



Masters of Bedlam

Andrew Scull, Charlotte MacKenzie, Nicholas Hervey

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Through an examination of the fascinating lives and careers of a series of nineteenth-century "mad-doctors," *Masters of Bedlam* provides a unique perspective on the creation of the modern profession of psychiatry, taking us from the secret and shady practices of the trade in lunacy, through the utopian expectations that were aroused by the lunacy reform movement, to the dismal realities of the barracks-asylums--those Victorian museums of madness within which most nineteenth-century alienists found themselves compelled to practice. Across a century that spans the period from an unreformed Bedlam to the construction of a post-Darwinian bio-psychiatry centered on the new Maudsley Hospital, from a therapeutics of bleeding, purging, and close confinement through the era of moral treatment and nonrestraint to a fin-de-siècle degenerationism and despair, men claiming expertise in the treatment of mental disorder sought to construct a collective identity as trustworthy and scientifically qualified professionals. This fascinating series of biographies answers the question: How successful were they in creating such a new identity?.

Drawing on an extensive array of sources, the authors vividly re-create the often colorful and always eventful lives of these seven "masters of bedlam." Sensitive to the idiosyncrasies and peculiarities of each man's personal biography, the authors replace hagiographical accounts of the great men who founded modern psychiatry with fully rounded portraits of their struggles and successes, their achievements and limitations. In the process *Masters of Bedlam* provides an extremely subtle and nuanced portrait of the efforts of successive generations of alienists to carve out a popular and scientific respect for their specialty, and reminds us repeatedly of the complexities of nineteenth-century developments in the field of psychiatry.

Originally published in 1996.

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