



PROJECT MUSE®

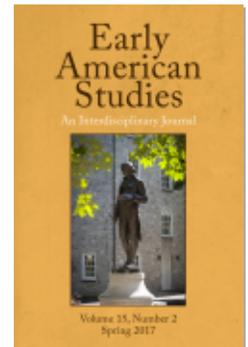
The Moral Thermometer: Rush, Republicanism, and Suicide

Richard Bell

Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Volume 15, Issue 2,
Spring 2017, pp. 308-331 (Article)

Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2017.0009>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/653133>

The Moral Thermometer

Rush, Republicanism, and Suicide

RICHARD BELL

University of Maryland

ABSTRACT This essay situates Benjamin Rush at the center of a diffuse campaign to halt the “alarming progress” of self-destruction in the newly formed United States. It argues that Rush understood suicide not only as a medical, psychological, and religious problem, but also as a symptom of social and political atomization. By founding or supporting organizations and initiatives designed to drape coercive impulses in the garb of disinterested charity and cosmopolitan benevolence, Rush tried to nurture new bonds of empathy that could serve ordering functions without ever appearing to challenge the primacy of the rational individual in liberal society. The result was a battery of highly visible campaigns intended to transform individual character by promoting reflection, self-improvement, self-respect, and, most important, self-control.

On March 7, 1809, Benjamin Rush’s eldest son, John, tore a four-inch gash across his throat with a razor. It was the latest of “several attempts” that John Rush had made “to destroy himself” since killing a friend and fellow naval officer in an angry and impetuous duel several months earlier. In fact, John had challenged at least three other sailors to duels during the course of his episodic and entirely undistinguished naval service. Fiercely independent, obstinate, and quick-tempered, John had spent his childhood in near-constant warfare with his strict parents, and as an adult he had continued a pattern of studied defiance by openly indulging in all the vices against which his physician father so publicly railed. Removed from Princeton after tutors caught him playing cards on the Sabbath, John had refused his father’s offer of a job on his medical staff. Instead, he had struck

Portions of this essay are drawn, with permission, from Richard Bell, *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the Newly United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Early American Studies (Spring 2017)

Copyright © 2017 The McNeil Center for Early American Studies. All rights reserved.

out on his own, enlisting in the fledgling U.S. Navy as a lieutenant. During a liquor-soaked stint at a base in New Orleans, he shot and killed a fellow gunboat commander, “the distress and remorse [of] which . . . deprived him of his reason” and led directly to his suicide attempt.¹

John’s wound was not fatal—the razor had missed the veins in his neck—and so although he remained “in a deep state of melancholy,” the navy soon transferred him, against his will, to Benjamin’s care. Back in his father’s house once more, John, now thirty-two, staged one final domestic insurrection, enraging Benjamin by refusing “to speak or even to answer a question.” After three days of noncompliance, Dr. Rush ordered that his prodigal son be confined to a basement room at the Pennsylvania Hospital, where his staff of orderlies could compel his cooperation. John would remain there until he died, twenty-seven years later.²

This essay situates John’s father, Benjamin, at the center of a diffuse yet decidedly personal and implicitly political campaign to halt the “alarming progress” of self-destruction in the new nation. It argues that Rush senior understood suicide not only as a medical, psychological, and religious problem, but also as a symptom of social and political atomization, a problem intrinsic to the republican experiment. Traumatized by the perceived breakdown of morality and virtue that followed the American Revolution, Benjamin Rush spent much of his postwar public life searching for new ways to foster cooperation in an open society. Strikingly, Rush’s struggles to repair the ties of mutual obligation and cultivate new conditions of coexistence frequently found expression in the business of suicide prevention.³

As the father of nine voracious novel readers and as a member of the board of visitors of a young ladies’ academy, Rush strenuously attacked popular sentimental works that seemed to sabotage family bonds by portraying teenage suicide as exquisitely romantic. Likewise, as an early vice president of an anti-drowning charity, Rush invested time and money in the cause of

1. Eric T. Carlsen and Jeffrey L. Wollock, “Benjamin Rush and His Insane Son,” *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 51, no. 11 (1975): 1316, 1325.

2. *Ibid.*, 1317–18. In 1828 the actor Edwin Forrest, who was studying for the part of King Lear, visited the hospital to observe the fifty-one-year-old patient. Forrest found him shuffling back and forth in the corridor, muttering to himself.

3. For editorial hand-wringing about the rising frequency of suicide in the United States after independence see, for instance, *Independent Chronicle and the Universal Advertiser* (Boston), January 30, 1783; *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, June 15, 1785; *Massachusetts Gazette*, August 1, 1788; *Vermont Gazette or Freeman’s Depository*, April 27, 1789.

direct intervention to prevent the suicides of strangers, targeting considerable resources toward enacting his belief that well-meaning elites could and should interfere with the decisions of ordinary Americans determined to die. Finally, as the author of the first American textbook to categorize self-destruction as a symptom of biological disease, and as the superintendent of the first purpose-built psychiatric ward, the doctor was instrumental in extending the authority of the medical establishment to encompass the custody of men and women whom he deemed to be dangers to themselves, including his own suicidal son, John.⁴

SUICIDE AND REPUBLICANISM

Because personal choices about how and when to die take place at the nexus of self and society, self-destruction has always been a matter of consuming political concern. The problem of suicide, as philosophers from Socrates to Sartre have long understood, strikes directly at the core of questions about individual autonomy and collective organization, and it does so in ways that are agonizingly personal, pointed, and profound. Should individual citizens have the freedom to do with their life and their liberty as they see fit? Or should obligations to serve community interests provide necessary restraint? Are we all in this together or is it every man for himself?

In the new United States such questions were not abstract inquiries. On the contrary, they pressed down with great weight on the minds of every man and woman who ever paused to wonder whether their fellow citizens had sufficient virtue, self-discipline, and care for one another to foster a stable and self-governing republican government. Indeed, determining the proper relationship between private will and public interest was the fundamental social and political challenge facing the people of the United States in the fragile, formative years after the Revolution. As a result, the meaning of suicide became a principal locus of contention, and the term itself quickly came to function as one of the most evocative and incendiary words in Americans' political vocabularies.

That is because the early American republic was no ordinary political community. Though every society, by definition, prizes mutual affinity (order) over unchecked personal autonomy (liberty), most champions of the republican experiment held fast to the belief that republics in particular are

4. In addition, as a foot soldier of a republican revolution reliant on a virtuous and well-informed citizenry, Rush argued for censoring newspaper coverage of suicide lest it dull the moral senses of malleable readers or stir them to bloody acts of imitation.

built on the promise of associative cooperation. “Every man in a republic is public property,” Benjamin Rush reminded Philadelphians in an essay published in 1787 in support of the U.S. Constitution. “His time and youth—his manhood—his old age—nay more, life, all, belong to his country.” Convinced that the fate of the new republican system of government hinged on the relationship between the self and society, men like Benjamin Rush could not help regarding the frequency of individual decisions to die as a sort of “moral thermometer” for the country’s health (figure 1).⁵

Initially, of course, Patriot elites had greeted news of the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1783, as the herald of a wonderful new dawn. To punctuate the break with Britain, delegates in Philadelphia had proudly placed the spoils of the war into the hands of the American people, anointing every white man eligible to vote as an equal partner in a republican system of government, a political system never before tested on such a great scale. This fundamental change in the relationship of ordinary people to the state marked a radical redistribution of political sovereignty, a daring attempt to turn the ideas of the Enlightenment into vibrant reality. It was also an extraordinary vote of confidence, a measure of the Founders’ faith in the ability of their countrymen to hold their own ambitions, vices, and appetites in check and to exercise wisdom, respect, comity, and self-restraint whenever called on. If ordinary people could subordinate their interests to the common good in the war years, Patriot leaders such as Benjamin Rush reasoned, then why not in peacetime?⁶

Only as postwar euphoria started to thin in the late 1780s and early 1790s

5. Benjamin Rush, “An Address to the People of the United States on the Defects of the Confederation,” *American Museum* 1 (January 1787): 12–13. For the same claim in a very different context, see Benjamin Rush, *Considerations on the Injustice and Impolicy of Punishing Murder by Death, Extracted from the American Museum with Additions* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1792), 3.

6. Joseph J. Ellis, *After the Revolution: Profiles of Early American Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 217; Louis P. Masur, “Age of the First Person Singular: The Vocabulary of Self in New England, 1780–1850,” *Journal of American Studies* 25 (1991): 193; Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976), 219–21. Useful reviews of the literature of republicanism include Robert E. Shalhope, “Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (1972): 49–80; Robert E. Shalhope, “Republicanism and Early American Historiography,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982): 334–56; Daniel T. Rodgers, “Republicanism: The Career of a Concept,” *Journal of American History* 79 (1992): 11–38.

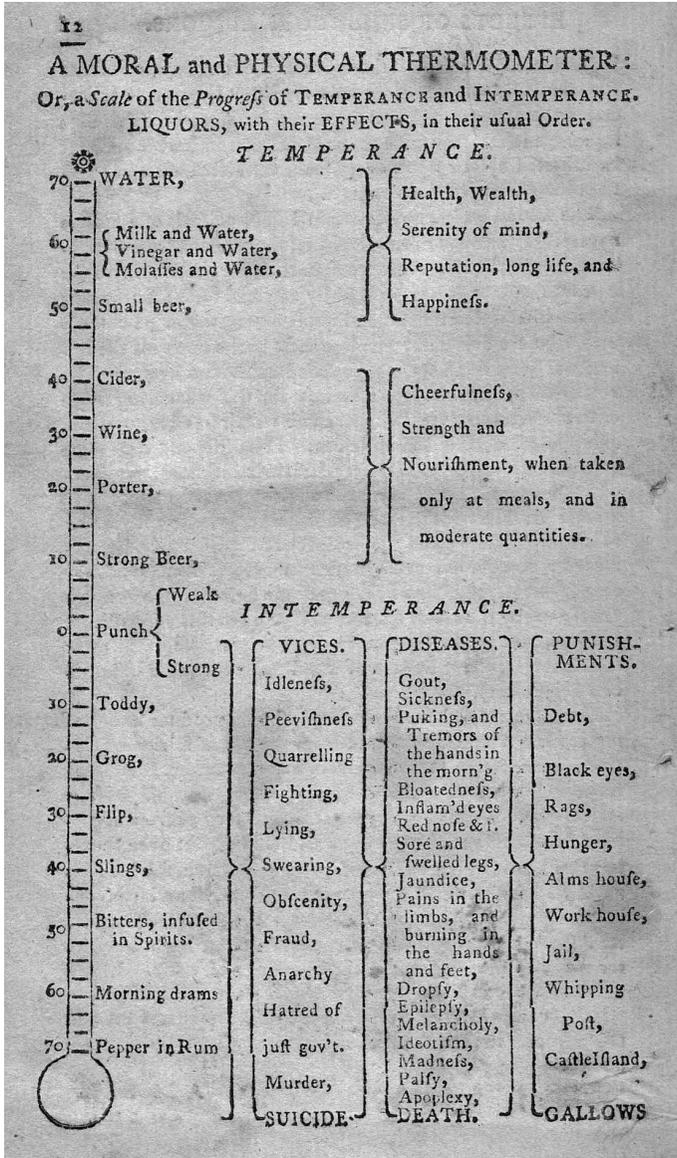


Figure 1. Benjamin Rush's illustration of the consequences of habitual drinking of distilled liquor placed "SUICIDE" at an extreme position along a spectrum of vices that ranged from "Idleness" and "Quarrelling" to "Anarchy" and "Hatred of just gov't." From Benjamin Rush, *An Enquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body. To Which Is Added a Moral and Physical Thermometer* (Boston, 1790). Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

did this rapturous vision of a cohesive, organic state held together by individual virtue begin to flicker and fail. Boosters like Rush had hoped that the egalitarian spirit promoted by the republican Revolution would thicken ties between different sections of society. Instead, the exact opposite seemed to be unfolding before their very eyes. Migrants were on the move, abandoning family farms and streaming unbidden into towns and cities. The urban labor force was growing ever more restless, its journeymen and apprentices coming to embrace strikes and mob actions to protest deskilling, falling wages, and the resulting surge in income inequality. Expanding access to the ballot box did nothing to calm these men; on the contrary, it succeeded only in bringing to the polls a flurry of agitated new voters impatient to politicize the concept of social superiority.⁷

The old bastions of authority found themselves under unprecedented attack. The established clergy, for instance, watched in horror as one state legislature after another dismantled governmental support for established churches. They fumed as strident young preachers representing minority religious movements such as Methodism and Universalism strode to the stage, denouncing the old guard as antidemocratic, authoritarian conservatives. Within families, erstwhile patriarchs witnessed the same velvet revolution as parents grappled with the growth of a permissive and eroticized sexual culture and worried that their ever more independent offspring were becoming ever more ungovernable and unreachable and thus might easily fall victim to crime, luxury, seduction, and sin.⁸

In the view of parents, ministers, and magistrates, the country was on a road to ruin. The harmonious, self-regulating ideal that proud republicans

7. Douglass C. North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790–1860* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 25–50; Paul A. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763–1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 92–94, 147, 169–70, 190–91; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 25–27; Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 6, 15, 55–58.

8. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3–4, 9–11, 22, 34, 56, 64; Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977; repr., New York: Doubleday, 1988), 23–24, 26, 36; Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750–1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 7, 12, 18–31; Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 112, 189, 282–83.

like Benjamin Rush had anticipated after the Constitutional Convention had failed to materialize. Instead, the taste for liberty had become contagious, sanctioning or hastening a string of wide-ranging social transformations that had undermined familiar mechanisms of public and private order and enshrined the individual as the prime unit in politics, economics, and religion. With few meaningful limits on personal freedom, young America struck social conservatives as a chaotic and unruly place, a sprawling, dissolute, unrestrained popular democracy in the midst of unprecedented ethical declension. Patriarchy—as measured by the power of the state, the church, employers, and heads of household to exert their will over that of their dependents—was in disarray. Never before had the lines of authority seemed so confused and the future so uncertain.⁹

For these reasons, many Americans in positions of political, social, and economic advantage found it difficult to interpret acts of suicide in their communities, especially those committed by their direct dependents, as anything other than wrenching and irrevocable recalibrations of the relationship between self and society. “Suicide is feared and resented because it transfers power from society to the individual,” the clinician and sociologist Robert Kastenbaum has written, and it “becomes a more salient threat when society believes it is under serious attack by divisive and rebellious forces. . . . It is not the death that disturbs. It is the affront, the threat, the act of assertion, the act of defiance, the act of self-empowerment.” Setting to one side colonial-era understandings of self-destruction as a sign of diabolical possession or a sin against God, more and more Americans of status and standing perceived a strong and binding link between the alarming frequency of suicides now daily described in the early national press and the individualistic and disintegrative impulses of this budding capitalist society.¹⁰

THE POWER OF SYMPATHY

Rush himself was greatly exercised by the belief that self-destructive behavior was more prevalent than ever before. In his commonplace book he frequently tallied the local suicides that came to his attention. To give just one example, in February 1802 Rush noted, “Three instances of suicide have

9. Gordon S. Wood, “The Significance of the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 8 (1988): 18, and Gordon S. Wood, ed., *The Rising Glory of America, 1760–1820* (1971; repr., Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), 9–10.

10. Robert Kastenbaum, “The Impact of Suicide on Society,” in Brian L. Mishara, ed., *The Impact of Suicide* (New York: Springer, 1995), 178.

occurred within the last month in this city.” Indeed, the doctor seemed to see the specter of self-destruction everywhere. Even his famous crusade against distilled spirits was organized around the central idea that inebriates were “guilty of a species of suicide.” Were those who drank themselves to death, Rush often asked, any different from those who might willfully jump “from the mast of a ship full sail into the sea?” To determine whether appetites for self-destruction were confined to the white inhabitants of the United States, Rush even went so far as to question Native leaders like Alexander McGillivray and frontiersmen such as Meriwether Lewis whether “suicide [is] ever known among the Indians. And from what causes, if it be?”¹¹

Rush’s suicide politics are nowhere more evident than in his shifting response to the rising popularity of sentimental novels among young people. At first, parents like Rush—whose first son, John, was born in 1777—welcomed the new fashion for fiction as a godsend. They hoped that if American authors might be co-opted to model restrained, moral behavior and to teach readers to listen to their elders and betters, then perhaps the nation might yet endure. As rates of premarital pregnancy reached record levels, many early supporters of the rise of the novel in America held out particular hope that fiction might smuggle lessons about female chastity and male self-discipline into the hearts and minds of adolescent readers by illustrating with riveting power the consequences of seduction. At the same time, advocates including Rush fantasized that novels and short stories could also be exploited to temper the selfishness that many associated with the rise of consumer society by reminding better-off readers of their obligations to others less fortunate.¹²

11. Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush, His “Travels through Life,” Together with His Commonplace Book for 1789–1813*, ed. George W. Corner (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1948), 188–89, 258, 265–66; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 26, 1771; *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, ed. Lyman H. Butterfield, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 1:580–81; Drake W. Will, “The Medical and Surgical Practice of the Lewis and Clark Expedition,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 14 (1959): 275; Benjamin Rush, “Medicine among the Indians of North America,” in *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (Philadelphia: Philosophical Library, 1947), 264.

12. Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the World: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 113–16; G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1–36, 104–53, 248, 276; Andrew Burstein, *Sentimental Democracy: The Evolution of America’s Romantic Self-Image* (New York:

In a well-publicized lecture at the American Philosophical Society in 1786, Benjamin Rush hoped aloud that “a familiarity with scenes of distress from poverty and diseases” might heighten young people’s regard for the growing army of indigents crowding city streets in the postwar years and singled out the literary arts as particularly potent tools if “properly directed.” In fact, in Rush’s mind, a carefully calibrated literature of sensibility might perhaps even usher in a new era of benevolence by training young men of feeling and young ladies of refinement to identify and sympathize with suffering wherever they found it. Sensibility might teach young readers to respond to the sight of a beggar by reaching into their pockets for coins. Better still, the doctor opined, it might even lead to more sustained acts of charity and selflessness along the lines of the new lifesaving rescue groups known as “humane societies, which are now established in many parts of Europe, and in some parts of America.”¹³

Rush’s vision was never realized. On the contrary, the popularity of one particularly sentimental novel, Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*—a novel that features an unashamedly self-absorbed and self-destructive central character—forced Rush to confront the dawning realization that precious few authors were willing to sign on to his campaign to harness literature for the purposes of moral education. Quite the contrary. As European and American writers experimented with all the possibilities of sentimental fiction during the 1780s, plots and characters had begun to appear that seemed to complicate or even undermine the messages about living virtuously and acting charitably embedded in earlier works like *Clarissa*. As *Werther* fever gripped young America in the late 1780s, the very people who had once promoted the affirming power of novel reading reluctantly reached the conclusion that excessively sentimental narratives might actually skew young readers’ delicate sensibilities to the point of perversion, encouraging

Hill & Wang, 1999), xi–xviii, 14; Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 1–18, 153–263.

13. Benjamin Rush, *An Oration, Delivered before the American Philosophical Society . . . on the 27th of February, 1786* (Philadelphia, 1786), 33, 26. Rush’s lecture to APS members ran to two print editions before being extracted in the *American Museum* in 1789 and then revised and reprinted in an early volume of Rush’s collected medical works. See *American Museum; or, Universal Magazine*, 1789, 118–21, and Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations* (Philadelphia, 1793), 2:1–56. On the role of new academies in this campaign, see Margaret A. Nash, “Rethinking Republican Motherhood: Benjamin Rush and the Young Ladies’ Academy of Philadelphia,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 17 (Summer 1997), 171–91.

them to wallow in exquisite fictional tragedies while ignoring those around them truly in need of their sympathy (figure 2).¹⁴

Addressing the Young Ladies' Academy in Philadelphia in 1787, at the very moment that *Werther* achieved cult status in America, Benjamin Rush voiced his distrust of a novel so sensational and stylized that it seemed to him to have replaced moral instruction with sentiments so cloyingly romantic and disparaging of social duty as to be downright damaging: "The abortive sympathy which is excited by the recital of imaginary distress, blunts the heart to that which is real and, hence, we sometimes see instances of young ladies, who weep away a whole forenoon over the criminal sorrows of a fictitious Charlotte or Werther, turning with disdain at three o'clock from the sight of a beggar, who sollicit in feeble accents or signs, a small portion only of the crumbs which fall from their fathers' tables." Rush did not bother to hide his disgust. A year earlier he had extolled the virtues of "properly directed" literature. But *Werther* was another matter entirely. Goethe, Rush told the governors of this pioneering female academy, had misused the much-trumpeted power of sympathetic identification to stir up affection for selfish and suicidal characters wholly undeserving of pathos. By doing so, this little novel seemed to have broken the link between sensibility and charity that Rush and other worried parents of disorderly teenage children had hoped the new fashion for fiction would foster.¹⁵

As copies of that novel continued to fly from the shelves of bookshops

14. O. W. Long, "Werther in America," in *Studies in Honor of John Albrecht Walz* (Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster Press, 1941), 88, 106–7; O. W. Long, "English and American Imitations of Goethe's 'Werter,'" *Modern Philology* 14 (August 1916), 193–216; Stuart Atkins, *The Testament of Werther in Poetry and Drama* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 251; Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789–1860* (New York: Pageant Books, 1959), 155. American editions of *Werther* published before 1830 include those from 1784 (Philadelphia), 1789 (Boston and Litchfield, Conn.), 1796 (New York), 1798 (Boston), 1807 (New York, Boston), 1814 (Brattleboro), 1823 (New York), 1824 (Hartford, New York, Boston, and Concord), 1829 (Hartford), and 1830 (Hartford). Examples of excerpts from *Werther* printed in American newspapers include *Massachusetts Centinel*, November 5, 1785, *Concord Herald*, August 24, 1791, and *Merrimack Intelligencer*, January 18, 1817. I have identified thirty-four *Werther* poems published in newspapers from New Hampshire to South Carolina before 1825. Others were published as stand-alone pieces, and it was also common for poets to versify individual letters from Goethe's epistolary novel.

15. Benjamin Rush, *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Thomas and William Bradford, 1806), 82.

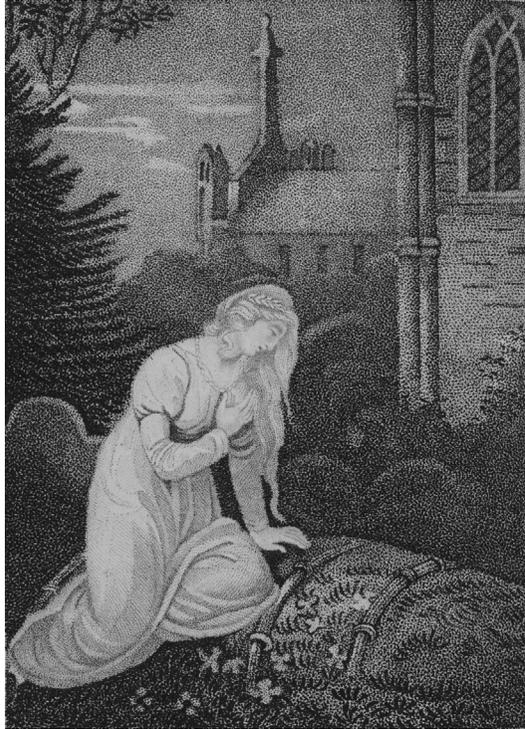


Figure 2. In this illustration Charlotte weeps over the tomb of Werther. By such means, young readers in particular were encouraged to identify with Charlotte's grief following Werther's suicide. From Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Werther*, trans. Dr. Pratt (New York, 1807). Courtesy of the University of Missouri–Kansas City Libraries, Dr. Kenneth J. LaBudde Department of Special Collections.

and libraries throughout the 1790s and the decade that followed, more and more public figures climbed aboard Rush's anti-*Werther* bandwagon. To drive home their case against the book's unchecked sentimentality, most took to arguing that the novel's tear-soaked pages encouraged tender-minded readers to follow in its idol's bloody footsteps. Playing on widespread fears that suicide was making alarming progress in the new nation, a gaggle of critics charged that by perverting the proper process of sympathetic identification so that a narcissistic young romantic became a literary hero, Goethe had produced a novel that seemed to condone and even valorize self-murder. In a frequently reprinted opinion piece published in 1806, one female commentator lamented how artful writers could prostitute their



Figure 3. American literary magazines published numerous short stories between 1780 and 1810 that culminated in the suicide of young women undone by seducers. From left to right: *Massachusetts Magazine* 6 (1794); *New York Magazine* 5 (1794); *New York Magazine* 2 (1791). Courtesy (left to right) of the American Antiquarian Society, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the American Antiquarian Society.

talents “in the encouragement of the most atrocious crimes.” Goethe could never compensate, the author continued, “for the injury that vague minds receive from those publications where SUICIDE is represented as heroism; nor can the writer of the Sorrows of Werther ever make atonement for the injury he has done to society.” Goethe’s offence, a growing gaggle of pundits agreed, was to transform the terrors of self-destruction into something soft and sweet, and to tempt “vague minds” to follow young Werther’s example if ever their own romantic entanglements became too much to bear.¹⁶

To Rush’s great dismay, *Werther’s* popularity with young readers ensured that sentimentalized portrayals of suicide found central places in a string of copycat works. Between 1780 and 1810 suicide spread through the pages of fashionable fiction like yellow fever (figure 3). The suicides of young men unlucky in love or young women ruined by seduction punctuate the plots of many of the most popular novels and short stories. Indeed, no fewer than fifteen (one-third) of the first forty-five novels written by Americans, all of

16. *Merrimack Magazine and Ladies’ Literary Cabinet*, June 12, 1806. Ironically, this editorial was actually an uncredited excerpt from another suicide novel, *The Hapless Orphan* (1793), at the climax of which one character commits suicide after having read *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.

them published before 1810, depict a character dying by his or her own hand. These fifteen novels together portray the suicides of ten women and fourteen men, and there are dozens more attempts at, thoughts of, and discussions about suicide in these and other early American novels.¹⁷

Of course, this crude body count takes no heed of differences in print runs, marketing and sales, or the likelihood of titles being reprinted. Nor does it differentiate between those works that appear to valorize suicide as an extreme romantic gesture akin to Werther's and those that portray acts of self-destruction with studied ambiguity, or as the just desserts of vice and villainy. But neither did Rush or any other knee-jerk critic of sentimental fiction. Prominent people increasingly suspicious of the literary forms they had once championed did not usually pause to distinguish between the myriad moral valences these authors attached to literary suicide. On the contrary, blinkered by the satisfying purity of indignation, observers such as Rush believed that all fiction had been poisoned by the fashion among a few writers for excessive sentimentality; to them, any literary portrayal of suicide was rendered suspect and assumed, until proven otherwise, to be dangerously romantic.

With time, authors began to fight back, impugning such blunt, undifferentiated criticism as best they could. Charles Brockden Brown, the sometime editor of the *Literary Magazine*, used columns in 1805 and 1806 to wonder in print how many novels critics like Rush had actually bothered to read before denouncing the genre wholesale. Responding directly to passages of a recent sermon impugning novel reading as a symptom of growing self-absorption and a leading cause of suicide, Brown went on to argue that most of the literary diet consumed by ordinary Americans did not deserve the sort of censure it had received. "Suicide in truth, is very rarely to be found," he protested. "Wherever it occurs, so far as we remember, it is placed in such a light as to discourage rather than provoke imitation." Building up a head of steam, Brown even charged parents like Rush with a patronizing disregard for their children's ability to discern the difference between positive and negative examples. Rush and critics of novels like *Werther* built their case on the assumption that typical readers had "vague minds" that could be easily corrupted, but Charles Brockden Brown assumed that these same consumers had sufficient moral competence to

17. Bibliographical data is drawn from Henri Petter, *The Early American Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971); Brown, *Sentimental Novel in America; Early American Fiction, 1789-1875*, Chadwyck-Healey, http://collections.chadwyck.com/home/home_caf2.jsp.

undertake the task in hand. Even untutored adolescent readers, Brown scolded, could readily distinguish virtue from vice and deserved more credit.¹⁸

Battered and bruised by Brown's criticism, Rush reluctantly retreated to the sidelines of the reading revolution. But it was hardly the only front on which he was fighting. As the debate over the power of sympathy raged on, Rush was also pouring money, time, and unbounded enthusiasm into another project to model republican charity and attack the "alarming progress" of suicide in the United States. In 1786 he took up his duties as the founding vice president of the Philadelphia Humane Society—the anti-drowning charity that he had touted as the associational embodiment of perfect sensibility. In so doing, he enlarged his focus, moving beyond this depressing debate about the causes of so many recent suicides to the practical matter of figuring out how best to prevent them.

THE DEEP AND GLOOMY ABYSS OF DEATH

The first humane society began in Amsterdam in 1766, the brainchild of a wealthy German resident who had been "struck with a variety of instances in which persons falling into the water were lost for want of proper treatment when brought on the shores." Pairing a tiered scale of cash rewards payable to any bystanders willing to risk their lives to save someone else with an array of astonishingly modern techniques, the idea was embraced by London philanthropists in the 1770s and crossed the Atlantic to America in the 1780s. A group of well-meaning doctors and lawyers formed the Boston Humane Society in 1786, and when the Philadelphia Humane Society sprang to life a year later, in 1787, it became a second hub for what boosters like Benjamin Rush—at first its first vice president and later its leader—hoped would become a network of American franchises. Sure enough, over the next few years other humane societies announced their existence: in Baltimore (1790), Charleston (1793), Albany (1793), New York City (1794), Newburyport, Massachusetts (1802), Burlington, New Jersey (1806), and Wilmington, Delaware (1812). Though several seem to have

18. "Criticism," *Literary Magazine, and American Register*, April 1805, 315–16; Charles Brockden Brown, "A Student's Diary . . . No. (VI)," *Literary Magazine*, March 1806, 404. For an introduction to reader-response scholarship see Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978); Jane P. Tompkins, ed., *Reader-Response: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Leah Price, "Reading: The State of the Discipline," *Book History* 7 (2004), 303–20; Philip Goldstein and James L. Machor, eds., *New Directions in American Reception Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

disappeared almost immediately, perhaps crowded out by competing philanthropic endeavors, some of these lifesaving groups laid down deep and lasting roots in local communities.¹⁹

Benjamin Rush, the most famous physician in America, was typical of the distinguished urban professionals and civic leaders who gravitated to the cause of restoring to life those apparently drowned. Indeed, the mission and reputation of the Philadelphia Humane Society attracted not only Rush, but also well-known printers such as Mathew Carey and William and Thomas Bradford, the lawyer Horace Binney, the industrialist Thomas Dyott, the Constitution signer Jared Ingersoll, and several Revolutionary War leaders such as Clement Biddle and Richard Bache. Even lesser-known figures were likely to be professional men—well-off, college educated, and members of several other civic organizations.²⁰

Subscription was no sinecure. As they struggled to mobilize, the humane societies hummed with activity and expectation. Corresponding secretaries communicated constantly with sister societies throughout the Atlantic world, exchanging information that helped managers refine, perfect, and promote their lifesaving techniques. Taking on the role of de facto medical boards, Benjamin Rush and other humane society doctors set about decrying some of the more violent folk methods of restoring a body to life, such as hanging it by its heels, beating it, or running it back and forth in a cart. Instead, they agreed on a series of procedures that drew heavily on the protocols pioneered in London and Amsterdam. “The Method,” as it came to be called, emphasized rewarming to combat hypothermia and chest compressions and tracheotomies to restore respiration. The result was a medical protocol that seemed to work wonders when properly performed on likely candidates. In 1791 Rush’s colleague Dr. David Hosack estimated that residents of Philadelphia and Baltimore who had applied “the Method” had succeeded in reviving three of every four people they tried to rescue.²¹

19. John Lathrop, *A Discourse before the Humane Society in Boston, Delivered on the Second Tuesday of June, 1787* (Boston: E. Russell, 1787), 18–19. The Humane Society of Philadelphia, to give it its legal title, was actually founded in 1780 by a group of physicians returning from medical training in Europe. Yet, for reasons that included the death of its president in 1783, the society lay almost dormant for seven years and was revived only in 1787, following the much-trumpeted establishment of a similar society in Boston.

20. Humane Society of Philadelphia, “Annual Subscription Book for 1813,” in *Records of the Humane Society of Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia*.

21. David Hosack, *An Enquiry into the Causes of Suspended Animation from Drowning; With the Means of Restoring Life* (New York: Thomas and James Swords,

The effectiveness of “the Method” relied in great measure on specialized equipment and relentless publicity. Agents placed “boxes of useful medicines,” typically emetics and smelling salts, alongside custom-designed grappling devices on the bridges, wharves, and ferries where they might be of greatest use. Both are clearly visible in Rush’s own copy of the illustrated membership certificates distributed by the Philadelphia Humane Society in its early years (figure 4). By 1799 Rush’s group had deposited at least eighteen sets of apparatus, accompanied by instructions printed on small pieces of stiff card, “in many places, the most advantageous on the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers.” “Do Not Despair,” these directives told anyone who needed them. To try to train potential first responders in their approved methods, managers also spent thousands of dollars on publicity campaigns. Donations from members paid for pocket pamphlets and cheap almanacs filled with directions on how to restore limp bodies to life. Managers even reproduced these same directions in the sort of versified forms they thought might appeal to the lower orders, and they pasted up large-print broadsides “in all the public parts” of the city.²²

What explains why Rush and so many elite Americans sank so much time and money into the humane society movement? Make no mistake, many simply wanted to help. Seizing on a spectacularly powerful means to do good in their communities, members enamored of the rhetoric of sensibility and distressed by the vicissitudes of life in bustling maritime cities did their best to act altruistically. In Rush’s case, his Universalist faith surely informed his participation. Rush had been raised by Presbyterian teachers who had insisted that only certain souls deserved to be saved. Yet after the Revolution, Rush had begun to question that doctrine and turned to Universalism as a faith system more closely aligned with the values of the great republican experiment he now championed. The central credo of the denomination—that salvation was an inalienable right granted to all by a benevolent creator—spoke powerfully to Rush and probably undergirded

1791), iii–iv; Stefan Maria Timmermans, “Saving Lives: A Historical and Ethnographic Study of Resuscitation Techniques” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995), 22–23; John Anthony Tercier, *The Contemporary Deathbed: The Ultimate Rush* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), chap. 3.

22. Benjamin Davis, *Some Account of the City of Philadelphia, the Capital of Pennsylvania, and Seat of the Federal Congress . . .* (Philadelphia, 1794), 51; Benjamin Say, *An Annual Oration Pronounced before the Humane Society of Philadelphia on the Objects and Benefits of Said Institution; the 28th Day of February, 1799* (Philadelphia, 1799), 21; Humane Society of Philadelphia, *Do Not Despair* (Philadelphia, 1806); John Clarke, *A Discourse Delivered before the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, at the Semi-Annual Meeting* (Boston, 1793), 33.



Figure 4. In this illustration, which appeared on membership certificates printed for the Humane Society of Philadelphia, the clothes of first responders indicate their nonelite status. The arrival of the man on the shore, armed with a box of medicines and pointing the way for others to accompany him, prefigures the next stage in this dramatic rescue. Humane Society of Philadelphia. Membership Certificate, 1805. Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

his relentless humanitarianism. “These principles,” Benjamin Rush wrote to a friend in 1787, “have bound me to the whole human race; these are the principles which animate me in all my labors for my fellow creatures.”²³

As a university-trained doctor, Rush also had additional incentives to seek out a leadership role in the humane society movement. Physicians

²³ Benjamin Rush to Richard Price, June 2, 1787, in *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, 1:419.

eager to augment their personal standing and their profession's rising reputation embraced this opportunity to differentiate themselves from folk healers. While Rush and other humane society doctors often chafed at press criticism that their work amounted to "playing God," they delighted in the thought that they had developed the scientific acumen through which death might occasionally be cheated. Writing to colleagues in London in 1795, Benjamin Rush was exultant at what he thought he and other medical professionals working within humane societies across the Atlantic world had already achieved: "In this age, MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS have done more:—their knowledge, their zeal, and philanthropy, HAVE PENETRATED THE DEEP AND GLOOMY ABYSS OF DEATH, AND ACQUIRED FRESH HONOURS IN HIS COLD EMBRACES. Witness,—the many hundred people who have lately been BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE by the ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY, and other HUMANE SOCIETIES now established in many parts of EUROPE and in several parts of AMERICA." Such pride was widespread among men of science connected with the humane society movement. In the Enlightenment paradigm, in which an afterlife seemed less certain and death more frightening, the prospect of stealing a soul from death's cold embrace was both audacious and exhilarating.²⁴

As doctors like Rush were acutely aware, doing good not only felt good, it also looked good. The business of benevolence was performative: participation allowed the ostentatious display of humanitarian concern and financial largesse for the purposes of concentrating authority and calibrating status. While status-conscious adolescents announced their finer feelings by weeping over sentimental novels, parents of means could turn compassion into a verb by taking a hand in the unique lifesaving mission of the humane societies. Forget *Werther*. Real distress was all around. Here on the doorstep were drowning children, shipwrecked seamen, and flesh-and-blood men and women on the verge of suicide.

Humane society officers hoped their methods, which combined expertise and incentive, would mark a great leap forward in the ongoing struggle to stop suicide. Most pressingly of all, they anticipated that they could turn

24. William Hawes, *Annual Report Published for the Anniversary Festival* (London, 1795), 23; Martin Pernick, "Back from the Grave: Recurring Controversies over Defining and Diagnosing Death in History," in Richard M. Zaner, ed., *Death: Beyond Whole-Brain Criteria* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1988), 20–27; Erwin H. Ackernknecht, "Death in the History of Medicine," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 43, no. 1 (1968): 21.

back the tide of self-destruction that many humane society leaders, Benjamin Rush prime among them, believed was sweeping the new nation. If more people could be encouraged to put their own lives on the line to save others from self-destruction, and if they had the right tools and training, perhaps suicide's alarming progress could be stopped in its tracks. Working from this premise, members poured tens of thousands of dollars, and hundreds of committee hours, into the business of preventing suicide. And they had some limited success. The records of the Pennsylvania group do not survive, but the published records of its sister organization in Boston reveal that its surrogates restored 261 adults and children to life in its first three decades of operation. In more than a hundred of these case records, there is insufficient information to determine whether accident or attempted suicide was the cause of their jeopardy. Many are tantalizingly ambiguous. For instance, a cash payment went to James Brewer in July 1791 "for saving an unfortunate woman, near Griffin's wharf." Likewise, in April 1795 John Carman, Nathaniel Robbins, and Abiel Pierce split a five-dollar reward "for saving the life of Rhoda Hardy, who plunged into the water at West Boston bridge," whereas Daniel Tracy collected two dollars "for receiving the said Rhoda Hardy into his house and assisting in her recovery." Had she fallen or had she jumped? The record does not say.²⁵

Of the 261 persons saved by the Boston Humane Society, the records described seven as unmistakably suicidal. For instance, in 1798 Joseph Eaton and Seth Nason took home four dollars after "saving a woman who had leaped from Treat's wharf." A decade later, in 1808, Bill Richardson received recognition and a larger cash reward for "taking several children out of the water near N. Mills, and preventing a young man from drowning himself." A careful reading of these often terse ledger entries makes it very clear how society philanthropists in Boston, Philadelphia, and elsewhere rationalized their drastic interventions to revive men and women who had chosen to die. Confronted by the troubling truth that, for some men and women at the end of their tether, suicide was a howling assertion of self, members of the American humane society movement justified their efforts

25. Clarke, *Discourse*, 35; John Bartlett, *A Discourse on the Subject of Animation. Delivered before the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, June 11, 1792* (Boston, 1792), 23; John Brooks, *A Discourse Delivered before the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 9th June 1795* (Boston, 1795), 25. Rescue data were compiled from all surviving annual addresses and other published documents and do not include any rescues that came to the attention of the society between June 1812 and June 1813, when no records are extant.

to rescue such people by instead asserting a more comforting and enabling interpretation of the causes of self-destruction. They took the position that destroying oneself was so unnatural, ungodly, unpatriotic, and antisocial that no person could rationally intend to do it. Though the Boston managers did not dwell on the mental state of the woman who had leapt from Treat's wharf in 1798 or the man Bill Richardson saved in 1808, they summarily diagnosed four of the other five unambiguous attempts at suicide they encountered as the product of temporary insanity. In 1793 Josiah Bartlett had described the man who jumped from the Charles River Bridge as having suffered "a degree of insanity" for several days before his suicide attempt. Over the following years, his colleagues offered a slew of similar explanations. For instance, a list of cash payments dispersed in 1795 included one each to John Deluce and Daniel Spear "for their exertions in saving the life of a man who appeared deranged in his mind, in danger of being drowned at a distance from the shore." Similarly, in 1812 several Bostonians shared a three-dollar reward "for taking up an insane person, who had jumped overboard," and four years later, in October 1816, John Gardner took home a cash award "for his exertions in preventing a Mr. Barrett from drowning himself in a fit of insanity."²⁶

It is hardly surprising that humane society managers saw derangement in despair so readily and reliably. By the dawn of the nineteenth century, coroners' verdicts of inquest habitually explained suicide as the result of nonculpable insanity. Such verdicts represented growing compassion for the suffering of the deceased's family as well as a means to avoid statutory punishments in those states where self-annihilation remained a criminal offense. At the same time, juries' expanding use of insanity verdicts to explain suicidal behavior marked the popularization of new medical theories that placed the moral and mental faculties side by side.

26. William Walter, *A Discourse Delivered before the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, at Their Semiannual meeting, June 12th 1798* (Boston, 1798), 41; Thomas Danforth, *A Discourse before the Humane Society, of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Boston, June 14, 1808* (Boston, 1808), 28; Thomas Barnard, *Discourse, Delivered before the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, at the Semi Annual Meeting, June 10, 1794* (Boston, 1794), 23; Chandler Robbins, *A Discourse Delivered before the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, at Their Semiannual Meeting, June 14th 1796* (Boston, 1796), 32; Henry Colman, *A Discourse Delivered in the Chapel Church, Boston, before the Humane Society of Massachusetts, 9 June 1812* (Boston: John Eliot, 1812), 29; William Tudor, *A Discourse Delivered before the Humane Society, at Their Anniversary, May 1817* (Boston: John Eliot, 1817), 53.

Falling into lockstep with these ongoing developments, Rush and other officers of the country's humane societies found it both intuitive and expedient to interpret each attempt at suicide they encountered as the product of a temporarily disordered psyche. Members' earnest conviction that most suicides were disordered maniacs gave them permission to intervene, legitimizing their efforts to revive people who had made the decision to die. Usually unconscious when rescuers reached them, men and women who attempted suicide were unable to grant or to refuse their consent to be revived, but managers made the calculation that in a rational person the will to live could be taken for granted. With insanity assumed, the interventionist dynamic would be vindicated just as soon as suicidal people could be restored to their right minds and made to see the damage they were doing to themselves, their families, and society at large. They would be thankful just as soon as they came to their senses.

This self-assurance continued to guide the most active humane societies as their mission evolved. After many years spent providing incentives for on-the-spot suicide prevention, the members of several of the most prominent humane societies set about channeling their resources into the provision of purpose-built custodial environments in which a professional staff could properly supervise, restrain, care for, and rehabilitate the suicidally insane.

America's first public asylum had opened in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1770, and since 1796 Benjamin Rush had been treating a few mentally distressed and disturbed people—including his own son John, admitted in 1810—in a private basement wing of the Pennsylvania Hospital. But in most early national cities, no such facilities yet existed. In Massachusetts the care of the insane was still provided largely by poorly equipped almshouses and jails, where inmates languished for years without medical treatment or therapy. This all changed once the New England humane societies announced their commitment to build a private asylum, a dream finally realized when the McLean Hospital opened in Charlestown in 1818 (figure 5). In fact, the fanfare surrounding its opening helped fuel a movement to fund and build other dedicated asylums for the medical treatment of the suicidally insane across the country. Within forty years, twenty-eight of the thirty-three states of the union had set up institutions modeled in some way or another on McLean.²⁷

27. David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), chap. 6, and Gerald N. Grob, *Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875* (New York: Free Press, 1973), chap. 1.

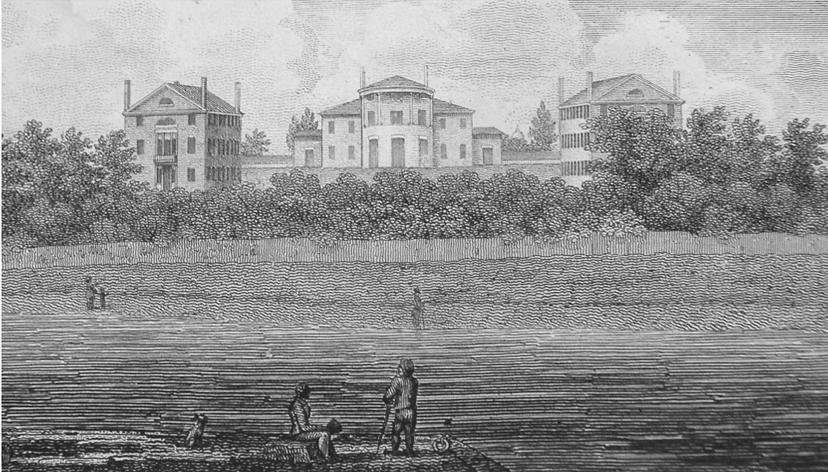


Figure 5. View of McLean Hospital in Charlestown, Massachusetts, ca. 1825. From Caleb H. Snow, *A History of Boston, the Metropolis of Massachusetts, from Its Origin to the Present Period, with Some Account of the Environs* (Boston, 1825). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

In members' minds, this was an idea whose time had come. Their anxiety about urbanization and immigration, their sincere commitment to philanthropic activity as a way to do good, and their increasing knowledge and admiration of European psychiatric treatments all coalesced around this campaign to privately finance purpose-built mental hospitals. It is easy to see why. Asylums and other new carceral institutions popular with professional elites at the dawn of the nineteenth century represented, in the words of the historian Steven Mintz, "an attempt to reestablish order in a society buffeted by the rise of a market economy, the disintegration of an older patriarchal and hierarchical social order, and the growth of democratic individualism."²⁸

More immediately, asylums like McLean began to proliferate in the early nineteenth century because physicians like Rush were developing a new interest in and understanding of the etiology of suicidal insanity. In the seventeenth century, most colonists had rested content in the belief that mania was simply God's will. More recently, a growing number of men of

28. Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 158; Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum*, introduction.

science had begun to embrace a different view. Enlightenment conceptions of the unity of the moral and mental faculties and growing consensus that environmental influences could produce biological effects now propelled iconoclasts such as the French physician Philippe Pinel to conceive of insanity, in Benjamin Rush's later formulation, as "a disease of the mind."²⁹

For his part, Rush never embraced the particulars of the distinctive therapeutic regime promoted at McLean Hospital. While the McLean method relied on vigorous physical and mental exercise and set rehabilitation and eventual release as its twin goals, the staff at Rush's Pennsylvania Hospital still tended toward the use of extreme tactics to try to rehabilitate patients who had attempted suicide. In Benjamin Rush's influential *Diseases of the Mind* (1812), the first American medical textbook to explore suicidal insanity as a category of temporary psychological disorder, the Philadelphia Humane Society's founding vice president recalled some of the many times that he and hospital orderlies had intervened to prevent an inmate from taking his own life. "In the year 1803," Rush wrote, "I visited a young gentleman in our hospital, who became deranged from remorse of conscience in consequence of killing a friend in a duel." Now suicidal with guilt, the patient demanded a pistol to accomplish what his opponent had failed to. Rather than dissuade him, Rush thought it better to give the young man some practical advice. "I told him, the firing of a pistol would disturb the patients in the neighbouring cells, and that the wound made by it would probably cover his cell with blood." Instead, the good doctor offered to help the poor man die by "bleeding him to death, from a vein in his arm, and retaining the blood in a large bowl." The patient agreed immediately, and so Rush and the hospital's apothecary ostensibly proceeded to euthanize him. But as Rush had surely anticipated, events took a different turn. "After losing nearly twenty ounces of blood, he fainted, became calm, and slept soundly the ensuing night." When the patient woke, not only was he too weak to try again, but his resolve had vanished. Rush's plan had turned the tables: "The next day when I visited him, he was still unhappy, not from despair and hatred of life, but from a dread of death; for he now complained only, that several persons in the hospital had conspired to kill him." The staff watched him closely over the next few weeks, and when he no longer

29. Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations, upon the Diseases of the Mind* (Philadelphia: Kimber & Richardson, 1812); Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum*, chaps. 2, 5; Grob, *Mental Institutions*, chaps. 1, 2; Mary Ann Jimenez, *Changing Faces of Madness: Early American Attitudes and Treatment of the Insane* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1987).

seemed like a threat to himself, Rush discharged him. Whether the great doctor employed a similar stratagem when treating his own son John—who arrived at the hospital seven years later following a duel and a suicide attempt each eerily similar to this one—Rush’s otherwise expansive personal and professional papers do not say.³⁰

CONCLUSION

In the early republic, discourse surrounding suicide emerged as a potent means to connect public and private concerns. It functioned as a locus and crucible for arguments whether the individuals that the United States uneasily comprised embodied a sustainable blend of sense and sensibility, reason and passion, independence and self-restraint. Thus, parents eager to restore their authority over their increasingly autonomous offspring took to demonizing romantic suicides in sentimental novels while physicians anxious to preserve and expand their professional reputation established anti-suicide groups committed to coercive intervention and long-term custodial supervision. They did so not only to warn their compatriots of the cataclysmic consequences of failing to repair this broken society and restore its moral covenant, but also to prop up their own flagging social authority. To declare an emergency is, after all, to claim the power to declare an emergency.

Benjamin Rush assumed leadership roles in both campaigns. A moderate, often maverick Jeffersonian, Rush was traumatized by the perceived breakdown of morality and virtue. His own claim to moral influence in the new republic derived definition and substance from his opposition to suicide and the socially subversive associations that he and many others perceived to accompany it. By founding or supporting organizations and initiatives designed to drape coercive impulses in the garb of disinterested charity and cosmopolitan benevolence, Rush and other like-minded critics of unbridled democracy tried to nurture new bonds of empathy that could serve ordering functions without ever appearing to challenge the primacy of the rational individual in liberal society. The result was a battery of highly visible campaigns intended to transform individual character by promoting reflection, self-improvement, self-respect, and self-control.³¹

30. Rush, *Medical Inquiries*, 129–30. Rush provided multiple case studies in suicide prevention, including one he had gleaned from reading Pinel (*ibid.*, 130–31).

31. Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 6, and Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution*, 3, 5, 11, 23.