

Gendered Folly:

Frailty of Daughters in Nineteenth-Century England

by

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Charlotte Perkins Gilman intended to show, in “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the link between the male image of invalidism and the increasing incidence of madness in women.¹ In her story Gilman shows that the creative intelligence of women in the late nineteenth century leads them to study the ‘spots,’ follow the ‘stains,’ and break through the ‘pointless pattern’ of violence on the wallpaper.

[T]here is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

. . . it turns a back-somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.²

The front pattern *does* move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and

sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over. . . .

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so . . .

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white!³

Many women in the late nineteenth century felt as if they were being strangled, that they were losing their bodies and minds, enmeshed tightly in the wallpaper design of social constriction. They were broken down in its pointless pattern. Gilman demonstrates that male society refused to recognize the intelligence of women, and that it became difficult for intellectual and sensible women not to conceive of themselves as seriously hurt or scarred.

If a heroine of the late nineteenth century is to provide us with the story of her consciousness, she must offer resistance to her body and its desires. In Thomas Hardy's novels, we can easily find the story of such women, Sue Bridehead in *Jude The Obscure* and Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, whose impulses drive them into the extremes of hysteria or catastrophe due to excessive sexuality. What the stories tell us is that, for woman, sexual experience and even the desire of the body itself are at odds with story where the main plot is self-fashioning to fit social conditions or norms.

We can find, in some contemporary feminist essays, the assertion that Victorian ideology constructed female sexuality in terms of 'sickness' or 'insanity.' Women's own sexual desires had to be hidden, surely more apparent than real, as it was firmly believed that women, with the exception of prostitutes, had no sexual desires. However Victorian men's desire of women has visibility in historically-specific versions of the male-viewing-subject/female-observed-object economy of contemporary feminist theory. The Victorian representations of female sexuality do not usually show a subject experiencing her own body. Instead, they present an objectified body that is sexualized for the male, which can be called 'the object of the male gaze' in Lacanian terms. In urban areas, with its wide

spectrum of women, a kind of showcase of femininity was provided, the female body was visualized and in certain areas often sexually displayed and became 'the masculine observer's spectacle.'⁴

Gilman's literary expression explicitly shows the pattern of a male discourse on femininity, in which the Victorian heroines of the stories might be enmeshed and caught. It is also reflected in forms of artistic expression, most particularly in literature and painting. And it can be said that traditional critical discourse on femininity may have become entrenched at that time.

Bram Dijkstra presents Ophelia as a significant 'secondary' character in *Hamlet*.⁵ Jacques Lacan depicts her as 'that piece of bait named Ophelia' in his essay 'The Object Ophelia.'⁶ Elaine Showalter complains that, despite the title, Lacan's discussion concentrates solely on Hamlet.⁷ But he does focus on the relationship between the subject and the object of desire, and he shows us the significance of thinking about 'the object a,' I do not think Lacan is unfair to his title. In New Historicism criticism, critic such as Kenneth S. Rothwell discusses the vision of the play vividly but treats the story of self-fashioning as Hamlet's alone.⁸ There is a prevailing attitude to see Ophelia as an object and an attachment. And many are ready to acknowledge the popular critical saying that 'We can imagine Hamlet's story without Ophelia, but Ophelia literally has no story without Hamlet.'⁹ But it is not fair to reduce Ophelia to a mere charming attachment to Hamlet, a lovely ornament of the play to facilitate and manage sentimental pity.

The feminist critic Showalter constructs Ophelia's own (hi)story and discusses her as an autonomous being. Showalter explores the history of theatrical and artistic representation of Ophelia and successively shows the conspiracy, the rivalry, and the contest between male and female representations of Ophelia. Her convincing essay 'Representing Ophelia' is of great worth as it explains how representation of Ophelia has been influenced by male discourse on female sexuality and madness in each historical period.

In asserting that, in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, it is 'through madness, the women on stage can suddenly

make a forceful assertion of their being,' Maurice Charney and Hanna Charney's discussion is very convincing.¹⁰ However, their argument is based on a convention, which is rooted in a male discourse on femininity. The sane Ophelia is a stereotype of a passive, obedient, and decent girl, who is a vessel of ideal purity; the mad Ophelia is a stereotype of a re-vital, love-melancholic woman, who is uncontrollable. We can easily remember Ophelia as being mad due to her vividly erotic body, frailty of mind, and sensual disorder. The mad Ophelia's image is contrary to conventional female roles. But, both sane and mad Ophelias could never have been permanently freed from the patterned male discourse and desire for the female. In this essay, influenced by some feminist views, I will consider female madness and consequent death represented in arts. And I will consider women's sexuality, heavily and deeply gendered, as an object of exploitation, in representations of Ophelia in the nineteenth century, and in those of Tennyson's virginal heroines and other Victorian heroines.

It was the British Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood who first brilliantly and vividly brought Ophelia to center stage in the late nineteenth century. The Pre-Raphaelites and many European painters of that period repeatedly depicted Ophelia's flowery madness and watery death. The most famous paintings are Sir John Everett Millais' "Ophelia" (1851), Arthur Hughes' "Ophelia" (1852), and Madeleine Lemaire's "Ophelia" (1880s). John William Waterhouse continued the Ophelia theme too, in 1894 and 1910. Especially Millais' dead Ophelia and Hughes' mad Ophelia inescapably present the principal iconographic details for Ophelia's portrait in the play's very last scene.¹¹

In the glassy stream, where a willow shows its hoary leaves,
Ophelia is drowned.

Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,

That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendant boughs her crownet weeds
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious silver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,
Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death. (IV. vii. 167-82)¹²

Among reeds and water lilies Millais' Ophelia, the beautiful dead girl, floats gently and weakly downstream in a passive voyage to eternal adoration. She has gone decorously into a watery flowery 'death-bed.' While Ophelia's death is depicted in a more refined style, the sweet 'rose' in lunacy, mad Ophelia sings the last song that foretells her future. It is not long before she dies.

*And will a not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
He never will come again.* (IV. vi. 188-91)

Wandering around field and forest, strolling madly and chanting bawdy songs near water side, staring vacantly before a glassy stream, and piling high gathered flowers in her arms and skirt, Ophelia after Hughes' always shows her madness. In surrendering to her fate, Hughes' mad Ophelia looks seriously pale and crazed-eyed; and the mad Ophelia desperately shows her sexual desire.

*Young men will do't if they come to't—
By Cock, they are to blame.*

*Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,
You promis'd me to wed.'*

He answers,

*'So would I a done, by yonder sun,
And thou hadst not come to my bed.'* (IV. v. 60-6)

In numerous paintings, Ophelia's last scene of both mad and dead is repeatedly realized and revitalized, it almost can be said 'duplicated.' There she is, always surrounded with flowers and in the end she explicitly commits herself to a watery grave. And there we can clearly find and distinguish the two types of Ophelia, 'decent' and 'sexual,' by examining her eyes, face, and manner of dress.

One Ophelia shows her sweet weak passiveness, like one helplessly abandoned, pale and lifeless. Being neatly and fully clothed typically reveals her sexless and virginal purity. The other, in contrast, is accentuated by her very lack of elegance, as her dress has loosely slipped off her shoulders. There her eyes are filled with the glowering light of temptation and excessive-sexuality, and she seems like a prostitute, 'Eve,' or serpent. But the important point is that both Ophelias, 'decent' and 'sexual,' show her devotion, passionate self-sacrifice to her man, descent into madness and consequent death, and that both are illustrative characteristics of love-crazed women who are senseless and lack control.

We can see the two outstanding images of Ophelia, 'decent' and 'sexual,' in Sarah Bernhardt's photograph (1884) and Lemaire's painting "Ophelia" (1880s). In the photo, the actress Sarah Bernhardt appears to be dead, but is not, lying in a coffin with her eyes closed and arms crossed. Within the frame her dead poise shows a refined, pale and fragile female corpse. Bernhardt's theatrical performance as an elegantly pale corpse shows clearly how strongly she was fascinated and identified with 'Ophelia' and this role was one of her most famous parts.

The actress continually and successively kills off her self and animates multiple selves. She takes great pleasure in the power to construct her own images.¹³ Through attractive powers in the new

medium of photography, Bernhardt exceptionally could design and exploit commercially her images for self-fashioning as an actress. She was well aware of the male fascination on the theme of female insanity and self-effacing heroine's expiring, and aware of the cult of invalidism, in that period. Bernhardt's display in the coffin can be seen as a dramatically perfect response to the cultural taste of the times. Her theatrical performance might have been linked to her desire to be given some social status and some personal recognition as an individual actress. Bernhardt's portrayal shows clearly how women desperately longed to be recognized as individual entities.

I think Lemaire's "Ophelia" cannot wholly be included in the group of Ophelia as a virtuous flower. Lemaire depicted Ophelia in profile with the dangerous glower of a vampire, emphasizing the excessive sexual origin of her madness. Lemaire's Ophelia glares defiantly, as if she cannot control her sexual desire, craving male flesh to fall victim to her enticing eyes. She revels in leading him into temptation like a serpent. This is further accentuated by her very seducing, indecorous, and non-dignified manner of dress. Like a prostitute's style her dress has slipped utterly off her shoulders to reveal her breasts. It shows deeply signs of her nature more self-indulgent and pleasure-seeking, and of her sexual incontinence.

Assuredly Ophelia became one of the idols for late nineteenth-century painters, for by depicting her story and theme they could visualize male fantasies of feminine dependency. The Pre-Raphaelites admired, besides Ophelia, Alfred Tennyson's lovely heroines, the Lady of Shalott, Elaine, Mariana and others.¹⁴ This fascination expressed itself in the exploitation of the fantasy world of good old-fashioned chivalry. It is the very pure world of Tennyson's, that wonderful world of brave men and frail girls, of medieval encounters between beautiful contrasts, and of simple endings.

Romantic love and jealousy in love, in Tennyson's world, are sensually idealized. Love is a discipline for the sake of delight in Tennyson's text. Rewriting the Celtic legends of a magical and heroic Arthurian world, Tennyson's text defined a passion, which involved a constant commitment and the highest degree of intensity, and

which was moralized, domesticated, and institutional. The feminist critic Catherine Belsey points out that 'Tennyson's text goes beyond its own moral judgements to affirm the difficulty of inscribing social ideals in human institutions.'¹⁵ Belsey's assertion is that Tennyson, as a good Victorian, longs to perceive romantic love and its experience as the merging of moral consciousnesses. Belsey concludes that Tennyson simultaneously acknowledges the distance that lies between the reason and the unaccountable imperatives of a desire which necessarily escapes the discipline consciousness seeks to impose.¹⁶

Such figures as William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne pursued the artistic representation of mythic simplicity of the pure Arthurian world and the idealization of chivalric romantic love and mystical experience. Morris wrote poetry on Queen Guinevere, painted Isolde, and embroidered Morgan. Edward Burn-Johnes also typically painted "The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon" (1880-98) and many other pictures of the Arthurian story. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Gustave Doré, William Holman Hunt, Toby Rosenthal, John William Waterhouse, Frederick Sandys, William Bell Scot, and John Collier all repeatedly represented the theme and motif of the very same Arthurian story.

Dijkstra asserts that many Victorian male artists found in self-effacing Tennyson's heroines the same qualities of feminine sincerity as in Ophelia.¹⁷ Although Tennyson's heroines had to yield in popularity to Ophelia, nevertheless they fitted the artistic role well of woman's tuneless, incipient madness, passive yearning, passion in love, and self-destructive and self-sacrificial devotion to her man. They could perfectly be represented in figures as shadowy mad girls and beautiful dead women floating downstream. Their figures so lovely and so impressive with their pitiful stories of love to madness and watery committed suicide are repeatedly represented in many popular arts.¹⁸

It can be said, as I noted, it was Millais' and Hughes' "Ophelia" that defined the details and ideas for her portrayal at mid-century. Their Ophelias certainly inspired many Victorian paintings of other

female idols. Waterhouse's "The Lady of Shalott" (1888), and Rosenthal's "Elaine" (1874), are decisively influenced by them. The maniacal artists of female sacrifice, no less than Ophelia, also saw Tennyson's Heroines as ideal woman. Deadly pale heroines lost to madness float on water, surrounded by beautiful flowers and accompanied by an oarsman who looks like death personified. The Tennyson's transcendently insane heroines passionately sought love-death. The subject of the mad and dead girl's journey downstream, lying in a boat, for the last meeting with her man inevitably attracts us. The point is that the theme of the extreme self-sacrificial woman and her desperate devotion to her lover is chosen again and again by artists.

The Lady of Shalott, helplessly insane and decorously expendable in the male world, is a victim of her desire as she easily succumbs to the manly charms of Lancelot. However, she can not hold him.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
 She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along,
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died . . .¹⁹

As well as the Lady of Shalott, another heroine Elaine can not gain Lancelot's love. Elaine pleads with Lancelot to give pleasure as a pledge of their love, expressing some element of her desperate erotic longing;

Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
'I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.' . . .
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'²⁰

Elaine desperately makes a little song, 'The song of Love and Death.' She sweetly sings it like a little helpless innocent bird, phrases of which are as follows;

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.'²¹

'The blood-red light of dawn flared on her face,' and she was 'shrilling' the words, 'Let me die!'²² In despair she loses her mind, Elaine in the end only repeats the same folly as the Lady of Shalotte, which was self-effacing, committing suicide to watery-death.

In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled. ²³

Elaine deeply loves and admires Lancelot. But with no return for her love and service, she decides to depart life. Lancelot takes her farewell letter, seeing her body lying in a boat. Lancelot reads Elaine's last words, 'I loved you, and my love had no return,' and 'therefore my true love has been my death.' But, in seeing the most gentle maiden's death, Lancelot still ends by only coldly saying that 'to be loved makes not to love again.'²⁴

However, the ladies of weakness and frailty, being heavily hurt by their men's indifference towards them, are seen as pearls among women by male society. Their men's lack of interest in them is more than enough to drive them mad and consequently into committing suicide. At the same time, they are clearly victims of having urgent erotic longing and realizing sexual impulses, even if their recognition is vague.

As soon as the nameless lady, the Lady of Shalott, sees the young virile Lancelot, she cries, 'The curse is come upon me.'²⁵ Here the curse results in her sensual awakening and her consciousness of sexual desire. However I think, Hunt's famous paintings, "The Lady of Shalott" (1857) and "The Awakening Consciousness" (1853), paradoxically indicates the Victorian male painter's awareness of the instability within all male institutions.²⁶ 'For nineteenth-century men,' writes Herbert Sussman, 'manhood was conceived as unstable equilibrium of barely controlled energy.'²⁷ It is exactly the volatile energy of maleness that is strongly backed by a numerous collection of female victims.

Once Tennyson's heroine is decisively aware of her passion in love, she feels as if 'her blood' is 'frozen' and her face becomes pale.

Then she knows that she is not likely to survive long, because she feels that the curse of her passion and desire is upon her, and she perceives her own passion and desire as sinful and shameful. She can only become one of the idols of passive yearning, self-destructive devotion, and incipient madness. There she is surrounded with beautiful flowers and floating downstream. She is also a helplessly abandoned victim of male social discourse of some unaccountable desires.

The Bible in Genesis tells us about Eve's temptation of Adam. From Eve's time 'the scapegoating of women' is intrinsically linked to her 'evil sexuality.' Unsurprisingly 'madness and badness have been associated with women's sexuality from the mystical representation of Eve's tempting.'²⁸ In the Elizabethan period, men's melancholy was associated with 'poetic inspiration and wit,' it was even fashionable, but it was not necessarily linked with evil and sexuality.²⁹ But women's lunacy and folly was diagnosed as being caused by menstruous blood, which is sexually evil vapors.³⁰ The sexually badness of the body melts in women with their frail minds. The mad girl with a frail mind is the bad girl with evil sexuality. Then she is deemed as frail, vicious, and sensual. Many Victorian stories of mad heroines who become conscious of their own sexual desires are always beautifully ended by a tragic death, then they are deemed to be scapegoats in male discourse.³¹

As I have shown, it might have been customary to credit or blame Victorian cultural trends for having turned death of a beauty into an art form. Though, we could have needed to go further beyond assertions like Camille Paglia's that the 'Victorian sentimentalization of disease and death has become a mawkish substitute for artistic vision.'³² We need to identify the specific form of Victorian depictions of female madness and death and the motivations behind them. Alluding to Edgar Allan Poe's observation that the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world, we can easily trace a necrophiliac tendency in his words. It can be indicated that we always see and read in the obsessive stories and portraitures of mad and dead women a deadly Orphic gaze or

murderous impulse.³³ In depicting mad and dead women, Tennyson sadistically shows an element of desperate erotic longing and sensual folly, and the sacrificial impulse, the 'sex-impulse,' which exists in a woman whose destructive urge remained unrequited.

The act of representing woman's sexually madness and consequent death could have been quite literally a matter of representing her graceful dead body. The trend of the act is certainly rooted somewhere in the formations, meshes, and patterns of deadly conservative male discourse on females. It is exactly the Victorian representations of the exploitation of the female body and mind. Besides that, it is an expression of the male subject's desire for the female object's self-sacrificial service and self-destructive love. Victorian representations of female madness and death or of the dead make explicit women's vulnerable role during that period. The vulnerable role of Victorian women could be typified by absence, loss, and repression, even when the female figure appear to demonstrate her presence.

NOTES

¹ Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-De-Siècle Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 36.

² Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," in Elaine Showalter ed., *Daughters of Decadence, Women Writers of the Fin-de Siècle* (London: Virago Press, 1993), p. 109.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴ Deborah Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 6. See also Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 127-69, Ellen Bayuk Rosenman, 'Spectacular Women: The Mysteries of London and the Female Body,' *Victorian Studies*, 40. 1 (1996), 35-40, Jennifer A. Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, & Social Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

⁵ Dijkstra, p. 42.

⁶ Jacques Lacan, 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*,' *Yale French Studies*, 55/56 (1977), 13.

⁷ Elaine Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism,' in Martin Coyle ed., *New Casebooks, Hamlet* (London: Macmillan Press, 1992), p. 113.

⁸ Kenneth S. Rothwell, 'Hamlet's "Glass of Fashion": Power, Self, and the Reformation,' in Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton eds., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), pp. 80-95.

⁹ Lee Edwards, 'The labors of Psyche,' *Critical Inquiry*, 6 (1979), 36.

¹⁰ Maurice Charney and Hanna Charney, 'The Language of Madwoman in Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists,' *Signs*, 3. 2 (1977), 459.

¹¹ See Showalter, p. 121. Showalter points out that while Millais' Ophelia is a sensuous siren as well as a victim, the artist rather than the subject dominates the scene, and that the division of space between Ophelia and the natural details Millais had so painstakingly pursued reduces her to one more visual object.

¹² All quotations from *Hamlet* are in The Arden Shakespeare, Harold Jenkins ed., *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (London: Methuen & Co., 1982).

¹³ Jani Scandura, 'Deadly Professions: Dracula, Undertakers, and the Embalmed Corpse,' *Victorian Studies*, 40. 1 (1996), 21.

¹⁴ Becky Wingard Lewis, 'A Conflict of Intentions: Tennyson versus Pre-Raphaelite illustrators,' in Margaretta Frederick Watson ed., *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: the Anglo-American Enchantment* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 1997), pp. 175-81. Becky argues that the Pre-Raphaelites exploited with unconventional technical innovations the intense psychological probing, sensuality, and strangeness of Tennyson's poetry in the belief that the artist is free to interpret a poet's lines. Becky concludes that, paradoxically, the Pre-Raphaelites' illustrations illuminate the same sensuous, emotional, intense world of Tennyson's poetry that threatens the restrained world of the Victorians.

¹⁵ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), p. 129.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁷ Dijkstra, p. 42.

¹⁸ Showalter, p. 121. Showalter discusses that the Pre-Raphaelite images were part of a new and intricate traffic between images of women and madness in late nineteenth-century literature, psychiatry, drama, and art. She additionally says that, first of all, superintendents of Victorian lunatic asylums were also enthusiasts of Shakespeare, who turned Shakespeare's dramas for models of mental aberration that could be applied to their clinical practice.

¹⁹ Alfred Tennyson, *Complete Poems & Plays*, T. Herbert Warren ed. (Oxford

and New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 27–28.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 381–2.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 385.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 387.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁶ Joseph A. Kestner, *Masculinities in Victorian Painting* (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1995), pp. 170–206. Kestner argues that the Victorian problem painting—that genre in which narrative is self-consciously indeterminate—destabilizes the hegemonic view of the male. See also Kestner, 'The Pre-Raphaelites, St George and the Construction of Masculinity,' in Margaretta Frederick Watson ed., *Collecting the Pre-Raphaelites: the Anglo-American Enchantment* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 1997), pp. 149–58.

²⁷ Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 13. On the formation of modern masculinities Sussman is informed by some of the best critical work, notably here of both Klaus Theweleit's and David Leverenz's studies. Sussman pursues closely and points out the anxiety in the respectable gentleman of letters and arts, in the works of the Robert Browning, Pre-Raphaelites, Tennyson and others. He shows exactly how and why the volatile energy of maleness was only too likely to collapse back into male hysteria or male madness. pp. 13–14. See also Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 7.

²⁸ Jane Ussher, *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 48.

²⁹ Vieda Skultans, *English Madness: Ideas on Insanity, 1580–1890* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 18–19. Many feminism and gender criticism essays adopt this explanation which is from the Aristotelian and Platonic tradition.

³⁰ Quoted by Skultans, p. 80.

³¹ Showalter, p. 121. Showalter points out that the case study of Victorian heroines, such as Ophelia or Tennyson's heroines, is one that seems particularly useful as an account of hysteria or mental breakdown in adolescence, a period of sexual instability which the Victorians regarded as risky for women's mental health.

³² Camille Paglia, *New Yorker*, 30 January 1995, 13.

³³ See *Death and Representation*, edited by Sarah Webster Goodwin and Elisabeth Bronfen (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).