

At Home in the Institution: Material Life in Asylums, Lodging Houses and Schools in Victorian and Edwardian England

Jane Hamlett

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Victorian England saw a dramatic growth in institutions. At Home in the Institution takes a look at the material life of three different types - asylums, lodging houses and schools - examining decoration and the use of space as well as the things that inmates were allowed. Although all three had very diverse aims, they were often influenced by the relationships, rituals and material culture of contemporary domesticity. An assessment of the everyday life of these places often shows the limits of these ideals in practice, the disruptions to domestic routines and the notions of class and gender that they were supposed to inculcate. While the material world reveals the intentions of authorities, it also afforded agency to patients, lodgers and pupils - from the schoolboy carving initials on a desk to the pauper lunatics who bred songbirds.



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