

**“Looking into the countryside from where he had come”:
placing the ‘idiot’, the ‘idiot school’ and different models of educating the
uneducable**

Abstract The paper begins with the story of ‘the savage of Aveyron’, a wild boy of the woods who some early nineteenth-century experts identified as an ‘idiot’ (a version of what is now widely termed ‘learning disability’). In seeking to tame, civilise and educate this boy, the French physician Itard learned to avoid wild nature, the remoter reaches of the rural, but still sought to enlist, as part of a thoroughly embodied training regime, encounters with patches of cultivated nature in Paris. A contrast is thereby suggested between different models and geographies of how the apparently ‘uneducable’ might be educated, one dwelling within the remote rural as a source of sensory enchantment and other enlisting domesticated ‘natural’ settings within a broader programme of disciplining the mind-body. This contrast is illustrated through the later nineteenth-century extremes of, first, Guggenbühl’s ‘idiot school’ on a remote Swiss mountain and, second, Séguin’s blueprint for a North American ‘idiot school’ with carefully regulated buildings, gardens and outdoor gymnasiums not *too* ‘isolated’ from urban areas. This contrast loosely maps on to disputes between Romanticism and Enlightenment, as well as on to shifts in forms of power enacted in educational establishments, and it informed specific controversies over where exactly to locate ‘idiot schools’ on the ground. The paper concludes with brief reflections on such wider matters beyond the empirical materials to hand.

Keywords: ‘wild boy’; ‘idiocy’; learning disability; Itard; Guggenbühl; Séguin; countryside and city; geographies of education

Introduction: the ‘savage of Aveyron’

The boy had first been seen ..., a naked child, running free in the woods They had caught him then, but he had escaped, before being trapped again, by hunters, some fifteen months later in July 1798. Once more the boy had escaped, but in early 1800 he had sought shelter in a house in St Sermin, in the department of Aveyron,¹ and so was recaptured and finally held.

They moved the boy to the hospital at St Afrique, and from there he went to Rhodéz, where he remained for several months. Here he was inspected by a man called Bonaterre, Professor of Natural History at the École Centrale at Aveyron and a friend of Linnaeus’s. After long study of the boy, Bonaterre came to the conclusion that here, at last, was another wild child, an astonishing individual, close study of whom might yet reveal much about our [humanity’s] essential nature.

Four and a half feet tall, the boy walked with an uneven, rocking gait ...; there was no sign that he had ever gone on all fours, the knees being ordinarily uncalloused. ... Most often, he would just sit and rock himself, from side to side, or backwards and forwards, his head held up and his eyes fixed ahead of him. His primary interest was food ...

He would not go to sleep until it was late at night. Perhaps boredom kept him awake. He would stand by the window long into the night, looking out into the countryside from where he had come.²

The world has long heard about ‘wild children’ – from Romulus and Remus to Mowgli in Kipling’s *Jungle Book* – set within a wider imaginative construct of the ‘wild man of the woods’, the ‘green man’, lurking in the densely forested wildernesses of Medieval/Early Modern Europe (and with different versions, differently culturally inflected, for different parts of the globe).³ With the child-variants, there is the notion that a small, vulnerable human being has been lost or ejected from the sites of human sociability, and yet has somehow survived alone, wandering, fending for itself in the tracts of non-human nature. In practice, though, this child has not been alone, but rather has become one with the beasts of the woods, maybe even raised by them as one of their own cubs, and in the process ‘educated’ in the order of wild nature. It is now barely part of the world’s *human* geography, but instead has become just another snatched vital event in the world’s excessive *biogeography*. Among the countless questions that crowd in about this strange being – is it human, is it nature, is it hybrid, does it reveal the ultimate untenability of positing a human-nature divide? – there is one about ‘return’: can such a wild child be reclaimed from the wild, re-accommodated back into the human realm? Can such a child learn, either *re*learn or basically learn anew, to be human, to approximate what is seemingly expected (in a given time and place) of a human being? Can such a child be educated, in short, and, for geographers of education, what can be said about its education in the woods at the paws and claws of wild nature, through to its possible re-education in the institutes, schools, streets and parks of human society (at the hands and fists of the educator, physician, police officer)? More broadly, what further questions might be prompted about different models and geographies of educating the apparently ‘uneducable’, and particularly about differing interfaces with either the spaces of wild nature, in the forests and beyond, or those of more cultivated nature, mingled in the boundaries of planned farmland, institutions or cities?

The child in my opening quotes, the ‘savage of Aveyron’ subsequently named Victor, became a celebrity in early-nineteenth century France, called upon as a test-case in proving/disproving competing theories about the essential ‘nature’ of the human, the transformation of humans (and their capacities for speech/thought) from the Garden of Eden, and the fate of the human free from the snares of human oppression (a prevalent theme in immediately post-Revolutionary France).⁴ After being inspected by Bonaterre at Rhodéz, the boy was sent to Paris for ‘medical inspection’ at the Institution Nationale des Sourds et Muets de Naissance (National Institution for Deaf-Mutes [from birth]). The boy was inspected by the famous physician of mental disorders, Phillippe Pinel (1745-1826), who supposedly initiated humane treatment of the ‘mad’ or ‘lunatic’ by striking the chains off the inmates of the asylum at Bicêtre.⁵ Crucially for this paper, Pinel saw in the boy nothing but an ‘idiot’ whose period living wild in the woods was irrelevant to his condition and, indeed, to any prognosis for his future educability:

He simply saw an abandoned, mentally defective creature The boy was an ‘idiot’ – at the time not a word of abuse but a precise medical term. Pinel saw in the boy an example of someone so mentally damaged as to be beyond help, his intellectual faculties effectively obliterated. ... Insensible in the extreme, unmoved by anything, the boy could only live a

kind of vegetative life, sunk in inaccessible torpor, capable only of detached and half-articulate sounds, or silent from the absences of ideas. ... He was best to be understood by reference to the mentally defective inhabitants of the asylum, and not to those long-past and once famous cases of wild children.⁶

The boy's place in the history of 'idiocy' or 'mental subnormality'⁷ – what has also been termed 'mental handicap' and 'mental retardation', but which now tends to be termed 'learning disability', 'intellectual disability' or 'developmental disability' (none of these labels are without their problematic baggage) – was hence assured, as a result of Pinel's authoritative naming of his state. Many such histories hence discuss this case, then, with attention paid to how the boy was treated following Pinel's diagnosis, notably asking about what efforts were then made, using what means and objects, to educate him, to rescue him from a purely 'vegetative life'.

Notable was the child's absence of language – he clearly knew no (human) words and was seemingly incapable of learning any – and hence the verdict of Pinel and others remained that he was indeed "wordless, bestial, without world"⁸. Without words, so it was averred, he could not think: he could not *represent* himself to himself, regard himself as an 'object' for his own conscious reflection. The philosopher Etienne Bonnot De Condillac (1715-1780) had theorised about the evolution of humanity from a state of wildness to that of civilization, stressing the role of words/language, and thereby provided a blueprint for considering any wild child as, in effect, a *non-representational being*: indeed, even if such a 'wild child' could remember a time when he had roamed the forest, "it would have been impossible for him to represent it to himself".⁹ Plausibly, then, the boy was cast as without history or biography, caught on the treadmill of the present moment, living a perpetual sequence of 'nows' with no time-depth, backwards or forwards; an entity trapped in the chrono-logical moment between sensation and cognition,¹⁰ locked in the famous instant (after William James) *between* perceiving the presence of the bear and the naming of 'the bear' in a spike of conscious thought.¹¹ Instead, he was effectively positioned as living spatially, not temporally, merely responding over-and-over again to the immediacy of local environments in which he found himself (not according to intentions/plans formulated previously and projected through the present into a future);¹² and this reference to living spatially has special purchase for arguments later in the paper.

"The boy ha[d] come from a wild loneliness, a blanked-out space, an invisible world from which nothing would ever be discerned,"¹³ his origins unknowable and his experiences in the woods unrecoverable, except through inference from how he moved, fed himself and responded to other 'natural' environments that he encountered. As directed by Pinel, his future was likely languishing in an asylum, a species of 'bare life', after Agamben, disqualified from any semblance of 'political life' by dint of being framed a creature of wild nature.¹⁴ Then came the intervention by Jean Marc Gaspar Itard (1774-1838), albeit caution should be expressed about hero-ising what he did for the boy who he called Victor (not least because he possibly made life harder not easier for Victor). Itard was one of Pinel's students and likely attended the conference when Pinel labelled the boy a hopeless 'idiot', but, whether there or not, he decided that he wished to see if the 'master'

was correct. Initially in his capacity as an evening consultant at the Institute for Deaf-Mutes, and then when appointed as resident physician at (and living in) the Institute, Itard began to work with the boy, slowly, diligently, often in ways that must have been emotionally draining for both himself and the boy as well. Itard wrote two books on the case, the first in 1801 was entitled (in an 1802 translation) *An Historical Account of the Discovery and Education of a Savage Man, or of the First Developments of the Young Savage Caught in the Woods Near Aveyron, In The Year 1798*.¹⁵ He reckoned that the boy was about 12 years old and had been living wild since the age of 4-5 years, with many scars on his body occasioned by the bites of animals, “probably living on acorns, potatoes and raw chestnuts” as well as “hav[ing] made a prey of small animals deprived of life”.¹⁶ The boy’s own ‘animality’ manifest in many guises, including “an obstinate habit of smelling at everything which came in his way, even bodies ... inoderous”, and his sensuous involvement with the world was typified by his preference “to sleep, to eat, to do nothing, and to run about in the fields”.¹⁷ The reference to ‘the fields’ is telling, but, even so, Itard’s conviction was that it should be possible to turn him away from these wilder reaches and, indeed, to *educate* him so that he might become something approaching human.

Itard’s methods with Victor have been itemised elsewhere, for instance by Dennis McDermott when relating Itard’s ‘therapies’ across to the professional practices of the ‘child and youth care counsellor’.¹⁸ In outline, they blended: the pragmatic, notably a kindly attentiveness to Victor’s own ‘tastes and inclinations’; the technical, in terms of attempting to train Victor in vocalising sounds that could be routinely associated with objects; and a deeper ambition of releasing Victor’s ability to achieve ‘emotional connection’ or ‘emotional relatedness’ with another human being (chiefly Itard himself but potentially other people too). Itard believed that it would only be through the inculcation of such relatedness, overcoming his ‘wild loneliness’, that Victor might glimpse himself in the mirror of that human other, awakening a sense simultaneously of *both* himself and wider human sociality. Itard’s work with the boy achieved some alterations in Victor’s demeanour, as McDermott summarises, but with a nod to fragments of deviant spatial behaviour and ‘wild’ environmental preference that are helpful curtain-raisers for what follows below:

After six years with Itard and Guérin [Madam Guérin, the Institute’s Housekeeper, to whom Victor did become quite attached], Victor bore little resemblance to the picture [of the ‘savage of Aveyron’]. He wore clothes, slept in a bed, used a washroom, and ate at a table with utensils. He could be taken for walks, for visits to Itard’s friends, and to restaurants, without appearing too out of place. There is one mention, though, of Victor attending a dinner party of Parisian socialites that didn’t go well. Early in the dinner, Victor grabbed handfuls of the fruits and nuts on the table, ran off into the garden, climbed a tree and proceeded to enjoy eating his dinner his way.¹⁹

Victor progressed little in terms of speech and social skills requiring empathy or ‘real’ engagement with others: he could gesture and make his needs known, but he never really developed any capacity for speech and remained in a state of child-like dependency for his entire life. He stayed on at the Institute until 1811, when he was circa early-20s, cared

for by Madame Guérin; and then it appears that Guérin and her family took Victor to live in a house a few blocks away from the Institute until his death in 1828, at circa 40 years old. His fate was therefore not quite that envisaged by Pinel, and arguably he had a decent quality of life, although whether Victor was happier than he would have been remaining a dweller of the deep woods is impossible to judge. Itard, meanwhile, completed his work with Victor in 1806, when he produced a second report on the case,²⁰ and embarked upon what was to become a brilliant career in the medical treatment of the ear, nose and throat. Some years later, in a paper of 1828 on mutism, he confessed to being mistaken in supposing that he could ‘train’ or educate Victor adequately, implying that Pinel had indeed been right all along.²¹ That said, the consensus within texts on the history of learning disability is that Itard’s labours with the ‘savage of Aveyron’ created the “first example recorded of an idiot reclaimed from the life of a mere animal to be trained to a human existence”.²²

The geographies of Itard and Victor: wild and domesticated natures

Several passages above indicate that wildness lurked within Victor, rendering it hard for him to comply with the routine socio-spatial orderings of human realms, making him indeed ‘out of place’²³ as a small body of wild nature careering through polite Parisian social spaces. As Itard recalled about what could become these “races in the open air”²⁴:

I found it impossible, when I took him out with me, to keep him in proper order on the streets: it was necessary for me either to go on the full trot with him, or make use of the most violent force, in order to compel him to walk at the same moderate pace with myself. Of course we were, in future, obliged to go out in a carriage ...²⁵

Throughout Itard’s 1801/1802 book, Victor’s love of the outdoors – his seeming wish to be immersed in its elemental qualities – was evident, for he was “almost always to be found squatting [and Itard also reflects on this animal-like posture] in the corner of the garden, or concealed in the second story of some ruinous building”.²⁶ Similarly, Itard continued, “Frequently, during the course of the winter, I have seen him, while ... amusing himself in the garden belonging to the asylum of the Deaf and Dumb, suddenly squat down, half-naked, on the wet turf, and remain exposed in this way, for hours together, to wind and rain”.²⁷ “When the severity of the seasons drove every other person out of the garden,” moreover, “he delighted in taking a great many turns about it”; when it snowed, he headed for the garden, “exhibit[ing] the utmost of pleasure; he ran, rolled himself in the snow, and taking it up by handfuls, devoured it with an incredible avidity”.²⁸

Even when inside, in his chamber, Victor’s attention was drawn outwards: he would be “directing his eyes constantly towards the window, and casting them in a melancholy manner on the external air”.²⁹ Changes in the weather outside enraptured him: “[i]f, at any time, a boisterous wind arose; if the sun, concealed behind a cloud, suddenly burst forth, brilliantly illuminating the surrounding atmosphere, he expressed an almost convulsive joy by thundering peals of laughter”.³⁰ The ‘affective atmosphere’ of such a sublime moment often corresponded with Victor giving the impression of “a kind of leap

which he wished to make, to throw himself out of the window into the garden”,³¹ an impulsion to be one with the drama of wilder nature. Another revealing passage told of what happened when the light of the moon bathed his room:

... he seldom failed to awake out of his sleep, and to place himself before the window. There he remained, during a part of the night, standing motionless, his neck extended, his eyes fixed towards the country illuminated by the moon, and carried away in a sort of contemplative exta[s]y, the silence of which was interrupted only by deep-drawn inspirations, after considerable intervals, and which were always accompanied with a feeble and plaintive sound.³²

Something else crept into these passages, however, in that Itard retold instances when Victor “did not always manifest ... lively and boisterous expressions of joy at the sight of the grand phenomena of Nature”.³³ Indeed, the suggestion was that “this simple child of nature”³⁴ could rather be sad, ‘melancholic’ and ‘contemplative’, arguably imputing human emotional states, where the prompt for such feelings was seemingly Victor’s spatial separation from the wilder manifestations of nature, even in a town garden with limited sightlines to the countryside beyond. For Itard, this emotional tethering to wild nature was indicative of the very wildness within Victor that he was striving to suppress, and hence can be seen the geographical crux of Itard’s approach to educating his wild charge.

This claim can be elaborated with reference to incidents early in Itard’s work with Victor when the pair visited a countryside retreat some 15 kilometres north of Paris, then heavily forested but now suburbanised:

What an increase of pleasure was it to him when our visits were paid to the countryside. I took him not long ago to the seat of Citizen Lachbeaussière, in the vale of Montmorency. It was a very curious and exceedingly interesting spectacle, to observe the joy which was painted in his eyes, in all the motions and postures of his body, at the view of the hills and the woods of this charming valley: it seemed as if the doors of the carriage were a restraint upon the eagerness of his feelings. ... He spent two days at this rural mansion; such was here the influence upon his mind, arising from the exterior agencies of these woods and these hills, with which he could not satiate his sight, that he appeared more than ever restless and savage; and ... he seemed to be occupied only with the anxious desire of flight. Altogether engrossed by this prevailing idea ... , rising from table every minute, he ran to the window, with a view, if it was open, of escaping into the park; or, if it were not, to contemplate, at least through it, all those objects towards which he was irresistibly attracted by recent habits, and, perhaps, also by remembrance of a life independent, happy and regretted.³⁵

The final sentence here disclosed Itard’s realisation that tugging Victor away from his previous ‘ecology’, encased within a deeply rural region, quite likely was causing him distress, with the affective ties binding him back to such a region being dangerously heightened by his visit to Montmorency. Numerous of the remarks above about Victor’s love of the outdoors, notably in its wilder visages, are thrown into stark relief by this account of staying at the ‘rural mansion’; as too is another of Itard’s observations to the effect that “rural excursions appeared to [Victor] even more agreeable when any sudden and dramatic change in the atmosphere took place”.³⁶ The outdoors, the countryside, rural regions and the more sublime aspects of ‘grand Nature’, a heady admixture of leafy materialities and fluctuating atmospherics, were all calling to Victor, threatening to undo

Itard's hard work at removing such elemental disruptions from the latter's education.

While "determined no longer to subject him to similar trials",³⁷ implying that the Montmorency trip had been upsetting rather than stimulating *for* Victor, Itard nonetheless concluded that it would be wrong to cut him off completely from aspects of 'nature'. As such, Itard sought to deploy forms of what might be termed 'nature therapy' or at least 'green space therapy', in tandem with the various pragmatic, technical and emotional methods noted earlier. Specifically, Itard decided:

... that [Victor] might not be entirely secluded from an opportunity of gratifying his rural taste, I still continued to take him out to walk in some gardens in the neighbourhood, the formal and regular dispositions of which have nothing in common with those sublime landscapes that are exhibited in wild and uncultivated nature, and which so strongly attract the savage to the scenes of his infancy. On this account Madam Guerin sometimes took him to the Luxembourg, and almost every day to the gardens belonging to the Observatory, where the obliging civility of Citizen Lemeris allowed him to take a daily repast of milk.³⁸

The Luxembourg Gardens was one of the largest garden areas in Paris, while the Paris Observatory sat in its own extensive garden grounds, and it was in their domesticated version of 'nature', laid-out in geometric patterns, that Itard strove to render Victor's "exercise more subservient to his [Itard's] instruction" (not least by replacing running with walking).³⁹ A vital contrast emerged in the education of Victor, therefore, between, on the one hand, letting him encounter a rawer form of nature - 'those sublime landscapes ... exhibited in wild and uncultivated nature' - and, on the other, subjecting him to disciplined enjoyment of a more manicured, polite form of nature - the 'formal and regular' gardens nearby, with a cultivated beauty reflecting the designs of human rationality. The former was alluring to Victor when 'looking into the countyside from where he had come', to repeat a phrase from earlier, but Itard fretted that it might draw Victor back to the very untamed wildness that it was his task to quell from the boy. The latter was not unpleasant to Victor, it seems, and here Itard found a pragmatic half-way house, sitting between wild nature and the 'nature-less' interiors of human social life, where the boy might take pleasure, experiencing something of his previous rural independence, but without the dangers and possibly with the added bonus of witnessing 'human' dominion *over* 'nature'.

There were hence two very different educational geographies arising - if accidentally, unplanned and only lightly systematised - from Itard's work with the 'savage of Aveyron': one an encounter with wild nature, about which Itard became distinctly uneasy, and the other a more considered variety of training, possibly learning, through routine visits to urban gardens. While not implying direct causation from a generative moment, these two species of educational geography can arguably be identified, in hindsight, as resonating down the nineteenth century in a pair of institutionally-based models that became in effect the contrasting standard-bearers for how *and where* to educate 'idiots'. The first of these models was associated with Johann Jakob Guggenbühl (1816-1863), a Swiss physician interested in 'cretinism', a form of mental deficiency endemic within remoter Alpine valleys (and known to be linked with iodine-deficient soils and the physical malady of

goitre). The second was associated with Édouard (or Edward) Séguin (1829-1880), a French physician who moved to the United States, and who became, first in France and then across the Atlantic, an acknowledged expert, administrator and advocate in the treatment and education of 'idiocy'. These three figures, Itard, Guggenbühl and Séguin, were probably the three most influential 'idiocy' reformers of the age, lionised in the standard histories of this condition, and so it is appropriate to foreground them in any investigation into the historical geography of 'idiot' education. Moreover, both Guggenbühl and Séguin held strong convictions about the appropriate geographical settings in which institutions for 'idiots' might be housed: the former, perhaps touched by currents of Romanticism, was drawn to those tracts of wild nature that were seductive to Victor but deeply worrying to Itard; the latter, carrying the mark of sustained Enlightenment rationality, sought out those pockets of domesticated nature mildly diverting to Victor but taken as therapeutically useful by Itard. It is to an elaboration of such claims that this paper must now turn.

Guggenbühl's idiot school on a mountain-top, remote from human settlement

Guggenbühl believed that, "through human exertions, a mind may be awakened, in what was apparently a senseless mass, [and] that even education may be extended to those, who have been hitherto considered beyond the reach of instruction".⁴⁰ Determined to provide an institution for 'cretins', to demonstrate that they could be educated, Guggenbühl opened a small 'cottage hospital' in the late-1830s, initially for only a handful of 'cretinous' children, which became known as the Institution on the Abendberg. Later he was able to replace this ch  let with a larger, more substantial structure capable of taking upwards of 40-60 such children, and for a period the Institution was a much-respected experiment, expressing Guggenbühl's own status "as a pioneer for his ideas".⁴¹ Unfortunately, by the 1860s, the Institution had "fallen into disrepute. ... Guggenbühl had made false claims regarding the curative effects of his treatments, had failed to maintain adequate supervision during his foreign tours of promotion ..., and had failed to provide adequate heating, nutrition and clothing for his young charges".⁴² Nonetheless, like Itard, he is fondly remembered as a humane innovator,⁴³ but, unlike Itard, he appears to have embraced wild nature, including its awe-inspiring sublime aspects, as integral not hostile to how his institution for 'cretins' was supposed to accomplish its objectives.



Figure 1: Guggenbühl, attendants and children in the Swiss mountains. Source: J.J.Guggenbühl, *Cretins and Idiots: A Short Account of the Progress of the Institutions for their Relief and Cure* (London, W.A.Wighton 1853), p.2 (no copyright issues).

One surviving painting (see **Figure 1**) captures something of the remote setting selected by Guggenbühl for his experiment in educating ‘idiocy’, picturing him and some of his charges against a vertiginous landscape of rock and glacier, definitely a large slice of wild nature. William Twining, an ‘advocate and correspondent’ of Guggenbühl in England, published a pamphlet in 1843, *Some Account of Cretinism, and The Institution for its Cure, on the Abendberg, near Interlachen, in Switzerland*, designed in part to solicit the funds that would subsequently enable the initial small ch  let to be replaced by the more solid structure mentioned above. Twining’s account evoked the remote geography of this institution, in part by being written as a travelogue starting with the arduously steep ascent through fir forests up the Abendberg mountain; and then, nearly “at the summit of the mountain we came to an open space of grass land, and ... saw the small ch  let, the scene of Dr. Guggenb  hl’s benevolent labours”.⁴⁴ Twining dwelt on the drama of the setting:

It is difficult to imagine a more lovely spot, or a view more exquisite than what was displayed before us. The glorious chain of the snow mountains, the Eiger, M  nch and Jungfrau, are there in all of their grandeur, whilst far beneath lie the lake of Brienz, and the green valley of Interlachen.⁴⁵

In some measure this site, 3,600 feet above sea level, was explained as escaping to “an elevation greater by a thousand feet than that of the part where cretinism is endemic”,⁴⁶ informed by Guggenb  hl’s own investigations, statistically and cartographically, of ‘cretinism’ “in a very mountainous part of Switzerland to ascertain its prevalence and localities”.⁴⁷ In a classic hygienic mode, the site was also justified in terms of “the purity of the air and the excellence of the springs”, as well as by claims that “[i]n summer the air is more invigorating than in the valley, and in winter it is warmer, as the rays of the sun reach it sooner and leave it later, and the south winds from Italy lessen the intensity of the cold”.⁴⁸ Whether such locational principles quite necessitated the adoption of *such* an extraordinary site for Guggenb  hl’s ‘idiot school’ must be debatable, but what is clear is

that the site's wild nature did become rolled into understandings of *how* his institution was supposed to achieve its educative (and, in some grander vows, curative) ambitions.

Considerable play was made of 'the view' and its potential role in 'elevating' the mental capacities of those who witnessed it, with the glorification of a site, "[i]n the midst of that shain of the High Alps, amidst the grand phenomena of nature, which, even on the most insensible of men [*sic*], cannot fail to make an impression".⁴⁹ References arise about how it enhanced the spirits of the "little patients",⁵⁰ also referred to by Twining as the institution's "scarcely human beings",⁵¹ and in his *First Report* Guggenbühl related the following happening:

One day, when the setting sun gilded the sky most brilliantly, the attention of all the children in the Institution was attracted to the splendid sight, Admiration and astonishment were visible in all of them, even little F. [a particularly severe 'case'] called out suddenly, 'The Sun'. The strong chain that bound the mind was thus broken; by means of speech he could not communicate with those around him.⁵²

The particular luminescence of sunset over those snowy mountain lofts must indeed have attained a powerful affective push for these children, as perhaps for many life-forms, but pressing too upon the contemplative faculties in a manner akin to the rain, wind and moon-light transfixing Victor at his window. Intriguingly, in this happening 'even little F.' was impelled to speak, and Guggenbühl emphasised the value of anything that provoked speech, even just the capacity to learn letters, in his 'cretinous' pupils. In this regard, his fundamental goals were hence not so very different from Itard's. One of the earliest historians of 'idiocy', M.W. Barr, has provided a wide-ranging summary of Guggenbühl's overall approach:

Guggenbühl in his experiment has not only proved that the cretin, transported at a tender age to a higher and purer atmosphere, immediately began to improve physically, but he sought also to utilise the glorious panorama of nature's wonders, these constantly presented, as a means to quicken and arouse dormant faculties and to fix the wandering attention of the child. 'In such a neighbourhood', he tells us, 'all the phenomena of nature, such as the rising and setting of the sun and moon, tempests, thunder-storms, rainbows and the like, are seen in perfection, and found of infinite value in awakening the sleeping soul.'⁵³

In contrast to Itard's fears for Victor, wild nature – here the grandeur and sublimity of the elements engulfing or crashing down on the remote mountain fastness of the Abendberg – was not a threat, a lure to an animality within needing to be ousted or controlled, but rather was precisely *part* of the experiment, wholly integral to the care, therapy and education of Guggenbühl's 'little patients'.

Séguin's ideal 'idiot school' in domesticated gardens and fields, not far from town

Séguin, the best-known of the three key physician-protagonists discussed in this paper,⁵⁴ grew up in post-Revolutionary France and initially worked under Itard from 1837, just prior to the latter's death, before opening his own Parisian private school for 'idiots' in 1840. In 1846, he published a substantial treatise, *Traitement Moral, Hygiène et Éducation de Idiots et des Autres Enfants Arriérés*,⁵⁵ announcing at the outset that "[m]a

method n'est pas la méthode d'Itard"⁵⁶ and claiming it instead to be an exercise on a 'gymnastiques sensoriales' orientated towards a highly physical training of 'idiot' bodies (compartments) and senses (faculties). More will be said about this method shortly, but what Séguin also authored here was a whole chapter entitled 'De l'habitation', considering where to locate 'les ailes destinés à recevoir les jeunes idiots', which complemented a previous chapter entitled 'De l'influence des agents atmosphériques', insisting that 'idiots' were best served by air of the right chemical properties but not too hot or cold.⁵⁷ Séguin recommended "un site élevé, exposé au midi, dans une contrée sèche, et pourtant fertile et assez boisée", alongside extolling the virtues of gardens, flowers, trees, vegetable patches and "des animaux domestiques".⁵⁸ While an elevated site could be provided in "des montagnes", and although mention was also given to "splendid éclairage qui circule à flots" around the best asylums,⁵⁹ the emphasis was not straightforwardly towards wild nature (as at Guggenbuhl's establishment). Indeed, there was a hint of benefits arising from proximity to towns, ones providing access to services and industries as well as being the more likely sources of high-quality staff,⁶⁰ so that Séguin's 1846 text effectively balanced up the respective merits of 'nature' and 'civilisation' for the best-constituted 'idiot school'.

His political sensibilities – influenced by the utopian socialist Claude de Sainte-Simon (1760-1825) who advocated a form of state-technocratic socialism – made Séguin vulnerable to the loss of revolutionary ethos in mid-nineteenth century France, and in 1848 he became a political exile to America (and so Edouard became Edward). He retained his interest in 'idiocy', however, becoming involved with various 'idiot' institutions (mainly around the eastern seaboard) and eventually opening his own training school for 'feeble-minded' children and their nurses/teachers. In 1876, he became the first president of the Association of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Persons, dying four years later, with a tribute at his funeral avowing that Séguin's name was now inscribed in "The Angel's Book of Gold, as those who loved their fellow men".⁶¹ In 1866, he published his major work, *Idiocy and its Treatment by the Physiological Method*,⁶² which reiterated a distance from the more 'psychological' stance of Itard in favour of a determinedly 'physiological method' predicated on "finding modes of training, natural and yet powerful enough, to bring into physiological activity impaired functions and even atrophied organisms".⁶³ The onus shifted squarely to the training of muscles, nerves, reflexes and functions, with a stress upon interventions in the somatic actions of 'movement', 'locomotion', 'prehension', 'manipulation', 'imitation' and, if possible, 'communication';⁶⁴ and Séguin wrote of 'calisthenics' and 'gymnastics', with the latter understood in the widest of senses, encompassing too what he called "gymnastics of the hands" and "gymnastics of sight",⁶⁵ always attuned to how 'idiots' might be encouraged to work physically with 'objects' of all kinds (creating "object lessons").⁶⁶ Attracting the attention of Michel Foucault in the latter's *Psychiatric Power* lectures,⁶⁷ Séguin effectively laid out a manual for an intensive disciplinary 'dressage' of the 'idiot' body, mobilising all of its own capacities through a myriad of micro-level arrangements operated within an ideal 'idiot school'.⁶⁸ Exactly in accordance with Foucault's specification of 'disciplinary

power', what Séguin termed the 'moral treatment' of young 'idiots' depending on an intimate manipulation of "time, space and surroundings" or "intelligent disposition of time, place and scenery".⁶⁹ "The places where lessons are to be held must be not only convenient, but exactly appropriate",⁷⁰ he wrote, and Part IV of his book, entitled 'Institutions', contained a forensically detailed tour of the spaces across an ideal school, from the overall site to building lay-outs and the characteristics of specific rooms.⁷¹ Closing this tour, Séguin reflected that "[n]ow we have described the most important parts of the material institution, as the locality, or frame with many compartments ... ; each room, nook, corner, hall and ground".⁷²

The reference to 'ground' was important, because the purpose and configuration of outdoor spaces gained remark, and it is worth quoting at length from two passages:

... training and teaching may be transferred to the open air. There another and more natural school is prepared for them, and by their own efforts. Between some lofty trees, they have built and dug up with spades and wheelbarrows, walls, ditches and race-courses strewn with obstructions, over which they are made to run, and from which they must extricate themselves. They have also raised stone or turf banks to sit upon under the shade in warm weather, and listen to the wonderful stories flowing from their teacher's lips. Thence they are sent in quest of specified natural objects, such as leaves, insects, flowers, etc., and they return, each one with his [sic] booty, a more intelligent countenance, and a happy face.⁷³

Next to the pleasant shades, the gardens and fields are open for more sober sports The very youngest of the children are sent in squads to dig little holes a few inches apart; to deposit a precise number of seeds in each hole, without missing any; to cover the seeds with light dirt, etc. Later, being made familiar with the shape of a few leaves, they are sent in crowds to weed out from a large patch every green thing showing itself under a form different from the one expected to grow. The hunting for insects destructive of vegetation is another occupation rendered attractive by making the children conscious of the good they do Soon these children become able to pave the garden walks with pebbles, or make gutters at their sides; they learn in short sessions the use of the spade, hoe, rake, watering-pot and others, according to their strength.⁷⁴

Hardly any boisterous roaming the countryside, Séguin's 'natural school' was to reflect the same microscopic attention to detail and order, creating a thoroughly domesticated nature – paved walks, pebbled and guttered borders, weeded patches, holes dug with geometric precision, and the like – which was to 'tutor' the children in their bodily comportment and even 'intellectual countenance'. In part too, as Séguin acknowledged, this garden-based activity was preparation for their later work, once grown, "in the farm ... helped by animals which they treat kindly, and above all are aided by nature. This is essentially the work for them".⁷⁵ The likely limits of the 'idiot's' education were sketched here, solidifying the sense of nature encounters in this regime being ultimately ones about, in the Foucauldian lexicon, producing docile bodies and minds fit for simple labours, not 'free spirits' lured by the seductions of wild nature. Notwithstanding Séguin's claimed distance from the methods of Itard, his 'natural school' thereby echoed Itard's use of the manicured nature in Paris's finest gardens for his instructional walks with Victor.

Séguin supposed that the ideal location for 'idiot' institutions would not be one following the likes of Guggenbühl up a mountain or, indeed, into any wild or remote setting. He

accepted that usually they were “retired institutions”⁷⁶ sited away from centres of population, and he saw merit in them occupying an agricultural landscape, partly to afford those opportunities for garden and field work reckoned to hold educational value, but also “to make [the children] aware of their relations to those who have worked and suffered as farmers, gardeners, bakers, to produce their food”.⁷⁷ Such a placement was in domesticated nature, rendered productive for meeting human needs, with an evident parallelism between the domestication of ‘external’ nature (the fields) and ‘internal’ nature (of the ‘idiots’ themselves). Moreover, in line with remarks from his 1846 text, he made crystal-clear his preference that:

The institution is never so far from a city that its inmates cannot be admitted to the sights of civilisation and wonder. We must beware of too much isolating the naturally isolated idiot. By sending him [*sic*], as soon as he behaves, to the museum, meetings, shows and even theatres, we do not so much create in him a taste for those things, as a desire of mingling with yonder world; pregnant curiosity, which is itself one of the mainsprings of life.⁷⁸

This locational prescription could not be plainer: the ‘idiots’, so readily isolated and lonely because of their condition, should be given opportunities to ‘mingle’ with products of the civilised urban scene, since this intercourse could spark the ‘curiosity’ which may be the key to learning, to self-improvement. Elsewhere, Séguin had promoted “the freedom of association” with others as a fundamental principle guiding his stance on what relationship ‘idiots’ should have with the wider communities of their time and age.⁷⁹

More narrowly, Séguin declared that “the city of New York, with its immense suburbs, cannot much longer send its idiots to the northern climate of Syracuse [to the State Idiot Asylum], depriving them of the warmth of the sea-shore and of the visits of their friends”.⁸⁰ While identifying both a physical-environmental variable, the relative warmth of New York’s coastal site, and a social-cultural variable, to do with long distances discouraging regular kith/kin visits, the key point is that Séguin had no reservations about calling for an ‘idiot’ institution placed adjacent to a notably large, densely populated urban concentration. Hence, close to the end of his life, when he finally did open his own private ‘idiot school’ on American soil, initially as a very modest venture with a handful of children, it was at his own Manhattan home in New York city.⁸¹ Following his death, his wife, Elsie Seguin (d.1930), who he had only married in the year of his death, 1880, took over running the school and presided over it growing and then relocating to Orange County, a 40 minute train ride from the city, now known as ‘The Seguin Physiological School for the Training of Children of Arrested Mental Development’. As a pamphlet about the school stated in 1905, it was “situated in an elevated section of the city”,⁸² while, in a twist on Séguin’s own justification of an ex-urban institutional location, the following claim was made:

The nearness of New York with its many pleasures and attractions is one of the most important advantages of the school. The work of teaching these unfortunate little ones is peculiarly exhausting, and in order to avoid the danger of lapsing into that listlessness and perfunctory performance of duty which is fatal to improvement in the child, the teachers must be within reach of recreations such as only large cities can afford.⁸³

The physical and educational distance from wild nature hence became a whole lot more exaggerated, as may be inferred from a photograph of the school (see **Figure 2**) which suggests two sizeable suburban townhouses with a close-cut lawn to the fore and a sparse smattering of smallish decorative trees.

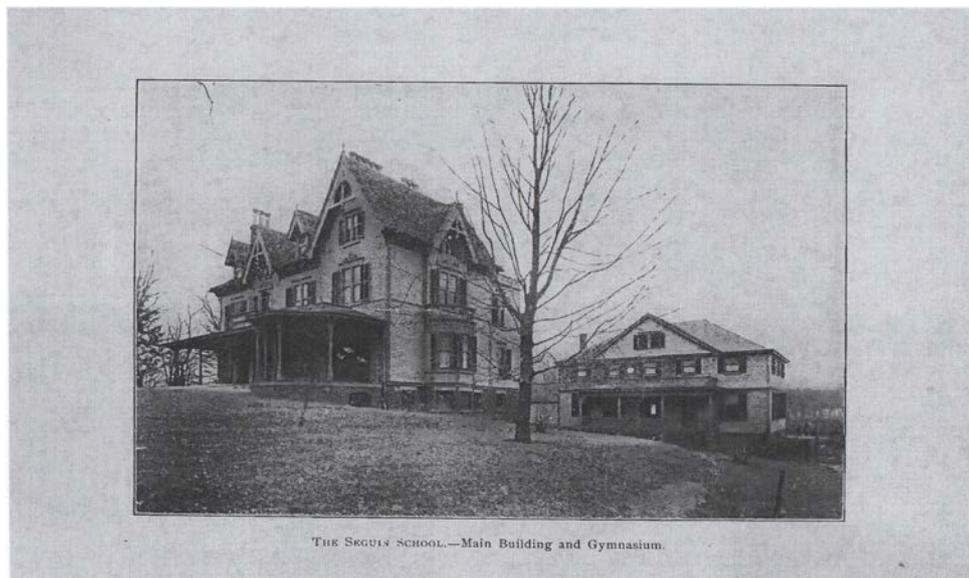


Figure 2: The Seguin Physiological School in Orange County, New York. Source: Various, *The Seguin Physiological School for the Training of Children of Arrested Mental Development* (Orange NJ, For the Institution 1905), p.4 (no copyright issues).

Conclusion: grander and narrower implications

This paper has been concerned with differing models of educating the (by some lights) uneducable, contributing an essay particularly concerned with geographical dimensions of educative-training regimes proposed for ‘idiot’ children. It has been prompted by how Itard in early-nineteenth century Paris sought to educate Victor, the ‘savage of Aveyron’, by turning him away from the lure of wild nature – ‘the countryside from where he had come’, in this case a heavily forested relative wilderness – and instead to deploy the resources of polite, ordered nature found in urban parks. The former, to Itard’s mind, merely affirmed, even enflamed, the wild internal nature of an ‘idiot’ child, a ‘brute’ animality within,⁸⁴ whereas the latter, working simultaneously on the body and mind of the child, held some potential for inculcating a more disciplined, just possibly intellectual state of existence. Geography here seemingly mattered in converting a non-representational being into a representational one, with maybe a measure of self-awareness and capacity for self-expression. Entrained within the story of Victor and Itard, there are also intimations of two rather different modes of geographical engagement, ones subsequently played out in the differing approaches to educating ‘idiot’ children pursued by Guggenbühl in Switzerland and Séguin in France then North America. Guggenbühl’s institution atop the Abendberg mountain, in an awe-inspiring environmental context, relied to some extent on the scenic drama afforded by this context: here wild nature was not shunned, but effectively enlisted in the educative-training of the institution’s young

charges. Séguin's ideal institution, as exemplified at his New York private school both in Manhattan and when relocated to Orange County, set in well-tended, carefully designed gardens and grounds, relied on the possibilities for (microscopically) ordering such nature: here wild nature was kept at a distance, with preference shown for proximity to the civilising facilities and energising recreations of the urban.

Risks attach to over-polarising the models of Guggenbühl and Séguin, and in practice aspects of what they attempted when educating 'idiot' children overlapped: the former's approach clearly depended not only upon sporadic, spontaneously sublime landscape events to inspire its pupils, but also a round of everyday, banal physical activities;⁸⁵ while the latter's approach was open to atmospherics, not just issues of cold and warmth, but also the qualities of light and the changing of the seasons.⁸⁶ More broadly, and notwithstanding Séguin's placing of clear water between his 'physiological' approach and Itard's 'psychological' approach, in practice both of these regimes operated on and with physiology and psychology, often hailing both of them simultaneously in their detailed spatial-environmental manipulations. That admitted, they arguably still mark opposite ends of a spectrum in methods for educating the uneducable, with sharply contrasting geographical visions at their respective cores. Moreover, seen through a grander optic, they speak alternatively of snippets of Romanticism in the treatment of 'idiocy' - a belief in the powers of the sublime, so often associated with spectacular occurrences of wild nature,⁸⁷ for unlocking the 'soul' or humanity buried deeply in the damaged mind-bodies of 'idiot' children - or a more thorough-going Enlightenment rationality - a conviction that a proper medical-scientific grasp of corporeal form, function and movement, and of how it intersects with mental perception, conceptualisation and communication, provides the blueprint for producing an 'idiot' individual serviceable as a useful member of human society. It is perhaps not over-claiming, then, to suggest that Guggenbühl offered a Romantic geography of 'idiocy' and 'idiot schools' while Séguin offered an Enlightenment geography, and that the Romantic propelled the 'idiot' towards wild nature (and remoter rural wastes) while the Enlightenment corralled the 'idiot' in the circle of domesticated nature (in ex-urban or even city locations).⁸⁸

In a narrower guise, there can be little doubt that the differing locational prescriptions integral to these two spectrum end-points exerted a tangible influence - albeit one among others, such as land availability and affordability - in the emergence of actual systems of 'idiot' institutions spread across the regions of Europe, North America and beyond. For instance, in 1857, a review of relevant continental literature by J.B. Bucknill in the *Asylum Journal of Mental Science* reported the thoughts of a German 'idiocy' expert, 'Dr Kern',⁸⁹ who was critical of the sites adopted by Guggenbühl's institution and ones apparently emulating its extreme location: "Mariaburg, which was once a convent, lies upon the Suabian Alps; the inclement and isolated position of which might be very adapted for the former purpose of the place",⁹⁰ but which, by implication, was not felt properly adapted for its new purpose in dealing with 'idiocy'. Kern preferred the site of an 'idiot' institution at Winterbach, which lay within "a beautiful wide, open valley",⁹¹

where scenic attributes were not compromised by inhospitable isolation. As Bucknill then concluded, with a final flourish that might have issued from Séguin's pen:

The locality in which the institution ought to be established should, above all things, be free from endemic idiocy. It is indifferent how many feet it lies above the level of the sea; but it is wrong that idiots should be separated from the rest of [hu]mankind, and that the institution should be established where people who do not belong to it seldom come.⁹²

This is not the place to cover in detail the historical geography of the 'idiot asylum' system as it arose in Britain and elsewhere, but a sustainable claim is that much previously explored in the present paper – notably as manifest in a 'push-pull' dynamic between countryside and town – was parachuted down into decision-making about suitable sites, grounds and buildings.⁹³ Tellingly, though, towards the close of the nineteenth century, a new swathe of deeply problematic assumptions about 'idiocy' began to cloud the horizon of this historical geography: namely, eugenics and a rapidly growing demand that 'idiots' (and their cousins, the 'feeble-' or 'weak-minded', also increasingly known as 'mental defectives') be completely ostracised from proximity to 'normal' populations with whom they might breed.⁹⁴ As John Radford and Deborah Carter Park reveal, in a series of inquiries into the geographies of 'idiot asylums' across nineteenth-century England and Canada,⁹⁵ eugenic ideology spawned a whole new impulse directing 'idiot' institutions to rural reaches far from cities, towns and villages, at the same time as a deepening pessimism about the fundamentally 'damaged' organisms crowding into these institutions – ones for whom improvement was now reckoned basically hopeless – generated more of a 'warehousing' mentality than any sense of trying to educate or train (let alone cure). The nuances of how Itard, Guggenbühl and Séguin had understood 'idiocy', as hooked to the niceties of their geographical visions for 'idiot' establishments with substantially *more* than a carceral-sheltering mission, were now run over roughshod by the eugenicist imperative. Any sense, with Séguin or Bucknill, of *not* 'separating' these people from 'the rest of humankind', was obliterated; and simultaneously "[t]he term 'school' began to disappear from the names of institutions, being replaced by the term 'asylum'. For example, in 1893, the 'Custodial Asylum for Unteachable Idiots' was founded at Rome, New York".⁹⁶ The just-possibly-educable thereby became 'the uneducable'; and, for a period, 'idiot' institutions effectively disappeared from the educational landscape (and so from the compass of a fledgling study of educational geographies).

Acknowledgements: The original version of this paper was given as a keynote address at the 2nd International Conference on Geographies of Education, held at Loughborough University, 10th-11th September, 2012. Huge thanks are due to the conference organisers for inviting me, and to them and the participants more generally for their constructive responses to my presentation. Thanks are also due to the editors of this theme issue, Peter Kraftl and Sara Mills, for their encouragement, as well as to the editor, John Wylie, and three anonymous referees for their wonderfully generous remarks and suggestions (some if not all of which have made their way into the final revision).

The paper has also been influenced by the proceedings of an ESRC Seminar Series on 'Rethinking Learning Disability: Contexts, Voices, Policies' (ES/J022004/1) co-organised by Murray Simpson (PI), Ed Hall and Chris Philo (both Co-Is). For a range of materials

generated by this seminar series, see <http://rethinkinglearningdisability.net/>.

¹ A heavily-wooded department to the north-east of the Midi-Pyrenees region of southern France.

² M.Newton, *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children* (London, Faber & Faber, 2002), pp.98-99.

³ R.Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press 1952).

⁴ On pre-Darwinian theories of 'evolution', see A. Desmond, *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine and Reform in Radical London* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1989).

⁵ For a critical account, see M.Foucault, *History of Madness* (London, Routledge 2006), esp.pp.476-480, pp.495-496.

⁶ Newton, *Savage*, p.101.

⁷ There are a number, if not numerous, histories of 'idiocy', 'mental deficiency', etc., and recent contributions include: C.F.Goodey, *A History of Intelligence and 'Intellectual Disability': The Shaping of Psychology in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, Ashgate 2011), conveying a sense of radical historical instability in the 'object' of deficient human intelligence supposedly captured by the family of terms such as 'idiocy', etc.; P.McDonagh, *Idiocy: A Cultural History* (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press 2008), reconstituting the socio-cultural positioning and representation of 'idiocy' in a variety of *milieux*; M.K.Simpson, *Modernity and the Appearance of Idiocy: Intellectual Disability as a Regime of Truth* (Lampeter, Edwin Mellen Press 2014), offering a Foucauldian critique of the 'developmental' assumptions written into modern conceptions of 'idiocy' (ones increasingly constituting it as a problematic of the young). Geographical work on 'idiocy', 'learning disability', etc. has not been extensive: for a review, now itself a little dated, see C.Philo, D.Metzel, 'Outside the participatory mainstream?' *Health and Place* (2005) 11, 77-85. For a wide-ranging introduction to academic, policy and learning-disabled views on the many issues entrained in this field of inquiry, application and experience, see contributions to the following WordPress site: www.rethinkinglearningdisability.net.

⁸ Newton, *Savage*, p.108.

⁹ op.cit., p.115. There is a purposeful allusion here to debates about 'non-representationalism' which have swirled through contemporary human geography: see B.Anderson and P.Harrison (ed.), *Taking-Place: Non-Representational Theories and Geography* (Farnham, UK, Ashgate 2010). Nonetheless, no simple elision should be assumed between 'the non-representational' and 'the wild', since so much that cannot be readily 'represented' - so much that remains tantalisingly absent from attempts to tell/script human life-worlds - cannot be collapsed on to some caricature of 'the animal within' (the non-human within the human).

¹⁰ To echo the account given in P.Harrison, 'Making sense: embodiment and the sensibilities of the everyday' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (2000) 18, 497-517.

¹¹ To echo the account given in W. James, 'What is an emotion?', *Mind* (1884) 9, 188-205.

¹² This construction is repeatedly invoked, if with differing emphases, to draw the distinction between 'human' and (non-human) 'animal'.

¹³ Newton, *Savage*, p.105.

¹⁴ G.Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (trans. D.Heller-Roasen)(Stanford Ca., Stanford University Press 1998).

¹⁵ J.M.G.Itard, *An Historical Account of the Discovery and Education of a Savage Man, or of the First Developments of the Young Savage Caught in the Woods Near Aveyron, In The Year 1798* (London, Richard Phillips 1802).

¹⁶ op.cit., p.23, p.30.

¹⁷ op.cit., p.37.

¹⁸ D.McDermott, 'Jean Itard: the first child and youth care counsellor' *The International Child and Youth Care Network* (2003) 48, no pagination (at <http://www.cvc-net.org/cvc-online/cvcol-0103-mcdermott.html>, consulted on 23/08/2012). To an extent, Itard appears to have 'made it up' as he went along, being prepared to experiment and to shift emphases in his therapeutic engagements with Victor; as such, he did not possess a fixed educational philosophy, nor framework for deploying the resources of place, as was arguably the case for the two physicians to be considered later in this paper.

¹⁹ op.cit, no pagination (but 7th page of document).

²⁰ The two reports, translated into English, are collected together in J.M.G.Itard, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron* (trans. G.&M.Humphrey) (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts 1962). Also see H.Lane, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1976).

²¹ Newton, *Savage*, p.82.

²² W. Barr, *Mental Defectives: Their History, Treatment and Training* (London, Rebman 1904), p.31.

²³ The 'out of place' problematic, exploring what is at stake when 'matter' (people, phenomena, practices) turns up where it is supposed to be, is central to contemporary human geography: see T.Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis, MN., University of Minnesota Press 1996).

- ²⁴ Itard, *Historical*, p.33.
- ²⁵ op.cit., pp.69-70.
- ²⁶ op.cit., p.36.
- ²⁷ op.cit., p.44.
- ²⁸ op.cit., p.39, p.40
- ²⁹ op.cit., p.38.
- ³⁰ op.cit.
- ³¹ op.cit., p.39. The ‘affective atmosphere’ reference is a deliberate attempt to create a resonance here with the theoretically-charged claims found in B.Anderson, ‘Affective atmospheres’, *Emotions, Society and Space* (2009) 2, 77-81.
- ³² Itard, *Historical*, pp.41-42.
- ³³ op.cit., p.40.
- ³⁴ op.cit., p.55.
- ³⁵ op.cit., pp.70-72.
- ³⁶ op.cit., p.38.
- ³⁷ op.cit., p.72.
- ³⁸ Itard, *Historical*, pp.72-73. Newton, *Savage*, p.117, captures this story as follows: “The boy’s taste for wild places remained strong. Itard and he went to the country ..., to the estate of Citizen Lachabeaussière, in the vale of Montmorence. The sight of real countryside inflamed the boy again with a desire to escape, had him running again and again to the window of the house, to look out once more on to the park. Itard knew he must mortify this taste, while still restrainedly indulging his enjoyment of outdoors. So, on their return to Paris, they began to take regular walks amidst the more orderly and regular beauties of the gardens local to the Institute”.
- ³⁹ Itard, *Historical*, p.42.
- ⁴⁰ W.Twining, *Some Account of Cretinism, and The Institution for its Cure, on the Abendberg near Interlachen, in Switzerland* (London, John W.Parker), pp.5-6.
- ⁴¹ R.Hirst, ‘Early establishments’, History of Mental Institutions (History of Psychology Projects) blogsite, no pagination (at <http://psychologyshistory.umwblogs.org/evolution-of-institutions/>, consulted on 29/08/20120).
- ⁴² J.Lewis, ‘Integration in Victorian schools: radical social policy or old wine?’, in *Is There a Desk with My Name on it? The Politics of Integration*, ed. R.Slee (London, Falmer Press 1993), p.12.
- ⁴³ eg. Barr, *Mental*, pp.38-39; also Hirst, ‘Early’; Lewis, ‘Integration’.
- ⁴⁴ Twining, *Account*, p.9.
- ⁴⁵ op.cit., p.10.
- ⁴⁶ op.cit., p.8. ‘Cretinism’, usually regarded as a form of ‘idiocy’ (learning disability) and often associated with goitre, was already known to have some relationship with the iodine-deficient soils of elevated Alpine valleys. As Guggenbühl himself observed: “There are whole districts in Switzerland, as well as throughout the entire region of the Alps, which languish under the burden of unfavourable soil and climate to such a degree that the population is more or less afflicted with cretinism” (J.J.Guggenbühl, ‘Extracts from the *First Report of the Institution on The Abendberg*’ [trans. W.Twining], appended to Twining, *Account*, p.8).
- ⁴⁷ Twining, *Account*, p.6.
- ⁴⁸ op.cit., pp.8-9.
- ⁴⁹ J.J.Guggenbühl, *Cretins and Idiots: A Short Account of the Progress of the Institutions for their Relief and Cure* (London, W.A.Wighton 1853), p.4. It was also remarked here on the site “commanding a prospect of the loftiest mountains of the Oberland”, and on how “the Abendberg is frequently bright in the rays of the sun” (p.4). This report, ostensibly by Guggenbühl himself, albeit likely ‘ghosted’/translated by others, explicitly builds upon (and quotes from) Twining, *Account*. It also provided commentary on other institutions for ‘idiots’ spread across Europe, Britain included, which had allegedly been influenced by the Abendberg example (esp.pp.12-21).
- ⁵⁰ Twining, *Account*, p.15.
- ⁵¹ op.cit., p.10. The resonance with Agamben’s writing on humans reduced to the status of ‘bare life’ is telling: see Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.
- ⁵² Guggenbühl, ‘Extracts’, p.9.
- ⁵³ Barr, *Mental*, pp.38-39.
- ⁵⁴ eg. H.Holman, *Séguin and his Physiological Method of Education* (London, Pitman & Sons, 1914).
- ⁵⁵ E.Séguin, *Treatment Moral, Hygiène et Éducation de Idiots et des Autres Enfants Arriérés* (Moral Treatment, Hygiene and Education of Idiots and Other ‘Backward’ Children) (Paris, J.D.Ballière 1846).
- ⁵⁶ op.cit., p.2 (‘My methods are not the methods of Itard’ [my trans., as other translations below]).
- ⁵⁷ op.cit., several pages (‘sensory gymnastics’)
- ⁵⁸ op.cit., p.265 (‘The asylums designed to receive young idiots [idiot children]’: in Chapitre XXVIII [‘On the habitation’]), Chapitre XXVII [‘On the influence of atmospheric agents’]).
- ⁵⁹ op.cit., p.268 (‘an elevated site, exposed to warmth from the South, in a dry countryside but also fertile and sufficiently wooded’), p.267 (‘domesticated animals’).

⁶⁰ op.cit., p.267 ('the mountains'), p.271 ('splendid light that circulates in streams/floods': at this point, Séguin is discussing climatic properties, such as temperature, not internal lighting).

⁶¹ 'In memory of Edouard Séguin, MD', a funeral tribute, 31st October, 1880, taken from online pages of the Disability History Museum (at <http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=1924>, accessed 29/08/2012).

⁶² E.Séguin, *Idiocy and its Treatment by the Physiological Method* (New York, William Wood & Co. 1866). Intriguingly, Séguin suggested that Itard initially followed a "psychological programme" with the 'wild boy' (pp.21-22), but, not being successful veered towards a more 'physiological' approach wherein he "began to treat the idiot in the savage" (p.26): maybe, indeed, Itard had "a secret consciousness of his error in diagnosis" (p.22); Itard was also "the first to educate an idiot with a philosophical object and by physiological means" (p.28).

⁶³ op.cit., p.16. "To be physiological, education must first follow the great natural laws of action and repose, which is life itself" (pp.32-33).

⁶⁴ op.cit., p.34.

⁶⁵ eg. op.cit., p.125, p.257.

⁶⁶ eg. op.cit., p.167.

⁶⁷ Foucault, M. 2006b. *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-1974* (trans. J.Lagrange) (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan), esp.pp.205-219.

⁶⁸ The author of the current paper discusses Séguin's 'dressage' of the 'idiot' body, particularly its intense emphasis on training both mobility and *immobility*, in C.Philo, "One must eliminate the effects of ... diffuse circulation [and] their unstable and dangerous coagulation": Foucault and beyond the stopping of mobilities' forthcoming in *Mobilities*. This paper also draws out continuities between claims about modern forms of spatially-organised 'disciplinary power' in M.Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (trans. A.Sheridan) (London, Allen Lane 1976) and Foucault's analysis of Séguin in the *Psychiatric Power* lectures, the latter of which were prepared at much the same time that Foucault was completing *Discipline and Punish*.

⁶⁹ Séguin, *Idiocy*, p.217, p.218. The conception here of 'moral treatment' should not be conflated with the Tukean conception of the same name as widely applied to supposedly curative work with 'lunatics' (those with mental health problems) from the later-eighteenth century, even though correspondences could be drawn. On the former, with sustained attention to its geographical dimensions, see C.Philo, *The Geographical History of Institutions for the Insane in England and Wales from Medieval Times to the 1860s: 'The Space Reserved for Insanity'* (Lampeter, Edwin Mellen Press 2004), Chap.6.

⁷⁰ Séguin, *Idiocy*, p.217. "We must remember that our teaching him [the 'idiot' child] how to do a thing, is of no practical value if we do not place him in the best circumstances to accomplish it" (p.217).

⁷¹ op.cit., pp.251-265: it is impossible to do justice to the fine-grained spatial-environmental detail here, which should dispel any lingering sense of the present paper *over-playing* the extent to which 'geography' (broadly defined) mattered to 'idiocy' experts such as Séguin. It might be noted that Séguin preferred the rather neutral term 'institution' potentially to embrace both 'school' ("The term school expresses well the place in which ['idiot'] children are educated": p.249) and 'asylum' (which implies "a life-time residence": p.250). Clearly, however, his focus in *Idiocy* was on the 'school' component, but realising that many 'idiots' tended to dwell in institutional surroundings throughout their lives.

⁷² op.cit., pp.264-265.

⁷³ op.cit., p.263.

⁷⁴ op.cit., pp.263-264.

⁷⁵ op.cit., p.264. Also known as his 'garden schools', they have been claimed by one commentator as the "crown and completion" of his whole physiological education theory (Holman, *Séguin*, p.224).

⁷⁶ Séguin, *Idiocy*, p.206. He also spoke of "[t]he necessary distance of the institution from cities" (p.259).

⁷⁷ op.cit., p.238.

⁷⁸ op.cit., p.243.

⁷⁹ J.W.Trent Jr., *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley CA, University of California Press 1994), p.52.

⁸⁰ Séguin, *Idiocy*, p.15.

⁸¹ Trent, *Inventing*, p.58.

⁸² Various, *The Séguin Physiological School for the Training of Children of Arrested Mental Development* (Orange, NJ, For the School 1905; reprinted by Forgotten Books, London 2012), p.5. The pamphlet was authored by Elsie Séguin and others associated with the School, and included a circular written by her late husband in the last month of his life specifying the basic principles of his 'Physiological School for Weak-Minded and Weak-Bodied Children' (p.8). Initially for only three children, it grew and relocated to Orange in 1894, away from "the strong salt air of New York and Brooklyn" (p.5), suggesting that the original site was perhaps *too* urban.

⁸³ op.cit., p.6. It was also noted that "occasional visits [for children] to the city are always carefully planned and greatly enjoyed" (p.26).

⁸⁴ Historically, ‘idiots’ have often been positioned as little more than ‘animals’ (and, indeed, frequently being described as mere ‘brutes’).

⁸⁵ The two primary documents consulted here (Twining, *Account*, and Guggenbühl, *Cretins*) also contained considerable ‘technical’ detail on physical training and procedures designed to inculcate a very basic use of language. There were also hints of a more scientific reasoning about the mountain air – “The pure mountain air is peculiarly favourable for its strong electrical properties and production of good effects on the nervous system” (Guggenbühl, *Cretins*, p.11) – and about the ‘magnetic electricity’ of mountain spring water in baths for ‘cretins’.

⁸⁶ In both his 1846 and 1866 tracts, Séguin revealed a deep interest in atmospheric, notably in issues of heat and cold (he was fascinated by thermometry, publishing on ‘medical thermometry’ and the role of the thermometer), but there were also signs of how he appreciated the more aesthetic properties of light.

⁸⁷ E.Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics and Nature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2013). Arguably, a much older mytho-poetics of landscape, of wildernesses or ‘Arcadian’ pastoral paradise, may have filtered through into diverse nineteenth-century articulations of nature’s possible role in a therapeutics of ‘idiocy’ or, indeed, of ‘madness’ more broadly.

⁸⁸ The ‘deep space’ of nineteenth-century lunatic asylum systems was structured by competing attractions and repulsions of, respectively, rural and urban landscapes – and, indeed, as associated with more subtle gradations in-between such as suburban, proximate rural-agricultural and remote rural-wilderness environments: see Philo, *Geographical History*, esp.Chaps.5, 6 and 7.

⁸⁹ J.C.Bucknill, ‘Review of Kern’s *On the Present Condition and Future Prospects of Idiot Education*’, *Asylum Journal of Mental Science* (1857) 3, 406-420.

⁹⁰ *op.cit.*, p.414. The Marienburg institution was definitely established in imitation of Guggenbühl’s institution, following a visit to the latter by the King of Wurtemberg (Guggenbühl, *Cretins*, p.12). Wurtemberg (now Württemberg) is an area (and former state) in southwestern Germany, with mountainous regions (the ‘Suabian’ [Swarbian] Alps) to the south.

⁹¹ *op.cit.*

⁹² *op.cit.*, 420.

⁹³ C.Philo, ‘Convenient centres and convenient premises: the historical geography of England’s nineteenth-century idiot asylums’ *University of Hull, Department of Geography Working Paper No.3* 1987, esp.pp.28-33.

⁹⁴ M.Jackson, *The Borderlands of Imbecility: Medicine, Society and the Fabrication of the Feeble Mind in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England* (Manchester, Manchester University Press 2000); M.Thompson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy and Social Policy in Britain, c.1870-1959* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1998).

⁹⁵ D.C.Park, *Changing Shadows: The Huronia Regional Centre, 187601934* Unpublished Masters thesis, Department of Geography, York University, Ontario, 1990; D.C.Park, *An Imprisoned Text: Reading the Canadian Mental Handicap Asylum* Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Geography, York University, Ontario, 1995; J.P.Radford, ‘Sterilisation versus segregation: control of the ‘feeble-minded’, 1900-1938’ *Social Science and Medicine* (1991) 33, 449-458; J.P.Radford, ‘Response and rejoinder: eugenics and the asylum’ *Journal of Historical Sociology* (1994a) 7, 462-473; J.P.Radford, ‘Intellectual disability and the heritage of modernity’, in *Disability is not Measles: New Research Paradigms in Disability*, H.Rioux and M.Bach (eds.); J.P.Radford, D.C.Park, ‘The asylum as place: an historical geography of the Huronia Regional Centre’, in: *Canada: Geographical Interpretations - Essays in Honour of John Warkentin*, J.R.Gibson (ed.) (York University, Atkinson College, Geographical Monographs No.22. 1993a); J.P.Radford, D.C.Park, ‘A convenient means of riddance’: institutionalisation of people diagnosed as ‘mentally deficient’ in Ontario, 1876-1934’ *Health and Canadian Society* (1993b) 1, 369-392; J.P.Radford, D.C.Park, ‘The eugenic legacy’ *Journal of Developmental Disabilities* (1995) 4, 63-74; J.P.Radford, A.Tipper, *Starcross: Out of the Mainstream* (Toronto, Roehar Institute 1988).

⁹⁶ W.Wolfensberger, *Changing Patterns in Residential Services for the Mentally Retarded* (Washington DC, President’s Committee on Mental Retardation 1969), p.17.