My own analysis of the networks associated with asylum periodicals proposes a similarly fluid, relation-based understanding of asylum operations. And while considering Reichardt's warning that the decentralised operation of the network should not obscure the existence of hierarchies and power imbalances, my study reveals that the history of asylum periodicals is one of many actors (people, texts, and objects) rather than of interactions between victimised patients and controlling physicians.[81] Rather than forgetting the boundaries and inequalities of power that doubtlessly existed in mental institutions, the network approach highlights their construction around the undeniably existing relations.

The emphasis on relationality also enables me to avoid exaggerating the outsider status of asylum periodicals' producers. Flawed dichotomies such as doctor–patient, institution–inmates, and sane–insane influence research in profound ways, even when scholars try to interrogate them. While asylum periodicals did engage with madness and individual patients' suffering, they resist the scandalous image of madness and the asylum construed by the press, literature, and popular culture since the nineteenth century. Academic researchers have seen asylum periodicals as elusive due to the apparent performativity of their writing. Reiss calls the *Opal* 'an elliptical record of the lives, thoughts, and experiences of the authors', and Turner describes asylum periodicals as 'unknowable' due to their origins.[82]

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Surprise or frustration with the 'normality' of these publications is common in the disjointed historiography of asylum periodicals. Disappointed expectations of sensationalism led a late nineteenth-century reviewer of the *New Moon* and the *Morningside Mirror* to produce a troubling condemnation, published in the *Sketch*. The article expressed dissatisfaction that these publications were 'edited by resident doctors, whose waste-paper baskets could many a strange tale unfold. One may presume that the pathetic folks of Dumfries and Morningside do not always confine their literary activities to such normal topics as Robert Burns and the Röntgen rays.'[83] Here, the pathologising gaze of the reviewer takes the shape of aggressive, voyeuristic interest in the allegedly abnormal thoughts of the mad. I have detected similar, if significantly more sympathetic and well-intended urges in my own, as well as others' work. The drive to seek sensation, even when the evidence lacks it, has fuelled my curiosity and enthusiasm about my project, but it has also threatened to distort the representation of asylum periodicals and the people who made them. Continuous reflection on my expectations has hopefully kept the threat at bay.

Labelling asylum periodicals as fundamentally 'elliptical' or 'unknowable' is potentially rooted in similar urges, and it is dismissive of a few aspects of their history. Their main purpose was to offer an occupation and amusement to patients while also promoting the institution. They were not intended as platforms of patients' grievances, so their mostly positive description of asylum life is in line with their original intentions. More importantly, publication is always a performance, a result of careful selection of content and wording and of collaboration, conflict, and negotiation between agents with various power and agendas. There was an unquestionable power imbalance between asylum staff and patients, and the possibility of institutional editorial intervention should be considered even if it is not openly declared. The emphasis on asylum periodicals' 'unknowability', however, hides a risk of unintentionally furthering the mystification and Othering of madness and perpetuating the victimisation of those considered insane.[84] It can also obscure the fact that a lot *can* be known through them and about them. Discontent with the institutions and the staff does appear in their pages, and criticisms are not always soft, nor subtle. Furthermore, their unusual origins have attracted the attention of physicians and the press and ensured their preservation in institutional archives, so they are, in some respects, more knowable than regular periodicals of similar circulation and lifespans that did not receive as much attention. Though challenging, identifying contributors is

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possible, as signatures in the periodicals can be matched to patients' records.[85] Dispelling anonymity is much harder in cases of other types of unstudied periodicals, where no additional information is available. Consequently, the actual knowability of asylum periodicals, their producers, and their publication processes make them valuable sources of information about nineteenth-century periodicals and publishing more generally.

There are of course ethical considerations associated with author attribution in these contexts. Reiss has argued that anonymity in asylum periodicals was 'a unique kind of social degradation: any author who hoped to return to the outside world would not want to broadcast his or her associations with the asylum'.[86] Turner has also been cautious about revealing patients' identities, since 'patients could possibly have been incapacitated and unable to make decisions regarding their literary identification, or those responsible for their care may have made such decisions on their behalf'.[87] In addition, scholars have acknowledged the potential influence of literary convention in matters of author identification: anonymous publication in the periodical press was common up until the mid nineteenth century and continued to be practised later too.[88]

However, contributors' pride in their literary work and desire to be identifiable, if not actually known, also deserve to be respected. Anonymity did not mean that authorship was necessarily unknown. It is highly likely that authors were recognised not only within the asylum community but beyond too, as they occasionally addressed their relatives and shared episodes of their lives in their writing.[89] For instance, the *Morningside Mirror* included an unsigned love poem titled 'To I–. F–.'[90] If the addressee and their close social circle read the magazine, they would have recognised the author. Another example, from the *New Moon*, is explicitly titled 'Stanzas Written to My Son in Answer to the Concluding Words of His Letter, "Remember Me"' and even mentions the name of the intended reader, hence revealing the author's identity.[91] Some contributors and editors of asylum periodicals did not conceal their identities at all. Such are the cases of Barber Badger of the *Retreat Gazette* and the editors of the *Asylum Gazette* of the New Hampshire Asylum, who revealed their names on the pages of their periodicals.[92] The editors of the *Conglomerate* of the Middletown Homeopathic Hospital in New York State adopted nicknames such as 'Fat Jim', 'The Judge', and 'Krank', but they also included small portrait engravings in the third volume of the newspaper.[93] Assured that most contributors tended to be proud of their contributions to the asylum periodicals for which they wrote, I have found it appropriate

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to study and reveal some of their identities in this book, disclosing only so much of their stories as is necessary to promote a better understanding of the varied experiences of institutionalisation and the history of asylum publishing.

Despite cultural representations of mental institutions and insanity as defined by isolation, contributors to asylum periodicals did not exist outside society. Before, during, and after their admissions, they continuously and actively participated in literary culture. Asylum periodicals allowed patients to claim their place in social life, challenge prejudice and misrepresentations, and form relationships that were not confined to the segmented wards or even individual institutions. The result was a sense of an existing community conscious of its marginalised status but also proud of its distinct literary tradition. The fact that the press actively contributed to the construction of identities has been well-established in the field of periodical studies. As Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein have stated, reading the same periodical regularly inspired a feeling of belonging to 'a clearly definable, and defining, textual community with its own ideologies, social aspirations, and cultural assumptions'.[94] Asylum periodicals faced the difficult task of catering to at least two distinct readerships – the institution's population and outsiders.[95] As a beneficial pastime that broke the monotony of asylum life, they allowed patients to speak to each other and to staff. As platforms for representing the institution that were distributed externally, they enabled patients to speak to the rest of the world.

The book is divided into two parts. The first one focuses on the beginnings of asylum periodicals, exploring the key factors that promoted their emergence and spread. Chapter 1 outlines the main developments in the treatment of madness and publishing that led to the introduction of printing presses and periodical production in asylums. It then discusses ideas about the press and insanity in discourses of civilisational progress, seeking explanations for the early enthusiastic adoption of asylum periodical publishing in Scotland and America. Ultimately, the chapter shows that institutions' financial and reputational interests always drove the acquisition of printing presses and the launches of periodicals. However, the publishing experiments reflect not only physicians' but patients' progressive aspirations and desire to contribute symbolically to the project of civilisation.

Chapter 2 examines more closely the transatlantic and global spread of periodicals, arguing that the process was a result of cross-institutional exchanges involving physicians, print tradesmen, and various publications.

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Periodical production spread in different institutions through networks of medical professionals, and asylum periodicals themselves contributed to medical communication, once they were in circulation. Medical superintendents also created opportunities for patients to interact with each other within and across institutions and with the outside world. Asylum periodicals participated in wider networks of print, enabling patients' continuous engagement with literary culture, public life, and their peers. The inception, development, and survival of these publications thus depended on the exchanges they involved.

Chapter 3 discusses two of the earliest known asylum periodicals and their role in their founders' lives during and beyond their confinement: the *Retreat Gazette* (Hartford, CT, 1837) and the *Chronicles of the Monastery* (Glasgow, Scotland, 1842). Both publications were patient-led projects, supported by their respective institutions but inevitably tied to the fates of the individuals that launched them. Their dependence on patients' efforts shaped their purposes and contents and was the major reason these publications struggled to survive. Regardless of their short lives, however, these two titles are strong examples of the ways in which patients employed writing and publishing to navigate the institutional environments they temporarily inhabited and face the challenges of life beyond the asylum.

The second part of the book explores the question of voice in asylum periodicals by examining the role of conflict and collaboration in their production. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the issue of voice and freedom of expression. It interrogates the function of the patient-editor in asylum periodicals in theory and in practice, through the case of the *Gartnavel Gazette* (1853–54; 1855), which was produced and internally circulated in the Glasgow Royal Asylum. The well-preserved archives of the institution enable a close examination of patient-editors' medical notes, which include biographical information and details about their relationships with staff, other patients, and the institution. The story of the *Gazette* and its editors reveals that periodical production in asylums was the result of conflict, negotiation, and collaboration, perhaps not unlike other similar publications at the time. The chapter disrupts the doctor–patient dichotomy, as it reveals the role of class-based aesthetics in the selection of material for publication and highlights clashes and instances of cooperation between different patients, as well as between staff and patients. It also shows that, contrary to the interpretation of asylum periodicals as polished records of asylum life, interpersonal tensions and patients' grievances did find a place in their pages, even if complaints and attacks were softened with humour and irony.

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In Chapter 5, I continue exploring patients' agency by examining the *Meteor* of the Alabama Insane Hospital in Tuscaloosa, an American title that was distributed across the United States and abroad, reaching as far away as Perth, Scotland. Edited by a former plantation owner who taught himself how to print in the institution, the *Meteor* shows once again that patients' self-expression was limited by factors beyond institutional intervention. The selection process and the contents of the published issues were governed by the editor's personal circumstances, respect for his and his fellow inmates' privacy, and aesthetic criteria, shaped especially by racial and gender prejudice. Featuring in a broader campaign of literary activity that the editor ran to recover his compromised social position, the *Meteor* enabled him to maintain his image as an erudite and accomplished gentleman, position himself as an ally to the physician, and speak to authority, as the frustration of his prolonged confinement grew.

Having exposed the tensions that governed publishing in mental institutions, in Chapter 6 I turn to the forces of unity that drove patients' publishing projects, focusing on the role of asylum periodicals in construing and maintaining real and imagined communities within and beyond the asylum. The chapter firstly shows that the complexity of the publishing process brought together people with different skill sets and assesses periodical publishing's potential to disrupt the internal institutional segregation of patients. Then the chapter examines representations of the asylum community as a family on the pages of the periodicals. Nineteenth-century institutions strove to emulate families in which patients were infantilised under the parental care of the superintendent and the matron. Asylum periodicals show not only the manifestation of this framework's application but also patients' active engagement with these symbols. Finally, the chapter explores former inmates' continuous involvement in asylum periodicals, suggesting that some patients formed lasting and meaningful connections during their stay in mental institutions and used the asylum as a source of support and stable community.

Chapter 7 brings all threads of my discussion together by examining the question of identity. First, it examines the two-directional rhetoric of resisting exclusion and using exclusion for self-empowerment evident across different titles. Recognising the processes of marginalisation, some patients found rhetorical power in their disadvantaged position. They used asylum periodicals to challenge the distinction between sanity and insanity, evoke sympathy and better understanding of their status, and foster a sense of solidarity among fellow inmates across institutions. *Excelsior* of the Murray Royal Asylum in Perth, Scotland, was the title where these

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sentiments found their clearest expression. Though edited by the physician superintendent of the institution, this periodical was especially militant in its attack on the misrepresentation of mental illness and keen to cultivate a sense of an existing tradition of lunatic literature. Fraught with paradoxes, this collaborative project purposefully strove to embody a cross-institutional imagined community of patients determined to renegotiate their social positioning and prove their worth – even if that eventually meant carving a literary space of their own.

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