



Troping the Asylum: Authors and Authorities at the Toronto Asylum (1850-1920)

Jon Thomas Rowland

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A discussion of the writings of the patients, inmates, and principal alienists of the Toronto Asylum, circa 1840 to 1920, organized around such themes as the relationship between medical authority and authorship, the textuality of disease, and the meanings of asylum. Rowland's principal thesis is that doctors in rather self-interested ways constructed medical authority as authors, by troping the asylum and its diseases until, thanks to the perceived failure of things like "moral therapy," and to professional self-interest, they "virtually" troped it out of existence. Rowland describe this troping in the doctors' own texts, focused on the Toronto Asylum, because of its paradigmatic, long and troubled history. In the process he reverses the usual relationship of such texts to history; what are usually treated as glosses are here treated as main text.

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