September 22, 1998

TO: RICHARD RIEHL, EXECUTIVE OF ENROLLMENT SERVICES

CC: LESLIE ZOMALT, ADVISING COORDINATOR
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

VICTOR ROCHA, DEAN
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

RICHARD H. KARAS, VICE PRESIDENT/ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
ACTING DIRECTOR/ENROLLMENT SERVICES

FROM: YUAN YUAN, THESIS CHAIR, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE AND WRITING STUDIES AND THESIS ADVISER OF RENEE WEISSENBURGER

DEBORAH SMALL, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS,
MEMBER OF RENEE WEISSENBURGER THESIS COMMITTEE

SUSIE CASSEL, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE & WRITING STUDIES & MEMBER OF RENEE WEISSENBURGER THESIS COMMITTEE

This memo is to confirm that RENEE WEISSENBURGER has completed all requirements for the Masters of Literature and Writing Studies at California State University San Marcos. Her final course was completed Fall 1998. Her public Thesis Defense took place on September 22, 1998. The Thesis Committee signed off on this thesis on September 22, 1998.

Dr. Yuan Yuan, Associate Professor of Literature & Writing Studies
Thesis Adviser

Deborah Small, Associate Professor of Visual & Performing Arts
Thesis Committee Member

Susie Cassel, Assistant Professor of Literature & Writing Studies
Thesis Committee Member
Dangerous Games:  
The Adoration and Persecution of the Victorian Madwoman

*A thesis in two parts*

By:

Renee M. Weissenburger

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Literature and Writing

at

California State University, San Marcos

May 1998
Contents

Abstract 1

Part I: Introduction 3
   I. Evolutionary Theory and Darwinist Doctors 3
   II. Visual Arts: The Birth of Photography and the Pre-Raphaelite Painters and Poets 3

Chapter One: Alice, The Victorian Woman-Child, and Preventative Medicine 12

Chapter Two: The Ophelia Syndrome 26

Chapter Three: Bertha, Wolfish Cries and the Cures Which Follow 44

Notes 59

Works Cited 61

Part II: Photographic Works 64

Slides 65

Conclusion: Shadows Which Linger 70
Abstract

The general belief concerning the relationship between art and reality is usually that art imitates life. In this thesis, I propose that during the second half of the 19th century, this relationship changed. For a time, men of science based their ideas of women on contemporary art motifs. Stereotypes of women portrayed in novels, paintings and photographs were often mistaken for reality. These images and texts were used to validate and justify behavior towards women.

Many of us are familiar with the Victorian notion of the angel in the house vs. the fallen woman. The fallen or undesirable woman was not only the sexual woman, but also the crippled, tormented, mad, angry and opinionated woman. But in the medical profession another defining fraction was made. Not unlike the Madonna/Whore syndrome, there manifested two opposing madwoman archetypes: there was the expired, virtuous woman vs. the monstrous, animal-woman. In addition, there was also the woman-child who was on the dangerous brink of becoming one of these two creatures. In analyzing this phenomenon, I will be examining real-life asylum patients as well as representations of madwomen in Victorian imagery and texts. This thesis consists of two parts: (1) a written text; and (2) an exhibition of 26 photo-based pieces.

Part I:

While many characters are discussed in this thesis, I have selected three fictional characters who serve as the primary representatives to critique the Victorian archetypes of females: Alice from Alice in Wonderland, Ophelia from Hamlet, and Bertha from Jane Eyre.

By exploring the significant images of the woman-child, (i.e. Alice from Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass), Chapter One investigates the idealization and manipulation of little girls in Victorian literature and art as well as
the treatment of girls both by their families and members of the medical profession who deemed themselves the moral and physical guardians of all women. Especially in terms of representation, I noticed that the more the Victorian girl-child was isolated and adored, the more seductive and womanly her image in art became.

The infamous Ophelia, who was by far the most frequently painted character of the Victorian era, represents the virtuous madwoman. With the invention of photography, a strange phenomenon occurred. Art and medicine were suddenly merged in a surreal era where life began to imitate art. Asylums became a place where Ophelias, Isabellas, and Elaines were made. Chapter Two seeks to establish a link between and the literary and artistic madwoman and the role of real life asylum inmates.

Bertha from Jane Erye represents the fallen, forgotten and abused madwoman in this thesis. Chapter Three analyzes the treatment that real women received in asylums when they failed to be young, beautiful actresses, or refused to play Ophelia games. It also explores the horrific punishments and "cures," such as genital mutilation, isolation, forced medication, and psychological abuse.

Part II:

An exhibition of 26 works of art was installed in the Cal State San Marcos library from April 12 to May 17, 1998. The photographic works serve as a link between the fictional and historical 19th century women discussed in Part I and their lingering influences on 20th century women. The memory boxes, mirrors, photographs and cages are my homage to those women, both of the past and present, whose testimonies (both of words and silence), bravery and endurance continue to remind me where we have come from and where we need to go.
Introduction

In the second half of the 19th century, there generated a serious interest in "female illnesses" for which women were either celebrated or punished. This thesis takes an interdisciplinary look at this topic; a large variety of diverse sources were necessary in its construction. When analyzing the phenomenon of the Victorian madwoman, I find that medical documentation alone is not sufficient. To get a clearer understanding of what happened and why, we must delve into all of the commingling ingredients -- the fictional madwoman, the pictorial madwoman, the scientific theories concerning gender, the medical documents, and the written testimonies of asylum inmates. Only when we examine all of these factors together can we begin to understand how things got so out of control.

This period in history was a very potent time for the study of female madness, for not only were scientists and doctors of the day obsessed with it, but artists and writers were as well. This was a rare time when men of science were influenced by artists, a time when the lines between images and reality were strangely blurred. The general understanding of the relationship between art and reality is often a simple one -- that art imitates life. In this thesis, I propose that for a specific time (the last half of the Victorian era), this relationship changed. Stereotypes of women portrayed in novels, paintings and photographs were often mistaken for reality.
These images and texts were used to validate and justify behavior towards women. For a while, art became used as a factual guidebook rather than a personal observation.

This introduction provides the necessary background on the invention of photography, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Darwinist doctors, and Victorian asylums -- all of which provided a substantial contribution to the events at hand. Although the bulk of the events took place in England, the effect of this phenomenon was so immense that in several instances I have drawn on materials from both America and France.

I. Evolution Theory and Darwinist Doctors

In the second half of the 19th century, science was presented and understood on the same plane as morality and responsible guidance. While numerous "scientific" texts proved damaging to the treatment of women, none proved more devastating than Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859. While women (as well as non-white races) had long been deemed physically and mentally inferior, this new theory -- the theory of evolution -- attempted to prove it scientifically. This theory, among other things, justified and reinforced all prejudices inflicted upon women, non-Caucasians, the poor and the weak. The Evolutionary Theory *proved* that the predicament of these unfortunates of nature was scientifically predestined: the survival of the fittest. And since those most "evolved" were automatically placed on a higher moral plane, the idealization of women's innate "goodness" began to dissolve.

Carl Vogt, a natural history professor and craniologist, further crafted Darwin's ideas on human hierarchy, pursuing his own physical "proofs." His most prolific evidence was found in his vast studies of the human skull. In *Lectures on Man* (1864), he determined that the female skull was more similar to the skull of a child.
than that of a man and even more akin to the "lower races." The skull difference between Caucasian men and women was so vast, he concluded, that the white female was further removed from the white male than the black female was from the black male (Eagle Russett 32). In Idols of Perversity, Bram Dijkstra notes that "when we consider what 'improvements' evolutionists such as Darwin and Vogt made in our conceptions of the role of women in society, we discover that where woman was concerned the theory of evolution represented a baroquely inscribed license to denigrate and destroy" (163). Indeed, the ideas of these two men ignited an entire army of scientists who set forth to prove the "natural" short-comings of women.

The quest of proving women's biological inferiority was also on the agenda for Arthur Schopenhauer. In his essay "Of Women," he declared that women are "themselves childish, frivolous and short-sighted; in a word, they are big children all their life long -- a kind of intermediate stage between the child and the full-grown man, who is a man in the strict sense of the word." ¹ This notion linking women and children only strengthened the argument that men must be their "moral managers." Just as a mother must guide her child, a husband, father or brother must make it his responsibility to protect and guide the women in his life.

If men, in the evolutionary scheme of things, were destined to protect, invent, and discover in the name of "progress," then women's role was to remain in the never changing realm of reproduction. Victorian scientists "reasoned" that women were, by nature, predetermined to be ruled by their sexual organs, men by their brains. One consequence of this ideology is that each element of women's biological function -- ovaries, uterus, clitoris, fallopian tubes and menstrual cycle -- was dissected by trouble-shooting doctors. And each part, for women's organs could not be acknowledged as a self-sufficient system, was simultaneously assigned a function and a disease. Each of these parts, at any given time, could cause all sorts
of problems, from invalidism to dementia, from tuberculosis to insanity. In *Woman's Complete Guide to Health* (1869), Dr. M.E. Dirix wrote:

> Thus, women are treated for diseases of the stomach, liver, kidneys, heart, lungs, etc.; yet, in most instances, these diseases will be found on due investigation, to be, in reality, no diseases at all, but merely the sympathetic reactions or the symptoms of one disease, namely, the disease of the womb (23-24).

This new evidence showed that women were not only the weaker sex, but also the afflicted sex; as a result, the medical profession thrived, igniting a whole new breed of specialists who focused solely on "the women's problem." If men were responsible for the everyday well being of women, then doctors would become the saviors of fallen or sick women in their time of need. In order to prevent illness, all women, no matter how healthy they might seem, were encouraged to focus their total attention on their uterus and resist *wasting* energy on their brain. As the medical profession saw it, women were extremely limited in their potential capabilities. Wasted energy would doubtlessly prove harmful when they should need it later for reproduction.

The infamous Dr. S. Weir Mitchell \(^2\) proposed "the rest cure." Basically, if a woman found herself suffering from postpartum or other depressions, restlessness, insomnia or neurosis, the cure prescribed was total isolation for six weeks. Throughout the duration of the *cure* the woman was not to read, have visitors, eat food save for the blandest, and in extreme cases was not even to get out of bed to urinate (Ehrenreich and English 131). The rest cure could be effective both in an asylum or at home.

Curiously, this was a time when many women diagnosed themselves as "sick". The reason, however, had little to do with female sexual organs, but rather with the plight of being female -- the pressure to remain uneducated, marry young, and bear
children was traumatically unappealing to some women. Today, it is generally understood that most women taken by "invalidism" were seriously depressed by the understanding of their predestined life-long confinement. Their sickness was never fatal, and rarely cured. Notable women, such as Florence Nightingale, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Alice James, became mysteriously "sick" as they grew to understand what their expected roles were as women. One day a woman would be thought healthy (or at least as healthy as a woman could be) and the next, could not or would not get about of bed. Women who longed for freedom and independence were forced to marry. Women with creative or intellectual ambitions were silenced. When such spirited women as Perkins Gilman and Nightingale managed to break free, their sickness ceased.

II. Visual Arts

Art played the central role in the unraveling of this drama. It is in the assumptions about madwomen found in medical documentation which echo the stories told on so many canvases. It was not uncommon (as it might be considered today) for Victorian doctors or men of science to concern themselves with fashionable transitions in art. In The Female Malady: Women, Virtue, and English Culture, 1830-1980, Elaine Showalter attributes this interest in fictional portrayals of madness to the belief that fabled "accounts of female insanity . . . are psychologically much richer than the descriptions by Victorian doctors" (72). It would seem that the medical profession in general craved such exciting characters as patients. There are two major movements in Victorian art which this thesis will primarily concentrate on -- the rise of photography, the "new art," and the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.
The Birth of Photography

From its advent in 1839, until the early 1850's, photography served primarily as a tool for portraiture. But in the mid-1850s and 1860s, a few artists took it a step further, first as a preliminary step to painting -- documenting a model they wished to paint, and later as a substitute of the painting itself. Among the first to make this transition were O.G. Rejlander, one of the first to specialize in human forms in a painterly context; Arthur Mumby, the "gentleman" amateur photographer who hired other photographers (including O.G. Rejlander) to work with him in the photographic transformation of his "lower servant" and secret love Hannah Cullwick into a "lady," a "Chimney Sweep," "Mary Magdalene," and a "gentleman"; Julia Margaret Cameron, who created spiritual images of martyrs, Madonnas, and the angelic nature of babes (her famous photograph "The Kiss of Peace" exemplifies all of these motifs); and Lewis Carroll, who is both revered and scorned for his images of little girls. This text will focus primarily on images produced by Lewis Carroll.

While essentially remembered for his children's books, Carroll is also known as one of the pioneers in the new science-art. Between 1856 and 1880, Carroll created an immense body of photographic work. He is known for two distinct subjects in his photographs: famous intellectuals and sweet-faced children. Although I will be concentrating on his images of little girls for the purpose of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge his portraits of adults because often they were important artists whose work he emulated. The influence of the Pre-Raphaelites is undeniably present in his work. Carroll, in turn, played a role in igniting a whole generation of asylum photographers. It is here that the separation of "imagined" and reality became diffused.

In this thesis, I will carefully examine the immense power and influence photography is capable of exerting. In Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes repeatedly refers to the quality of "infinity" which photographs possess. Photographs, more
than any other source of documentation, gives us the feel of a moment (real or manipulated) which existed once and can never be repeated. He writes:

I should prefer that instead of constantly relocating the advent of photography in its social and economic context, we should also inquire as to the anthropological place of Death and of the new image. For Death must be somewhere within a society; if it is no longer (or less intensely) in religion, it must be elsewhere; perhaps in this image which produces Death while trying to produce life . . .

*Life/Death*: the paradigm is reduced to a simple click, the one separating the initial prose from the final print (92).

When examining Carroll's images of little girls, this idea of death in photographs becomes particularly relevant. Always, the girls ceased to be photographed when they reached puberty. This, indeed, marked the death of childhood -- the death of innate purity. The photographs of the asylum, as we shall see, are so meticulous in their orchestration, that the absence, or death, of the sitter seems to have already set in before the fatal "click."

*The Pre-Raphaelite Painters and Poets*

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in 1848. Its primary members included Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais. The group began on a self-assigned pilgrimage to "revolt against the tide of triviality and vulgarity" (Wood 10), which they believed to be the art of the age. Their aim was to return to nature. They found their course through literature and were very interested in medieval themes, as were many of the romantic poets whose work they drew upon. In his book *Pre-Raphaelites*, Christopher Wood keenly describes the curious ambitions of the brotherhood:
The Pre-Raphaelite movement is a blend of romantic idealism, scientific rationalism and morality. This typically mid-Victorian mixture is, like so much in the Victorian age, full of paradox. How else can one explain a group of artists and intellectuals whose idea of modernity was to paint the middle ages? The Pre-Raphaelites, were modern and medieval at the same time, and to understand them is to understand the Victorians (12).

The self-chosen name "Pre-Raphaelites" illustrates their esteem for the trend they saw in Italian painting before Raphael's reign as a master painter. It is for this reason that their work is often ignored today. Few people want to study a movement which went backwards in time rather than forward, considering the movement to be a regression rather than innovative. But while their style and sense of nobility were old, their subjects were certainly Victorian. The majority of their paintings focused on images of women. They depicted women as madwomen and martyrs, as mothers and prostitutes.

An immense amount of work by the Pre-Raphaelites exists celebrating the beauty of women, both in domestic life and fantasy. Among the most characteristic of these works are Rossetti's "Ecce Ancilla Domini," which poses as a beautiful, if not unorthodox, look at the Annunciation with its frightened Mary (1850); Millais' "Ophelia" (1852); Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix" (1864-70), a tribute to Elizabeth Siddal after her death, and Holman Hunt's "The Lady of Shalott" (1886-1905).

While a substantial portion of work by the Pre-Raphaelites glorifies the literary madwomen, a few painters chose to criticize what they saw as social evils of the time. Ford Madox Brown tackled the problem of illegitimate children. In the only Victorian painting I know of to address the issue, "Take your Son Sir!" (1852-92), the painter directly places the blame on the seducer. In several instances, William Holman Hunt attempted to draw attention to the tragedy of prostitutes and
mistresses. "The Awakening Consciousness" (1853) is the most obvious of these warnings, packed with symbols from a cat-caught bird to a partially unwoven tapestry. Rossetti was also interested in illustrating the tragedy of prostitution, earning the respect of Lewis Carroll for his notorious "Found" (1855), which remained unfinished at the time of his death.

Their influence on Victorian culture, photography, gender roles, and doctors concerned with the "women's disease" cannot be denied. The images of the Pre-Raphaelites played a key role, whether consciously or not, in the development and treatment of the Victorian madwoman.

This strange marriage of art, literature and science provided a fundamental influence on the way women were perceived in the 19th century. With new scientific theories proclaiming the inferiority of the female sex, artists and writers divided their icons between glorified women of unearthly virtue, and pathetic, un-evolved creatures who were easily led from the moral path. The medical world, in return, took these images and texts as testimonies which validated and reinforced its eternal pursuit of "truth." Only when we examine all aspects of this incestuous cycle can we determine how assaults on women, both "mad" and "sane", were allowed to thrive -- and why many traces of these events continue to haunt us the following century.
Chapter One:
Alice, The Victorian Woman-Child,
and Preventative Medicine

When examining the role that women played in Victorian culture, I believe it is only natural that one should begin by exploring the mysterious Victorian girl-child. I would first like to investigate the idealization and manipulation of little girls in literature and art, and the treatment of girls both by their families as well as the medical profession, which deemed itself the moral and physical guardian of all women, young or old. The Victorians' moral opinions, in particular, tended to be expressed in extremes. A woman was either pure or filthy, while a young girl was indisputably pure. But the moment she became a woman, she became enslaved to her inferior sexual organs and lost her ability to govern her own virtue.

The Victorian middle class was very concerned with the nature of literature and art of the time. This chapter explores how selected images and texts were construed by society as a whole; for whenever anything, whether it be an era or a person, is idealized, there is always the danger of ignorance. When archetypal ideals are expected to be met, it becomes all too easy to turn one's back on the grittiness of reality. And whenever society is in denial of its darker occurrences, there are always those who will take advantage of it. In my research, I have found
reoccurring contradictions between the alleged Victorian ideal -- everyone behaving morally and cerebrally -- and historical accounts.

Fearing that women would inevitably fail them, many Victorian writers and artists turned to the girl-child. In her naivété and innocence, she would serve them well as the icon of their imaginary Eden. In the little girl, there is presumably no defiance, no sexual threat. Women, it was deemed, were incapable of evolving beyond the mental capacities of children. In fact, the only difference between women and children was that women, through the sole fault of their sexual organs, remained impotent in matters of moral judgment. Grown women, if not carefully managed, were capable of allowing their lust, vanity, and greed to lead them into the most dangerous of places -- the realm of men. Men, it was common knowledge, were intellectually and morally superior and were able to control their every action. As one 19th century writer, George Romanes, writes in his article, "Mental Differences between Men and Women:" "We can only regard it as a fortunate accident of inheritance that there is not a greater difference between the intelligence of men and women" (662). Romanes would have us believe that, considering women's brain size, it is a miracle that women are not completely unable to perform even everyday tasks properly (such as running the home).

Some of the most relevant and telling literary and visual works concerning girl-children of this time are the books, photographs, and letters of Lewis Carroll. Though often mistaken to be solely for children, both of Carroll's Alice books, Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, serve as vivid and unexpected accounts of the lives of women in Victorian England. His stories illustrate both the wonders of childhood and the entrapment of womanhood.

These books were written in a time when little girls were idealized as the purest members of an otherwise ugly and frightening world. Carroll himself had a particular phobia of little boys, believing them to be hideous. But even those who
did not share his neurosis believed little girls to be sacred from the world of sin. (Auerbach 131). In her "Introduction" to Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, Camille Paglia writes that "For Rousseau and Wordsworth, children have a primal innocence and purity; they are saintly and sexless ambassadors of nature, untouched by corrupt society." She further notes that for Carroll, this is true only of female children: "Rarely fearful and never frail or hysterical, Alice reflects Carroll's real-life adulation of little girls as superior to boys, whom he loathed and avoided" (vii-ix). The danger was not just of sin itself, but of age (womanhood) and awakening (to sexuality, creativity, and sin). A woman would be far more likely to comprehend sin and, furthermore, indulge in it. Carroll himself wrote:

"What wert thou, dream-Alice, in thy foster-father's eyes? How shall he picture thee? Loving, first, loving and gentle: loving as a dog (forgive the prosaic simile, but I know of no earthly love so pure and perfect), and gentle as a fawn: ... and lastly, curious -- wildly curious, and with the eager enjoyment of life that comes only in the happy hours of childhood, when all is new and fair, and when Sin and Sorrow are but names -- empty words, signifying nothing!" ¹

Alice is the quintessential Victorian dream-child. She is also the fallen woman -- innocence corrupted by curiosity. She exists as a Pre-Raphaelite fetish. In Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Other Glorified Outcasts, Nina Auerbach describes Alice as being both "scandalous and blessed" and "slave and queen" to the strange lands she invades (152). Carroll was a great admirer of the haunting images of childlike prostitutes that filled Dante Gabriel Rossetti's paintings, warning young girls and men alike of the tragic, spiritual drudgery resulting from this path. He described Rossetti's painting "Found" -- an image depicting a fallen girl humiliated upon being recognized by a man who loved her as an innocent years before -- as "one of the most marvelous things I have seen done in painting" (Cohen 113). As
with the Pre-Raphaelites' paintings of young girls, Alice is lost, but determined to find her own way home independently.

Victorian culture idealized the woman-child, and through the character of Alice, Carroll was able to study the Victorian woman (of whom he was so terrified) hidden inside the little girl. Alice's appearance and innocence have all the charm of a child, but her polite, logical manner, and curious nature are rapidly pushing her to the verge of womanhood. Alice -- like many women and little girls -- is often the subject of intense observation by others. In the chapter, "Looking-Glass Insects," she becomes a specimen on a train: "All this time the Guard was looking at her, first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera glass" (210). High on her pedestal, Alice has indeed become an insect.

As with the photographs of Carroll's child friends, this Alice is celebrated not only for her innocence, but also for the dormant power which won't be revealed for a few more years. Carroll's protest against adult femaleness was not merely that it robbed them of their innocence or chastity, but also of their vitality (Auerbach 157). In the flower garden, the rose predicts Alice's inevitable growth: "That's not your fault ... you're beginning to fade, you know -- and then one can't help one's petals getting a little untidy" (196). Along her journey, other characters further anatomize her age:

'Seven years and six months!' Humpty Dumpty repeated thoughtfully. 'An uncomfortable sort of age. Now if you'd asked my advice, I'd have said 'Leave off at seven' -- but it's too late now.'

'I never ask advice about growing,' Alice said indignantly:

'Too proud?' the other inquired.

Alice felt even more indignant at this suggestion. 'I mean,' she said, 'that one can't help growing older.'

'One can't, perhaps,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'but two can.
With proper assistance, you might have left off at seven' (263-264).

Time and time again, when his child friends grew up, Carroll felt abandoned. Little girls who once adored his every word went on to make new friends, form new interests, and eventually get married. He knows that there is the chance that Alice would grow up and lose her beautiful, whimsical nature. She would no longer belong to herself, but rather to society. His fears are foreshadowed for the reader: Alice desires to become queen, and eventually does so.

While Alice possesses much of the freedom of childhood, it is apparent that she is already bound to Victorian moral codes and expectations. In her essay, "Alice in Wonderland: A Curious Child," from Romantic Imprisonment, Nina Auerbach notes that Alice's "violent and unconscious search for 'the moral' of things echoes Alice's own violence and search for 'the rules'' (139). Alice is constantly annoyed at the fact that her "rules" are non-existent in Wonderland and on the other side of the looking glass. Like the scientist and doctors of the Victorian world, Alice is obsessed with issues of control. Even the most banal events, if not properly executed, can drive Alice into aggravation. At the tea party, we see Alice's annoyance at the lack of social etiquette. She also exhibits little patience with the Dutchess and the pig baby, the rolling hedgehogs (who serve as balls) in the Queen's croquet game, and the overtly rude flowers.

Throughout the two books, whenever she cries, she immediately reprimands herself for her lack of control. She is as critical of herself as she is with others, often scolding herself. We see her own moral dilemmas regarding her desire to cheat and the punishment she inflicts upon herself for these impure thoughts:

She generally gave herself very good advice, (though she seldom followed it,) and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes, and she once remembered trying to box
her own ears for having cheated herself in a croquet game she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people (24).

This self-punishment is reflective of what was expected of the Victorian woman. At a time when martyrdom was celebrated, the more a woman sacrificed herself, the more attractive she was. Women became much more prized if their virtues consisted of "self-denial" and "self-abasement." The ideal wife thought only of her family and of her job maintaining the household. She scarcely had a need of anything self-gratifying, such as quests for knowledge, little vanities, and sometimes even food. 3

While Alice does indeed indulge in self-punishment, her notion of suitable punishment is quite different from that of Victorian doctors and husbands, as it is chiefly concerned with justice. In Wonderland, the Queen orders beheadings without reasons, and issues arrests before crimes have been committed:

'For instance now,' she went on, sticking a large piece of plaster on her finger as she spoke, 'there's the king's messenger. He's in prison now, being punished: and the trial doesn't even begin until next Wednesday: and of course the crime comes last of all.'

'Suppose that he never commits the crime?' said Alice.

'That would be all the better, wouldn't it?' the Queen said, as she bound the plaster round her finger with a bit of ribbon.

Alice felt there was no denying that. 'Of course it would be all the better,' she said: 'but it wouldn't be all the better his being punished.'

'You're wrong there at any rate,' said the Queen: 'were you ever punished?'

'Only for faults,' said Alice.

'And you were all the better for it, I know!' The Queen
said triumphantly.

'Yes, but I had done the things I was punished for, Alice said:

'That makes all the difference.'

'But if you hadn't done them,' the Queen said, 'that would have
been better still; better and better and better!' (246)

Alice is mortified by this unfairness, yet she is small and powerless to fight it.
Likewise, a woman sentenced to be cured in an insane asylum was thought to come out "better," even though there had been no required proof of her insanity, only the opinion of a related male. Deficient in her ability to defend herself, a woman may well have submitted to the "cures" rather than fight in vain.

As the games on the other side of the looking glass are played with of live animals, we see Alice's desires to introduce human social rules to the animal kingdom. This is an exceptionally fascinating metaphor because in it Carroll clearly draws a picture of the rules and constraints placed upon Victorian women. At the Queen's croquet game, Alice becomes irritated that her club, which is really a bird, refuses to hit the ball. Alice wishes to punish her bird because he is not obeying her, just as wives were sometimes punished with clitorectomies or strait-jackets for disobedience towards their husbands. The bird is acting as its own agent, assuming its freedom from Alice, just as one day, a grown-up Alice may attempt not to submit to her husband's restraints or abuse. As the Victorian woman virtually had no voice or name for herself, she was an easy target. Is it cruel to discipline or torment a creature who is believed to be incapable of thoughts or feelings beyond a superficial level? Society apparently thought not. As women were believed to be unable to think for themselves, it was consequently not cruelty which drove their husbands' domineering actions, but rather moral obligations to look after the weaker sex.

Towards the end of the story, Alice finds herself cornered as the Red Knight declares her his prisoner. The White Knight fights the Red Knight to rescue her.
She tells him that she doesn't want to be a prisoner. She wants to be a queen. This simple statement is pregnant with meaning. The Victorian woman was usually regarded as one of three things: a whore or fallen woman, a prisoner/possession (a wife or daughter), or for the very few women who were lucky enough to possess a bit of freedom, a queen. Alice, on the cusp of womanhood, can be seen as any of these things. If she decides to be sinful, to give in to her selfish desires, to cheat at croquet, then she may well become a fallen woman. If she decides to be a good and obedient wife, she will become the prisoner. But if she is to follow her own moral code, and her own set of rules, she may become the celebrated Victorian muse or madwoman. Because Alice is young and pretty she is allowed to become queen, to be celebrated as an eccentric. But this cannot last forever. As Carroll foreshadows, she will grow up and have to enter the world of being the "good" woman. Were Alice older or less attractive she would have most certainly been punished for her desires.

As she crosses the brook a golden crown appears on her head. The red queen and the white queen move into the squares on both sides of Alice. They test her on various nonsense subjects to see if she is queen material. At a feast for the new queen, the red queen quickly introduces Alice to the plum pudding to prevent her from slicing it. She reasons that one cannot possibly cut into an acquaintance. This, for me, was one of the most revealing moments in the book. This is representative of all human nature. Individuals, as well as societies and even nations, can destroy anything that is foreign to them. We can cut apart and change and bend things until they have been introduced to us. Once a person or an object has been personalized to us, it is much more difficult to destroy. It is no longer a part of the nameless masses. As women were believed by many Darwinists and doctors to "not have a brain" and to merely be "a sexual organ. And that is the beauty of it," 4 it should
come as no surprise that when it came to decisions regarding their health or well-being, women were essentially nameless.

Carroll's lesser known works, his photographs, are even more telling of the roles little girls were expected to play. Over his lifetime, he photographed numerous young girls. Many of the images have a strange, theatrical quality to them. He delighted in dressing up the girls as such unlikely characters as Chinamen, beggar girls, and Little Red Riding Hood. But there are other images which have a much more adult feel. Several nudes, particularly the one of Evelyn Hatch taken in 1878, are somewhat unsettling. Evelyn has been described as a "beautiful little odalisque" (Auerbach 168). But there is also a strangeness to the picture. Indeed, Evelyn is a pretty little girl, but her expression does not seem to be that of a child. Rather, her gaze is strong and her face appears old. As she lounges, her little body transforms into that of an awkward nymph -- arms luxuriously bent behind her head, rib-cage pointed skyward to emphasize the curve of hips which will not grow voluptuous for years. Trapped somewhere between adult sexuality and childish innocence, the overall feel is one of uneasiness. In Camera Lucia, Roland Barthes discusses the difference between pornography and erotic photographs. He notes that while pornography focuses on the sexual organs as "a motionless object," "the erotic photograph, on the contrary (and this is its very condition) does not make the sexual organs its central object; it may very well not show them at all; it takes the spectator outside its frame" (59). Carroll's photographs of little girls seem to linger somewhere between these definitions: clothed or unclothed, they seem as dependent on the role of womanly attraction as childish innocence.

This idealization of young children soon became a trend in Victorian art. As women became increasingly less respected with the spread of Darwinist ideas, more and more writers and artists turned to the image of the child as a "replacement
object" of affection. Whenever something is put on a high enough pedestal, reality is bound to become blurred. That is exactly what happened here. Sweet-faced innocents, thought to be the epitome of goodness, soon began to be desired. And when they were desired, the paintings and photographs of the little girls began to look more and more like grown women. In his insightful book, Idols of Perversity, Bram Dijkstra spends a considerable amount of time on this trend of glorifying naked children, pointing out, "how thin the line separating 'idealism' art and pornography had become." He further writes, "It all seemed very pure, this exploration of the soft vulnerability of childhood, very 'ideal' -- but it is obvious that these men were playing with the fire that turns innocence into sin" (190).

One of the most interesting Pre-Raphaelite paintings which exemplifies this warning of womanhood is Apple Blossoms by John Everett Millais, painted from 1856-1858. At first glance, it appears to be another pretty, but flighty, portrayal of eight young girls at a picnic in an apple orchard. Upon a closer examination, however, the viewer is solicited to take heed to subtle warnings laced throughout the picture: on the far left side of the panel, there are four girls submerged in the task of serving porridge. They are dressed conservatively in plain, dark colors. Two of the girls have their eyes cast down, while the eyes of the other two stay within the safe realm of their group. Behind them are apple trees, moderately in bloom. In the center of the painting are two girls, considerably younger, modestly attentive toward the older girls. The apple trees behind them are barren. The last two girls occupy the right side of the painting. A girl in dark colors focuses her attention on what is indeed the focal point of the painting. A beautiful young girl dressed in bright yellow lounges suggestively on her back, her eyes brazenly confronting the viewer. Her lips are bright red, and she seductively bites on a long strand of grass. Behind her, the orchard is wildly fecund. And there can be no mistake about Millais'
message as one notices a reaper (the very one clutched by death) pointing right down to the girl's heart. We can see what will inevitably become of such a girl.

Indeed, the summer of childhood was advised by the medical profession to last as long as possible. There were many recipes for delaying womanhood. Among the most popular and "effective" methods were instructing that pubescent and teenage girls "remain[ed] in the nursery, took cold shower baths, avoid[ed] feather beds and novels, eliminat[ed] meat from their diets and wore drawers" (Showalter 75). Delayed menstruation was a matter of utmost seriousness. It was believed that allowing menstruation to occur in a normal manner further induced chances of insanity, rebelliousness, and moral corruption. The Victorian medical profession, believing themselves to be "evolved," made a habit of collecting these young girls with hopes of "curing" them. It was not at all uncommon for a woman-child to become depressed, neurotic or hysterical. Her entire identity, after all, was threatened upon the appearance of menstruation. No longer would she be regarded as the epitome of goodness. Upon menstruation, she was suspect to every vile, selfish act imaginable. It is not surprising that so many young girls found themselves hopelessly confused. The descent into womanhood raised many questions and, unfortunately, there were no answers. There were, however, asylums dedicated to the restoration of these girls' sanity. While many doctors found Victorian images of women and girls to be charming and "truthful," they were reluctant to discuss (or even acknowledge) the many problems inflicted by their own moral short falls which plagued many asylums. It was not uncommon for female inmates, many of them young girls, to become pregnant. Accounts of these pregnancies place the blame on the keepers and male patients, never on doctors (Showalter 79-80). Children born to "insane" women were either given to their families, or in the case of lower class women, the babies became societal slaves in workhouses.
The most revolting evidence of this moral hypocrisy can be found in an anonymous book, *My Secret Life*. It serves as a self-pleasing, boasting account of the raping and drugging of little girls. This text, which I have not been able to track down in its entirety, is discussed and quoted by Vern Bullough in his book, *Science in the Bedroom: The History of Sex Research*. Apparently, this case is extreme. I do not claim that these practices were widespread (although the author does make that claim). But it is relevant, if only for the fact that Victorian society would have denied the very existence of such violent episodes performed in the text, as it often did with the problem of asylum abuses. The following quote is disturbing in its arrogance, but it is, unfortunately, an insightful glimpse through the peekhole of Victorian evil:

'Verily a gentleman had better fuck them for money, than a butcher boy (fuck them) for nothing. It is the fate of such girls to be fucked young, neither laws social or legal can prevent it. Given opportunities -- who has them like children of the poor -- and they will copulate. It is the laws of nature which nothing can thwart. A man need have no 'compunctions of conscious' -- as it is termed -- about having such girls first, for assuredly he will had done no harm, and has only been an agent in the inevitable. The consequences to the female being the same, whosoever she may first have been fucked by' (161).

Several questions and paradoxes at once make themselves known. What does he mean by "It is the law of nature?" The one thing which Victorian/Darwinist philosophies repeatedly stressed is that man is in control. He is in control of his every action, his every choice. We may also ask, what is natural about drugging and raping children? When he attests that there is no need for guilt or moral thoughts because, "assuredly he has done no harm, and has only been an agent in the inevitable," is he saying that because children and women cannot match men's
intellect, that they also have no capacity for suffering? Or merely that suffering is inevitable to these little girls because they were, in fact, born female? He claims that it is justified because they are daughters of the poor. Although he denies it, he lives under the same Victorian pretenses as everyone else. He commits criminal acts towards the most vulnerable and untraceable targets and brags anonymously. Lastly, are the "consequences to the female" really all the "same," even though he has had sex with little girls as young as ten? Did he not change their lives? In the next two chapters, I will explore what became of these rape victims when they were later handed over to asylums for their wild and hysterical imaginations.

But the questions do not end with the text of My Secret Life itself. Dr. Bullough provides a few questions for us as well. He adds that "we know from other sources that it was not uncommon in the 19th century to chloroform the girls during penetration." (161) The "other sources" are not revealed. We are also left without a clear understanding of what, exactly, "uncommon" means.

It became easy for Victorian men -- husbands, doctors and strangers -- to get away with abusive behavior. Everything surrounding them, from moral codes to art to Darwinist psychologists, contributed to the thick veil that men were so evolved, so completely in control of their every action, that these very atrocities were covered up before they were even performed. If it was inconceivable to society, to the moral managers, that these violations could ever happen, why then should I be surprised that little was done to protect these little girls? Once again, I find myself questioning my research. Why do I want to uncover all these horrors? Perhaps, it is because these horrors still occur. Perhaps, because we have our own code of silence, our own cultural mythology which feeds on denial and placement of blame.
Chapter Two:
The Ophelia Syndrome

It is startling to what degree Victorian writers and artists alike were fixated on the ideal of the virginal, self-relinquishing madwoman. Actually, she really wasn't a woman at all, but merely the shadow of a woman, a saint or an angel. There were several primary ingredients for becoming such an elusive creature. First, and perhaps most importantly, she must be young and virginal. Physical beauty is also a great attribute. Next, she must be completely self-sacrificing, giving attention to nothing other than her virtue, her noble love or domestic life. In the peak of demonstrating her virtue, she must surrender the only thing she has left -- her mind. Once she has lost her mind, her body may expire. Virtuous madness followed by death is indeed the fundamental element in recreating the Ophelia archetype.

It is only in death that the madwoman can transcend into a state of permanent purity. If a certain virtuous lady were to live long enough, she would surely face her fall from grace sooner or later. For if there was one thing the Victorians knew about women, it was that they all would crumble at the first offering of sin if their virtue was not properly surveilled. In Idols of Perversity, Bram Dijkstra poignantly describes this phenomenon of death as becoming "a woman's ultimate sacrifice of her being to the males she had been born to serve" (26). Under rare circumstances, as we shall
see with Christina Rossetti's poem "Goblin's Market," the heroine may be allowed to live. But first she must suffer through sacrifice and finally, redemption.

Victorian painters were especially interested in the desperate maidens depicted in Romantic poetry. This is particularly true of writers and painters of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. While the Pre-Raphaelites painted women as many different archetypes, none were so adored as the beloved madwoman. As painters, they were dramatically dependent on literature. The majority of their work was literary-based. It was they who ignited the trend to worship the virtuous madwoman that lasted well past the turn of the century.

The tragic heroines in the poems of John Keats and Lord Alfred Tennyson were predominately illustrated by the group. Favorite characters, such as Isabel, Madeline, Mariana, The Lady of Shalott, Elaine and Ophelia, were repeatedly recreated in an attempt to capture the mysterious essence of these sad tales of purity and demise. It is apparent that the Pre-Raphaelites were consciously affected by these texts, as their own poetry continued recycling themes of ideal love and virtuous death.

Ever since her inception in Shakespeare's Hamlet, Ophelia set the standards for the ideal madwoman. For the Victorians, she was not only the ideal madwoman, but in many ways, the ideal woman. All literary madwomen who followed are deeply indebted to the illustrious Ophelia. There are literally hundreds of Ophelia paintings which exist from that time. It was she who began the trend which no human woman could live up to. In archetypal terms, she is reminiscent of the Virgin Mary. She represents purity and sacrifice. Yet she is also akin to Mary Magdolene. She becomes both saintly and desired. In her madness, a paradox is born.

The most famous and influential of the Victorian Ophelias is John Everett Millais', painted in 1852. This painting hauntingly depicts Ophelia's actual moment
of death. She drifts in the river, her pale golden hair encircling her body. Her hands reach out slightly as the water encircles her wrists, and brightly colored petals fall out of her delicate fingers. Her hair drifts about her and her eyes are glazed over. But, perhaps, the most startling aspect of the painting is her mouth. It is open, suggesting one last breath or one last song. Her surroundings are vibrant and clear. They are almost as "lovely" as Ophelia herself.

The model was Elizabeth Siddal, Rossetti’s model and future wife. The painting was created in winter. Millais requested that Siddal lie in a bathtub heated by votive candles. The candles eventually burnt out, and by the time Millais noticed, Siddal had nearly caught pneumonia. Her father sued Millais for the doctor’s bill. While Siddal recovered, this incident is often thought of as foreshadowing her own tragic death. She herself played the role of the sacrificing, under-valued wife, having had a twelve-year tormented love affair with Rossetti before she committed suicide. With her, Rossetti created his own real-life Ophelia.

Water plays a key role in the majority of these tragic tales. The reoccurring theme of the watery grave works particularly well when dealing with issues of rebirth and transcendence. In her book Taking the Waters, Alev Lytle Croutier contemplates the ever-present quest to understand the power of water. She describes water as being "sanctified as the source of life, the seminal fluid, the juice of the earth’s womb" (14). Water further evokes images of baptism, magic, and death. Ophelia's death, as described by Gertrude, has become an icon in itself:

There is a willow grows askant the brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the grassy stream.
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name.
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious silver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her cloths 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 her garments, heavy from their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death. (144)

Water lives up to its accusations of paradox in the case of Ophelia. It does indeed purify her, transforming her into an angel or mermaid, baptizing her in saintly martyrdom. Her earthly clothes "heavy with drink" drag her to her "muddy death."

Another curious inclination for dying maidens is to engage in song. Ever since Ophelia's bittersweet decline, the element of song is present in nearly every glorified madwoman's death. Ophelia's brother Laertes comments, "Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself, She turns to favor and prettiness" (135). And, indeed, is Ophelia ever portrayed as lovelier than when in her fateful song:

   And will 'a not come again?
   And will 'a not come again?
   No, no he is dead;
   Go to thy deathbed;
He will never come again.
His beard was white as snow,
All flaxen as a pole.
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast a moan.
God 'a mercy on his soul! (135-136)

Ever since the advent of Ophelia, dying words and dying chants take on a whole new shade of romance.

The painters of this time were not content to merely paint a character once. Rather, characters such as Ophelia or the Lady of Shalott were painted numerous times by the same painter. This in itself is not extraordinary, but what is fascinating is that they would constantly recreate the same scene, rarely straying from the elements of water and song.

John Keats' Isabella, from his poem *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*, was another Pre-Raphaelite favorite. Isabella is a young girl with a classic tragic problem: She is in love with Lorenzo, who likewise adores her, but whom her base and vile brothers believe is not worthy of her. They conspire to murder Lorenzo, telling their sister that she has been abandoned. Always the faithful Victorian maiden, Isabella fades away waiting for his return, until she is plagued by a vision of the dead and buried Lorenzo. Her rise in moral virtue aided in the decline of her sex appeal:

In the days of autumn, on their eves

The breath of Winter comes far away,
And the sick west continually bereaves
Of some gold tinge, and plays a round delay
Of death among the bushed and the leaves,
To make all bare before he dares to stray
From his northern cavern. So sweet Isabella

29
By gradual decay from beauty fell,

Because Lorenzo did not come. . . . (183)

But while the poet allows his audience to imagine Isabella's youth to fade, in the painter's eyes, she becomes more beautiful than ever. Her descent into melancholy followed by madness is rewarded. Her virtue has proved true, her love sincere. If we look at the paintings depicting earlier scenes of the story, such as the 1848-49 version by John Everett Millais, we see that there is nothing particularly glamorous about her. Her hair is severely tied into a long braid, her lips are thin, and her dress is extremely modest. She is not unattractive, but rather a little plain and meek, devoid of the usual effulgent characteristics of the Pre-Raphaelite women. At this point in the story, she is not yet what the Pre-Raphaelites called a "stunner." But there is hope for her. A little pious descent can increase the appeal of any young heroine. As the painters became more infatuated, the "pale ladies of death" (Marsh 135), became more of a physical ideal as well. Somehow the "Madonna" and the "Whore" got confused and the madwoman became a manifestation of men's desire for both. Isabella's song is alluring in its morbidity:

O Melancholy, linger here a while!
O Music, Music, Breath despondently!
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,
Unknown, Lethean sigh to us -- O sigh!
Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile;
Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,
And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,
Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs (188).

It is for this madness that she was celebrated. For the Pre-Raphaelite painter, few things could have been more seductive than learning that "simple Isabel is soon to
Among the dead: She withers, like a palm/Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm (189). Indeed, it is her inevitable decline into madness and death which inspired the most colorful, passionate images. Isabella receives a vision of the dead Lorenzo. In the middle of the night, she rushes to his unmarked grave. She retrieves the body, cuts off its head and places it in a pot, where it becomes her only companion. In William Holman Hunt's image depicting the latter scene, we see a more soulful Isabella. No longer is she mousy, but rather lustrous, with an abundance of rich tangled hair and dark haunting eyes. No longer is she presented in stiff, respectable Victorian attire. She must now roam mournfully in body clinging gowns of white.

In the eyes of the Victorian male, from painters to psychiatrists, she has claimed with great authority her ability to attract. Only on her way to death, has she become a sort of sex-goddess. While her death does not exactly entail a wistful drowning, her story is not devoid of the magic of water. In fact, it is Isabella's tears which turn her pot of basil into Lorenzo's watery sepulcher. But even Lorenzo's baptism of tears is not enough to preserve Isabella. Her brothers become suspicious of the pot of basil and steal it. Upon realizing their crime is known, they run away, leaving Isabella to sing her "sad ditty" -- "O cruelty, to steal my Basil-pot from me! (190).

Occasionally in Victorian imagery and text, the broken or abandoned woman is rescued from her decent into madness and death. In these cases, demise is ultimately replaced by moral salvation. Christina Rossetti's Goblin's Market illustrated such a (near-fatal) fall. Goblin's Market explores the journey of the fallen woman, her loss of innocence, the dreadful consequences, sacrifice, and, finally, redemption. The two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, find themselves in the middle of a true Victorian crisis when they are encountered by goblin men. While the two girls know that:

We must not look at goblin men
We must not buy their fruits
Who knows upon what soil they feed
Their hungry, thirsty roots? (1509).

Laura, however, ignores her sister’s warnings, and allows herself to be seduced by the luscious fruit. As she has no money, she buys the fruit by selling a lock of her golden hair, and as she symbolically loses her innocence, her virginity even, "she dropped a tear more rare than pearl." She fully surrenders herself to the animalistic sensuality of the beautiful, messy fruit:

She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore
She sucked until her lips were sore (1511).

After Laura has tasted the "forbidden fruit," she begins to dwindle, growing old and gray before her time. Now that she has lost her "virginity," her looks must fade. Not only is she no longer worthy of being a "modest maid" or a wife, she is no longer capable of further seduction. Laura's decline is eminently Victorian -- she shrinks and grays to pay for her pleasure, an act which can not stop until she dies in punishment or is redeemed. She has become self-indulgent, forgetting her place as Eve's daughter and man's servant.

Thus, it is up to Lizzie, the "good" Victorian girl, to sacrifice herself in order to save her sister. This can be examined on two levels. First, it allows Lizzie to be a martyr. She goes to seek out the goblin men to buy her sister fruit. The goblin men are suspicious, and after they have taken her gold coin (she does not offer her hair), they insist that she eat the fruit on the premises. When she refuses, they violently assault her, pulling her hair and ripping her clothes. In this moment, there is a strange irony. Rossetti is warning women against the dangers of temptation, and
yet, these punishments are much more reflective of what may be inflicted by men and society rather than the sins themselves.

In her biography, Christina Rossetti - A Writer's Life, Jan Marsh perceptively notes:

When Lizzie goes to trade with the goblins, she politely offers her penny, 'mindful of Jeanne,' and is described with metaphors used of sexual conquest in a long Renaissance tradition. Most importantly, moreover, the goblins' assault on Laura is a seduction, while that on Lizzie is attempted rape (233).

This story serves not only as a warning against temptation, but also as an admonition against the violent danger which exists towards women.

Goblin's Market also serves as a tribute to sisterhood, both spiritual and tangible. The poem was dedicated to Christina's own sister Maria, who she often referred to as a "born teacher," as well as her dearest friend. Christina was constantly influenced by her sister's goodness, and often recalled her sister's moral influence on herself. In one instance, in what Jan Marsh calls "the wild strawberry incident at Holmer Green," we see a glimpse of the young Laura and Lizzie. One day, Christina was wandering in a strawberry field where she was tempted to pick some of the luscious fruit. Maria intervened, revealing the slug which had hollowed out the berry and transposed a seemingly beautiful piece of fruit into something repulsive. In a small heroic moment, her sister had taught her that alluring temptations are not always what they appear to be. At the end of Goblin's Market, Christina leaves Maria with the sentiment:

For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather,
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands (1859).

Lizzie, like Maria, will not abandon her sister. She is strong in her faith and is certainly not one to give up so easily. She is determined to obtain the poisonous fruit for her sister without becoming tainted herself. The goblin men smear the forbidden fruit all over her, but she will not submit. In this she is goddess like, unearthly in her strength. She finds herself, "like a lily in a flood," yet still refuses to open her mouth. She has risked everything, even her most valued possession, her virtue, metaphorically speaking, to save her sister. In *The Madwoman in the Attic* Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write, "Lizzie, like a female savior, negotiates with the goblins (as Christ did with Satan) and offers herself to be eaten and drunk in a womanly holy communion" (566). Their description of Lizzie as the sacramental meal reflects the Victorian model woman. After she has refused the goblin men, they angrily give her back her gold coin. She is tattered and beaten, but she has won, her innocence still intact. She rushes home to offer herself to her sister:

She cried, "Laura," up in the garden
Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Never mind my bruises,
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin Pulp and Goblin Dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me (1518).
There is an undeniable erotic quality to this passage. It is almost as though the sensuality has been stripped from the sin and pasted onto the act of sacrifice. It seems that the only way to achieve such ecstasy is by giving all of one's self. It is surprising that this moment was created by Christina and not her brother. While Christina's poetry is always passionate, it is usually flavored with a sort of pious zeal, rather than paralleling physical love. The ending of the story, of course, abandons all dangerous passions and replaces them with pious thoughts of home and family. The ending, however, seems much more characteristic of Christina. The two sisters recover, and are able to go on to become wives and mothers warning their daughters about the "forbidden fruit" of the goblin merchant men.

While this poem openly preaches the virtues of virginity and purity (and of being a wife and mother), it also provides a powerful feminist perspective. This poem suggests that while women are capable of giving life (through childbearing and redemption) men are only capable of hurting women. All we see of men in the poem are the harmful, twisted goblin men with their poisonous fruit. They go around seducing young girls and creating their downfall. It is the men, not Eve, who offer the poisonous apple, and yet Laura's fall certainly parallels Eve's. While both the goblin men and Laura have acted impurely, it is Laura alone who takes the fall. As Laura's sexuality is far more dangerous (to herself, and to society) her punishment must then be greater. We see nothing of the other men, the obscure husbands of whom we hear about at the end of the story. We are also fairly certain that there are no sons -- only daughters who must be warned of the evils men have to offer. After the sisters have overcome their dangerous flirtation with sexuality (and violence), they can enjoy life as sacrificing, hard-working creatures, existing solely for their children.

This vision of womanhood is fascinating because it beautifully contradicts itself. In Laura and Lizzie, we can see the struggles which Christina Rossetti
contended with. On one side of the looking glass, she was her brother’s ideal woman, self-sacrificing, twice his model for the Virgin Mary ("In The Girlhood of Mary Virgin" and "The Annunciation"). Yet on the other side of the looking glass, she had found her artistic self. She herself had tasted the unnatural fruit which, in Victorian times, was no less shocking than had she found the forbidden fruit of sexual pleasure (Gilbert and Gubar 570). Dante Gabriel Rossetti allowed himself the freedom to fall in love with beauty for beauty’s sake, while Christina felt she must justify her work through spiritual and moral teachings. Gilbert and Gubar write, "Rossetti believes she must learn to sing selflessly, despite pain, rather than selfishly, in celebration of pleasure" (571). In Goblin’s Market we see Laura sing only after she has devoured her sister’s sacrificing self. Only when they have both been purified, through redemption and surrendering of the self, can they be truly at rest.

The last two ill-fated heroines I would like to discuss have another admired quality in common: they die similar deaths. Tennyson’s epic poem The Lady of Shalott is almost a mirror image of his Elaine from Idylls of the King. And both, as with all celebrated Victorian martyrs, were caste impeccably upon the model of Hamlet’s Ophelia.

Paintings of The Lady of Shalott became strong competition for Ophelia images, mimicking her heroic fall for unrequited love. The Lady of Shalott is living under a curse which condemns her to a tower which overlooks Camelot. Through her looking glass she is able to observe the ladies and knights who live there. She takes note of their stories and weaves them into her loom. One day, she sees Lancelot in the mirror, and falls instantly in love with him. It is here that her descent into madness begins. She angrily cries, "I am half sick of shadows." Completely unaware of what will happen to her if she leaves, she wraps herself in her tapestry, steals a boat, and bravely heads for Camelot in search of Lancelot. But
the curse is upon her and she does not live to see her beloved. The death of the
Lady of Shalott possesses an Ophelia-like quality:

Heard a carol, mournful, holy
Chanted loudly, Chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
    Turned to towered Camelot.
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the waterside,
Singing in her song she died,
    The Lady of Shalott (1103).

Once again, we observed the desired remnants of a virtuous death. Her
suicide/death is marked by her transcendence through water and her maidenly song.
The Lady of Shalott virtuously surrendered herself to the very image of the heroic
knight. Lancelot is among those who find her expired body. He is greatly
impressed with her beauty and apparent virtue.

From 1886-1905, William Holman Hunt dedicated his attention to one of the
most unusual portraits of the Lady of Shalott. He seems to have captured her in the
exact first moment of madness. Having seen Lancelot in her looking glass, she
disregards all consequences for breaking the curse. Holman Hunt's lady is trapped
in the spider web of her loom. Her hands desperately try to de-tangle her clothes
from the spiraling thread. Her long, dark hair is floating in the sky above her in a
sort of deranged halo. In her large, looking glass, we see her fate -- the winding
river to Camelot which will lead her to Lancelot, and to her death.

In Idylls of the King, Tennyson creates another self-sacrificing, ill-fated
heroine, Elaine. Like the Lady of Shalott, Elaine's madness is due to her admiration
of Lancelot. But unlike the Lady of Shalott, who has only witnessed his face through a flash in the mirror, Elaine has come into physical contact with Sir Lancelot, even receiving a small kiss from him. After Lancelot has been wounded, Elaine rushes to his aid, bringing with her the diamond which he had won in the tournament. To thank her he:

kissed her face
as we kiss the child
That does the task assign'd

At once, we see the first of her Ophelia-like qualities surface as she "slipt like water to the floor." She continues to pursue him, growing more distraught by the day. Finally, her torment comes to a climax as she sings:

I have gone mad
I love you:
Let me die

It would not do for the Victorians to have Elaine die on land: therefore, upon perceiving her impending death, she requests that her father arrange for her to be placed in a boat which will drift towards Camelot. While Elaine sings no sad songs, she is not entirely mute. In her pale fist, she clutched a letter which reads, "I loved you, and my love had no return, And therefore my true love has been my death."

It is ironic that these medieval themes, as portrayed by the Romantics and the Pre-Raphaelites, were taken by society as a representation of their own moral standards. The Victorians, confusing artistic themes with real life, allowed these ideas to set standards and regulations for Victorian women.

But there is fault in believing the Victorians to be reflective of these characters. For a beautiful madwoman, who was wildly desired in theory, was not allowed to
roam free. For Victorian men to fantasize about the raving virgin was one thing, but to be involved or married to her was quite another. In literature and art, a space of fantasy was created. Indeed, if one's wife was melancholy, depressed (postpartum or otherwise), sad, selfish, too sexual or simply duller than the new pretty maid, there was a "civilized" way to handle it. There was no shame in sending one's wife to be "cured" or locked up in one of London's many insane asylums. With theories of evolution under its belt, asylums thrived during the Victorian era. And with the recent invention of photography, a strange phenomenon occurred. Art and medicine were suddenly merged in a surreal realm where life began to imitate art.

In 1848, Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond became a physician at the Surrey Asylum in London. He was remembered not for his contribution to psychiatric theory, but rather for his innovative photographic documents of female inmates. Diamond, a friend of Lewis Carroll, was no stranger to contemporary trends in Victorian art and literature. It is evident that he was well versed in all of the above mentioned works. His images start out simple enough, documenting alcoholics, hysterics, and manics. These images, while carefully framed, costumed, and lit, remain within the realms of medical documentation. Earlier photographs do not seem the least bit concerned with age or beauty. One photograph bitterly entitled "A Cretin in Surrey Asylum" reveals a broken, tired woman. Diamond's harsh lighting makes her features appear somewhat mannish, and her dress and posture are hardly intended to make the viewer sympathize.

As he grew more skilled (and became more interested in the Pre-Raphaelite movement), his images increasingly become more clearly defined. Hair is more appropriately tangled and props are more frequently used, until the ideology of the Victorian madwoman is manifested in works of art rather than works of medicine. As his photographs gained recognition, his images grew bolder. The women of the asylum seem magically transformed into Elaines and Ophelias. One image, suitably
entitled "A Victorian Ophelia in Surrey Asylum," divulges a young woman with a beautiful face enveloped in a mass of dark, flowing cloth and a wreath of flowers in her hair. Her large, honest eyes boldly gaze upon some unknown ailment. It is these Ophelia-like images which won him admiration from both doctors and artists alike.

The trend which Diamond and his colleagues started soon spread all over western Europe. His style was especially mimicked in France and America. The new photographers, however, took the idea a bit further. Instead of only documenting a patient once, they would repeatedly photograph the same woman, allowing her time to feel more at home in front of the camera. In *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*, Elaine Showalter recounts the case of a fifteen-year-old girl named Augustine, who is arguably one of the most remarkable inmates photographed at that time. In 1875, she was placed in the Salpetriere in Paris for "hysterical" fits which had begun when she was thirteen. The attacks began after she had been raped by her mother's lover and employer. Interestingly enough, while Augustine was sent to an asylum to be cured for her troubled behavior, no accounts exist about any aftermath faced by the rapist himself. Somehow the fact that he (as well as other violent and harmful men) may be the one who needed to be cured had evaded society as a whole.

As a model and actress, Augustine was a natural. In a photograph entitled "Erotisme" (1878), we observe Augustine lying in bed, her white gown falling off her shoulders and melting into the tangled white sheets. Her arms are crossed over her chest, as if in death. But the face is warm, smiling even -- she seems to be lingering somewhere between martyrdom and self-gratification. The photographs of her have always reminded me of both the numerous paintings of the actress Ellen Terry, as well as the self-modeled photographs and sculptures of Sarah
Augustine had the much valued talent of transforming herself into spiritual replicas of Isabella, Saint Theresa, Elaine, and Ophelia. But unlike these piteous creatures, Augustine was strong. One day she decided that she did not want to be photographed anymore. Her reluctance to play the asylum doll was punished, and she was placed in solitary confinement. But Augustine would not be forced to play. With the same brilliance that she revealed in front of the camera, she made her escape. She cut off her long hair, dressed as a man, walked out of the asylum. She was never heard of again. When Augustine was photographed, the doctors and photographers of the asylum could not have imagined her impending liberation. They sought to paint a picture of a martyr; she sought to be stronger. There is tragedy in Augustine's photographs, but there is also great hope in her story.

The cult of Ophelia remains very much alive today. Our fascination with her deathly transcendence is nearly as apparent as our archaic magnetism to water or song. The trends in art which the Pre-Raphaelites and Dr. Diamond set so long ago continue to manifest today. In fashion magazines all over the world, we find an abundance of young, ghostly beauties, with dark circles painted around frail eyes and appropriately tangled hair. Indeed, Ophelia continues to haunt us over a century later.

Overall, we must be careful to recognize what we are idolizing. When the Victorian madwoman was transformed into muse, there was no place for real women to go. They could either be saints and wither in self denial or they could fall. Women of flesh and blood were quickly locked away in a little black box.

I think that the blame of these occurrences lies not with the images or texts themselves, but rather, with the societies who confused them with reality. It was a specific moment -- a particular time, place and people -- in which the Victorians took these literary and artistic characters out of context and manipulated them to support certain ideas. And just like the Victorians, contemporary society often
allows these ideas and representations to set our own intellectual and moral standards. The Victorians used art to conceal the despair and ugliness which infects every city of every age, just as we often pretend that our squalor does not exist, confusing pictures with real life. And when we believe whole-heartedly that these dreams are reality, it is inevitable that we should fail to see the depravity which contaminates the world.
Chapter Three:
Bertha, Wolfish Cries and 
the Cures Which Follow

The last chapter explores what happens to women who emulated the beautiful, 
chaste heroines which the Victorians so adored. This chapter focuses on the lesser 
celebrated characters, rather, the fallen madwomen and the real-life replicas of such 
characters. If Ophelia is the poster child for the mad muse, then Jane Eyre's Bertha 
is certainly her fallen counterpart. And if water and song are the defining traits of 
the virtuous Ophelia, then fire, decay, and animalistic or vampiristic properties are 
the detrimental characteristics of the fallen madwoman.

Unlike the cherished Ophelias, Berthas -- both in fiction and reality -- were 
viciously scorned. For women, to be mad, unhappy, unruly or opinionated meant to 
be punished. In literature and art, such characters are locked up, burned or 
suffocated, and if they die, they are neither pitied nor revered. In real life, a 
"Bertha" may be sent to an asylum where she might be kept in bridles, chains and 
strait-jackets, and where her sexual organs could be abused and operated upon. Her 
ovaries, uterus, labia and clitoris may be taken so as to silence her unorthodox 
mouth. The unacceptable or wrong sort of "madwoman" says and thinks the 
unmentionable. She voices her opinion about religion or politics, or worse: she 
objects to the treatment of women, the treatment of her children, the handling of her 
finances or the affairs of her husband.
Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* is a beautiful and potent example of the Victorian feminist novel. At the time it was published, this book produced a tremendous amount of outrage, not merely because of its forward use of sexuality, but because of Jane's anger at the society which condemned her to be less than equal. We first see the rage of the ten-year-old Jane at Gateshead. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar compare Jane's story to that of Cinderella. Jane is the little orphan forced to live with her wicked stepmother and her equally disgusting stepsisters. The Reeds do not like her as they find her to be a strange, unhappy child. Jane is also marked with being shockingly honest. When she tells Mrs. Reed what she thinks of her, "I'm glad you're no relation of mine," she is at once locked inside the red-room. It is within these walls that Jane discovers that she is imprisoned, both literally and metaphorically. She has just sensed a sort of "madness" within herself, as she tells Mrs. Reed that, "something just spoke out of me." Perhaps also, because she is an orphan, she does not belong to anyone. Yet Jane, because she strays just far enough from convention to annoy society, but not far enough to cause any real trouble, is not punished. Because she is pure and "moral," she is spared. But Bertha, the "madwoman" of the manor, and secret wife of Rochester, Master of Thornfield, is punished. She defies all standards of what a wife and daughter should be. Her father marries her off, and her husband locks her up.

Rochester, extremely masculine with his "dark face" and "heavy brow," is the "very essence of patriarchal energy" (Gilbert and Gubar 351). There can be little surprise at the fact that in his masculine ruling of the home, Bertha's sort of "savage" femaleness is not allowed to be acknowledged. While Bertha is not sent to an asylum to be "cured," she is undoubtedly punished for her wildness. Far from being pitied, she is locked up in the attic.
Jane and Bertha are in many ways counterparts. Since her experiences as a little girl in the red-room, we have known Jane to be consumed with rage. Jane is angry -- furious at injustice, at brutality, and at the overall status of women. But Jane does not act out this anger, instead she contemplates. She speaks out, but rarely acts out.

As marriage to Rochester approaches, Jane must deal with the issue of sexual tension. Rochester is already well experienced in the secrets of sex: it is he who will lead Jane into this new realm. As soon as they are engaged, Rochester begins to treat Jane as an inferior. She has surrendered her love and soon she will surrender her body. She has now become his "little sunny-faced girl-bride," his possession. Just as Jane is beginning to have serious doubts about the marriage, Bertha becomes a tangible force in opposing the wedding. Bertha strongly represents the "mad," passionate side of Jane. It is Bertha, the snarling, crawling creature from the attic, who acts out Jane's desires to stop the marriage. In the days preceding the wedding, Jane has frightening, symbolic nightmares about the past and events to come. When she is upset by the embellished veil (and the role which it represents), it is not Jane who destroys the veil, but Bertha who tramples it. When Jane sees Bertha at this point, she is wearing a white dress. Jane cannot tell whether it is a sheet or a gown, but it certainly symbolizes that Bertha was the first (and technically still) Bride of Rochester. Next to Jane's self-proclaimed plainness, Bertha seems a dark, magical creature. So exaggerated is her rebellious presence that Jane cannot help but imagine Bertha as other-worldly when describing her to Rochester:

Fearful and ghastly to me -- oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discolored face -- it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!

Ghosts are usually pale, Jane.
This sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed; the black eyebrows widely raised over bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?

You may.

Of the foul German spectre -- the vampire (pg. 171).

To Jane, Bertha's appearance is not merely that of a frightening stranger, but that of a supernatural force. With her "red eyes" and "swelled and dark" purple lips, she indeed inspires remembrances of that "foul German spectre" called vampire. Women taken by rebellious madness surpass being merely undesirable humans, they are now considered demons.

Bertha's mother is "mad and shut up in a lunatic asylum," and her younger brother is "a complete dumb idiot." Yet Rochester and the rest of the world do not pity her. Why feel compassion for a monster? Rochester informs Jane that "Bertha Mason -- the true daughter of an infamous mother -- dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste" (184-185). The allegation of being "unchaste" is as serious as the notion that she is mad. For a Victorian woman who was worldly, sexually experienced or even mentally "unchaste," she might as well have been mad. For everyone knew that the "True Woman" was dedicated, noble, quiet, respectful, and above all, innocent (even in marriage she was to remain mentally chaste). So to say that Bertha, or any woman, was unchaste was to declare that she was not really a woman at all. She was regarded as, merely, an animal of the basest breed. When the animalistic madwoman takes the stage, her entire surroundings often melt with her. Rochester describes the night he desired to kill himself:

One night I had been awakened by her yells -- (since the medical men had pronounced her mad, she had been locked up) -- it was a fiery West Indian night; one of the description that frequently
proceeds the hurricanes of those climates; unable to sleep in bed, I got up and opened the window. The air was like sulphur steams -- I could find no refreshment anywhere. Mosquitoes came buzzing in and hummed sullenly round the room: the sea, which I could hear from thence, rumbled dull like an earthquake -- black clouds were casting up over it; the moon was setting in the waves, broad and red, like a hot cannon-ball -- she threw her last bloody glance over a world quivering with the ferment of tempest. I was physically influenced by the atmosphere and scene, and my ears were filled with the curses the maniac still shrieked out: wherein she momentarily mingled my name with such a tone of demon-hate, with such language! -- no professed harlot ever had a fouler vocabulary than she: though two rooms off, I heard every word -- the thin partitions of the West India house opposing but slight obstruction to her wolfish cries (pg. 185).

Bertha's *wolfish cries* not only disrupt her new marriage but the very climate in which she exists. The moon, "broad and red like a hot cannon-ball," keenly forecasts the fiery destruction of Rochester's estate, Thornfield. Bertha's eruptions, like all true madwomen, follow the distinct pattern of the moon. Evidence in this lies in her wolfish cries, once again linking her to the animal kingdom. The extent of prejudice against this unchaste madwoman is remarkable, for even Jane who is thoughtful and compassionate does not pity Bertha. Instead, she feels remorse for the "treachery of concealment" which has led Rochester into misery. Jane has seemingly forgotten her own *madness*, her own questions regarding authority, while being locked in the red-room.

When Jane is feeling suffocated and angry at Rochester and the entire manor, Bertha once again acts out literally what Jane symbolically wishes to do. It is Bertha, not Jane, who burns down the house. Rochester foreshadows his own
downfall by telling Jane, in a moment of desperation, "You shall, yourself, pluck out your own right eye; yourself cut of your right hand" (179). His predictions of pain are inflicted on himself rather than Jane through Bertha's strange death. And we will see at the end of the story that this is what has made him humble. It was Bertha, the wailing tormented lost soul, who transformed Rochester into the only sort of man Jane could ever have -- a true equal. Now, for the first time, they can live without subordinate and authoritarian roles.

Bertha, the woman who bows to no law, legal, social or otherwise, has been destroyed, and Jane's anger has been sufficed. After the fire, Bertha is described "as cunning as a witch." When Bertha is powerful, she is described as a "witch." But Jane, who has experienced premonitions throughout the course of the story, is thought to have female intuition. Her visions of impending doom, from the ghost-child to the hellish destruction of Thornfield to Rochester's cries, are believed to be neither deception nor witchcraft. Jane denies superstition in faith of a miracle, "my powers were in play, and in force." Jane's otherworldly influences make her a heroine; Bertha's make her a fiend.

It is Bertha's animalistic side, her "vampire" qualities, which enabled her to act out her every angry cry. In the second half of the 19th century, artists were as conscious of portraying the deranged woman as they were of the martyr, for how could a saint or Ophelia be defined if she did not possess a counterpart? With scientific research testing the properties of blood as genetic links to madness and evolutionary "flaws" and "weaknesses," it is no wonder that science was applied to further prove the inferiority of women. When Jane is called to nurse Mason's mysterious wounds, she is left to wonder, "What mystery, that broke out, now in fire, and now in blood, at the deadest hour of night? What creature was it, that masked in an ordinary woman's face and shape, uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey?" (126). Rochester has forbidden
Mason, or anyone else, to reveal the "web or horror" to Jane. Alarmed, the surgeon and Mason discuss the matters freely:

'The flesh on the shoulder is torn as well as cut. The wound was not done with a knife: there have been teeth here!'

'She bit me', he murmured. 'She worried me like a tigress, when Rochester got the knife from her'. . . 'She sucked my blood: she said she'd drain my heart,' said Mason (127).

Bertha's ardent display of violence foreshadows her "vampire" appearance in Jane's wedding veil. In *Idols of Perversity*, Bram Dijkstra notes that it was assumed a "scientific fact by many turn-of-the-century intellectuals that for women to taste blood was to taste the milk of desire, and that such a taste might turn an innocent, inexperienced woman into an insatiable nymphomaniac" (347). Since women's blood was believed to be dramatically thin to begin with, and was partially lost each month through menstruation, there was much speculation about women's relationship to blood. Carl Vogt believed women's blood to be comparatively watery and weak, because men ate more, helping their blood to be denser and redder (Russett 29). Since menstrual blood was thought to be as diseased as the sexual organs themselves, some doctors attempted the "removal" of this blood themselves. An English gynecologist, Bennett, believed that placing leeches on the vulva or the neck of the uterus could help cure nearly any female ailment. He cautioned his vast followers, both in England and America, to count the leeches so they would not be "lost" in the woman's body. He further noted that in such instances he had "scarcely ever seen more acute pain than experience by several of my patients under these circumstances." (Ehrenreich and English 123). Unfortunately, many doctors found their blood research more important than their patients' well being. The scientific search for the link between female madness and blood was often more violent than Bertha's own blood moon and blood thirst.
This fascination with the properties of female blood also inspired a medical reading of the fashionable myth of the vampire. The popularity of J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, at this juncture, changed the notion of blood craving by significantly focusing on women. A tremendous number of paintings denouncing women as animalistic, even outright evil, were produced at this time. Perhaps the most famous example of this trend is Philip Burne-Jones' painting, simply entitled "The Vampire." It depicts a long-haired, nightgown-clad woman aggressively leaning over a dead man, presumably one she has herself killed. She seems pleased with herself, bearing her teeth in a horrific smile, a mix of madness, greed, and lust. The dark eyes, white nightgown, wild hair, and smug, uneasy expression are all reminiscent of Bertha.

In Victorian culture, female sexuality was automatically transformed into carnality and madness. When a woman failed to be submissive, she was automatically hailed as animalistic. And it is this "primitive" behavior which ultimately severed her from the civilized, paternalistic world.

Victorian women were often brainwashed into being afraid of their own desires, their own goals, for fear of being labeled insane. Florence Nightingale's (mostly) autobiographical *Cassandra* is notorious for its portrayal of self-destructive female intelligence and ambition. Even when Nightingale herself finally escaped to become a nurse (unlike poor Cassandra who withered away), she still considered herself an oddity. In *Suggestions for Thought to Searchers After Religious Truth, Vol.2*, Nightingale described herself as knowing that as a "very young child she had an obsession that she was not like other people. She was a monster; that was her secret which might at any moment be found out" (220). This notion of determined, indulgent or rebellious women was inflicted so deep into the Victorian cultural consciousness that even intelligent, innovative women could not fully surpass it.
Nightingale wrote numerous essays on the rights and needs of women, and yet she still described herself as monstrous.

Nightingale was acutely aware of the similarities of a woman’s position in a constricting family and an insane asylum. Madness, she believed, was often created by families and medical establishments in their attempts to keep intelligent women in their proper place:

It is almost invariable that, when one of a family is decidedly in advance of all others, he or she is tyrannized over by the rest, and declared 'quite incapable of doing anything reasonable.' A man runs away from this -- a woman cannot . . . It is not only against those esteemed physically insane that commissions of lunacy are taken out. Others have been kept unjustly in confinement by their well-intended relations, as unfit to be trusted with liberty. In fact, in almost every family, one sees a keeper, or two or three keepers, and a lunatic.  

What Nightingale proposes is truly unnerving, that women who show promise of developing their goals are watched more closely, more fearfully than women who would not appear to disrupt the order of established gender roles. If that is the case, then women who have revealed vampirish or animalistic traits are backed into the same corner as those with a dazzling intellect. Might not Bertha have been just as detrimental to the breakdown of the patriarchal family as Florence Nightingale was?

Had Bertha died young, say 12 years earlier when she was still beautiful and innocent, she may have been cherished rather than despised. If her "madness" had not made her fit for the evils of this world rather than growing up to play a part of them, she may have even been an Ophelia. But Bertha, like most real life asylum patients, did not simply disappear when life became too traumatic for them. Whatever is to be done with real life Berthas when they wilted but refused to die?
With the rise of asylums, there was no longer a need for families to hide the "madwoman in the attic."

Even the horrors concerning madwomen which Charlotte Bronte proposed in creating Bertha pale next to the testimonies of real-life "madwomen." Bronte imagined a nightmare which glimpsed into the waking lives of many unfortunate women. A small number of first-hand accounts penned by asylum inmates exist. In most of these cases, women wrote intending for their unjust experiences to be exposed to the public. Sophie Olsen, in her account of her imprisonment from 1862-1864, begins by addressing readers of the future:

Hail horrors! Hail infernal world!

If the inhabitants of the twentieth century should ever have the real condition of this terrible prison described as it now exists, and be informed of the purpose to which it is applied, they will not only see the perfect propriety of my quotation at the head of this chapter, but will regard this prison with the same feelings as we do now the Spanish Inquisition and its abettors and apologists (69).

Indeed it is with great horror that we examine these accounts. Torturing a woman who fails to possess all the required delicate female traits is quite similar to torturing a man because he fails to believe in a particular religion. Olsen testified that in the asylum there are indeed women with tortured minds, those who might be described as Berthas:

Beside me, sitting, or rather crouching on the same bench, were a few silent and very filthy women, with their one garment indecently torn, and a puddle of unfragrant water at their feet. Some, in remote parts of the hall, were screaming fearfully, at which I did not wonder. If I had
been a screamer, or at all nervous, I should doubtless have swelled the concert, so full was this Pandemonium of every imaginable horror! The faces of many were frightfully blackened by blows, received, partly from each other in their internecine conflicts, but mostly, I subsequently discovered, by their attendants! (71).

Olsen's allegation that lunatic asylums are places where women are made insane is reaffirmed by the majority of the first-hand accounts I have found. Lydia A. Smith, who was institutionalized from 1865 to 1871, painfully and meticulously recorded the barbaric treatment which was thrust upon her. During her first day of imprisonment, she was nearly drowned, tied in a "muff," chained to her "crib," forcibly drugged, and had five of her teeth knocked out. In the case of Smith, and many others I have come across, the only "animalistic" behavior displayed is that of the attendants and doctors. Aside from the fact that no testimony or inspection was required in institutionalizing a woman, Smith affirms that belladonna and chloroform are enough to give a woman "the appearance of being crazy enough." Thus, the configuration of a madwoman can be created. When Lydia Smith entered the asylum, she was clean, well dressed, and perfectly sane. By the end of the day, she was a bloody, weeping mass chained to a crib.

Women who did not wish to marry, had different religious views from their families, chose to voice unpopular opinions or had property their husbands wished to acquire, were stripped from their homes and children, rarely allowed visitors and were treated with vile and disgust by those who promised to take care of them. Olson is quick to point out that brutality is by no means an effective way to cure the insane.

Clarissa Caldwell Lathrop, in her imprisonment from 1880 to 1882, accounted that women, whether rebellious, sick, poor, crippled or insane, all endured the same horrific treatment. For the sane woman, punishment was regarded as discipline.
For the disturbed woman, punishment, in the guise of treatment, sought to keep her "wolfish cries" silent. For silence, perhaps equal to chastity, was an absolute requirement of the Victorian woman.

For women who did not fall into the category of beautiful, martyr dolls, madness was a contemptible state in which to be. The patient was rarely pitied, and always blamed. Even the beautiful Augustine, who was discussed in the previous chapter, was held responsible for her nightmares about fire and decay, hysteria and depression. Her mother's employer and lover, the rapist, was certainly not held responsible. Because she was not quiet, respectful, and chaste (force was irrelevant), she was punished. If women were older, unattractive (by opinion of the doctors), less agreeable or truly tormented, there was little hope for being treated well.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the onset of menstruation was thought to make women susceptible to insanity. Many doctors prescribed prevention for insanity for pre-pubescent girls, but a few took it a step further. The most monstrous of these practices was performed by Dr. Issac Baker Brown, of the Obstetrical Society of London, who championed himself as the "inventor" of clitorectomies as an antidote for female insanity. Among Victorian medical doctors and psychiatrists, masturbation was considered a well known cause for insanity. Dr. Brown was of the belief that by performing clitorectomies on young women, he was eliminating their temptation to masturbate, and therefore greatly reducing the risk of insanity. With the seemingly simple act of removing the clitoris, Dr. Brown reduced women's sexuality to reproduction. A woman who had this surgery may not only become immune to sexual pleasure, she would also most likely become the frightened little mouse her husband desired; for what woman would be brave enough to face the threat of another sexual surgery? A "Bertha" could be medically forced into becoming a dutiful, "angelic" wife.
From 1859 to 1866, Dr. Brown performed these surgeries in his private practice in London. He soon took the operations further, in some cases removing the labia as well as the clitoris, and stretched his death fingers to epileptics, women with mental retardations and eye problems, and in a few cases, on patients as young as ten. Somehow oblivious to the dangerous game of monstrous force and fear he was inflicting upon his patients, he even boasted his surgeries as a "cure" for women who wished to act upon the new Divorce Act of 1857 (Showalter 76). As women were legally the property of their husband until a divorce was granted, a man was at liberty to get his wife "fixed" if she were insane enough to wish a divorce. Dr. Brown was very proud of the fact that in every threatened divorce case brought to him, the woman was cured and returned to her husband. In the case of the temporary insanity which plagued women who wanted to divorce their husbands, it is no great wonder that their brave ambitions should be crumbled after being taken to Dr. Brown.

Rebelliousness in women was automatically equated with madness. For these surgeries, there existed no means of prevention nor a trial. If a husband proclaimed his wife unruly or mad, few questions were asked, and certainly not the right ones. We can easily imagine what would have happened had Rochester taken Bertha to see such a doctor, or if Florence Nightengale's parents has sought out mental "help." While many doctors did not approve of Dr. Brown's miracle "discovery," the trend of clitorectomies as female "treatment" lasted well into the 20th century with the last known case being performed on a five-year-old child as a cure for masturbation in 1948 in the United States (Ehrenreich and English 123).

Masturbation was not the only believed physical cause of insanity for women; the sexual organs themselves played a key role in many doctors' diagnosis. The uterus and ovaries were observed as time-bombs, beginning at puberty and ending with menopause, which could strike at any given moment. In 1870, Professor M.H.
Holbrook perceived that it was "as if the Almighty, in creating the female sex, had taken the uterus and built up a woman around it" (Ehrenreich & English 120). Similarly, Dr. G.L. Austins credited the ovaries for giving a woman "all her characteristics of the body and mind" (Ehrenreich & English 120). Any sense of self-affirmed sexuality, like rebelliousness, was deemed dangerous. It was sexuality, above all else, which was deemed capable of setting off the time-bomb of insanity. The removal of the ovaries was deemed a far more acceptable alternative to clitorectomies as both a cure and prevention for female insanity. G.J. Barker-Benfield, in "The Spermatic Economy: A Nineteenth Century View of Sexuality," describes the symptoms for ovarian insanity as:

... troublesomeness, eating like a ploughman, masturbation, attempted suicide, erotic tendencies, persecution mania, simple 'cussedness,' and dysmenoria [painful menstruation]. Most apparent in the enormous variety of symptoms doctors took to indicate castration was a strong current of sexual appetitiveness. 3

Basically, any "troubled" woman who was not a beautiful Ophelia was severely punished by the medical profession. A truly angry or disturbed Bertha had virtually no chance of winning this war which Victorian doctors had waged upon unsuspecting women.

If the discussed cases of white women's asylum imprisonments weren't horrific enough, a few glimpses exist of the monstrosities inflicted upon women of color. Marion Sims, an American doctor, performed nightmarish gynecological surgeries on black female slaves which he owned "for the sole purpose of surgical experimentation." He is noted for having performed these operations without anesthesia. One slave was operated on thirty times in four years, as Sims was "foiled over and over by post-operative infections" (Ehrenreich and English 125). Sims' brutal experiments were further inflicted upon poor indigent Irish patients in
New York's Women's Hospital. While the brutal (official) treatment of middle and upper class women financially supported the continuation of his work, it was the women of the lower class who suffered from his barbaric "scientific procedures."

We can only imagine the painful humiliations these women were forced to repeatedly endure. These women, poor and perhaps plain in regards to the tastes of the "educated man," were punished because they failed to exist as the archetypal ideal of the perfect woman. For the troubled woman, whether she suffered from depression, suicidal tendencies, postpartum, neurosis or "madness," neither hope nor help could be found inside asylum walls. For the woman unjustly imprisoned, she could count on no doctor to believe her over the father or husband who had imprisoned her. Any fallen Bertha must simply submit and resign to the horrific fate which had befallen her, for fighting only made matters worse. These women were looked upon as neither angelic housewives nor selfless martyrs nor Ophelias. They were living in a time when ordinary women were rejected as "filthy," "insane" or "dangerous," and extraordinary women were branded demons.
Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. This quote of Schopenhauer's was found in Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity: Images of Feminine Evil in Fin-De-Siecle Culture*. 167.

2. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell was Charlotte Perkins Gilman's doctor. She writes that in the three months that she obeyed his rest cure, she came very "near to the borderline of utter mental ruin." Her story "The Yellow Wallpaper" is based largely on her experiences with Dr. Mitchell. See *Women of the Asylum* for Perkins Gilman's first-hand account. 161-168; Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady*. 140-143; and Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English's *For Her Own Good*. 101-102, 131-134.

3. Daguerre's photographic process was first introduced at the Acadamie de Sciences in Paris in 1839. The invention was freely given to the world by the French government. The daguerreotype, however, was extremely complex and was virtually inaccessible to all but a few. About the same time in England, Henry Fox Talbot was developing his own photographic process, the calotype. The calotype was fiercely protected by patents, which rendered this, too, inaccessible to the majority. For a decade, only a limited number of images were produced. In 1851, Frederick Scott Archer introduced the wet-plate process, which gained great popularity as the process was remarkably simple, the materials cost less, and it was free of patents. That same year, photography made its debut as a serious art form. The Great Exhibition of 1851 included an entire section of photographic works. Thus, students, artists and patrons all over England were exposed to the possibilities of photography. Photography became widely popular -- even Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had a darkroom installed in Windsor Castle (Gernsheim 4).
4. Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.

CHAPTER 1. ALICE, THE VICTORIAN WOMAN-CHILD, AND PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE


2. Child friends he photographed included the real Alice, Alice Liddell. Other images portray the sons and daughters of Lord Tennyson, George Macdonald, Arthur Hughes, Richard Westmacott, and John Everett Millais.

3. The anorexic woman was considered a most exceptional wife. Dijkstra, Idols of Perversity: Images of Feminine Evil in Fin-De-Siecle Culture. 198. When food was neglected along with other self-interests (out of devotion for the family), it was extremely attractive. Showalter in The Female Malady, however, points out that when it was out of vanity or to get attention, it was considered unfeminine, selfish, and greatly unattractive. 121, 127-129.


CHAPTER 3: BERTHA, WOLFISH CRIES AND THE CURES WHICH FOLLOW

1. Philip Burne-Jones was the son of Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones.

2. Florence Nightingale, as quoted in Showalter's The Female Malady. 62.

3. G.J. Barker-Benfield as quoted in Ehrenreich and English's For Her Own Good. 124.


---


Part Two: Photographic Works

Part two, the visual portion of this thesis, is an exhibition of 26 photographic works illustrating the themes of madness, martyrdom, and gender traps. These works serve as a link between the fictional and historical 19th century women discussed in the text and their lingering influences on 20th century women. The exhibition portion was installed in the Cal State San Marcos library from April 12 to May 17, 1998.

The texts and images studied in this thesis have permeated my dreams and nightmares over the last several years (some even longer). In my waking life, I am repeatedly amazed by the way the women in my life -- my family and friends, women I meet by chance, pass in the street or read about in the newspaper -- crossover into my studies. Their stories -- beautiful and tragic, grotesque and amazing -- often melt into and reflect those almost-forgotten accounts of women from over one hundred years ago. The memory boxes, mirrors, photographs and cages are my homage to those women, both past and present, whose testimonies (both of words and silence), bravery and endurance continue to remind me where we have come from and where we need to go.
Slides

1. untitled

Materials: photograph, seeds, acrylic, and memory box

I have always been interested in themes of guilt and self-persecution. Florence Nightingale believed that she was "a monster" for not wanting to remain in the home. Charlotte Perkins Gilman suffered from terrible guilt for not wanting to be a wife or mother. This ingrained "guilt" remains very much alive today. Even though western society as a whole agrees that women do not need to stay in the home to be functional, respectable human beings, the guilt continues to linger. I have known many bright, educated young women who always feel as though they are somehow failing, never quite "perfect" or "good" enough. The sticky, bleeding quality of pomegranate seeds work well in representing sexual guilt. I have always been attracted to pomegranate seeds as an icon (as have countless artists, such as Rossetti in his painting Proserpine, 1873-7). The idea of seeds, which we usually think of as prosperous, or life-giving, becomes -- in the hands of a woman -- sinful, a curse.

2. untitled

Materials: photograph, shears, hair, frame, acrylic, and memory box

When a woman is portrayed as "angelic" or "pure," more often than not, her hair is neatly tied back or hidden under a hat. When she is "deficient" in her morality or "mad" her hair is often long and wild (as in Hunt's The Lady of Shalott). The exchange of woman's hair for something material often serves as an obvious symbol for the loss of virtue (as in Rossetti's Goblin Market). Occasionally, the cutting of hair can be the sign of a true martyr. When a woman's hair is cut, her identity is completely altered. In this box, I was interested in exploring themes of martyrdom, loss of innocence, guilt and redemption.
3. untitled
Materials: photograph, dried fruit and flowers, acrylic, and memory box

Christina Rossetti's *Goblin's Market* has been a favorite poem of mine for years. I was interested in visually exploring her lush, velvety descriptions of temptation, poisonous fruits, and sisterly devotion.

4. untitled
Materials: photograph, dried flowers, doll's face, acrylic, memory box

When I took this photograph, I was very concerned with ideas about gender and manipulation. The presence of the doll helps raise the question "who controls whom?" I was also interested in exploring the role that the woman-child plays. She plays with a doll, suggesting a very traditional wife/mother role, but her face is dangerously painted. She seems to be stuck somewhere in-between the designated roles for women, becoming both the mother and the whore.

5. untitled
Materials: Photograph

This is a woman who has been forced to submit to her surroundings. She is not quite broken yet, but has begun to stop fighting.

6. untitled
Materials: photograph, dried flowers, crucifix, acrylic, and memory box

Like many women of the 19th century, as a child I was preoccupied with the notion of goodness. However, rather than dreaming about becoming an "angel in the house," I was fairly certain that I was to become a saint. I thought of every detail as a test, and was devastated with guilt when I failed.

7,8,9. untitled
Materials: photographs, aluminum medicine containers, acrylic, memory box, watercolor, transparencies and aluminum frames
I chose these frames for the images because they reminded me of the cold, sterile metal used in hospitals. Many of the medical accounts I had read made the "subject" or woman sound like a biology experiment, completely devoid of any real feeling. These frames allow the images to be violently pressed against the glass, like a moth writhing on a pin. These pieces were among the most difficult to make. To comment on how profoundly these women had suffered was a great responsibility. It took about eight months reflection before I was ready for the challenge. It is terrifying to know that no matter how much I read, thought or prepared for these photographs, the horror and desperation I attempt to illustrate can only be a small fraction of the humiliations these women actually suffered. I had just read Lydia A. Smith's painfully and meticulously recorded account of her institutionalized from 1865 to 1871, when I created the medicine box. Smith wrote that many women were forcefully drugged on visitors day, so that the outside world might easily abandon them. She maintains that belladonna and chloroform give a woman "the appearance of being crazy enough."

10. *untitled*

Materials: photograph

This photograph, for me, represents internalized horrors. A million stagnant thoughts are harboring in this woman's brain. She has no outlet, no one to tell her sorrows to.

11. *untitled*

Materials: photograph

I've always been fascinated by the beauty fixation on virgin deaths. This photograph is an exploration of the Ophelia archetype, a very external celebration of the deathly maiden.

12. *untitled*

Materials: photograph
In this image, I thought to internalize the virgin death, exploring the more psychological experiences of martyrdom.

13, 14. *untitled*

Materials: photographs, watercolor, pewter hand-mirrors, pewter compact, acrylic, and wall mirror

I liked the idea of inviting the viewer to have a personal experience with the images. The photographs are women in unsettling situations. The element of the vanity mirror induces the viewer to interact with the image. The viewer and the women in the photograph have become, for a moment, two characters in the same story.

15. *untitled*

Materials: photograph

In many Victorian photographs of the woman-child, it seems impossible to determine the maturity or age of the sitters. This ambiguous quality fascinated me. Usually, it seems, a younger girl was made more "womanly" for the benefit of the photographer. I decided to take a young woman and, instead, hide her maturity. The shadowed face together with the awkward hands and stripped stockings give her a very childish feel.

16, 17. *untitled*

Materials: photographs

It was the strangeness of Lewis Carroll's girls that have always attracted me. There always seemed to be another story behind the presented one. These two photos explore issues of manipulation and mixed messages.

18. *untitled*

Materials: photograph, branches, acrylic and cage

While reading first hand asylum accounts, I was tremendously moved by the bravery and hope found in the words of several incarcerated women. While many
women collapsed under the severe duress of being imprisoned (understandably so), some women grew strong. It is for these women that I made this caged photograph of Sarah, a dancer, who has always reminded me of a bird in flight.

19. *untitled*

**Materials:** photograph, glass, rubber cement, frame, metal and cage

The outer frame and cage reminded me somewhat of a bridle, or asylum restrain. Here, I thought of the unfortunate plight of Bertha. She is punished for her madness, pitilessly consumed by flames. The red glass serves as both the literal flames and the open hostility she receives from everyone surrounding her.

20. *untitled*

**Materials:** Photograph

There was a bizarre trend in "moralizing" Victorian paintings, which was intent on cramming as many "hidden" symbols into as small a space as possible (such as William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening*, and John Everett Millais' *Apple Blossoms*). In exploring this trend, I opted to place a knife, rosary beads and cut fruit next to my contemplating model.

21. *untitled*

**Materials:** photograph, moss, plaster angel, acrylic, and memory box

I was interested in exploring the 19th century's obsession with the "beauty" of youthful death, this time from a female perspective. I was reading quite a bit of Emily Dickinson at the time.

22. *untitled*

**Materials:** photograph, glass, lacquer and cage

Once again, I found myself drawn to the symbolic gesture of cutting hair. The self-inflicted martyrdom seems to take place quite naturally in the home, the unseen world of women.
Materials: photograph, glass, watercolor, and memory box

I made this piece after my friend Martha had been brutally raped. This contemporary act of violence occurred as I was reading first-hand accounts from asylum inmates. The pain, anxiety, depression and humiliation of the cases from over 100 years ago seemed to mirror Martha's experience.

Materials: photograph, knife, rubber cement and mail box

This piece, like the glass box, explores the aftermath of sexual violence. I made this piece after my fifteen-year old cousin had been raped while baby-sitting last year. I chose the house-shaped box because I kept thinking about how often violence and betrayal occur there. Once again, I found myself thinking of women long ago who had been torn from their homes to become victims at the hands of merciless doctors. I also thought of Augustine, and so many women like her who were punished for the sexual abuse inflicted upon them. These women, like my cousin, would never again be the same. They would never feel safe in their own beds again. They would never, for one moment, let down their guards.
Conclusion:
Shadows Which Linger

There are many ways in which women have gained freedom in the last century and a half, but there is still much change which needs to take place. Women who are beautiful, soft-spoken, devoted to men and virtuous are still celebrated and adored. Those who are overtly sexual, angry, candidly opinionated, conventionally "unattractive," or emotionally or mentally unbalanced are still considered contemptible failures who nudge and tear at the fraying ends of society's respectable foundation. And, unfortunately, when women are victimized, they are still held responsible. The women in the asylum who mysteriously became pregnant were blamed because female sexuality is one of the few sins which society has never been willing to overlook. It was they, the mad Berthas, the troublemakers and nymphomaniacs who led the upstanding attendants and doctors astray. Likewise, society as a whole in the 20th century holds the victims of sexual abuse in great disdain. We still seek excuses for why these things happen. If we were to hear that one of the women in Millais' painting *Apple Blossoms* (discussed in Chapter One) had become victim to sexual violence, the general estimation would be that it would have been the girl in yellow who fell into trouble. With her red lips, bright dress and open gaze, we see that shame and death are all that await her. Millais has already informed us, with the reaper aimed at her heart and the wildly fecund
orchard behind her, of what will become of such a girl. If she had only been more like her sensible sister in grey it is assumed that she would have been spared.

The response to sexual violence is not the only lingering remnant of Victorian thought. There is also the implicit authority of doctors. Perhaps, most alarming, is the colossal power doctors still have over women concerning their sexual organs. It is terrifying to recognize that as recently as 1971, (the first year of my lifetime) doctors at the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology were discussing the idea of advising a hysterectomy for every woman who does not intend to have any more children (West 12). The very Victorian idea behind this was that the uterus (when not nurturing babies) was considered a "useless, bleeding, symptom-producing, potential cancer-bearing organ" (West 12). While this entire sentiment is alarming, I was particularly struck by the notion of the uterus' cancer-bearing potential. This is incredibly reminiscent of the Victorian notion that female sexual organs were a disease waiting to happen, a literal time-bomb or death-trap.

Even more dismaying is the statement issued by Dr. James H. Sammons, executive vice president of the American Medical Association in 1977, that a hysterectomy was "beneficial to women with excess anxiety" (West 19). Once again, we see the lingering theory that woman's sexual organs are greatly responsible for her emotional and intellectual downfalls.

In a contemporary book, The Hysterectomy Hoax, Dr. Stanley West discusses some of the side-effects associated with female sexual surgery. Among the most commonly reported complaints are loss of sexual desire, severe depression, loss of motivation, fatigue, and urinary disorders. These symptoms come as no surprise as they were the same as suffered over one hundred years ago. What does come as a surprise is that the medical profession still refuses to take them seriously. Dr. West explains:

No one knows for sure why removing the uterus should bring
on certain of these problems, and because we have no medical answers -- and no useful help -- to offer patients, their complaints are often dismissed as psychological. Indeed, medical students are taught that women who attribute symptoms to hysterectomy must be neurotic, hysterical, or obsessed with their uterus (2).

This is frightening terminology for the closing of the 20th century. While women are certainly more protected now from being "legally kidnapped" for the purpose of surgical cures, the manipulation and cavalier attitude towards women's bodies remains very much alive.

What's promising is that there are laws protecting women, both against sexual assault, harassment and sexual surgery. What's missing, however, is the understanding which is necessary by a group or society to make these laws work. As long as these Victorianist ideas concerning female sexuality remain -- by jurors, judges, families, and doctors -- there is little hope that these laws will develop into the pillars of justice they promise.

While husbands are no longer at liberty to have their wives declared insane on their word alone, there is still a tremendous amount of power which they are legally entitled to exert. In the 1970s, Oregon became the first state to make it illegal for a husband to rape his wife. In the United States in the 1990s, only a little over one-third of the states have revoked marital exemption for rape. About twenty-five more states have only partially eradicated the marital exemption (Hick 423). The notion of "wife as property" still casts its shadow today.

So far as sexual surgery is concerned, several states, including New York and California have issued consent laws which require doctors to fully inform the patient of exactly what surgery will be performed, potential side-effects, alternative choices, and whether or not the ovaries will be removed. Today, the fact that women legally have the right to know what organs are being removed from their
bodies may be a thing which many of us take for granted -- the expected act of liberty. And while anything less would be considered horrific, I cannot help but wonder how Clarissa Caldwell Lathrope or Sophie Olsen might have rejoiced. Perhaps, we "inhabitants of the twentieth century" have heard their cries after all. Perhaps, we have just begun to unravel the thick veil which binds and conceals our web of deceit.