'Renounced all the decent tenderness of her sex': spaces and spectacles of female madness in England, 1770-1833

'Renounced all the Decent Tenderness of her Sex':
Spaces and Spectacles of Female Madness in England, 1770-1833

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ABSTRACT

Revising dominant stereotypes found in the feminisation of madness model, this thesis investigates the relationship between women, madness and spectacle in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England. Taking a case study approach, it entangles visual, material, spatial and documentary methodologies to interrogate responses to and resonances of female madness between 1770 and 1833.

The introduction sets out the methodological opportunities and challenges that a study of this nature faces, whilst the first chapter lays out the cultural, social and political backdrop of the project. Chapter two argues that the cultural power and profusion of Margaret Nicholson, the would-be assassin of King George III, was driven by her contravention of expectations surrounding gender, class and madness. Applying museological perspectives such as 'Freakery' to her spectacularisation, I argue that these subversions were managed through frameworks that perpetuated distance and containment. Chapter three analyses the spatial, material and emotional dynamics of the public asylum tour, positing that asylums navigated or commodified the pleasurable torment of spectatorial sympathy through the body of the incarcerated madwoman. Moving into the culturally loaded arena of the late eighteenth-century private madhouse, chapter four examines the lives of four confined women: Louisa, the 'Lady of the Haystack', Dorothea Fellowes, Euphemia Boswell and Mary Lamb. It identifies how slippage between cultural models and historical experience coloured responses towards and experiences of private female confinement. Connecting fashion, sensibility, emotions and mental illness, chapter five provides a reassessment of the sentimental love-mad trope. It situates the fictional character of 'Crazy Jane' within a wider narrative of material culture, presenting her as a far more complex cultural figure than previous scholarship has acknowledged.

Together, these chapters demonstrate that both fictionalised and living madwomen functioned as vehicles for evolving sexual, social and political anxieties, serving as potent prompts for a cocktail of paradoxical emotions. Offering a fresh reading of the feminisation of madness through the interrogation of various stereotypes, its tight focus on the blurring of art and life sets it apart from existing work in the field. The result is a more nuanced account of the ways that women and mental illness were represented, understood and culturally managed in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis submitted for the degree is entirely my own work, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

BIA	Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York
BLWM	British Library Western Manuscripts
BMMA	Bethlem Museum of the Mind Archives
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
HA	Huntingdonshire Archives
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LWL	Lewis Walpole Library
NRO	Norwich Record Office
OHA	Oxfordshire Health Archives
PRO	Public Record Office
RCP	Royal College of Physicians
WYAS	West Yorkshire Archive Service

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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, a group of scholars published an appeal to the medical humanities which radically questioned the 'conventional distinction between the "objectivity of science" and the "subjectivity of culture"'.[1] Led by Julia Kristeva and positioned as part of the second wave of medical humanities, the article stressed how culture was typically framed as 'a critical and potentially liberating perspective that can be applied to medicine'. In contrast, medicine was formulated as 'an object in need of repairment'.[2] Kristeva argued that the first wave of the medical humanities had been driven by the 'three Es': ethics, education and experience. She insisted that, with the second wave viewing the body as 'bio-cultural', it required an additional fourth E: entanglement.[3] The entanglement metaphor, she proposed, reframes the medical humanities as not just a 'humanistic perspective on medicine', but rather as a 'cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural space' in which interrogations of both biomedicine and the humanities can unfold.[4]

The methodological tension between culture and medicine is at the forefront of current thinking in the medical humanities, but these issues are by no means new for the discipline. Kristeva et al.'s critical interventions build upon others that have stressed the 'essential compatibility between the medical and literary enterprises'.[5] This compatibility has been discussed within debates on women and madness. In her seminal *The Female Malady* (1987), literary critic Elaine Showalter proposed a 'one-culture' model which positioned medical and cultural sources as unified, rather than separate, categories. If psychiatry and culture *has* to be categorised as separate realms, Showalter maintained, 'images and ideologies nevertheless flow smoothly between them'.[6] Helen Small's work on literary representations of love's madness questioned what it means to say that a particular source is 'literary' or 'medical', 'when its ability to use a language shared by both popular fiction and medicine puts in question the demarcation of separate spheres of knowledge'.[7]

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[1] Julia Kristeva, Marie Rose Moro, John Ødemark and Eivind Engebretsen, 'Cultural crossings of care: An appeal to the medical humanities', *Medical Humanities,* 44 (2018), 55-58 (55).
[2] Kristeva, 'Cultural crossings', 56.
[3] Kristeva, 'Cultural crossings', 56.
[4] Kristeva, 'Cultural crossings', 56.
[5] Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts, eds., *Literature and Medicine during the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1.
[6] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), 13-14.
[7] Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 19.

Positioning itself across this 'cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural space', this study adopts a methodology of 'entanglement' to examine the relationship between women, madness and spectacle in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Interrogating a range of case studies and sources that span the literary, medical, visual, material and social, this thesis is pointedly interdisciplinary. Inspired by scholars from across the histories of psychiatry and gender who fuse together documentary, medical and cultural sources, it draws upon and combines methodologies from multifarious disciplines, including: visual and material culture; literature; theatre; the history of psychiatry, gender and emotions; the medical humanities; museum studies; and social history. Seeking to answer a range of separate yet interconnected questions, it asks: what can cultural tropes and representations of madwomen tell us about how mental illness was understood in Georgian society? How did certain spectacles and spaces frame the madwoman differently? How did asylums function as creators of meaning, contributing to cultural frameworks through which certain feelings were experienced, and how important were women within this process? What consequences did the spectacularisation of the mad female have upon Georgian identities? And how did stereotype and lived experience relate to each other in the context of mental illness?

This is an under-researched period, particularly when compared with the extensive scholarship 'lavished', as Roy Porter described, on the Victorian madwoman.[8] Research on that era has been extremely fertile, with histories of late nineteenth-century hysteria and cultural figures such as Ophelia assuming a starring scholarly role.[9] The relatively few scholars who have trained their focus on the cultural figure of the late eighteenth-century madwoman have identified two tropes of female behaviour: the melancholic and the manic.[10] Yet the cultural significance of the melancholic figure has typically been overlooked. Homogenised within a line-up of more docile and pathetic love-mad figures, she is frequently conceived as a sentimental step en route to more transgressive and exciting modes of female insanity.[11] Her value is only now being

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[8] Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), ix.

[9] See Elaine Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', *Victorian Studies*, 23, 2 (1980), 157-181; Sander L. Gilman, 'The Image of the Hysteric', in *Hysteria Beyond Freud,* eds. Sander L. Gilman, H. King, Roy Porter, G. S. Rousseau and Elaine Showalter (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 345-436; Kimberley Rhodes, *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture: Representing Body Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2008). The majority of previous studies that bring together women, madness and culture have focused on women writers or literary examples. See Philip Martin, *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn. (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000); Lisa Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad: A History of Women and the Mind Doctors from 1800 to the Present* (London: Hachette, 2011).

[10] Jane Kromm, 'The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation', *Feminist Studies,* 20, 3 (1994), 507-535.

[11] Showalter, *Female Malady,* 10-14; Small, *Love's Madness*, 12-14; Kromm, 'Feminization'.

fully realised, specifically through scholarship on Laurence Sterne's (1713-1768) Maria.[12] Inspired by the

work of art historian Jane Kromm, who has analysed the sexual and political connotations of melancholy's

raving and manic counterpart,[13] this thesis calls for a reassessment of the melancholic archetype across

contemporary culture and society. By probing these dominant constructions, I argue for a more nuanced

understanding of the cultural role of the madwoman during these years, and in doing so, significantly

develop the limited scholarship in this area. Unlike past scholarship, this study investigates the psychological

resonances of various representations of female madness through fresh methodologies found within freak

studies, material culture and the history of emotions.

Simultaneously, through a case study approach, this study interrogates the lives of several living

women. I question how treatment and experience coalesced with pervading stereotypes of female madness

found within cultural sources and past scholarship, demonstrating how the materialisation of certain tropes

and narratives impacted a woman's understanding of her own health. The stories of Margaret Nicholson

(1745-1828) and Mary Lamb (1764-1847) — famous women who were respectively unsuccessful and

successful in their murderous intentions — will be examined, as will several lesser-known women who were

incarcerated in private madhouses during this period. Through close examination of these women's

experiences, along with sustained discussion of how collectives and individuals interacted with material

objects that depicted love-mad women, this thesis interrogates the interplay between lived experience and

stereotypes of female madness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: the first study of its kind

to do so.

The chosen timeframe of this thesis (1770-1833) corresponds with both a general shift in attitudes

towards madness and to the aforementioned lacuna within historical research. 1770 is my starting point as it

marks the year that Bethlem Hospital (popularly known as 'Bedlam')[14] closed its doors to casual visitors —

traditionally viewed as a turning point for contemporary attitudes towards madness. Following King George

III's (1738-1820) first bout of insanity in 1788, this timeframe allows me to contextualise attitudes around

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[12] William B. Gerard, '"All that the heart wishes": Changing Views toward Sentimentality Reflected in Visualizations of Sterne's Maria, 1773-1888', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 34 (2005), 197-269; William B. Gerard, *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016); William B. Gerard, 'Laurence Sterne's "Poor Maria" as Model of Empathic Response', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Affect Studies and Textual Criticism,* eds. Donald R. Wehrs and Thomas Blake (Basingstoke; Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 481-512.

[13] Jane Kromm, *The Art of Frenzy: Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500-1850* (London: Continuum, 2002), 100.

[14] As Roy Porter has shown, whilst 'Bethlem the institution was small; 'Bedlam' the image loomed large in the public imagination'. See Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 122.

female madness within the monarch's own mental decline. Concluding in the early 1830s enables proper analysis of a sixty-year period which witnessed significant legislative, social and political upheaval. Furthermore, this endpoint allows me to question narratives of continuity and change across a wider range of documentary sources which describe life within, and visits to, private and public asylums respectively.

Despite the propensity of scholars to focus on Victorian psychiatry, a collection of scholars join Jane Kromm in backdating their research to examine the late eighteenth century, rooting attitudes towards madness within contemporary contexts of sensibility, sociability and sentimentalism. Porter's extensive work on eighteenth-century madness has proved instrumental in these forays, with *Mind-Forg'd Manacles* (1987) first arguing for a less linear understanding of the treatment and experience of mental illness during this period.[15] Alongside Porter and Kromm, this thesis is indebted to, and builds upon, the research of Jonathan Andrews, Anne Digby, Leonard Smith and Christine Stevenson.[16] Though their focus varies, all take the late eighteenth century as their chronological parameter, and the representations or experiences of the mad and their institutions as their subject. Drawing upon new research on emotions, bodies, objects and experience within psychosocial environments, this project makes a significant contribution to this field.

This introduction outlines scholarship, issues and debates integral to this thesis before turning attention to source material, methodologies and structure. It considers the polysemic definitions used by contemporaries when discussing madness. Sketching out the methodological challenges which a study of this nature faces, it then sets up the ways in which this study expands existing scholarship which has defined the madwoman as an icon of spectatorial sympathy, and how it interacts with additional disciplines in order to draw out further meanings of, and reactions toward, the mad female body. It does not provide the

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[15] As well as *Mind-Forg'd Manacles,* see Roy Porter, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from below', *Theory and Society*, 14, 2 (March 1985), 175-198; Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Roy Porter, *Madmen: A Social History of Madness, Mad-doctors and Lunatics* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006).

[16] Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker and Keir Waddington, *The History of Bethlem* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1997); Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull, *Undertaker of the Mind: John Monro and Mad-Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001); Jonathan Andrews and Anne Digby, eds., *Sex and Seclusion, Class and Custody: Perspectives on Gender and Class in the History of British and Irish Psychiatry* (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodophi, 2004); Anne Digby**,** *Madness, morality, and medicine: a study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Anne Digby, 'Women's Biological Straitjacket', in *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (London: Routledge, 1989), 192-220; Leonard Smith, *Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody: Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999); Leonard Smith, *Private Madhouses in England, 1640-1815: Commercialised Care for the Insane* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British hospital and Asylum Architecture, 1600-1815* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000).

historiographical backdrop upon which this project rests, saving this for a more sustained discussion in chapter one.

Cultural Spectacles: The Feminisation of Madness

In late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England, female madness became visible as never before. People heard stories, sang songs, collected mementoes, read poems and carried chapbooks which represented madwomen. Described as the 'feminisation of madness' by a number of scholars,[17] this craze had significant implications for the social, cultural and medical understandings of female madness, through the stereotypes and conventions it solidified. Even though madness was understood as a disease of the mind, developments in cultural production and dissemination meant that madness was now visualised and viewed through physical, physiognomic and aesthetic attributes, making the madwoman easy to recognise. As Sander L. Gilman argues, various aspects of appearance — including complexion, posture, gestures, movements and accessories — combined to create an 'aura of madness'.[18] The most recognisable of these appearance types within women was the melancholic and the maniacal. Visualisation of the former relied on a language of downcast eyes, tearstained cheeks, dishevelled clothing and a sweet, unthreatening disposition. These women were typically young, beautiful and wandering, listlessly roaming through natural, nondescript settings.[19] The manic madwoman, on the other hand, was a more violent and aggressive force: incarcerated and chained within a gloomy cell, she exhibited an animated frame, electrified straw-like hair, bulging eyes and bare breasts.[20]

Scholarship that focuses on the feminisation of madness has undergone some criticism. In 2004, Jonathan Andrews and Anne Digby's edited volume, *Sex and Seclusion, Class and Custody,* mapped the development of scholarship on gender, class and British psychiatry. In regards to the feminisation of madness model, they questioned to what extent madness was really a 'female malady' at all, scrutinising a range of early feminist texts on women and psychiatry that they dubbed 'polemical'.[21] Suggesting that

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[17] Kromm, 'Feminization'.

[18] Sander L. Gilman, *Seeing the insane: a cultural history of madness and art in the western world* (Nebraska, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 12.

[19] Showalter, *Female Malady*, 13; Gerard, 'All that the heart wishes', 238-240.

[20] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 131, 149-152.

[21] Andrews and Digby, *Sex and Seclusion*, 8, 12-13.

focusing on women *specifically* could prove limiting, the editors conceded that certain areas of historical enquiry — such as wrongful confinement and the powerful gendering of mental disorders such as puerperal insanity — still demand historical explanation, warranting a gender-focused approach.[22] Discussed further in chapter one, most relevant to my methodology are their demands that gender and class should be considered in *tandem*, compared and contrasted rather than adopting an exclusive gender/class oriented approach, along with their call for future studies to research the feminisation of cultural representations through empirical investigation.[23]

Whilst this project keeps in mind critiques of the feminisation model, it maintains a female-focused approach. Remaining wary of the polemical tone of early feminist texts, this thesis reappraises various issues they raise. In line with historian Nancy Tomes's fears over the re-emergence of a critique *against* ideological feminist approaches, a critique that marginalises feminist and women's history through its failure to integrate their insights into mainstream narratives in the history of psychiatry,[24] chapter four pays close attention to the particularly female threat of wrongful confinement. Whilst male examples are occasionally used as a comparative tool, it is only by focusing on women, their representations and their experiences *specifically* that I am able to systematically examine the range of cultural and documentary sources surrounding madwomen in this sixty year period, much of which has been neglected up until this point, via a range of methodologies hitherto unapplied to these debates and case studies. As such, this study breathes new life into the feminisation model.

A full understanding of the feminisation of madness is only possible when contextualised within contemporary notions of class, as Andrews and Digby demonstrate. With different institutional environments housing madwomen across the social classes, from lower and middle-class individuals within the public asylum, to middling and upper-class privately incarcerated madwomen, this thesis stresses the importance of class-identity upon the reputation of the institutions, the reactions of visitors and, as chapter four explores, the privately incarcerated woman herself. It examines how nervous illnesses interacted with elite codes of behaviour across the middling and upper classes, questioning how madness intersected within issues of

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[22] Andrews and Digby, *Sex and Seclusion*, 12.
[23] Andrews and Digby, *Sex and Seclusion,* 7-9, 11; Jonathan Andrews, 'The (un)dress of the mad poor in England, c.1650-1850, Part 1', *History of Psychiatry,* 18, 1 (2007), 5-24 (16).
[24] Nancy Tomes, 'Feminist Histories of Psychiatry', in *Discovering the History of Psychiatry,* eds. Mark Stephen Micale and Roy Porter (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 348-383, 376; Andrews, *Sex and Seclusion*, 9.

social status and self-fashioning. By analysing a wide range of cultural representations, often with a focus on production, materiality and dissemination, I track the ways that icons of female madness were made accessible and appealing to different cross-class audiences.

Additionally, this thesis broadens existing arguments about the feminisation of madness by examining them through the lens of spectacle. I review a raft of visual frameworks through which the eighteenth and nineteenth-century spectator viewed the madwoman. By combining scholarship typically reserved for modern conceptions of spectatorship — such as 'Freakery' — with arguments on eighteenth-century spectacular culture, the feminisation of madness, the history of emotions and material culture, this thesis contributes to established arguments put forward by a range of scholars who consider urban spectacle, spectatorial sympathy and looking at suffering.[25] Significantly, case studies and the public and private reactions they facilitated are not solely conceptualised through oppositional narratives of us/them, mad/sane, animalistic/humanised, dangerous/safe, acceptable/unacceptable, sexual/chaste — though these oppositional categories are considered throughout.

Definitions and Diagnosis

'Madness' has proved a slippery term across scholarship and popular culture. With its meaning deeply rooted in institutional and cultural contexts, today the term is often a controversial one in the way that it reinforces, rather than alleviates, past stigmas and stereotypes. Within histories of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, however, scholars continue to use the word to evoke its contemporary usage. As Leslie Topp, James E. Moran and Jonathan Andrews wrote in 2007, the term 'is not only historically appropriate in terms of the extent and scope of its use by a wide spectrum of society from the early modern period onwards, but it also encompasses in its definition an equally broad spectrum of behavioural meanings'.[26] This attitude

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[25] Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (London: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978); Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1999); Karen Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American culture', *American Historical Review,* 100, 2 (1995), 303-334.

[26] James Moran and Leslie Topp, 'Introduction: Interpreting Psychiatric Spaces', in *Madness, Architecture and the Built Environment: Psychiatric Spaces in Historical Context*, eds. Leslie Topp, James E. Moran and Jonathan Andrews, (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 4.

is reflected by leading scholars in the history of psychiatry, who employ 'madness' to express its global, transhistorical, malleable and often non-medicalised nature.[27]

During the eighteenth century, 'madness' was widely used to describe a large spectrum of psychiatric behaviour that we would today term 'mental illness'. Samuel Johnson's 1785 dictionary contained various definitions of 'madness', including a 'disorder of the mind' and 'broken in the understanding; distracted; delirious without a fever'.[28] It could therefore be used to explain a full blown manic episode or a mild bout of melancholy, referring to the mental illness of the King or even the 'health' of the nation. Contemporary synonyms of 'madness' included 'insanity', 'lunacy', 'derangement', 'disordered' or 'delusional', with a mad person described as a 'lunatic', 'maniac', 'patient' or 'inmate'. Perhaps surprisingly, the term 'mental illness' was in circulation in the late 1700s: one of the earliest usages of 'mental illness' in a newspaper report was in King George III's obituary.[29] The phrase was not common, however, and whilst Johnson's dictionaries in the final decades of the eighteenth century give plenty of synonyms for madness, it was not among the listed terms. Taking its cue from modern writers, this thesis uses a mixture of these definitions, derived from the specific cases and contexts considered, to describe the eighteenth-century experience of mental illness.

Like terminology, contemporary medical approaches to madness were also broad. Fully set out in chapter one, a range of physiological and biological models were available through which to explain its causes, ranging from classical humoural theory to medical models that saw mental disturbance explained via the irritation of the 'nerves'. As the eighteenth century progressed, this latter model enjoyed greater currency, in part due to its resonance with discourses that focused on the sensory, the sensitive and sensibility. Explored in the following chapter, sensibility looked towards philosophical models proposed in the late seventeenth century by philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), models which connected one's exterior environment, emotions and inner character. To be emotionally sensitive to one's environment was to be genteel, refined and virtuous. With the new etiology of nerves strongly linked to catalysts or irritations within the sensory world, it soon became a marker of refinement and civility to display some form of

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[27] Porter writes that 'madness was an extremely broad sociocultural category, with many manifestations and meanings'. See Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, x. See also Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015), 1-2.
[28] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of The English Language* (London, 1785), vol. 1.
[29] *Morning Post*, 2 February 1820.

nervous behaviour.[30] As eminent physician George Cheyne (1672-1743) showed in 1733, nervous diseases were increasingly understood as reserved for the social elite, bolstered by the King's own malady.[31]

With Cheyne's *English Malady* stating that those with 'weak, tender and delicate Constitutions' were more susceptible to nervous disorders,[32] nervousness had serious implications on women. The female body was medically, socially and culturally constructed as weaker and frailer than the male's, meaning that women were considered more likely to succumb to nervous behaviour. For these weaker individuals, subjecting oneself to intensely sentimental or sensorial cultural content could lead to an excessive display of oversensitive behaviour, catapulting them into full blown madness. Whilst on the one hand, women were 'better equipped to produce the requisite displays of feeling' that sensibility demanded, her delicate nervous system and frame meant that she was viewed as contributing disproportionate share to the ranks of the sufferers of nervousness, melancholia, and serious disorder 'when emotions overwhelmed reason'.[33]

The delicate physical disposition of nervous women, often depicted through the language of heartbreak, assumed a prominent role across the period's popular culture and medical texts.[34] When diagnosing or writing about their female patients, physicians were also able to draw upon a 'long medical tradition of viewing the physiology of women as cripplingly vulnerable to their emotional state'.[35] At the same time, they often relied on literary models when writing about women and madness; drawing upon familiar tropes, physicians used terminology 'cautiously evocative' of late eighteenth-century sensibility when describing love's madness.[36] This cross-cultural traffic was not just limited to text. Analysing a series of medical illustrations commissioned by Alexander Morison (1779-1866) at the Surrey County Asylum from the 1830s, Showalter argues that these images demonstrate the exchange between cultural images and psychiatric ideologies. Female patients were portrayed as harmless, feminine and respectable, via standardised smiles and the wearing of elaborate bonnets taken from illustrations of millinery in ladies's

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[30] G. L. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xvii, 6.

[31] George Cheyne, *The English malady: or, A treatise of nervous diseases of all kinds, as spleen, vapours, lowness of spirits, hypochondriacal, and hysterical distempers, etc* (London: Strahan, 1733), 101.

[32] Cheyne, *English malady*, 101.

[33] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 149.

[34] Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England: Courtship, Emotions and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 128.

[35] Small, *Love's Madness*, 15; Janet Oppenheim, *Shattered Nerves: Doctors, Patients and Depression in Victorian England* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 181.

[36] Small, *Love's Madness*, 33. See Alexander Morison, *Outlines of Lectures on Mental Diseases* (Edinburgh: Daniel Lizards, Princes Street, 1825).

annuals.[37] Clearly, and as discussed at the beginning of this introduction, medical definitions impacted cultural conventions, and vice versa.

Arguments surrounding illness and subjectivity ineluctably call to mind the work of Michel Foucault and the 'medical gaze', a concept which has dominated scholarship on the medical humanities since its coinage in 1963. In his *Birth of the Clinic,* Foucault proposed that the final decades of the eighteenth century witnessed the development of new scientific knowledge which focused on observation and empirical evidence, rather than narrative and imagination. According to Foucault, attention now shifted from the 'language of fantasy' to a world of 'constant visibility' and 'qualitative precision'.[38] Framing the patient's body as a silent vehicle of medical knowledge, this Foucauldian model may seem at odds with the above mention of the cultural prejudices that contributed to diagnostic opinion. But, as Gilman has argued, Foucault's description of the gaze documented a process whereby observable features of madness were transmogrified into clinical knowledge, so that doctors too began to utilise 'a complicated and varied visual vocabulary' when dealing with a patient.[39] As chapter one outlines, Foucault's presence can be a tricky one within current medical humanities, and I follow the advice of scholars who suggest that, whilst there is 'no escaping Foucault', it is best to view his work warily.[40] At the same time, his arguments on the *recognisable* signs of certain pathologies, displayed, seen, shared and read by both medical groups and a lay public, are important to this project. Linking back to the cross-cultural exchange between the medical and cultural, then, it is this 'visual vocabulary' — felt through the metaphors, stereotypes and schema that related to female madness — that this thesis unpicks. Additionally, with Foucault's arguments drawing together interconnected strands on the subjectivity and objectivity of the doctor and patient respectively, this thesis brings a third body into the mix: that of the non-medical spectator.

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[37] Showalter, *Female Malady*, 14.
[38] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (Routledge: London, 2003), x.
[39] Gilman, *Seeing the insane,* xii.
[40] Leslie Topp, *Freedom and the Cage: Modern Architecture and Psychiatry in Central Europe, 1890-1914* (Pennsylvania, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 13-14.

Sources and Methodology

This project utilises a broad conceptualisation of eighteenth-century madness, answering its guiding questions through an assemblage of case studies, images, texts, spaces and responses that span cultural, medical and social disciplines. Primary sources used can be broadly categorised into two groups. One set traverses literary, visual, theatrical, musical, material and museological fields, relating to fictional characters and enabling an investigation into how different cultural media participated variously, but also in combination, in the production of cultural meanings around the mad female body. The second group relates to encounters with real, living madwomen, and the personal experiences of incarcerated women within the private madhouse. Relying predominantly on unpublished material, this approach addresses the methodological challenges that stem from the fragmentary and elusive nature of the patient's voice, whilst engaging with debates in the history of psychiatry and the medical humanities that consider tensions between theory and practice in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century asylum reform, and the issue of retrospective diagnosis.

From paintings exhibited in the Royal Academy of Arts, caricatures displayed in print shop windows, prints published in periodicals and woodcuts adorning musical scores, eighteenth and early nineteenth-century actors had plenty of opportunities to view the madwoman. Crucial to arguments given in this project are the vital differences in media, distribution and viewing strategies, with images often functioning within an art historical hierarchy and designed with either a specific class in mind, or for cross-class appeal. At the same time, published descriptions of female madness within popular texts developed a highly pictorial quality, conjuring vivid images of the madwoman and providing an intense imaginative experience. Novels, poems and plays contributed to stereotypical narratives surrounding both the physical and psychic symptoms of female madness, alongside issues of cause and cure. These cultural examples were then publicised in periodicals and newspapers, joined by news stories on actual madwomen and their deviant behaviour. Coverage might describe the madwoman as an incarcerated, animalistic lunatic, a lost, wandering idiot, or a criminalised figure of deviance. The public also read about wider scandals involving named historical figures — such as the King — or details of governmental enquiries into mistreatment within asylums. Fictionalised characters coalesced with individuals depicted in the media, and medical texts were published within very public sources, read by non-medical groups.

As well as texts about madness, this thesis utilises printed sources to understand contemporary ideals and expectations of femininity. Texts that delineated conventional female behaviour — namely, conduct manuals, newspapers, periodicals and literary sources including novels and poems — have been presented as important cultural sources in having shaped eighteenth-century conceptions of gender. When using these sources, I follow methodologies proffered by revisionist historians that criticised earlier scholarship for accepting idealised gender narratives perpetuated within this prescriptive material. Historians such as Amanda Vickery question the extent to which women (and men) actually conformed to prescribed models of authority.[41] As these scholars have noted, eighteenth-century moralists and conduct-book writers 'attempted to coax, cajole or chastise their readers into complying with idealised notions of masculinity and femininity'.[42] The question of whether they succeeded is another thing altogether. These arguments allow our understanding of eighteenth-century women to move away from a formalised, fixed or uncompromising role, and instead take up a more fluid, nuanced position.[43] At the same time, idealised models are useful when thinking about the ways in which madwomen were conceptualised in opposition to, or in alignment with, idealised femininity, expanding our understanding of how female madness might be conceptualised as acceptable or unacceptable.

A thesis on representation, spectacle and reception may not be the obvious home for critical analysis and reflections on encounters with *actual* madwomen, along with discussion of historical actors within the eighteenth and nineteenth-century private madhouse. Considering viewing madwomen *in the flesh*, however, provides insight into how asylum spaces could imbue their female inmates with specific meanings, often derived from external cultural sources. Furthermore, they give information about the emotional processes that might take place within asylums, processes which could begin with the literary or visual, then be consolidated within these compelling carceral spaces of confinement and care. Thinking about individual lives within the culturally loaded spaces of the late eighteenth-century private madhouse, and looking towards sources authored by incarcerated women, broadens our knowledge of how certain mediating frameworks could impact meaning. Additionally, interrogating pervasive stereotypes surrounding conditions

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[41] Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal,* 36, 2 (June 1993), 383-414, (385).
[42] Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth-century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 1.
[43] Barker and Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England,* 3.

and experience sheds light on the ways that stereotype and lived experience could coalesce, within these spaces and beyond.

Textual sources that help better our understanding of responses to social encounters with actual, living madwomen within asylums are ample. Chapter three makes particular use of sources relating to asylum tourism, including travelogues and guidebooks that discuss the public face of the English asylum. It also considers a range of unpublished documentary sources revealing responses to madwomen by visitors, located outside of the public sphere, including letters and diaries. In line with the aforementioned softening of disciplinary distinctions, and this thesis's positioning of medical texts within a broader cultural landscape, it also includes asylum records and visitor books from a range of London-based and regional institutions. In addition, chapter four draws upon material written by women and their families during time spent in madhouses, including account books, letters and notebooks.

This methodology responds to demands from historians during the 1980s, led by Roy Porter, Anne Digby and Bill Luckin, for patient-focused scholarship. As chapter one details, this was part of a second wave of the history of psychiatry that looked towards a granular, source-based methodology. Categorising the mad as a marginalised group within the 'history from below', and in agreement with Digby that asylum records only reveal feelings of patients 'inadvertently', Porter eschewed physician-centred narratives, advising scholars to cease seeing the doctor as the 'agent of primary care'.[44] Likewise, Luckin congratulated quantitative work that focused on 'ordinary' individuals, encouraging future scholars to prioritise records that move away from authority structures and male-dominated physician narratives.[45] Such work, he advised, begins with the reconstruction of the social history of institutionalised patients, providing detailed accounts of 'architecture, routines, meal-times, diets, work schedules, therapeutic personnel and systems of authority'.[46] Recent scholars have responded to such suggestions, piecing together patient experiences through clothing, material history and asylum case notes.[47]

Whilst this study does not characterise itself as an explicit response to Porter's call for 'history from

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[44] Porter, 'Patient's View', 176, 183, 194; Digby, *Madness*, xiv-xv.
[45] Smith, *Cure,* 5.
[46] Bill Luckin, 'Towards a Social History of Institutionalization', *Social History*, 8, 1 (January 1983), 87-94 (89).
[47] Charlotte Newman, 'A mansion for the mad: an archaeology of Brooke House, Hackney', *Post-Medieval Archaeology,* 49, 1 (2015), 156-174; Rebecca Wynter, "Good in all respects': Appearance and dress at Staffordshire County Lunatic Asylum, 1818-1854', *History of Psychiatry*, 22, 1 (2011), 40-57; Sarah Chaney, 'No "Sane" Person Would Have Any Idea': Patients' Involvement in Late Nineteenth-century British Asylum Psychiatry', *Medical history,* 60, 1 (2016), 37-53.

below', it does contribute to understanding of the patient's voice and experience, through case studies of specific individuals and institutions. Important here is how I define 'lived experience', a complex issue which becomes thornier still when considering the lived experience of mental illness. Rather than understanding this as a static concept, I relate it to a wider experiential arc, that not only included an individual's time in the madhouse, but also experiences of anticipation, imagination and memory. Documentary sources used to consider the experience of several women in private madhouses in chapter four at times prove fragmentary, yet combining these sources with other institutional, textual and visual material builds a clearer picture of life before, during and after incarceration. Interpretations drawn from these sources are at times necessarily creative and speculative, meshing methodologies and examples found within the history of emotions to suggest how viewing a madwoman within a space of so-called 'clinical encounter' affected both individuals and collectives. Crucially, they are aligned with suggestions put forward by Kristeva on ways to create a cross-cultural space: one way being to understand clinical encounters as cultural, 'in the sense that they involve translation between health as a biomedical phenomenon and healing as lived experience'.[48]

A critical issue when embarking on a historical study on madwomen is that of retrospective diagnosis. The dangers of projecting current medical thinking upon the past and diagnosing historical individuals with today's diseases was made clear in 1969 when Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter wrongfully diagnosed George III as suffering from porphyria, leading to the use of this diagnosis in Alan Bennett's play and the subsequent film, *The Madness of King George*.[49] Whilst Porter has stressed that 'medical sociology and anthropology can prove immensely suggestive for the historian trying to breathe life into sufferers long since dead and gone',[50] later scholars stress epistemological concerns surrounding 'pathobiographies' and 'anachronistic diagnosis'.[51] An irresolvable methodological issue plagued, as Axel Karenberg argues, by an 'unlimited range of speculation',[52] the spectre of retrospective diagnosis looms large

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[48] Kristeva, 'Cultural crossings', 57.
[49] Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1969), xii, 195; Joanne Edge, 'Diagnosing the Past', 26 September 2018, Wellcome Collection Blog, <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/W5D4eR4AACIArLL8>.
[50] Porter, 'Patient's View', 184.
[51] A. Karenberg, 'Retrospective Diagnosis: Use and Abuse in Medical Historiography, *Prague Medical Report*, 110, 2 (2009), 140-145; Osamu Muramoto, 'Retrospective diagnosis of a famous historical figure; ontological, epistemic, and ethical considerations', *Philosophy, Ethics and Humanities in Medicine*, 9, 10 (2014).
[52] Karenberg, 'Retrospective Diagnosis', 142.

in the work of 'hobbyish detectives' who enjoy diagnosing famous individuals and literary figures with illnesses they deem transhistorical.[53]

Karenberg does suggest a number of ways that scholarship might use retrospective diagnosis productively, arguing that future pathobiographies should think of 'historical personalities as "windows of opportunity" to learn more about medical practices and social perceptions of the past'. He prioritises the use of extensive primary sources, a critical approach and a keen focus on context, rather than searching for a *concrete* diagnosis.[54] Whilst setting out the epistemic challenges and probabilistic nature of medical diagnoses, Osamu Muramoto stresses that all diagnoses are, to some extent, hypothetical.[55] The idea that the study of illnesses provides scholars with glimpses or windows into past attitudes and perceptions is important to this project. Whilst the following chapters resist ascribing modern illnesses to historical actors, I deem it productive to speculate on the nature of certain mental illnesses, questioning whether these case studies were indeed mad, to expand my thinking on reasons for incarceration and the stigmas surrounding certain types of behaviour.

Scholars of asylum histories face further methodological challenges. In the 1980s, Luckin lamented how asylums were identified too strongly with their socio-economic context, as scholars argued that institutions functioned as 'mirrors' to society. Whilst there is no denying that institutions reflect and are 'partially shaped' by society, he argued that this approach 'should not blind us to the possibilities of a quite different methodology, which begins with the embedded routines of the institution, and then works backwards and outwards'.[56] Later historians have critiqued this tendency for asylums to be characterised as 'islands' divorced from wider cultural and contextual issues.[57] I respond to both of these challenges in chapter three, which carefully maps the asylum visitor experience, moving from macro exterior spaces to micro experiences of the cells. I consider the wider social and cultural importance of these institutions, using sources such as maps, travelogues and topographical prints to highlight their place within an increasingly philanthropic society. Simultaneously, I use a range of aforementioned material to provide more granular details of institutional life. This oscillation between a macro and micro approach provides a broader cultural

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[53] Cullen Murphy, 'Second Opinions: History winds up in the waiting room', *The Atlantic*, June 2001.
[54] Karenberg, 'Retrospective Diagnosis', 144.
[55] Muramoto, 'Retrospective diagnosis', no page number.
[56] Luckin, 'Institutionalization', 90.
[57] Andrews, *Sex and Seclusion*, 13.

definition of these spaces, allowing greater understanding of the more nuanced spatial and temporal frameworks within which the madwoman was situated, and to which select asylum visitors were given access.

Chapter Structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first is predominantly historiographical and lays out the social, political and cultural foundations on which the following case studies rest. Chapters two and three think closely about display, looking and spectatorship. The fourth chapter focuses on lived experiences and written narratives, whilst the fifth turns to material culture.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis and the degree to which it engages with so many different aspects of the histories of gender, medicine and psychiatry, the first chapter deals with a range of historiography, functioning as an extension of this introduction. It outlines pressing historiographical debates and discourses, giving further analysis of the methodological challenges faced by researchers in these areas. It presents a range of secondary material, bolstered by some primary examples, relating to topics including: the humanisation and feminisation of madness; the construction of idealised forms of femininity; the emergence of didactic discourses surrounding spectacular culture and narratives of subjectivity, sensibility and sympathy; the ways in which madwomen might function as models of gendered political resistance; and the role of material culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It also provides the institutional and legislative backdrop for mental health provisions during this period. Critically, chapter one critiques the ways in which past historians of both gender and psychiatry have relied on oppositional narratives of men/women, public/private, mad/sane, us/them, to shape their academic endeavours: narratives which fail to capture the rich texture and complexity of responses towards the mentally ill examined in the rest of the thesis.

Chapter two moves onto my first case study: Margaret Nicholson, a servant turned needlewoman who attempted to assassinate King George III in 1786 and was subsequently diagnosed as mad. Surveying a range of understudied prints alongside textual and material sources such as chapbooks, broadsides, newspapers and objects, it analyses the shifting interpretations and meanings of female madness that the Nicholson affair reveals. I consider the ways in which Nicholson was briefly framed within the 'love-mad'

tradition, serving as an evocative emotional prompt for the 'Man of Feeling' — in this case, the King —

before discussing auxiliary modalities of *looking* at female madness. I extrapolate the interconnected layers

of meaning within these intriguing cultural representations, stressing how Nicholson's resistance to gendered

conventions and stereotypes of female madness saw audiences and spectators struggle to place her within

common cultural frameworks.

Informed by museological and sociological arguments about how certain cultural frameworks

perpetuate difference,[58] chapter three confronts the public asylum and the role of incarcerated madwomen

through the lens of asylum tourism. Building upon scholarship that positions the madwoman as a

sympathetic icon, it charts emotional reactions to female madness in tandem with contemporary discussions

of sympathy, compassion and pity found within moral philosophy. I use these writings to ask wider questions

about the concept of spectatorial sympathy and the often oxymoronic experience of viewing suffering during

this period; an experience sometimes described by contemporaries as eliciting a 'delicious pain'.[59]

Illustrating how various strategies and techniques promoted specific psychosocial reactions and contributed

to the madwoman's contradictory cultural meanings, the chapter utilises a broad selection of material,

including first-hand responses, published accounts and official sources such as topographical prints and

visitor books.

Whilst chapter three focuses on representations of and reactions towards unknown women, engaging

more with a *type* rather than living individuals, chapter four untangles the experiences of known, actual

women. It pieces together and examines the stories of four women incarcerated in private madhouses

between 1791 and 1836. It does this by using archival documents, madhouse records, journals, newspaper

reports and literary representations of these institutions. Arguments put forward in chapter four approach

cultural history with a renewed emphasis, to quote Karen Harvey, on 'the study of social and material

relations of power'. Including conceptual thinking about identity and the female body, it also looks towards

various economic and social contexts to understand what life was really like within these spaces.[60] In this

way, it contributes to the histories of psychiatry and medicine as well as arguments about cultural history, the

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[58] Edward. L. Schwarzschild, 'Death-Defying/Defining Spectacles: Charles Willson Peale as Early American Freak Showman', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body,* ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (London: New York University Press, 1996), 82-97, 82; Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates* (London: Penguin, 1961).
[59] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 308.
[60] Karen Harvey, 'Rabbits, Whigs and Hunters: Women and Protest in Mary Toft's monstrous births of 1726', *Past and Present*, 238, 1 (February 2018), 43-83 (45).

history of art and visual culture, dismantling several stereotypes and considering how these private sites actually functioned as arenas of consumerism and imaginative behaviour. At the same time, it addresses wider methodological concerns surrounding post-diagnosis and the search for patient agency. Significantly, this chapter identifies slippages between cultural models and historical experience. It considers how popular stories and stereotypes might colour responses towards and experiences of private female confinement, whilst suggesting that incarcerated women might utilise certain cultural scripts and behavioural types to elicit both sympathy and funds.

Finally, chapter five explores the realm of the fictionalised love-mad women, tackling her cultural significance through the prism of material culture. It considers the birth, popularity and lifecycle of 'Crazy Jane', a fictionalised heroine who was driven mad following an ill-fated attachment. In the wake of scholars such as Porter and Lesel Dawson who view the lovesick woman as both a medical category and a literary archetype,[61] I argue that love's madness in general, and Jane in particular, was a more complex, mysterious and transgressive trope than other scholars have allowed. Finally, this chapter considers the role of the Crazy Jane object within the home. It examines the emotional terrain of the love-mad souvenir to complicate scholarly understanding of the function of love's madness in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England. Discussions of the chronological development of the Crazy Jane trope paves the way for a more developed analysis of continuity and change within representations of female madness in the main conclusion.

Paramount to many of the arguments and debates outlined in this thesis are the ways in which different cultural media participated in producing different, often contradictory, meanings through the mad female body. Understood as a site of cultural projection, the concept of a woman's body as a vehicle through which society's ideals, stereotypes and anxieties are mapped and interrogated is not a new one. Susan Bordo has argued for the 'body as a text of culture', stressing how the female body functions as 'a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed'.[62] In recent years, these ideas have been refreshed by scholars who have questioned

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[61] Roy Porter, 'Love, Sex and Madness in Eighteenth Century England', *Social Research*, 53, 2 (1986), 211-242 (218); Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.
[62] Susan Bordo, 'The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault', in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, eds. Alison M. Jagger and Susan R. Bordo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 13-23, 13; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1978), 116, 129.

what different permutations of familiar cultural figures tell us about the 'body politic', the construction of gender roles, and how body image and culture interact. As Kimberley Rhodes writes, by understanding 'the interdisciplinary conjunction of forces' to which these bodies were subjected, we can unpack 'the heroine's role in reflecting the anxieties and archetypes of the period'.[63] Casting the madwoman as my heroine, the next chapter explores these ideological forces and the academic terrain necessary for fully understanding her complex role.

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[63] Rhodes, *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture,* 2.

CHAPTER ONE

Madness, Gender and Spectacle

The Royal Academy of Art's summer exhibition of 1787 was considered unremarkable by contemporaries,

receiving ambivalent remarks, and only a limited number of those. 'The present exhibition', stated *The*

World, 'has brought forth nothing of strong or wonderful effect'.[1] As art historian Esther Chadwick notes,

the only real highlights of the exhibition were the history paintings put forward by James Northcote and John

Opie, seen as saving 'the Exhibition from real mediocrity' and described by *The General Evening Post* as

'the only two historic exhibitors'.[2] Of the seven pastels exhibited by the seventeen-year old British artist

Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), all went unnoticed by the periodical press.[3]

More recently, however, Lawrence's number 184 has captured scholarly imagination. Titled *Mad*

Girl, Lawrence presents a pastel of a sky-ward looking female figure, bearing a mixed expression of heated

passion and melancholic despair [Figure 1.1]. Tears roll down her cheeks, her right breast is exposed and

wisps of straw crown her flowing hair. Situated in a cell-like interior with chained wrists, her outstretched

slender hands call upon the viewer's sympathy. On the back of the frame reads the below inscription in the

artist's hand:

> Madsong
> One Morning very early,
> One Morning in the Spring,
> I heard a Maid in Bedlam,
> Who mournfully did sing;
> Her chains she rattled in her hands
> While sadly thus sung she,
> I love my Love, -because
> I know my Love loves me!

These lines were taken from a popular folksong titled 'A Maid in Bedlam', first published in London in

1772.[4] Situating his subject matter within Bethlem Hospital — which, as this chapter soon discusses, had

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[1] *The World*, 1 May 1787.

[2] Esther Chadwick, '1787: Contemporary History Painting', in *The Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition: A Chronicle, 1769–2018,* eds. Mark Hallett, Sarah Victoria Turner and Jessica Feather (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2018), <https://chronicle250.com/1787>; *The General Evening Post,* 28 April 1787.

[3] Cassandra A. Albinson, Peter Funnell and Lucy Peltz, eds., *Thomas Lawrence: Regency, Power & Brilliance* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale Center for British Art, National Portrait Gallery, in association with Yale University Press, 2010), xiv.

[4] Anon, 'The Maid in Bedlam' (London: W. Napier, 1772); 'Mad Song', *The goldfinch, or new modern songster* (Edinburgh: A. Brown 1782).

closed its door to paying visitors in 1770 — Lawrence's canvas invites the Royal Academy's crowds back into the asylum. Like the poem's blending of the madwoman's rattling chains and mournful song, Lawrence's pastel mingles melancholic and maniacal iconography, functioning as an alluring hybrid of the two dominant tropes typically used by those depicting female madness during this period.[5] Despite its lack of contemporary attention, the inclusion of this work amongst a selection of significant late eighteenth-century portraits highlights the cultural phenomenon discussed in the introduction: the feminisation of madness.

In order to answer my principal research questions — on the contemporary display and reception of the madwoman, the ways in which she was framed by certain contexts and spaces, and the consequences that her spectacularisation had upon Georgian identities — this preliminary chapter introduces the cultural, medical, political and social landscape of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries of which Lawrence's pastel relates. It outlines the key historic debates, ideologies and discourses vital to this project, reserving detailed analysis of case studies for later chapters. Critically, and as stated in the introduction, it sets out the ways that scholarship of psychiatry and gender has often relied on diametrically opposed narratives to unpack the role of the mad, the sick and women.

Falling into five sections, the first part outlines debates on the humanisation of madness. The second discusses the feminisation of madness, the cultural history of the female body and shifting gender roles during the period. The third examines a range of scholarly arguments on sensibility, suffering and looking, revealing how texts or images instructed eighteenth-century collectives and individuals on how to look at specific spectacles within specific spaces. Paving the way for arguments made in chapter two in particular, the fourth section introduces politicised representations of female madness and the maniacal trope. Part five delineates scholarship on late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century material culture, providing a basis for arguments put forward in chapters four and five.

Madness, Humanised?

The period from 1770 to 1833 was marked by legislative changes, the growth of asylums, the promulgation of new therapies and a shifting understanding of what it meant to be mad. A number of scholars have

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[5] Jane Kromm, *The Art of Frenzy: Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500-1850* (London: Continuum, 2002), 150-152.

characterised these developments as a revolution, whereby the lunatic transmogrified from an animalistic brute to a curable human being, 'whose sanity might be restored by kindly care'.[6] Critical to these arguments are changing societal, political and humanitarian pressures, which have led Allan Ingram to argue that, by the end of the eighteenth century, whilst 'madness was still something to be inspected […] the eye of the beholder had changed'.[7] These next two sections chart and challenge these ideas, interrogating Whiggish narratives of reform alongside debates of continuity and change put forward by revisionist historians.

Conventional narratives within the history of medicine and psychiatry posit that pre eighteenth-century Western culture relied on witchcraft, devil worship and demonic possession to explain madness.[8] Alongside superstition, Hippocratic and Gallenic explanations of madness had been the chief model for centuries and continued to dominate seventeenth and early eighteenth-century discourses. This model of humoural theory saw certain illnesses caused by the imbalance of the 'four humours': blood, choler, phlegm and black bile. This widely accepted theory conceptualised health through the balance of these bodily fluids, with imbalanced proportions leading to a range of different maladies. Whilst too much black bile was viewed as producing melancholy, too much yellow bile or choler led to mania.[9] With their origins linked to different fluids and their symptomology so strikingly different, melancholy and mania were often viewed as polar opposites. The seventeenth century had seen a distinct conception of the morose melancholic, with Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) characterising it as an ailment associated with genius and intellect.[10] In contrast, mania was viewed as the most 'turbulent and extreme' of the mental disorders, its external markers of uncontrollable wildness, angry passion and shameless self-exhibition making it a 'common source of uncivil behaviour'.[11]

Most medical writers, however, believed the two to be interconnected.[12] As Robert James's influential *A Medicinal Dictionary* (1743-5) argued, melancholy was 'the primary disorder', with mania

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[6] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), 8.
[7] Allan Ingram, *The Madhouse of Language: Writing and Reading madness in the Eighteenth Century* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 76.
[8] Denise Russell, *Women, Madness and Medicine* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1995), 4; Sander L. Gilman, *Seeing the insane: a cultural history of madness and art in the western world* (Nebraska, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 22.
[9] Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 45.
[10] Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy. A new edition, correct and enriched by translations of the numerous classical extracts by Democritus Minor* (London: William Tegg & Co., 1849).
[11] Jane Kromm, 'Olivia furiosa: Maniacal Women from Richardson to Wollstonecraft', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 16, 3 (April 2004), 344-372 (346); Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 146.
[12] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles,* 46.

being its 'augmentation'.[13] The sequential nature of these disorders meant that mania was often

conceptualised as an augmented stage rising from melancholy's baseline. As such, mania was viewed as

subsequent or secondary to melancholy, with the melancholic outlook often understood as limited, partial

and 'not overtaking the person entirely'.[14] The connected yet distinct nature of these disorders proves a key

theme of this thesis, with melancholy often serving as a less troubling counterpart to mania's passionate

violence. Even if melancholy proved a milder malady, bold treatment had long been justified to correct the

disproportion of bodily fluids at its root; as Thomas Willis stated in 1684, 'bloodletting, Vomits, or very

strong Purges, boldly and rashly given, are most often convenient' for treating both manic and melancholic

disorders.[15]

'For most writers on the subject', Jane Kromm has argued, 'the humoural tradition's hegemonic

position slipped in the eighteenth century'.[16] These narratives present contemporary medical men as

increasingly objecting to all 'Tormenting Means' and 'Punishments' used to treat varying forms of

insanity.[17] In 1758, William Battie, previously governor of Bethlem and one of the founders of St Luke's

Hospital for Lunatics, wrote in his *Treatise on Madness* that emetics, blisters, cathartics and bleedings were

inappropriate remedies for treating madness.[18] Alongside Battie, this period saw publications by England's

leading physicians move away from humouralism and instead argue for a sensitive, observation-based

response when treating patients.

With discussion of different forms of treatment came new theories on the causes of mental disorder.

As Roy Porter has argued, the eighteenth century saw humoural theory somewhat eclipsed by 'the role of

nerves as mediators between distempered bodies and troubled minds'.[19] Seventeenth-century physicians such

as Thomas Willis had linked the origins of mental disorders to a range of irritated nerves, fibres and particles

found within the nervous system.[20] Positing the close interaction between mind and body, these ideas gained

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[13] See Robert James, 'Mania, Madness', *Medicinal Dictionary* (London: Osborne, 1743-1745), vol 2, no page number; John Johnstone, *Medical Jurisprudence. On Madness* (Birmingham: J. Belcher, 1800), 24; Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 117.
[14] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 117.
[15] Thomas Willis, *The practice of physick: two discourses concerning the soul of brutes* (London: Dring, Harper, & Leigh, 1684), 206.
[16] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 116-117.
[17] Lewis Southcomb, *Peace of mind and health of body united* (London: Cowper, 1750); Richard Hunter and Ida Macalpine, *Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry, 1535-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 383-384.
[18] William Battie, *Treatise on Madness* (London: J. Whiston, and B. White, 1758), 94. For more information on Battie and his views, see Anne Digby**,** *Madness, morality, and medicine: a study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5.
[19] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 47-48.
[20] Thomas Willis, *Cerebri anatome* (London: 1764); Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles,* 48.

considerable influence in the eighteenth century, with physicians such as George Cheyne arguing that the nervous system provided an 'alternative geography of anguish and action'.[21] Illnesses such as hysteria, hypochondria, 'the spleen' and 'the vapours' were now seen as part of a closely related family of diseases, their terms used interchangeably under the umbrella term of 'nervous disorders'.[22] As shown later in this chapter and vital to this thesis as a whole, these changes seriously impacted how female health was conceptualised.

Charting these developments, early scholarship within the history of psychiatry has told a straightforward story of progress and reform. Aubrey Lewis's *The State of Psychiatry* (1967), for example, marked the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a time of whips, chains and degradation. The end of the eighteenth century saw humanitarian effort 'put an end of the abuses', with English reformers in the 1790s inaugurating a new era of kindness and 'a rational, humane approach to the mastery of mental illness'.[23] Drawing upon the framework of the Enlightenment, other mid twentieth-century writers propounded this comforting collective mythology of progression; one that was later criticised for failing to 'capture the diversity and confusion that actually characterised the eighteenth-century scene'.[24]

In *Reflections on Psychiatry and Its Histories* (1994), Roy Porter and Mark S. Micale critiqued these histories as 'presentist, progressivist and tenaciously internalist', presenting a 'dual historical movement, from cruelty and barbarism to organised, institutional humanitarianism, and from ignorance, religion, and superstition to modern medical science'.[25] As Leonard Smith has noted, these Whiggish narratives built upon

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[21] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 178. See George Cheyne, *The English malady: or, A treatise of nervous diseases of all kinds, as spleen, vapours, lowness of spirits, hypochondriacal, and hysterical distempers, etc* (London: Strahan, 1733); Richard Blackmore, *A Treatise on the Spleen and Vapours: Or, Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Affections* (London: Pemberton, 1726); Giovanni Battista Morgagni, *The Seats and Causes of Diseases Investigated by Anatomy* (London: Millar, Cadell, Johnson and Payne, 1769); James Makittrick Adair, *Commentaries on the principles and practice of physic* (London: T. Becket and Co.: 1772).

[22] Porter describes how the spectacular symptomology of hysteria included 'constrictions, breathlessness, choking', with hypochondria being its male analogue. Closely linked to hysteria, the 'vapours' were a disorder where the sufferer belched black fumes, 'befogging the understanding'. 'The spleen' was linked to hypochondriacs, with symptoms including anxiety and experiencing sudden fits of anger. For further discussion of the overlap between these different disorders, see Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 48-50; Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1969), 287.

[23] Aubrey Lewis, *The State of Psychiatry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 3; Lowell S. Seeling, *Men against Madness* (New York, NY: Greenberg, 1940); Walter Bromberg, *Man above Humanity: A history of psychotherapy* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1954); Jan Ehrenwald, *From Medicine Man to Freud: A history of psychotherapy* (New York, NY: Dell, 1954).

[24] Andrew Scull, *The Insanity of Place/The Place of Insanity: Essays on the History of Psychiatry* (Routledge: London, 2006), 43.

[25] Mark Stephen Micale and Roy Porter, eds., 'Introduction: Reflections on Psychiatry and its Histories', in *Discovering the History of Psychiatry* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3-36, 6.

nineteenth-century writers who celebrated the 'moral therapy' movement of the late eighteenth century.[26] Discussed in the next section, moral therapy prioritised emotional, rather than organic, causes of insanity, with care constituting 'not so much a specific technique as a range of non-medical treatments designed to involve the patient actively in his recovery'.[27] With the movement positioned as neatly signifying the end of violent, inhumane and coercive treatment, this 'seductive picture' of change and reform has since been exposed as overly simplistic.[28]

Remaining 'radically sceptical of their progressive slant', it was Michel Foucault who first disrupted these narratives.[29] Expounded in his 1961 text *Madness and Civilization,* Foucault maintained that the eighteenth century witnessed the 'The Great Confinement', whereby the 'gradual discovery by science and philanthropy of madness in its positive truth' ran parallel to 'blind repression in an absolutist regime'.[30] He argued that the moral movement was in fact a 'gigantic moral imprisonment', situated within a wider story of 'anti-psychiatry'.[31] For Foucault, moral therapy did not liberate the insane; rather, it moved the unrestricted madman into a world of social control and repressive moral uniformity.[32]

Responses to Foucault's arguments have been mixed. Some have stressed how his text 'brilliantly exposed the repressive ideologies that lay behind the reform of the asylum', expanding historical conceptions of confinement, control and the silencing of the irrational.[33] Sociologist Andrew Scull has stressed how leading revisionist scholars have exhibited 'a distinctly ambivalent attitude' to Foucault's work, yet admits that 'in no small measure, it was probably his wide ranging speculations that attracted us to the field in the first place'.[34] Many of Foucault's arguments and methodologies have proved problematic. *Madness and*

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[26] Leonard Smith, *Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody: Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 3.

[27] Anne Digby, 'Moral Treatment at the Retreat, 1796-1846', in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry,* eds. W.F. Bynam, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd (London: Routledge, 2004), vol. 2, 52-72, 53.

[28] Smith, *Cure*, 3.

[29] Leslie Topp, *Freedom and the Cage: Modern Architecture and Psychiatry in Central Europe, 1890-1914* (Pennsylvania, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017), 14.

[30] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Routledge Classics, 2001), xiv.

[31] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 278; Micale and Porter, 'Reflections', 7-8. For more on the anti-psychiatry movement, see Peter Sedgwick, *Psycho Politics: Laing, Foucault, Szasz, and the Future of Psychiatry* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1981).

[32] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization,* 259; Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1993).

[33] Showalter, *Female Malady*, 6.

[34] Scull, *Insanity*, 4-5. Scull's earlier text on the history of madness, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions* (1993) drew heavily on the Foucauldian model of social control. Whilst wary of Foucault's sweeping historical judgements, his later work continued to present moral therapy as 'fundamentally ambiguous' and as a 'mechanism for inducing conformity'. See Scull, *Solitary of Afflictions*, 8; *Insanity*, 7.

Civilization relied heavily on the writing of the nineteenth-century reformers — writers that formed the foundations of the Whiggish trajectory that Foucault had so vehemently criticised. Noting his reluctance to utilise documentary sources, others have suggested that Foucault was 'unconcerned with historical detail of time or place'.[35]

Over the last fifty years, scholarship has established a more balanced view on eighteenth-century madness. Tempering both the humanisation narrative and Foucault's conception of social control and moral confinement, leading scholars of psychiatry have demonstrated that patient experiences across institutions was far more varied than these dual characterisations allow.[36] The eighteenth century, they argue, did not constitute a monolithic system of cruel psychiatric care; nor were they sites of straightforward humanity. Some were comfortable, humane, even pathbreaking, providing a range of therapeutic experiences for their patients. Others were spaces of mismanagement, or prioritised older models of humoural treatment.[37] Whilst remaining a mainstay within histories of psychiatry, the 'humanisation' narrative is now viewed as a more complicated story of change and continuity, full of contradictions rather than constituting a steady path towards reform.

This research has paved the way for a diversity of discourses, from cultural and social theorists, art and literary critics, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and neurologists — many of which this thesis interacts with.[38] Architecture and space have become important areas of study, considering perspectives 'from the macro-scale of the region, through the mid-scale of the therapeutic institution, to the micro-scale of patient experience'.[39] Of particular significance to this thesis is research that adopts a gendered focus, such as

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[35] Lawrence Stone, 'An Exchange with Michel Foucault', *New York Review of Books,* 31 March 1983. Foucault's contention that it was the *eighteenth* century that witnessed a period of confinement, rather than the nineteenth, has also been debunked. See Ingram, *Madhouse,* 5.

[36] William Ll. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971); Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, chapters three and four; Jonathan Andrews, 'Bedlam revisited: A history of Bethlem hospital 1634-1770' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1991); Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker and Keir Waddington, *The History of Bethlem* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1997); Patricia Allderidge, 'Bedlam: fact or fantasy?', in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry,* eds. W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd (London: Routledge, 1985), vol. 2, 17-33; Leonard Smith, 'Eighteenth-Century Madhouse Practice: The Prouds of Bilston', *History of Psychiatry*, 3 (1992); Leonard Smith, "God grant it may do good two all': the madhouse practice of Joseph Mason, 1738-79', *History of Psychiatry*, 27, 2 (2016), 208-219.

[37] Even the Retreat at York, which heralded itself as the country's bastion for moral treatment methods, used bloodletting, emetics and purging when treating patients. Case Book 1, York Retreat, RET/6/5/1/1A, BIA.

[38] Micale and Porter, 'Reflections', 4

[39] James Moran and Leslie Topp, 'Introduction: Interpreting Psychiatric Spaces', in *Madness, Architecture and the Built Environment: Psychiatric Spaces in Historical Context*, eds. Leslie Topp, James E. Moran and Jonathan Andrews, (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 1-2, 12.

the work of Hilary Marland.[40] Others such as Charlotte Newman and Rebecca Wynter have examined

material culture and dress history in relation to certain institutions and their patients.[41] These scholars are

part of a wave of scholarship that unpicks issues of gender and class; emotions and sexuality; the body, space

and architecture; patient psychology, agency and self-expression, often tackled in unison rather than

singularly.

Foundational to much of this scholarship was Porter's call for the 'patient's voice', which

demonstrated a renewed interest in reinstating patient perspectives to the history of psychiatry.[42] While

Porter's 1985 essay had an 'extraordinary echo', it was met by a period of relative silence from scholars.[43]

This silence is now being addressed. In 2016, a dedicated edition of *Medical History* argued that the

psychiatric patient should no longer be viewed as a 'sub-culture' of the discipline, but rather, at its heart.[44]

Providing a range of illuminating analysis and methodological perspectives regarding the lived experience of

mental illness, discussed further in chapter four, scholars such as Sarah Chaney reconsidered the

standardisation of daily life in the asylum, interrogating the ways late nineteenth-century patients functioned

as 'active intermediaries between medical and lay perceptions of madness'.[45] Coupled with work that

interrogates changing attitudes towards gender and subjectivity, the texts outlined in this section form the

historical bedrock of this thesis.

Institutional Reform

Debates around narratives of continuity and change dovetail with those concerning eighteenth-century

asylum reform. In the last twenty years, detailed scholarship has mapped out this institutional terrain, with

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[40] Hilary Marland, *Dangerous Motherhood: Insanity and Childbirth in Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Hilary Marland, 'Languages and Landscapes of Emotion: Motherhood and Puerperal Insanity in the Nineteenth Century', in *Medicine, Emotion and Disease, 1700-1950*, ed. Fay Bound Alberti (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 53-78.

[41] Charlotte Newman, 'A mansion for the mad: an archaeology of Brooke House, Hackney', *Post-Medieval Archaeology,* 49, 1 (2015); Rebecca Wynter, "Good in all respects': Appearance and dress at Staffordshire County Lunatic Asylum, 1818-1854', *History of Psychiatry*, 22, 1 (2011), 40-57.

[42] Roy Porter, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from below', *Theory and Society*, 14, 2 (March 1985), 175-198.

[43] Condrau Flurin, 'The Patient's View Meets the Clinical Gaze', *Social History of Medicine*, 20, 3 (2007), 525-540 (526); Alexandra Bacopoulos-Viau and Aude Fauvel, 'The Patient's Turn, Roy Porter and Psychiatry's Tales, Thirty Years on', *Medical History,* 60, 1 (2016), 1-18 (1, 4).

[44] Bacopoulos-Vian, 'The Patient's Turn', 12, 14.

[45] Sarah Chaney, 'No "Sane" Person Would Have Any Idea': Patients' Involvement in Late Nineteenth-century British Asylum Psychiatry', *Medical history,* 60, 1 (2016), 37-53 (37).

the work of Smith on late Georgian asylums proving foundational. Smith's research delineates the three types of institutional provision for the mad: private madhouses, which mostly catered for middling to upper-class individuals who paid for their care; voluntary and subscription institutions such as Bethlem Hospital, funded by benefactors and sponsors, typically providing care for pauper lunatics as well as the middle classes; and state-funded asylums.[46] Key to this story of reform was the 'moral therapy' movement that developed from around the mid-century.[47] Mentioned above, moral management engaged the 'sympathies and affections of the insane individual as a stimulus to the restoration of their reason', rather than medicine or restraint.[48] Treatment included intimate interaction between patients and staff, occupational therapy, religious participation and organised leisure pursuits.[49]

In 1751, a new hospital opened in London which provided the city's 'melancholy objects' with much needed relief and 'the proper means of cure'.[50] Eclipsing Bethlem as the country's largest subscription asylum, St Luke's Hospital has been heralded as sparking a vibrant voluntary asylum movement across the country.[51] Other likeminded institutions soon sprung up across England's cities, including Manchester (1766), Newcastle (1767), York (1777), Liverpool (1792) and Leicester (1794). Discussed further in chapter three, the movement reached its most vivid conception in the founding of the York Retreat by William Tuke (1732-1822) in 1796. Along with subscription asylums, by 1808 the County Asylums Act created the basic administrative machinery for the development of a comprehensive national system.[52] Establishing provisions for state-funded asylums, by 1845 it was mandatory for each county to provide a pauper lunatic asylum, and 'over the next three decades the national network was completed'.[53] As chapter four details, private madhouses also saw various developments during these years. Responding to growing concerns about the state of madhouses, the Act for Regulating Madhouses was passed in 1774, requiring all private madhouses

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[46] Smith, *Cure*, 5-7, 15; Leonard Smith, *Lunatic Hospitals in Georgian England, 1750-1830* (London: Routledge, 2007). Whilst predominantly catering for the wealthy classes, Smith has shown that large madhouses sometimes housed substantial numbers of pauper lunatics, paid for by their parishes. See Leonard Smith, *Private Madhouses in England, 1640-1815: Commercialised Care for the Insane* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 4.
[47] Digby, 'Moral Treatment at the Retreat', 52-72.
[48] Thomas Dixon, 'Patients and Passions: Languages of Medicine and Emotion, 1789-1850', in *Medicine, Emotion and Disease, 1700-1950*, ed. Fay Bound Alberti (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 22-52, 43.
[49] Smith, *Cure*, 3.
[50] *Considerations upon the usefulness and necessity of establishing an Hospital as a further provision for poor Lunaticks*, St Luke's Hospital, H64/A08/001, 1751-1949, LMA.
[51] Newman, 'Mansion for the mad', 157.
[52] Smith, *Cure,* 6.
[53] Leonard Smith, '"The Keeper Himself Must Also Be Kept": Visitation and the Lunatic Asylum in England, 1750-1850', in *Permeable Walls: Historical Perspectives on Hospital and Asylum Visiting*, eds. Graham Mooney and Jonathan Reinarz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 199-222, 200.

to be licensed and regularly inspected.

Legislative reforms and institutional change across these various asylum types means that, like the humanisation narrative, these developments are often understood within a story of progress.[54] As Porter has shown, 'both in rhetoric and in reality, 'moral' forms of therapy were tried and tested long before the close of the eighteenth century'.[55] Smith has been keen to warn against too smooth a narrative within this overarching story of evolution, maintaining instead that several instances of moral treatment represented *continuation* rather than full-scale innovation.[56] These arguments reveal an additional strain within the history of psychiatry: the relationship between theory and practice. Revising the characterisation of the York Retreat as *the* bastion of moral therapy, Digby argues that both reformers and historians have placed too great an emphasis on the optimistic writing of Samuel Tuke (1784-1857), grandson of the original founder, rather than the actual methods used by the institution.[57] Whether in theory or practice, however, the spirit of therapeutic optimism set out here impacted responses to institutions and their treatment of patients, as chapter three expounds.

These arguments intersect with debates on Bethlem, and the reasons that it banned casual visiting in 1770. Reportedly beginning in 1598, visiting was actively encouraged by Bethlem's governors throughout the seventeenth, and well into the eighteenth, century, allowing the hospital to exploit public curiosity towards its inmates to raise additional funds.[58] Whilst visits hoped to inspire generous donations from wealthy benefactors, governors also instructed casual visitors to drop a few coins in the poor box on arrival or exit, asking guests to remember the 'poore Lunaticks'.[59] Despite this instruction, many visitors engaged in less salutary and more voyeuristic forms of spectatorship — as evoked in William Hogarth's (1697-1764) eighth plate of *A Rake's Progress* [Figure 1.2], the asylum's best-known representation. Showcasing a menagerie of mad characters, Hogarth's engraving and etching depicts the unfortunate Tom Rakewell as he ends his debauched journey of immoral behaviour. In the scene's background, two fashionable ladies peruse

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[54] Digby, *Madness*, 2; Smith, *Cure,* 3.
[55] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 277. See also Roy Porter, 'Was there a Moral Therapy in the Eighteenth Century?', *Lychnos* (1981-2), 12-26.
[56] Smith, *Cure*, 3, 5.
[57] Digby, *Madness,* xiii*,* 4.
[58] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 122.
[59] Bethlem Court of Governors Minutes, 25 February 1709, fol. 465, BMMA. See also Andrews, *History,* 182. The cost of a visit to Bethlem is discussed by Allderidge, 'Bedlam', 17-33.

the inmates on display, tittering behind their fans. Whilst art historical analysis of the print is ample,[60] its particular relevance to this project is the way that it interacts with circulating controversy surrounding visiting Bethlem throughout the period. By 1770, public visitation of the asylum was stopped, unless visitors had written permission from a governor. It was now only the educated elite who were able to visit and view Bethlem's mad, creating a unique philanthropic activity that chapter three examines in detail.

Scholarship on Bethlem has followed the trajectory of broader debates outlined above. Whilst earlier examples relied on 'reach-me-down historical clichés', whitewashing the historic realities with narratives designed to shock and scandalise, research of the 1980s and 1990s painted a more balanced picture of the institution and motivations for visiting.[61] Key to this study are debates on *why* the hospital shut its doors to ordinary visitors, and what this reveals about changing attitudes towards madness in the period. The tangled web of reasons for the asylum's closure are discussed in chapter three, but, broadly speaking, these are understood as twofold: a 'reaction to the disenchantment of the educated public' alongside an 'internal response to the problems posed by disorderly visitors'.[62] These ideas are expanded using arguments surrounding spectatorial sympathy, set out later in this chapter, alongside circulating narratives of contemporary moral philosophy.

The Feminisation Model

The 'pernicious influence of psychiatry' was discussed in the feminist manifestos of the late 1960s and early 1970s.[63] Developing ideas that had been in circulation since the publication of Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1961), feminist writers included a critique of psychiatry in their analyses of women's oppression, claiming that psychiatry 'had played a crucial historical role in providing the intellectual justification for female subordination'.[64] Of these texts, Nancy Tomes pinpoints Phyllis Chesler's *Women*

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[60] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 112-116; Fiona Haslam, *From Hogarth to Rowlandson: Medicine in Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 145-162; Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1999), 172-173.

[61] Allderidge, 'Bedlam', 18; Andrews, *History,* 180-188, 186.

[62] Andrews describes the various steps first taken to curtail improper kinds of visiting, including disorderly behaviour, the barring of Methodist preachers, and limiting visiting times. See Andrews, *History*, 191.

[63] Nancy Tomes, 'Feminist Histories of Psychiatry', in *Discovering the History of Psychiatry,* eds. Mark Stephen Micale and Roy Porter (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 348-383, 352.

[64] Micale and Porter, 'Reflections', 4; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1969)*;* Eva Figes, *Patriarchal Attitudes* (New York, NY: Stein and Day, 1970); Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1970); Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (New York, NY: Bantam Books*,* 1971).

and Madness (1972) as particularly pioneering.[65] Of her manifold assertions, most important to this study is Chesler's condemnation of the male dominated institutions of the family and the psychiatric profession. Characterised as repressive sites of 'female misery', Chesler argues that these were governed by an 'overwhelming dislike and devaluation of women'.[66] Building on Chesler, feminist writers contextualised the madwoman within these misogynistic psychiatric practices.[67] Vividly expressed in the subtitle of Jane Ussher's *Women's Madness; Misogyny or Mental Illness?*, these writers sought to expose the patriarchal power structures of the mental health business through the exploration of two key issues: first, how sane women had been incarcerated by overbearing husbands and abused by male psychiatrists; and second, how women had been driven mad by the hierarchical structures of patriarchal society.[68]

Described as more 'manifestos than measured historical evaluation', these texts have not escaped criticism.[69] Yet scholars have praised them as foundational to further studies, their female authors puncturing the 'woman-free zone' of psychiatric history pre-1970.[70] Building on their polemical predecessors, and critical to this thesis as a whole, the work of Elaine Showalter and Helen Small looked towards the cultural representation of women and madness. Showalter's *The Female Malady* argued that the final decades of the eighteenth century saw mental illness gendered as female, with this cultural shift being an extension of the female condition:

> [Women are] typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature and the body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture and the mind […] madness, even when experienced by men, is metaphorically and symbolically represented as feminine: a female malady.[71]

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[65] Tomes, 'Feminist Histories of Psychiatry', 354; Joan Busfield, *Men, Women and Madness: Understanding gender and mental disorder* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1996), 4.

[66] Clinicians, Chesler argued, treated patients 'as "wives" and "daughters," rather than as people: treat them as if female misery, by biological definition, exists outside the realm of what is considered human or adult'. See Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1972), xx-xxi.

[67] Hilary Allen, 'Psychiatry and the Construction of the Feminine', in *The Power of Psychiatry*, eds. Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), 85-111; Jane Ussher, *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (London: Prentice Hall, 1991).

[68] Busfield, *Men, Women and Madness*, 5.

[69] Whilst Showalter warned that Chesler's claims came dangerously close to 'endorsing madness as a desirable form of rebellion rather than seeing it as the desperate communication of the powerless', Busfield criticised the methodological reluctance of these texts to 'examine the epidemiological data on gender and mental disorder in any detailed or systematic way', meaning that individual case studies were often disaggregated from issues of diagnosis, age, class, marital status and race. See Showalter, *Female Malady*, 5; Busfield, *Men, Women and Madness,* 6; Jonathan Andrews and Anne Digby, eds., *Sex and Seclusion, Class and Custody: Perspectives on Gender and Class in the History of British and Irish Psychiatry* (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodophi, 2004), 8, 13.

[70] Andrews, *Sex and Seclusion*, 8.

[71] Showalter, *Female Malady,* 3-4.

'A feminist history of psychiatry and a cultural history of madness as a female malady', *The Female Malady* argued that women became *the* cultural archetype for madness in the latter half of the eighteenth century — a phenomenon now known as its 'feminisation'.[72] In 1996, Helen Small's *Love's Madness* stressed the 'extraordinary vogue' of stories about love-mad women between 1770 and 1810.[73] Whilst the majority of her text focused on mid to late nineteenth-century literary examples, her introduction firmly located the madwoman's commercialisation within the context of sensibility. Extending arguments put forward by Philip Martin on the ways in which madwomen enabled the performance of pity (1987), Small briefly explored the trope of the late eighteenth-century lovelorn madwoman before providing sustained discussion on the nineteenth-century love-mad woman's role within gentlemanly medicine.[74]

Whilst some methodologies utilised in *The Female Malady* and *Love's Madness* have been critiqued — in particular, Andrews and Digby have discussed the reliance on both writers to use sources drawn from *elite* artistic, literary and medical material — both are understood as ground-breaking, heavily impacting a body of writers who tackle these themes with greater circumspection.[75] The model of feminisation that they present is influential to this project, particularly given arguments that frame the madwoman as an emotional provocateur. Yet the brevity of their arguments proves somewhat limiting. Though they reference the sentimental love-mad figure in the introductions of their texts, Showalter and Small technically begin their enquiries in 1830 and 1800 respectively. Neither incorporate focused discussion of late eighteenth-century female madness into the main arguments of their hypotheses; the insinuation being that the Victorian madwoman is more interesting, influential and significant than her love-mad forebear. Flattening the wider social and cultural significance of the late eighteenth-century love-mad woman, Showalter and Small present her as a vague construction of harmless sentimentally, a precursor for more disarming and erotic modes — arguments that will be examined, and remedied, in chapter five.

Expanding understanding of cultural tropes of madwomen beyond a Victorian timeframe is the work of Jane Kromm. Her seminal article 'The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation' (1994) built on

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[72] As Tomes has stated, Showalter also posited that the shift in representation 'facilitated and was facilitated by an institutional 'feminization' of insanity itself'. See Tomes, 'Feminist Histories of Psychiatry', 365; Showalter, *Female Malady,* 5.

[73] Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 11-14.

[74] Small, Love's *Madness,* 11-14, 31-71; Philip Martin, *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987), 19.

[75] Andrews, *Sex and Seclusion,* 11.

the notion that madwomen functioned as sentimental prompts, claiming that the dynamics of sensibility transposed her into a spectatorial object 'designed to focalize male displays of proper feeling'.[76] The article tracked the representational strategies of poetic and politicised iterations of female madness during the 1780s — a shift succinctly dubbed as 'gender poetics to gender politics'.[77] Expanding these arguments in 2002, *Art of Frenzy* combined medical theory and visual analysis with themes of politics and sensibility, positioning the madwoman's image within a wider story of discord and political unrest.[78] Throughout this thesis, Kromm's arguments on spectacle, didacticism, sexuality and politics prove paramount. Yet this study diverges from her arguments in several ways. In chapter five I argue that Kromm, like others who tackle the feminisation model, has also bypassed contemplative iterations of love's madness in favour of more 'sexually provocative, primarily self-abusing' icons of the period.[79] Additionally, Kromm's close focus on representations, rather than responses, means that first-hand accounts of encounters with the madwoman are absent from her arguments. With these omissions in mind, this study seeks to further interrogate the emotional transaction, identified by Martin, Small and Kromm, between the madwoman and the sane spectator.

'Lofty Pines' and 'Clinging Vines'

Scholarship on gender in the 1970s and 1980s broadly conceptualised the lives of eighteenth-century men and women through 'starkly contrasting and increasingly rigid gender roles, most specifically exemplified by an increasing confinement of women to a private, separate, domestic sphere'.[80] Often accepting conventional gender narratives set out by prescriptive contemporary sources, these scholars identified the idealised late eighteenth-century woman as modest, desexualised, domesticated and dominated by men. As Lawrence Stone argued, the development of gendered physiology meant that by the century's middle decades, upper-class women were conceptualised through their reproductive responsibilities: 'idle drones' who passed their

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[76] Jane Kromm, 'The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation', *Feminist Studies,* 20, 3 (1994), 507-535 (511).
[77] Kromm, 'Feminization', 525.
[78] See chapter three in Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 100-163.
[79] Kromm, 'Feminization', 507.
[80] Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 2.

days playing cards or reading novels.[81] Anthony Fletcher agreed that by 1800, the divide between men and women was set, with women educated to 'internalise the gendered goals of modesty, chastity, humility, obedience and piety'.[82] This oppositional relationship was reinforced in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes* (1989), which argued that the late eighteenth-century's evangelical revolution saw the splitting of the sexes across the middle classes, the separation of work and home, and the creation of public and private spheres.[83] As Ellen Jordan explains, this segregation was complete by the latter decades of the eighteenth century: 'men were to be the lofty pine, women the clinging vine'.[84]

Arguments around the transformation of lived space went hand in hand with redefinitions of male and female bodies. No longer understood as two versions of 'the same kind plotted on a continuum', men and women were seen as qualitatively different from each other, leading to the emergence of a woman defined by her religious, desexualised and maternal qualities.[85] Thomas Laqueur's influential one sex/two sex model maintained that, prior to the eighteenth century, there was no sharp boundary between the sexes; yet at some time in the 1700s, 'sex as we know it was invented'.[86] Reasons for this radical reinterpretation spanned Evangelical religion, the rise in new public spaces, the birth of the middle-class, enlightened political theory, the French revolution and the free market economy.[87] By the end of the eighteenth century, Laqueur maintains, the two sex, two flesh model was established, supporting existing scholarship that positioned women as fragile and dependent, with associated negative characteristics deriving from these states being weakness, corruption, luxury, and idleness.

Taking his cue from Laqueur, Dror Wahrman argued that, from the seventeenth century onwards, gender crossing and experimentation had been an acceptable phenomenon. Gender definitions were imagined as 'occasionally mutable, potentially unfixed, and even as a matter of choice'.[88] Wahrman pinpoints the

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[81] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 247.
[82] Retha M. Warnicke, 'Review: Gender, sex and subordination, 1500-1800', *History of Education Quarterly*, 37, 2, 1997, 223-224 (224); Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination, 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1995).
[83] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 25.
[84] Ellen Jordan, 'Review: Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850; Leonore Davidoff, Catherine Hall', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society,* 15, 3 (1990), 650-652 (651).
[85] Karen Harvey, 'Gender, Space and Modernity in eighteenth century England: A Place Called Sex', *History Workshop*, 51 (Spring 2001), 158-179 (159).
[86] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 21, 149.
[87] Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 11.
[88] Dror Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2004), 40.

1780s and 1790s as a moment when gender underwent a sharp transformation; from 'gender play' to 'gender panic'.[89] Whilst Wahrman's arguments rightly attest to a general atmosphere of gender anxiety in the final decades of the century — an anxiety that I argue impacted responses to Margaret Nicholson in chapter two — critics took umbrage with his reliance on prescriptive rather than descriptive sources to make his central claims about the two sexual spheres.[90]

Raised in the introduction, historians such as Amanda Vickery, Hannah Barker, Elaine Chalus, Bridget Hill, Lawrence Klein and Joanne Begiato disrupt the notion of a fixed role for women of this period, promulgating their more fluid status through their roles as mothers, daughters and wives, as well activists, influencers or social agents.[91] Much like the humanisation debate, this revisionist wave highlights the complexities and contradictions that muddle the historical trajectory of eighteenth-century gender studies. In a methodological move similar to calls for more granular research within the history of psychiatry, these scholars utilised a range of cultural, legal and familial sources. Significantly, they lamented traditional methodologies that take patriarchal and prescriptive texts, such as conduct manuals or periodical articles, as indicative of female experience, questioning how much men and women actually conformed to prescribed models of authority, or if women deployed the 'rhetoric of submission selectively, with irony, or cynically?'[92] These writers posit that notions of masculinity and femininity were *ideals* rather than actualities.[93] These idealised models surrounding gender are valuable in shaping our understanding about how madwomen were conceptualised in opposition to or in alignment with idealised modes of femininity. At the same time, arguments that reassess the historical role of prescriptive sources — be they visual stereotypes of mania and melancholy or written accounts suggesting how to behave in an asylum — are critical to this

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[89] Wahrman, *Modern Self,* 42-44.

[90] Felicity Nussbaum, 'The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England by Dror Wahrman', *The American Historical Review,* 110, 3 (2005), 866-867; Karol Berger, Jill Campbell and Don Herzog, 'On Dror Wahrman's "The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England"', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 40, 1 (2006), 149-56.

[91] Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal,* 36, 2 (June 1993), 383-414, (401); Barker and Chalus, *Gender,* 3; Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life, c.1745-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 3; Bridget Hill, *Women, Work and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1989); Joanne Begiato, née Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11; Lawrence Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere in Early Eighteenth-Century England', in Judith Still and Michael Worton, eds. *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 100-115.

[92] Vickery, 'Golden Age', 385.

[93] Barker and Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth-century England,* 1.

project's investigation of the tensions between reality and lived experience, considered in greater detail as this thesis unfolds.

Critical within the reconceptualisation of eighteenth-century gender is the work of Amanda Vickery. In 1993, Vickery's article 'Golden Age or Separate Spheres?' dismantled the model of public and private spheres — something which she argued obscures more than it illuminates.[94] Vickery contested the ideology of ultra-femininity posited by the concept of the private, domestic realm, whereby the typical female protagonist ('Mrs Average') was a sheltered prisoner, 'drained of economic purpose and public responsibility'.[95] The two spheres model, she argued, 'fails to capture the texture of female subordination and the complex interplay of power and emotion in family life'.[96] Building on these themes, Vickery's *The Gentleman's Daughter* (1998) constructed the daily life of women through letters, diaries and account books of over 100 Lancashire families, arguing that the home was not a sphere of female subjection, but rather constituted a site where authority was shared and shifting. Her research next expanded from a regional to a national framework, with *Behind Closed Doors* (2009) redefining the home as an 'arena of social campaign and exhibition' and a site of female agency.[97] Unsettling arguments made by early feminist writers on the repressive domestic spaces that led to the woman's descent into madness, various methodologies used by Vickery, such as her use of account books to ascertain female experience, are employed to full effect in chapter four. At the same time, that chapter's discussion of identity and agency within the private madhouse builds upon Vickery's arguments on the strategies through which a woman might expand and negotiate her shifting cultural power.

The Feminine, the Sensory and the Sensitive

Originally published in 1689, John Locke's second edition of *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694) included a new chapter linking identity to personal surroundings and sensory awareness. It stressed the importance of what 'we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate', whereby 'Sensations and Perceptions'

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[94] Vickery, 'Golden Age', 386; Klein, 'Gender', 103.
[95] Vickery, 'Golden Age'*,* 387.
[96] Vickery, 'Golden Age', 401
[97] Julie Park, 'Review: Privacy, The Inside Story', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 74, 1 (2011), 151-155 (153); Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1998); Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2010).

create one's personality: 'And by this every one is to himself, that which he calls self'.[98] The middle decades of the eighteenth century saw Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) publish his seminal sentimental novels, *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748). As G. J. Barker Benfield has demonstrated, the emotional expressivity that these texts embodied provided various routes 'to the popularisation of sensational psychology in its earlier phase'.[99] These decades witnessed physical and emotional displays of sentimentality become markers of refinement. Individual emotion was no longer viewed as a matter for the private sphere alone, and it became of utmost importance to the national interest to display 'behaviours associated with women: fainting, weeping, blushing, being overpowered with feeling'.[100] By the middle of the century, sentimental fiction and newly disseminated ideas of Lockean philosophy led to a new focus on the feminine, the sensory and the sensitive. Men and women were expected to be emotional, expressive and sensitised to their immediate surroundings. A preoccupation with the sentimental — through novels, urban activity, ballads, plays and poetry — became mainstream and a marker of social status.

Sensibility also impacted common attitudes towards mental illness and its place within London's fashionable mainstream. Touched upon in the introduction, the exhibition of a mild form of nervousness or melancholia might evidence one's sentimental values, aligning one with a more refined and sensitive disposition. Cheyne's *The English Malady* argued that certain nervous diseases were reserved for the social elite, claiming that 'Fools, weak or stupid Persons, heavy and dull Souls, are seldom troubled with Vapours or Lowness of Spirits', in contrast to the livelier members of society, 'whose Genius is more keen and penetrating, particular where there is the most sensation and taste'.[101] The King's illness in the 1780s heightened the ways that nervousness might be framed as a genteel disorder — prompting Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter to describe disordered nerves as 'the maladie à la mode'.[102]

Being *too* sensitive, however, could be dangerous. For aristocratic men, corrupt or weak behaviour was often criticised as effeminacy, the 'degenerate moral, political and social state which opposed and

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[98] John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, XXVII, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 335.

[99] G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, University of Chicago Press, 1992), xvii, 6. See also Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986); John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

[100] Claudia Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentimentality in the 1790s – Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 14.

[101] Cheyne, *English malady*, 52.

[102] Macalpine and Hunter, *George III,* 68.

subverted 'manly' characteristics' of courage, strength, discipline and patriotic virtue. Mid eighteenth-century commentators often blamed effeminacy for threatening the nation's masculine character, and the period witnessed a smattering of new societies that formalised this anti-effeminate spirit.[103] More important in the context of this thesis is that the new lexicon positioned women as particularly susceptible to nervous disorders. Women had historically been equated with the body, viewed as moister, softer, spongier, whilst men were equated with the mind.[104] The ancient concept of the 'wandering womb' conceptualised this female organ as freely roaming the body, compressing bodily organs and moving upwards, towards the brain, and thus clouding one's mental faculties. Despite the new framework of nervousness, women continued to be depicted as 'increasingly unhealthy; a victim of her fragile nervous system and unpredictable reproductive organs'.[105] Her fragile physiological make up meant that women were acutely vulnerable to a mild case of nerves overflowing into hysterical disorder. Sensibility's demand for a physical and emotional response thus threatened a panoply of feminised disorders, as sighs, moans, sobs and groans could easily tip into full blown 'melancholy, hysteria, madness and death'.[106]

The delicate physical disposition of nervous women assumed a prominent role in both popular culture and medical texts. Whilst Small has argued that medical treatises on insanity had 'remarkably little to say on the subject' of women, comments on their susceptibility to mental disorder were common.[107] In 1755, Charles Perry lamented that 'women who are under the scourge and tyranny of the hysteric passion, are generally prone and subject to the more dismal irksome passions of the mind — as anger, grief, fear, despondency, &c'.[108] As William Rowley wrote in 1788, it was the sex who exhibited the most feeling — women — who were most affected by nervous disease, whilst 'those who possess least feeling, are least

[103] Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785,* 2nd edn. (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 186-7, 191. For more on the warnings and dangers surrounding the adoption of female characteristics, see Philip Carter, 'Men about town: representations of foppery and masculinity in early eighteenth-century urban society', in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, eds. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 31-57, 35.
[104] Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The disturbing history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 13.
[105] Marland, *Dangerous Motherhood*, 6; Anne Digby, 'Women's Biological Straitjacket', in *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (London: Routledge, 1989), 192-220.
[106] Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England: Courtship, Emotions and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 128; Barker-Benfield, *Sensibility,* 2-3.
[107] Small, *Love's Madness*, 45.
[108] Charles Perry, *A mechanical account and explication of the hysteric passion, under all its various symptoms and appearances* (London: Mr. Shuckburgh; Mr. Osborn; and Mess. Davis and Reymers, 1755), 197.

affected by this disease, and can hardly conceive its possibility'.[109] By 1800, John Johnstone noted that 'the female in our climate is said to be more frequently affected by this disorder of the understanding than the male sex', and, in 1828, Alexander Morison (1779-1866) was stating that 'more women than men become insane'.[110] With doctors often utilising literary tropes in their writing, the cultural weight of the vulnerable and emotional female body certainly loomed large within these texts.[111] As the next section considers, within a culture which connected nerves, fashion, sensibility and gender, the conceptualisation of the female body was also impacted by prevailing issues surrounding the new humanitarian ethos of the day.

Spectatorial Sympathy and the Language of Suffering

The expression of emotion that this period favoured had a profound impact on interactions with the mad. Scholars within the field have plotted the ways that sensibility was linked to a growing humanitarian movement within the eighteenth century, focusing on the experiences and suffering of a range of marginalised and disenfranchised groups within Britain and its colonies, including prisoners, slaves, animals, children, the poor, the sick, and the insane.[112] Martin Myrone has shown how Classical conceptions of heroism were revised during these years, with the 'admirable heroes of history' now found among 'lawmakers, pacifists and humanitarians'.[113] Stressing a new social atmosphere in which charity and philanthropy became decisive markers of one's virtue, these developments were embodied in Henry Fielding's 1752 proclamation that 'Charity is in fact the very characteristic of this nation at this time'.[114] As chapter three's discussion of asylum tourism demonstrates, over the course of the century virtually all strands of moral philosophy came to champion the importance of compassion when viewing suffering.

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[109] William Rowley, *A treatise on female, nervous, hysterical diseases; apoplexy and palsy* (London: C. Nourse, E. Nerbery and Hookham, 1788), 63.
[110] Johnstone, *On Madness,* 5-6; Alexander Morison, *Outlines of Lectures on Mental Diseases* (Edinburgh: Daniel Lizards, Princes Street, 1825), 33.
[111] Small, *Love's Madness*, 15; Janet Oppenheim, *Shattered Nerves: Doctors, Patients and Depression in Victorian England* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 181.
[112] Jamie Rosenthal, 'The Contradictions of Racialized Sensibility: Gender, Slavery and the Limits of Sympathy', in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830,* ed. Stephen Ahern (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 171-188, 171-172; Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment and Slavery, 1760-1807* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
[113] Martin Myrone, *Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities in British Art 1750-1810* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2005), 1-2.
[114] Henry Fielding, *The Covent-Garden Journal and A Plan of the Universal Register-Office*, ed. Bertrand A. Goldgar (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 247.

These virtues were readily translated into art. Mid-century artists such as Francis Hayman, Edward Penny and Benjamin West moved away from grand history paintings, instead depicting 'highly particularised icons of sensibility and benevolence, of qualities central to the idealised self-image of the 'ordinary' English men and women'.[115] These visual narratives depicted scenes of suffering that allowed the viewer to display their sympathy, whilst producing paradigms of behaviour through the representation of compassionate figures. With viewing artworks understood as affording 'moral influence on the mind, by holding forth impressive and affecting examples of great and good actions', these instructive, sentimental narratives offered 'tableau after tableau of pitiful suffering […] all aimed at arousing the readers' spectatorial sympathy and thus enhancing (and demonstrating) their virtue'.[116]

These arguments are contextualised within a densely spectatorial moment in English history, evident in a plethora of publications, theatrical productions, exhibitions and cultural activities which focused on the act of looking.[117] As Peter de Bolla has shown, the middle decades of the eighteenth century were a time of intense and self-conscious observation across a variety of cultural spaces, as England's cities and provincial centres became characterised by the 'possibility of display and observation'.[118] For De Bolla, the new visuality that these decades witnessed, innately entangled with issues of Lockean philosophy, was paramount in articulating the 'shape and contours of the modern concept of 'self' or 'subject''.[119] John Brewer's work on the interstices between politics and visual culture likewise paints a vivid picture of the smorgasbord of pamphlet shops, print-sellers, coffee houses, societies and clubs found within eighteenth-century London — attesting to a spectatorial public who were increasingly fluent in interpreting different types of visual culture.[120] Several scholars have interrogated this preoccupation with visual culture. Some, such as Diana Donald, Cindy McCreery and Sheila O'Connell, have examined the rise of print culture and the ways that the upper, middling and lower classes accessed printed media. McCreery has shown how visual culture was part

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[115] David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1992), 213.

[116] Anon, *Advertisement to Boydell's Graphic Illustrations of the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare* (London: Osborn, 1804); Karen Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American culture', *American Historical Review,* 100, 2 (1995), 303-334 (307).

[117] De Bolla stresses the intense focus on 'visuality' witnessed in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, or, to collapse this timeframe further, the 1760s. See Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape and Architecture in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 2-5.

[118] See also Harvey, 'Gender', 159.

[119] De Bolla, *Education of the Eye*, 4. See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[120] John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 7.

of the everyday experience within Georgian Britain; viewed in homes, exhibitions, print shops, cut out of periodicals and incorporated into the decoration of people's homes.[121] Mark Hallett has considered London's spectatorial make-up and the roster of commodified spectacles offered by the city and its representations.[122] This spectatorial landscape relates to the way madwomen were seen and spectacularised across various environments, whether 'live' within public or private spaces, or through multifarious cultural forms.

Scholarship has demonstrated the ways that a range of texts or images proved instructive during these years, guiding eighteenth-century individuals and collectives on ways to look at certain spectacles within certain spaces. These ideas provide a powerful underpinning to arguments given in chapter two and three. Brewer provides a useful overview:

> One cannot but be impressed by the remarkable preoccupation in this period with appearances and ways of looking, with actors and spectators. Didactic literature, of which the *Spectator* was the most distinguished but by no means the sole example, was overwhelmingly preoccupied with teaching its readers how to appear and how to look. There is a remarkable consciousness of how all aspects of the self — demeanour and body language, dress and material possessions, conduct and taste — are signs enabling the observer to understand the character and station of the observed.[123]

Brewer's mention of the *Spectator* calls to mind Michael Ketcham's work on the popular periodical, in which he describes the importance of representational strategies in looking and observing, whereby 'words, gestures, clothing, looks and glances, manners, familiar letters, painting or theatrical performances work as forms of communication'.[124] These ideas are supported by Rosie Dias's research on the self-conscious crowd within the exhibition spaces of Pall Mall. Detailed in chapter two, Dias posits that various prints depicting the galleries served as 'laconic guides' on how to behave within these spaces.[125] Her notion of the print as a visual tool has proved instrumental in my own thinking on 'guides to look' during this period, and the ways in which eighteenth-century individuals were subjected to instructions about the gaze across a variety of

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[121] Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 15-16, 21; Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 7, 14; Sheila O'Connell, *Popular Print in England 1550-1880* (London: British Museum Press, 1999).
[122] Hallett, *Spectacle of Difference*, 187.
[123] John Brewer, 'This, that and the other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *Subject in Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of the Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 1-21, 15.
[124] Michael G. Ketcham, *Transparent Designs: Reading, Performance, and Form in the Spectator Papers* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 5.
[125] Rosie Dias, "A world of pictures': Pall Mall and the topography of display, 1789-99', in *Georgian Geographies: Essays on space, place and landscape in the eighteenth century,* eds. Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (Manchester; New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2004), 92-113, 101.

cultural experiences — from exhibitions and country houses to spectacles of insanity and asylum spaces. From prints, catalogues and letters, exposure to didactic cultural tools meant that visitors came to a spectacle with a set of expectations and instructions, as analysed further in chapters two and three.

As well as more refined spectacles, English spectators had plenty of opportunities to engage in forms of looking that may be classed as more unsavoury and voyeuristic. Richard Altick's work from the 1970s on what the 'English paid to gaze at' considers how looking was extended — not merely to normative cultural experiences such as exhibitions and theatrical productions — but also to the viewing of medical or monstrous bodies.[126] Core to Altick's arguments are those that frame the eighteenth century as an era in which medical bodies were viewed as entertainment. From anatomical dissections in European universities to the exhibition of pathological disabilities by pedlars who toured the localities, a medley of medicalised bodies were on view during these years.[127] In Altick's wake, fresh scholarship has considered a collection of popular eighteenth-century 'freaks' such as Matthew Buchingen and the seven-foot Irish giant Byrne.[128] A flick through any London periodical during the latter decades of the eighteenth century highlights the compelling array of freakish personalities and human oddities on display, including hermaphrodites, stone eaters and the 'White Nigress'.[129] As chapter two argues, in some instances the madwoman might be included within this group, spectacularised as a freakish body of mental difference.

Viewing the medicalised body, however, did not merely rely on voyeuristic forms of looking. Scholars such as David Solkin and Karen Halttunen have considered the ways in which the focus on a self-conscious, inward-looking form of spectatorship prompted different modes of meaningful looking within certain tourist sites. Critical to my arguments on sympathy, spectacle and asylum visiting in chapter three, Halttunen describes how 'the concept of spectatorial sympathy was instrumental in shaping the eighteenth-century literature of sensibility'.[130] Hospitals, asylums, orphanages and workhouses were understood as pressing sites of charity to visit, providing middling and upper-class individuals with the opportunity to meaningfully engage with suffering, display sentimental behaviour and evidence their psychosocial

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[126] Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (London: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), 1, 253-267.
[127] Paul Semonin, 'Monsters in the Marketplace: The Exhibition of Human Oddities in Early Modern England', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body,* ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (London: New York University Press, 1996), 69-81.
[128] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (London: New York, NY University Press, 1996).
[129] The display of these individuals was advertised in periodicals, as highlighted in Scrapbook of advertisements, broadsides, poetry, newspaper clippings, etc., 1745-1838 (bulk 1780-1800), LWL, Folio 66 748 Sc43.
[130] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 307; Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 199.

refinement. London hospitals such as Greenwich, Chelsea, Guy's and St Bartholomew's found their way onto the philanthropic tourist circuit, as discussed in Christine's Stevenson's work on the spectatorial opportunities embodied in the architecture of London's leading hospitals.[131] As chapter three details, with the country's asylums contextualised within a philanthropic circuit which prioritised sentimental engagement, this had a significant impact on the ways that women were viewed within these spaces

Political Contexts and the Female Body Politic

In 1763, Hogarth added a halfpenny bearing the figure of Britannia to Bethlem's back wall, in his final plate of *A Rake's Progress* [Figure 1.3]. With her exposed legs, unruly hair and tattered drapery, her 'anarchic dishevelment' has been understood in a number of ways.[132] Whilst some have claimed that the placement of Britannia within a lunatic asylum represents Bethlem as a microcosm for 'society at large', others have given her a more precise political meaning. Kromm argues that, during a time of growing parliamentary factions, battling coalitions and disorderly general elections, the wild, unruly madwoman was part of a visual economy used to articulate concerns about the course of government and abuses of power.[133] Key to upcoming discussions of Margaret Nicholson and Mary Lamb, these decades simultaneously marked a period when political, public women were often depicted through this iconography.

Britain's political landscape during the second half of the eighteenth century has been characterised as a time of parliamentary upheaval, described by Kathleen Wilson as witnessing a 'crucial departure in popular politics through the emergence of a vigorous and largely bourgeois radical political culture'.[134] Likewise, Brewer has argued that the 1760s were pivotal in that 'all of the prerequisites of political stability were in some way challenged, modified or altered'.[135] Following a brief period of national unity after the military success of the Seven Years War (1756-1763), negative feelings towards the aristocracy intensified, amplified by the seemingly self-interested behaviour of the new King and his government in America.

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[131] Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British hospital and Asylum Architecture, 1600-1815* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000).
[132] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 120.
[133] Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic works* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), vol. 1, 169-170; Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 128.
[134] Wilson, *Sense of the people,* 206.
[135] Brewer, *Party Ideology,* 4. See also Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1823* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 201.

Throughout the 1760s and 1770s, the Wilkite resistance movement became a collective focus for grievances that circulated around the exclusive political system. Led by the English journalist and radical John Wilkes (1725-1797), this movement challenged the idioms of mainstream politics whilst championing extra parliamentary activity and the involvement of a newly commercialised political body.[136] By the 1790s, these issues transmitted into very real anxieties surrounding the Revolutionary, and later, Napoleonic, wars.

Analysing representations of Britannia from the 1760s and 1770s, Kromm has traced her metamorphosis from a stalwart emblem of freedom to something far more vexing. Examples such as *Britannia in Distress* (1770) and *Britannia in Fetters* (1769) [Figures 1.4 and 1.5] show this evolution, as she is reduced to a 'disabled and distraught' politically charged symbol, fettered and bare breasted.[137] By the late 1770s and 1780s, Britannia becomes angrier and energised, increasingly dishevelled and distracted, in line with the prevailing markers that denoted manic behaviour during this period. As the introduction mentioned, those representing female mania had a panoply of iconographical features, and their associative meanings, at their disposal. The madwoman's wild hair, dishevelment and semi-nakedness signified her psychic disarray whilst suggesting the abandonment of propriety and sexual availability. Straw, chains and manacles represented an untamed bestial nature, the chains often restraining her masculine physicality of clenched fists or bulging muscles, symbolising powerful strength and unruly violence.[138] Her angry and exophthalmic eyes denoted belligerence and rebelliousness. Often positioned within the tight brickwork of a cellular asylum space, these features formed a powerful visual combination; together, they 'externalise mental disorder into a shocking spectacle'.[139] Chapters two and three unpack further the meanings attached to these manic markers and their capacity to represent a complete disavowal from normative feminine behaviour. As Kromm has argued, mania was 'the least attractive and most-status lowering sign of mental distress' of the period, and as such, the allegorical potential of the manic female was strong.[140]

We see this potential in full flow through shifting representations of Britannia; no longer an emblem of national solidarity and pride, she becomes something far more troubling through the application of manic iconography. Examples such as Rowlandson's *Britannia Roused* (1784) [Figure 1.6] showed 'the full

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[136] Wilson, *Sense of the people,* 206-207.
[137] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 126-129.
[138] For a full account of the meanings behind these iconographical features, see Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 131-136.
[139] Kromm, 'Feminization', 507.
[140] Kromm, 'Olivia furiosa', 344.

complete of distracted traits, the torn clothes, exposed breasts and wild hair' used to articulate concerns about the government's and King's abuse of power.[141] Britannia is now a frenzied emblem of 'misguided and ministerial policies' and 'absolutism's encroachments on traditional rights'.[142] Discussed alongside other images of the madwoman in chains in chapter three, Britannia's manic and miserable mobilisation within print culture meant that Britons were familiar with the visual language of flailing limbs, electrified hair and disorderly undress; meaning that any madwoman who embodied these markers might also become a potent symbol of national disorder.

As chapter two explores, iconography that linked women with mania was also used to vocalise wider concerns about the place of women within politics. Historians have discussed the extent to which women were accepted within the political sphere during these decades, with some arguing for the *complementarity* of the sexes within public life. This 'mixed society' narrative sees the evangelical atmosphere and the impact of the French revolution as creating a 'new moral climate' in the 1790s, subsequently ushering women into public spaces.[143] As Klein has argued, 'in a world that was constructed around the touchstone of refined sociability or politeness, women had an assured place'.[144] These arguments once more demonstrate the cultural celebration of feminine virtues (sociability, civility, compassion, domesticity and refinement) — virtues that are emphasised within the idealised conceptions of women, female visitors and even the more acceptable modes of female madness that run throughout this thesis.[145] At the same time, others have shown how ideas of 'manly patriotism' were conceptualised against so-called 'threats' to the polity, of which the woman was one.[146] With national insecurity often understood through female characteristics of cowardice, idleness and weakness, some commentators argued there was no room for women within a successful political sphere.

Bolstering this paradoxical and shifting status, Chalus has demonstrated how the late eighteenth-century woman *was* able to take on a political role as confidante, adviser, agent and partner, across social circles and at home.[147] But there was a caveat to this integration. Bound to issues of class and political

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[141] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 124, 128.
[142] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 164. For Kromm's full discussion of Britannia as a symbol of national disorder, see 124-130.
[143] Vickery, 'Golden Age', 398; Emma Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce and Luxury* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
[144] Klein, 'Gender', 111.
[145] Clery, *Feminization,* 6-10.
[146] Wilson, *Sense of the people,* 186-7, 203.
[147] Chalus, *Elite Women*, 17; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1996), 250.

context, women were expected to negotiate an 'invisible and highly variable boundary', which, if overstepped, saw them become the 'target of torrents of often sexualised criticism designed to shame them back into their subordinate political roles'.[148] Lynn Hunt has eloquently summarised this tension; whilst the social and political order could not be reproduced *without* women, they were 'almost always imagined as dangerous if they meddled in public — that is, political — concerns'.[149] Particularly relevant when considering the critical treatment of Margaret Nicholson in chapter two — a woman who not only believed herself above her station, but dared to engage in the political act of petitioning — these ideas also highlight how women might use strategies of *negotiation*, as also suggested by Vickery, in ways that befitted their sex when faced with challenging situations, as seen with Euphemia Boswell in chapter four.

Female activity within the political sphere often drew visual criticism, with real women who dabbled in politics transformed into 'frenzied agents of disorder'.[150] Thomas Rowlandson's (1757-1827) *The Hospital for Lunatics* [Figure 1.7], for example, depicted an incarcerated Duchess of Gordon, a Tory political hostess, in Bethlem. Shackled and bare breasted, Gordon is portrayed alongside prime minister William Pitt the Younger, who sits on a chamber pot holding a sceptre and coronet made from twigs.[151] Shown as a foil to male folly, the iconography of mania is here employed to humiliate and mock. Parallels drawn between the political female and the madwoman speak of broader issues that have been considered throughout this chapter; namely, the various and often conflicting roles of the late eighteenth-century woman, the ways in which women might negotiate their position within institutions deemed patriarchal, and the increasing visibility of iconography linked to female madness during this period. Like the political woman, the madwoman was also subject to multiple re-enactments and reconfigurations, amplified during times of turmoil and causes of anxiety.

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[148] Chalus, *Elite Women*, 229.

[149] Lynn Hunt, ed., *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 2; Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 4.

[150] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 164.

[151] Haslam, *Hogarth to Rowlandson,* 162.

Material Worlds in the Eighteenth Century

In anticipation of arguments in chapters two, four and five, this final section looks towards consumerism and material culture within the mid to late eighteenth century. Historians have conceptualised this period as witnessing a consumer revolution, with certain institutions connected to mental illness — like the private madhouse — operating within a new commercialised sphere. As Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb argued in the early 1980s, this 'revolution' saw consumer goods increasingly designed for pleasure rather than need.[152] With scholarship originally focusing on social and economic processes of production, Brewer and Porter's *Consumption and the World of Goods* (1993) sought to 'establish a methodological and historiographical framework for consumption, encompassing a fertile mix of economic, political and cultural perspectives'.[153] Chapters within that volume, such as Vickery's work on the consumptive practices of Lancashire gentlewoman Elizabeth Shackleton, took an ideological and emotional perspective on the role of objects within eighteenth-century life.[154] As a result, 'the things people owned, displayed and coveted are now prominent in historical interpretations of the eighteenth century'.[155] Arguments about consumerism and consumption were joined by a new strand focusing on possession and meaning-making, fertilising a burgeoning literature within the humanities now known as the 'material turn'.[156]

While some scholarship focused on the ways in which objects engaged with class, race, age and nationhood, others considered how gender relations operated through material goods.[157] Recent years have seen an upsurge in scholarship that explored women's material practices across the fine, decorative and domestic arts. Work has been done on the ways that women engaged with material culture throughout an

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[152] Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, eds., *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1982), 1.

[153] Freya Gowrley, 'Gender, Craft and Canon: Elite Women's Engagements with Material Culture in Britain, 1750-1830' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2016), 18; John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1994).

[154] Amanda Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods: a Lancashire consumer and her possessions, 1751-81', in *Consumption and the World of Goods,* eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 274-301.

[155] John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America. 1700-1830* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 1.

[156] Gowrley, *Gender,* 18; Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Michael Rowlands and Patricia Spyer, *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE, 2006); D. Hicks and M. Beaudry, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Material Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[157] Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe, *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000); Victoria de Grazia and Ellen Furlough, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

object's lifecycle, theorising on how women engaged in 'meaning making, identity formation, and commemoration' through material artifacts.[158] At the same time, much of this research has sought to redefine our understanding of the woman's economic role as a consumer or collector.[159]

Contributing to scholarship that broadens and complicates the role of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century woman, these arguments have implications for this project. Considering the stereotype of the rampant female consumer, chapter four analyses the material world of the female madhouse experience, exploring how objects contributed to a diorama of public display and private self. At the same time, this thesis also considers the representation of madwomen via material items, particularly through its examination of representations of Crazy Jane in chapter five, and to a lesser extent, Margaret Nicholson in chapter two. Critical to these arguments are the multifarious function of objects, serving as crucial props in self-fashioning, as well as carriers of significant emotional baggage.[160] These arguments interact with the burgeoning discipline of the history of emotions.[161] In *The Comfort of Things,* Daniel Miller argued that items assembled by a person were seen to 'store and possess, take in and breathe out emotions with which they have been associated'.[162] Recent texts consider how humans have 'been bound affectively to the material world in and over time; how they have made, commissioned, and used objects to facilitate their emotional lives'.[163] While scholarship on the eighteenth century previously focused on a range of emotions, including familial sentiment, friendship, romantic love and grief, work over the last two decades now binds these debates with eighteenth-century *things*.[164]

Important to upcoming arguments are various methodologies that suggest ways to uncover what certain objects *meant* to eighteenth and nineteenth-century actors. Previous scholars have ascertained reactions to objects through inventories or probate lists, Old Bailey Records, letters and diaries, and Vickery

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[158] Maureen Daly Goggin and Beth Fowkes Tobin, eds., *Women and Things, 1750-1950: Gendered Material Strategies* (Surrey; Burlington, VT; Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 1.

[159] Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods', 274; Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), 5-6.

[160] Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, 9.

[161] Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2018), 1.

[162] Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 38.

[163] Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway and Sarah Randles, *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1, 15; Boddice, *History of Emotions,* 179.

[164] Marcia Pointon, '"Surrounded with Brilliants": Miniature Portraits in Eighteenth-Century England', *The Art Bulletin*, 83, 1 (March 2001), 48-71; Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), xviii.

has shown the multifarious ways that contemporaries projected emotions onto the objects they consumed.[165]

For Vickery, 'social meaning cannot be read off the bare fact of ownership'.[166] Yet, for scholars who have

not had the luxury of diary accounts or discursive inventories, other methodological strategies have been

suggested. Whilst Mark Overton et al. have criticised the idea that the mere *existence* of an object denotes

meaning, they concede that 'some aspects of the cultural context of consumption remain almost impossible

to retrieve […] We can only attempt to infer these considerations from their presence or absence in certain

contexts'.[167] This method of inference and speculation has been used by others, with Jules David Prown and

Karen Harvey validating approaches which use 'creative imagining […] to understand why the object is the

way it is, or provokes the way it provokes'.[168] Providing an important methodological underpinning to

various arguments put forward in this thesis, these ideas will be revisited in chapters four and five.

Conclusion

Returning to the pastel which began this chapter, Lawrence's *Mad Girl* [Figure 1.1] encapsulates several

issues of utmost importance to a study on the representation and reception of female insanity in this period.

The 'humanisation' and 'feminisation' of madness; sensibility and the rise of a highly visual culture in which

unusual or ill bodies were on display; the spectatorial landscape which this canvas both represented and fed

into: all these themes assemble in Lawrence's compelling pastel.

Circulated through an expanding print culture of broadsides, periodicals and newspapers, together

with ballads, chapbooks and prints, the ubiquity of images such as Lawrence's suggest that individuals

across classes were literate in the visual paradigms of mania and melancholy.[169] Typically constructed within

a framework that suggests duality, the infamous twin statues of mania and melancholy that flanked

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[165] Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darren Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London: Routledge, 2004); John Styles, 'Lodging at the Old Bailey: Lodgings and Their Furnishing in Eighteenth-Century London', in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America. 1700-1830,* eds. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 61-80; Vickery, *Behind closed doors.*
[166] Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods', 276.
[167] Overton et al., *Production and Consumption,* 9.
[168] Jules David Prown, 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 17, 1 (1982), 1-19 (7-10); Karen Harvey, 'Introduction: Historians, Material Culture and Materiality' in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (New York, NY; London: Routledge, 2009), 2.
[169] Brewer, *Party Ideology,* 184; Wilson, *Sense of the people,* 30-31.

Bethlem's gates serve as the prime example of this visual trend [Figure 1.8]. Caius Gabriel Cibber's (1630-1700) *Raving and Melancholy Madness* from 1676 establishes madness as oppositional forces: one relaxed, the other tense, the 'lethargic, withdrawn, self-enclosed' melancholic diametrically opposed to the 'hyperactive and exposed' maniac.[170] Whilst in agreement with Sander L. Gilman's statement that a dualistic conception of mental illness was integral to the cultural characterisation of madwomen in this period,[171] this chapter has demonstrated that ascribing too closely to oppositional narratives runs the risk of glossing over the rich texture of a period. The grafting of markers of both manic disorder and sensitive delicacy upon Lawrence's pastel — with tearful love-mad features joined by chains, straw and an exposed breast — illustrate that these aesthetic representations were not fixed.[172] As arguments within the history of psychiatry and gender studies have demonstrated, the cultural roles of the insane, institutions and women during this period were constantly in flux, and, as living women, these tropes were subjected to shifting definitions. Blurring traditional distinctions that view the maniac as dangerous, the melancholic as mild, this study provides a reappraisal of meanings typically attached to each trope, particularly in chapter five's reassessment on the cultural artefact of love's madness.

In line with debates set out in this chapter on the tension between prescription and description within the histories of both gender and psychiatry, this study additionally identifies these tropes as *ideals* through which to match acceptable and unacceptable modes of female madness. Each stereotype provided spectacular audiences with a clear disorder through which a woman's madness could be compared, contrasted or categorised. The manic stereotype might have been aligned with more troubling and unattractive female behaviour, but at least she proved recognisable to contemporary audiences. As we shall see, interpretations, encounters or experiences with madwomen who strayed away from these archetypes saw audiences struggle to place her, with interesting effects on the way she was culturally handled and managed.

At the same time, whilst this project considers maniacal and melancholic modes of madness as key representational strategies, it does not view these stereotypes as indicative of experience. The cultural feminisation of madness perpetuated a visual language that made melancholic and maniacal markers widely recognisable: but these functioned as reference points upon which to match behaviour, rather than actual

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[170] Gilman, *Seeing the insane,* 18.
[171] Gilman, *Seeing the insane,* 12.
[172] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 151.

behavioural modes in their own right. Just because these dual tropes of female madness existed and proliferated widely across the culture, does not mean that these frameworks were the only way that contemporaries could understand living madwomen, or that women experienced madness. As Porter has argued, 'lunacy was unbound, never confined to a charmed circle of meanings, never simply a slur or a nosological niche'. It 'wore many faces', and could be 'cosmic, comic, clinical or casual'.[173] The rest of this thesis explores a range of these sometimes conflicting, sometimes overlapping and often surprising categories: first, through the many faces of 'Mad Peg'.

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[173] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 18.

CHAPTER TWO

'Scorn of thy sex': Margaret Nicholson and the Many Faces of Female Insanity

At pity's soft command
The monarch stretch'd his hand
(Inclin'd his ever gracious ear
A female's plaintive tale to hear,
Suspecting not her dark design)
Held out his royal arm — and shed the look benign.

Her evil genius then began
To execute the horrid plan,
And boldly drew the cursed knife
And rashly dar'd attempt to take the monarch's life.[1]

When a forty-one-year-old servant woman joined the crowds at St James's Palace on the morning of Wednesday 2 August 1786, no one would have guessed there was a soon-to-be celebrated maniac in their midst. The 'dark design' of Margaret Nicholson was only realised a few hours later, when she stepped forward to present a petition to King George III. Rather than hand over the petition, however, Nicholson attempted to stab the King in the heart with a dessert knife. In an act of gentlemanly sentimentalism, the King ordered his guards to step back, allegedly exclaiming 'No, I am not hurt — take care of the woman — don't hurt her, for she is mad'.[2] By the end of the following week, Nicholson had been examined by the Privy Council, certified as insane by one of the country's most renowned physicians, and confined to Bethlem. She would spend the rest of her life at the asylum, until her death in 1828, living as a figure of national intrigue.

Within a few days of the attack, a notice appeared in a London periodical advertising 'the most Wonderful, Curious and Ingenious Exhibition', displaying 'Animated Figures and Striking Likenesses of curiosities, natural wonders and celebrated figures'.[3] Among this line up, which included 'the celebrated Mrs Robinson' and 'a Beautiful Diamond Beetle', was a waxwork of 'Margaret Nicholson [...] who made an Attempt on the Life of his Most Sacred Majesty, King George III, on Aug. 2 1786'. The show was to be seen from 'Nine in the Morning till Ten in the Evening', in a series of apartments in Somerset House on the

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[1] *London Chronicle*, 8 August 1786.
[2] Jonathan Fiske, *The Life and Transactions of Margaret Nicholson* [...] (London: J. Fiske, 1786), 36; *Lady's Magazine*, 17, 1786, 397.
[3] Scrapbook of advertisements, broadsides, poetry, newspaper clippings, etc., 1745-1838 (bulk 1780-1800), LWL, Folio 66 748 Sc43.

Strand, priced at 1 shilling per person, half price for servants and children — standard entry fee for an exhibition such as the Royal Academy at the time.

The exhibition was just one small part of a rapid proliferation of variously spectacular, romanticised and critical representations of Margaret Nicholson, that explored, interpreted and fabulated the affair. To say that the affair provoked an explosion of material would be no exaggeration: as the *Gentleman's Magazine* described, the news of the attack 'circulated through the city with amazing rapidity, and, gathering as it flew, a thousand fictions were added'.[4] Waxwork-makers, printmakers, writers and craftsmen: all set to work, turning Nicholson into a national celebrity. Whilst ample textual material exists regarding the Nicholson affair, including chapbooks, poetry, newspaper and periodical reports and advertisements, a range of prints, and even a sculptural frieze in St George's chapel at Windsor made Nicholson's body available for mass visual and material consumption. These images were contextualised amongst a plethora of publications, theatrical productions, exhibitions and cultural activities which focused on the act of looking — where 'individuals of both sexes and virtually all social ranks, literate and illiterate, urban and rural, had occasion or opportunity to take advantage of the market in information'.[5]

Despite the rich texture of images available, art historians have largely ignored the ways in which Nicholson's madness has been portrayed, and how these portrayals might contribute to our cultural understanding of gender and mental illness in the eighteenth-century's latter decades.[6] Nicholson's story has yielded two chapters in recent texts. Steve Poole's *Politics of Regicide* positioned Nicholson amongst a line-up of Georgian regicides, but whilst providing in-depth analysis on the ramifications of Nicholson's heinous act, he places her significance within a broader context of petitioning and the practicalities of Hanoverian contractual theory.[7] Andrew Scull and Jonathan Andrews's text on Bethlem's leading physician, John Monro, meanwhile, gives extensive analysis of key themes such as femininity and crime in relation to

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[4] *Gentleman's Magazine,* vol. 5, 2 August 1786, 708; Kenneth Baker, *George III: A Life in Caricature* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 132.

[5] Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31.

[6] Jane Kromm's *Art of Frenzy* does dedicate a few pages to Nicholson, but dwells upon her role as a riotous political emblem rather than the wider cultural implications of her representation. See Jane Kromm, *The Art of Frenzy: Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500-1850* (London: Continuum, 2002), 178-186.

[7] Steve Poole, *The Politics of Regicide in England, 1760-1850: Troublesome Subjects* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 84.

Nicholson. Whilst informative, their arguments fail to fully integrate her actions within the fragmented, contradictory and contentious atmosphere of the late eighteenth century.[8] As reviewer Lucia Dacome stated:

> The book's emphasis on the cultural relevance of sensibility (and its importance for eighteenth century attitudes towards madness) whetted my appetite for a more specific discussion of the role of the mad-business in the context of what historians have identified as a correlation between the dissemination of the feminized culture of sensibility and the gendering of nervous distempers.[9]

Whilst noting that the history of psychiatry treats illustrations 'too casually and superficially',[10] the methodology adopted by Scull and Andrews of writing pictorial analysis *alongside* the text through extended captions means that images are presented as complementary, not fully integrated into their main arguments. In contrast, this chapter does not treat images as ancillary evidence. Unlike previous scholarship, it contextualises a range of visual material within the densely spectatorial context of late eighteenth-century life, examining different frameworks through which different modalities of looking were encouraged — henceforth referred to as 'guides to look'. Alongside textual material including newspapers, periodicals, letters and diaries, it considers more formal modes of representation (paintings, prints, sculptural friezes) with material typically connected with the lower classes (broadsides, chapbooks), arguing that with these different iterations came distinct frameworks that facilitated varied ways through which the public could look at the Nicholson affair, be it sympathetically or critically.

 The first part of this chapter charts the multiplicity and speed of representations of the event. The rest analyses the ways in which Nicholson was interpreted by contemporaries: as a foil to a feeling King, love-mad victim, proud spinster, exhibited attraction, and intrusive political presence. First considering popular attitudes towards the monarchy, I locate Nicholson's act within the sentimental trope of love's madness — an archetype that enabled the sympathetic 'Man of Feeling' to extract social prestige through his lugubrious display of compassion. I next examine the development of more critical representations that contextualised Nicholson through her failings: as a reproductive agent, as a loyal servant and ultimately, as a woman. Drawing upon a collection of theoretical positions found within freak scholarship, the second half of this chapter discusses a range of freakish and political representations that saw Nicholson depicted at her

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[8] Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull, *Undertaker of the Mind: John Monro and Mad-Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 215-254.
[9] Lucia Dacome, 'Review: Undertaker of the Mind', *Early Science and Medicine*, 7, 4 (2002), 411-413 (412).
[10] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker,* xiii; Dacome, 'Review', 413.

most titillating, pervasive and troubling, suggesting that these more pejorative interpretations intensified as time went on.

Chapter one ended by setting out the ways that dominant stereotypes of melancholy and mania might distract us from the realities of how female madness was encountered and experienced. Whilst Nicholson's lack of conformity to these types lends weight to the notion that madwomen did not exclusively exist in one of these binary forms, at the same time her subversion of melancholic or manic tropes, alongside the normative behaviour prescribed to her sex and status, meant that contemporaries struggled to place her. As such, this chapter argues that a series of distancing frameworks — such as freakery and satire — were employed in an attempt to categorise her undefinable nature. The categorisation of Nicholson as something *different* and *undefinable* helped to ameliorate or placate the sequence of threats that she represented: the threat of the politicised and public female body, the physical danger she had posed to the sovereign and, even, one's possibility of mental collapse.

Reports, **Representations and Responses**

Reports of Nicholson's life were quickly pieced together across periodicals, newspapers and chapbooks. The wide range of mediums used to tell Nicholson's story demonstrate its cross-class reach — particularly evident in the affair's proliferation across chapbook form. Running to 24 pages and costing 2d or less, chapbooks were 'small paper-covered books, often sold unstitched and uncut by hawkers'.[11] Their affordability, brevity and simplicity of language meant that they are commonly associated with the lower ranks; though, as chapter five discusses, they in fact cultivated a broad readership, being read and collected by a middling and upper-class clientele. The first chapbook, *Authentic Memoirs,* was released six days after the attack. By 23 August, four more were in circulation.[12]

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[11] John Mullan and Christopher Reid, eds., *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7-8. For more on the chapbook trade and its history, see Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[12] Anon, *Authentic Memoirs of the Life of Margaret Nicholson* […] (London: James Ridgeway, 1786); *The Plot Investigated* […] (London: Macklew, 1786); Fiske, *Life*; Anon, *A True and Particular Account of Margaret Nicholson* […] (London: Thomas Sabine, 1786); Anon, *The Maniacs: a Tragi-Comical Tale* (London: James Ridgeway, 1786).

Originally from Yorkshire, Nicholson was the daughter of a barber from Stockton-on-Tees. Being of a 'reserved and thoughtful cast; seldom subject to the influence of the livelier sallies of mirth',[13] her professional prospects originally seemed bright, having secured work as a housemaid with a number of London's 'families of distinction'.[14] Yet by 1780, her 'employment history grew distinctly more checkered'.[15] She was allegedly sacked for misbehaviour on several occasions, whilst at the same time displaying 'a degree of pride unusual in a person of her station', as reported in the *Lady's Magazine*. Believing herself to be above other servants, she left several households over trivial matters and when working in the house of one Lord Sebright, she was allegedly dismissed after an affair with the Swiss valet.[16] Whilst parts of her story may have been fabricated or hyperbolised, these aspects remained vivid in the minds of writers. Various interpretations reported that Nicholson and her valet's 'attachment still subsisted, and they got into a third service; there her sweetheart flighted her, and paid his address to a person who had some property, whom he married'.[17] As her former landlord, Jonathan Fiske, describes, after being 'slighted, and then neglected' by the valet,[18] Nicholson continued work as a needlewoman, becoming financially desperate. Isolated from her family, it was this series of events, Poole argues, that saw Nicholson begin her fervent petitioning campaign to the King, leading to the dramatic events of 2 August 1786.[19]

In the hours that followed the attempt, the Privy Council was immediately summoned to test the King's declaration that Nicholson was insane. The examination took place over a few days, during which time newspapers were already publishing their judgements on Nicholson's sanity. Both *The Times* and the *Morning Chronicle* described 'her manner strongly expressive of a disordered mind, without any indication of fear'.[20] Whist the *Chronicle* stated that Nicholson exhibited 'strong marks of insanity',[21] *The Times* quoted the Privy Council's examination verbatim, stating that in the moments following Nicholson's attempt on the King's life, she displayed the 'utmost unconcern' for what she had done, exhibiting 'strong signs of insanity' and speaking incoherently.[22]

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13 *London Chronicle*, 4 August 1786.
14 *Universal Magazine*, vol. 79, 1786, 95; *Annual Register*, vol. 29, 1786, 233.
15 Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 217.
16 *Lady's Magazine*, 17, 1786, 396.
17 *London Chronicle*, 4 August 1786.
18 Fiske, *Life*, 9-10.
19 Poole, *Troublesome Subjects*, 69.
20 *The Times*, 4 August 1786; *Morning Chronicle*, 4 August 1786.
21 *Morning Chronicle*, 4-5 August 1786.
22 *The Times,* 4 August 1786.

Critical to these discussions was Nicholson's petitioning, which had been going on for several weeks. When her lodgings were searched on the afternoon of the attack, three petitions were found. The *Morning Chronicle* reported that Nicholson had already presented several petitions to the King, with one bearing the words: 'If your Majesty would wish to avoid *Regicide*, you will make some provision for me without delay'.[23] When asked by the Privy Council about the content of the petition she had presented the King on August 2, Nicholson wrote it down word for word:

> My cause is concerning the right in blood and understanding for the Crown of England by which I am sensible of securing the right Kingly marriage, in case I could obtain a Property answerable to bring him up upon, and unless I do this, I am sensible for the most fatalist catastrophe for some thousand years that ever was imagined in the mind of Man, owing to a foreign marriage, that in length of time causes a confusion of tongues.[24]

When the Councillors asked what Nicholson wanted, she allegedly replied 'That he would provide for me, as I want to marry and have children like other folks'.[25] Poole has interpreted Nicholson's final petition as indicative of Nicholson's wish to marry the King himself, suggesting that her lonely, lovelorn and unemployed status meant that she was 'requesting property and the King's hand in marriage to rescue him from his own foreign wife'.[26] Whilst Nicholson did not appear to harbour romantic affections for the King, the petitions suggest a deluded belief that marrying him was a viable option. At the same time, and in line with *The Times*'s report that Nicholson 'wanted nothing but her right', reports also circulated that Nicholson genuinely believed herself the rightful heir to the throne. It seems that she either believed that she should usurp the King on the throne or join him as his Queen.

A week after the attack, Monro officially certified Nicholson insane. 'Never in his life had [he] seen a person more disordered', he wrote, explaining how Nicholson made frequent outbursts of laughter that were 'so violent as to make it necessary for her to support herself against the back of a chair'.[27] He recommended that the council send her to Bethlem immediately. On Thursday, she was taken 'in a hackney coach to Bedlam'.[28] The following day, *The Times* reported that Nicholson had been 'in very good spirits'.

[23] *Morning Post*, 5 August 1786.
[24] *Morning Chronicle*, 5 August.
[25] *Gloucester Journal*, 7 August 1786; *Universal Magazine*, 79, 1786, 95.
[26] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects*, 84.
[27] Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1969), 311-312; Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker,* 238.
[28] Anon, *High Treason, committed by Margaret Nicholson, guilty of the horrid crime of endeavouring to murder his majesty King George III* (London: 1786)

Talking 'rationally the whole way', she dined with the steward that evening. Once taken to her cell, she asked for paper and pens, appearing 'perfectly collected'. The only nod towards her delusional thinking in this report was that she declared she was expecting the King's visit.[29]

What of Nicholson's madness, then? The notion of Nicholson being invited to dine with the steward on her first evening at the asylum hardly chimes with dangerous descriptions of her that surfaced elsewhere, reducing Nicholson's mania to something less serious and more sporadic. Whilst *The Times*'s first report described her as 'wild and incoherent', it modified its original diagnosis a week later, instead stating that she was 'liable, at intervals, to fits of lunacy'.[30] This agreed with a report from the *London Chronicle,* that whilst her mind comprised a 'wild labyrinth of distracted imagination', she enjoyed occasional lucid moments'.[31]

Not all were convinced of her insanity. Poole points out that 'many observers failed to understand why a 'dangerous lunacy' took so long to diagnose and which often seemed masked by composure and self-awareness'.[32] Nicholson was certainly composed when first confined at a messenger house on the night of the attack, described as requesting to play a game of whist.[33] Earlier that day, when a number of witnesses were called to give evidence on her state of mind, Fiske had defended the sanity of his lodger, stating that he 'had never observed any marks of insanity in her conduct, except that she frequently moved her lips as if talking'.[34] By the end of the month, the *Morning Chronicle* was ridiculing those who believed Nicholson mad, quipping 'She plans, proceeds, executes with uninterrupted deliberation — and such a woman is pronounced insane!'[35] This view was shared by members of the public, many of whom were outraged that Nicholson was seemingly getting away with such a heinous act. In her diary entry, the English noblewoman Lady Mary Coke wrote that Nicholson 'pretends madness, for pretence it certainly is'.[36] Coke believed that Nicholson's pretence was linked to her being a Roman Catholic pretender, having heard from an acquaintance that Nicholson 'never went to Church'.[37]

In opposition to these defamatory viewpoints, a number of commentators believed that Nicholson was not mad, but confused. In *Sketches of Bedlam,* a publication from the 1820s that gave short biographies

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[29] *The Times*, 11 August 1786.
[30] *The Times*, 11 August 1786.
[31] *London Chronicle*, 4 August 1786.
[32] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects*, 78.
[33] *Universal Magazine*, 79, 1786, 95; *Plot Investigated*, 36.
[34] *European Magazine*, vol. 10, 1786, 118; Poole, *Troublesome Subjects*, 77.
[35] *Morning Chronicle*, 25 August 1786.
[36] Lady Mary Coke, *The letters and journals of Lady Mary Coke* (London: Kingsmead Bookshops, 1889), vol. 1, 98.
[37] Coke, *Lady Mary Coke,* 103.

on Bethlem's patients, Nicholson was described as not having 'the remotest intention to injure His Majesty, on the contrary, that she had a great notion of him'.[38] Some suggested that Nicholson had produced the small knife from her pocket in a moment of panic, meaning to grab the petition instead.[39] Nicholson herself argued that her plan had been to 'terrify, not to kill' the King; as the *Universal Magazine* wrote, on her way to Coates's messenger house, she declared 'that she had no intention to hurt' him.[40]

Reviewing this evidence, it seems that Nicholson had moments of genuine confusion and derangement, at times suffering from delusional thinking as to her rank, status and familial connections. Andrews and Scull have made their own judgements as to Nicholson's mental health. On the one hand, they identify her failure to fulfil her 'biological, emotional and social prospects of fulfilment as a wife and mother' as an important reason for her mental decline, partly due to emotional consequences, and partly as it led to a life of 'isolation, hardship and disappointment'.[41] Yet they warn against taking 'contemporary constructions of Margaret as the archetypal mad spinster too literally', placing weight on other strains that they view as contributing to her mental decline, such as her poverty, reputation and absent family.[42] What is important to this chapter is not why Nicholson went mad, nor the medical specifics of her particular disorder. Rather, it is what the multifarious interpretations and spectacularisation of her madness can tell us about contemporary conceptions of female madness during this period, alongside the issues it raises around other commonly held contemporary anxieties, including gender, class, monarchy and politics.

Margaret, Monarchy and the 'Man of Feeling'

Published exactly one week after the attempt, *Authentic Memoirs* was the first chapbook to document the affair, describing the rippling impact that Nicholson's actions had upon the populace:

> The blow, though happily ineffectual, was nevertheless like the shock of electricity; it vibrated through the whole body, from the metropolis to the most distant and unimportant petty village in the extremities of the kingdom: all felt, all trembled at the shock and recovered a painfully pleasing sensation from its severity.[43]

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[38] James Smyth, *Sketches in Bedlam; or Characteristic traits of insanity* […] 2nd edn. (London: Sherwood, Jones & Co, 1824), 253-8.
[39] *The Times*, 4 August 1786.
[40] *Universal Magazine*, 95.
[41] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 234.
[42] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 235.
[43] *Authentic Memoirs,* 42-43.

This mention of the 'whole body' speaks of nerve theory on a national scale, as villages and metropolises were shaken by the severity of events. In the aftermath, the chapbook claims, a tingly mixture of pleasure and pain remained. As this section details, critical to this long-lasting feeling of pleasurable satisfaction was the affect the scandal had upon attitudes towards the King.

In order to fully appreciate the impact of the actions of a woman who not only attempted to kill the monarch, but also believed herself the rightful heir, it is important to consider contemporary attitudes towards both George III and regicide in general. Despite the shock expressed, regicide was not an unfamiliar concept in eighteenth-century Britain. Nicholson slotted into an extant revolutionary discourse, still present in a country that keenly remembered the heady days of the 'Glorious Revolution'. The political turbulence of the early years of George III's reign has been well documented by historians, with mounting political pressure turning 'potential critics of the ruling oligarchy into political radicals ready to demand constitutional reform'.[44] Following the outbreak of hostilities with American colonists in the 1760s, there was an influx of regicidal rhetoric, bolstered by the republication of a 1659 tract that justified 'king-killing'. Whilst much of this was hyperbolic, it reveals how seventeenth-century ideals might re-enter popular political discourse when the mood allowed.[45] Indeed, two years after the Nicholson affair, revolutionary societies would be celebrating the centenary of 1688.[46]

Crucial to English politics during this period was the belief that monarchy was both hereditary and elective, and that men had 'political rights that extended beyond obedience'.[47] As John Wilkes doggedly stoked the fire on topics such as national liberty, the King was consistently accused of unconstitutional aims, exploiting the crown to increase his own prerogative through a series of economic reforms.[48] At the same time, Harry Thomas Dickinson has argued that whilst historical interest in these decades has focused on their popular radicalism, less attention has been paid to the fact that this radicalism failed to attract genuine support. His arguments stress that England was *not* a radical powder-keg: extra parliamentary debate focused

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[44] Harry Thomas Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: St Martin's Press, 1995), 223; John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 6.
[45] Wilson, *Sense of the people,* 208.
[46] Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1823* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 242.
[47] Wilson, *Sense of the people,* 208.
[48] Dickinson, *Politics,* 224.

more on the broader *nature* of monarchy, rather than abolition of its current figurehead. The ruling elite and religious leaders encouraged monarchical loyalty,[49] helping to explain the national reaction towards Nicholson's behaviour. Additionally, earlier political crises in his reign are now understood as contributing to George III's popularity within conservative circles, with the monarch increasingly seen as a symbol of stability.[50] Linda Colley has argued that the American defeat in 1783 ushered in a decisive shift in attitudes towards George III; exemplified across print culture, the King was now typically characterised as a 'genial, homespun farmer', embodying a more familial and personal style of both kingship and masculinity.[51]

The near unanimous horror that most publications initially expressed over the Nicholson affair and the prospect of regicide supports the view that George was popular, and regicide abominable. As *Authentic Memoirs* begins

> Amid the many acts of delinquency which will blacken the annals of the present time, there are none of a deeper dye than the monstrous attempt on the life of our most gracious sovereign — Regicide and parricide are among those crimes whose superiority of horror strike on the human heart with the utmost dread.[52]

Illustrating George III's esteemed reputation at the time of the event, it is also clear that his compassionate and dignified response markedly boosted it. In the days that followed the attack, the King's subjects and supporters 'surrounded the throne with congratulations'.[53] As the *London Chronicle* gushed

> It must not be a little gratifying to the king to find how general and sincere the affections of his people are — but did a monarch ever more deserve them? — was ever a sceptre held by stricter justice, or a throne filled with truer dignity? — with regard to a late horrid event, his generous emotions of compassion to the wretch who was aiming at his life, are beyond all example — beyond all possible praise![54]

Poole has stressed that the Nicholson affair 'was to be a significant marker in the development of George III's fatherly style'. The affair, he argues, 'was a perfect vehicle for the interlinking of healing processes within both the Royal Family and the nation 'at a time when the relationship between the King and his son,

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[49] Dickinson, *Politics,* 255-257.

[50] Dickinson, *Politics,* 260.

[51] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1996), 209-210. See also Simon Schama, 'The Domestication of Majesty: Royal Family Portraiture, 1500-1850', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 17, 1 (1986), 155-183; Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2001).

[52] *Authentic Memoirs,* 1-3.

[53] *Plot Investigated,* 17-18.

[54] *London Chronicle*, 4 August 1786.

the Prince of Wales, were particularly tense'.[55] As one broadside, titled *High Treason Committed by Margaret Nicholson*, stated, 'Never did a husband, a father, or a master of a family deserve more truly [his family's] love, esteem, respect and admiration'.[56]

Of course, representations that yoked the King's reaction to Nicholson's madness became more complex as time went on, given George III's own, well publicised, experiences with madness. Less than two years later, the King would be reporting a 'bilious attack' and suffer his first minor bout of mental illness.[57] Tory politician William Grenville reported on 22 October 1788 that 'part of the King's disorder is an agitation and flurry of spirits, which hardly gives him any rest'.[58] By the end of that year, the Prince of Wales wrote to his brother that his father had suffered 'a total loss of all rationality' and was a 'compleat lunatick'.[59] Despite the fact that on 11 March 1789, *The Times* reported that 'There was no doubt existing of the King's mental health being perfectly restored',[60] he would suffer numerous bouts of madness in 1801, 1804 and 1810, the final phase lasting until his death in 1820, aged eighty-two.[61]

Somewhat ironically given these later developments, key to the widespread admiration of the King's behaviour in the summer of 1786 was his characterisation as a composed and rational individual. As the Earl of Guilford wrote, 'I hear that the King's behaviour was great, composed and generous'.[62] Most significant though, was his characterisation as humane ('take care of the woman — don't hurt her, for she is mad'), with his hortatory words frequently repeated in chapbooks, pamphlets, and along the edges of prints.[63] Bolstering the popularisation of eighteenth-century sentimental values set out in chapter one, whereby self-conscious feelings of sympathy were expressed within elite circles, the King's compassionate response conformed to this widespread behavioural type, staunchly situating him as the archetypal 'Man of Feeling'. That his behaviour was a source of national pride can be clearly seen through the whole-hearted acceptance of the

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[55] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects,* 70, 71.
[56] *High Treason,* 1786.
[57] Macalpine and Hunter, *George III,* 3-5.
[58] 'Mr W. W. Grenville to the Marquis of Buckingham, 22 October 1788', in *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George the Third,* ed. The Duke of Buckingham and Chandos (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1853), vol. 1, 291.
[59] 'The Duke of York and the Prince of Wales to Prince Augustus', in *The Correspondence of George, Princes of Wales 1770-1812*, ed. A. Aspinal ([S.I.]: Cassell, 1963), vol. 1, 339.
[60] *The Times*, 11 March 1789, 2.
[61] Macalpine and Hunter, *George III*, xv.
[62] 'The Earl of Guildford to Mrs Delany, 5 August 1786', in *The Autobiography and correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany, with interesting reminiscences of King George the Third and Queen Charlotte*, ed. Lady Llanover (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), vol. 3, 367-377.
[63] Fiske, *Life,* 36.

event within royal circles. Indeed, the King himself, in a letter to Richard Grenville, proclaimed that he 'had every reason to be satisfied with the impression [the affair] has awakened in this country'.[64]

That the affair was celebrated within royal circles is demonstrated by its immortalisation in a bas-relief at St George's chapel, Windsor. In October 1791, Horace Walpole (1717-1797) commented on the relief in a letter:

> In the midst of all this solemnity, in a small angle over the lower stalls is crammed a small bas-relief in oak with the story of Margaret Nicholson, the King and the coachman, as ridiculously added, and as clumsily executed as if it were a monkish miracle. Some loyal zealot has broken away the blade of the knife, as if the sacred wooden personage would have been in danger still.[65]

Despite Walpole's disdain for the relief's execution, his allusion to the 'loyal zealot' and the material act of monarchical devotion via the removal of the blade indicates the widespread positive and protective feeling that the attack engendered. Such evidence strengthens Poole's suggestion that, for many contemporaries, any meaning drawn from Nicholson's behaviour was overshadowed by the elevation of the King's sensibility. As we shall see, many representations cast Nicholson as a welcome foil for George III's humanity, underscoring his laudable actions. Not just a source of pride, we can read these representations as *instructive,* advising late eighteenth-century actors how to look and behave when encountering a similar madwoman of their own.

Discussed in chapter one, the eighteenth century witnessed a 'remarkable preoccupation' with ways of looking, preoccupations that were made manifest through didactic literature.[66] The simple act of looking, observing or spectating was now understood as potentially consolidating social status: as such, eighteenth-century spectators sought guides to help them look in the 'correct' way. Michael Ketcham has argued that popular texts such as the *Spectator* provided their readers with clear instruction on ways to behave, suggesting two key types of response: immediate sympathy or critical judgement, displaying a psychology that 'combines sentiment with scepticism'.[67] Whilst Ketcham argues that widely circulating periodicals such as the *Spectator* evidence how 'social structure [was] created out of a literary structure',[68] didactic guides on

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[64] 'George III to Richard Grenville, 29 August 1786', quoted in Jeremy Black, *The Hanoverians: The History of a Dynasty* (New York, NY: Hambledon, 2004), 139.

[65] 'Mary Berry, 9 October 1791', in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence,* ed. W. S. Lewis (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1937-1983), 363.

[66] John Brewer, 'This, that and the other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in *Subject in Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of the Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 1-21, 15.

[67] Michael G. Ketcham, *Transparent Designs: Reading, Performance, and Form in the Spectator Papers* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1985), 10.

[68] Ketcham, *Transparent Designs,* 5.

looking at specific cultural offerings were not only provided by the periodical press. They were also found in late eighteenth-century visual offerings.

Focusing on the sprinkling of new galleries which established themselves in Pall Mall following the Royal Academy's departure, Rosie Dias has interrogated the ways in which these spaces actively encouraged extensive time spent with individual works, a practice which hitherto had not been possible due to the Academy's overcrowded rooms.[69] She demonstrates how prints of exhibition spaces functioned as 'laconic guides' on how to look or behave in certain social, and moreover, *public*, scenarios, arguing that the visualisation of catalogues, glasses and male companions within these prints functioned as didactic tools.[70] If exhibition prints and catalogues constituted the main disciplinary apparatus of the exhibition space, then surely prints and texts produced around other specular events — such as the Nicholson affair — could function in a similarly instructive way?

Building on these ideas, several prints visualised the King's sensitive handling of the crisis as exemplary, in line with discussion in chapter one on the ways that melancholic love-mad women functioned as emotional prompts for sentimental and sensitive viewers. With scholars such as Poole arguing that the King's concern over Nicholson's welfare might tap 'straight into a fashionable current of sensibility towards the melancholic afflictions of unrequited love', it is worth considering the ways that Nicholson may have been framed as love-mad, tapping into that familiar brand of Ophelian lovelorn madness.[71]

Margaret as Love-Mad

Eighteenth-century audiences were no stranger to tales of women driven mad through romantic disappointment — following a lover's death, disappearance or abandonment. The final quarter of the eighteenth century saw an unprecedented interest in this new trope, as novelists, dramatists, musicians, painters and printmakers bestowed their heroines with iconography that codified their heartbroken pathology. Typically presented as young, tearful, beautiful, lost and submissive, the love-mad woman's psychic

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[69] Rosie Dias, "A world of pictures': Pall Mall and the topography of display, 1789-99', in *Georgian Geographies: Essays on space, place and landscape in the eighteenth century,* eds. Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J. Withers (Manchester; New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2004), 92-113, 100.
[70] Dias, 'World of pictures', 100-101.
[71] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects,* 79; Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 229.

symptoms were communicated through physical posture, gesture, countenance and accessories, including downcast eyes, a weary expression and tearstained cheeks. Positioned in a natural setting, her clothing tended to be simple: either a loose white dress as we see with Laurence Sterne's Maria, or shabby drapery, as in the case of William Cowper's (1731-1800) Crazy Kate.

The archetype of the eighteenth-century reincarnation of love's madness, we first meet Sterne's 'Maria of Moulines' in the ninth volume of *Tristam Shandy* (1767), and again in *A Sentimental Journey* (1768). Once a 'quick witted and amicable maid', Maria is now melancholic, grief-stricken and haunted by the death of her lover. Described as childlike and simple, she rarely speaks and mournfully plays a pipe, which 'since she has been unsettled in her mind […] seems her only consolation'.[72] William B. Gerard has demonstrated the intense cultural interest in Maria, arguing that the pictorial quality of Sterne's writing inspired 'many additional verbal and pictorial renderings for over 100 years beyond its initial publication'. Gerard argues that this visualisation of Maria had three chronological phases: as a figure of mourning, as a sympathetic prompt and as 'other'.[73] Sometimes depicted alone, at other times with her male companion Yorick, the 1770s saw representations from John Raphael Smith [Figure 2.1], Joseph Wright of Derby [Figure 2.2] and Angelica Kauffman [Figure 2.3]. Across these depictions, Maria is set in a bucolic landscape, wearing a sorrowful, pensive expression. Dressed in white, she has loose flowing hair and soft feminine features.[74] Between Smith's painting of Maria in 1774 and 1792, she had appeared in another fourteen paintings displayed in the Royal Academy and the Society of Artists, alongside a dazzling array of Wedgwood stoneware, even becoming a motif in jewellery medallions for bracelets and earrings, belt and shoe buckles.[75]

In 1785, Cowper's *The Task* provided the love-mad craze with a new character: Crazy Kate.[76] The poem gives its reader a vivid description of the young serving maid before her demise, once 'better clad' in

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[72] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristam Shandy, Gentleman,* ed. James Aiken Work (Indianapolis, IN; New York, NY: The Odyssey Press, 1940), vol. 9, 630-631; Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick,* ed. Paul Goring (London: Penguin, 2001).

[73] William B. Gerard, *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 137.

[74] For more on Maria's melancholic iconography, see William B. Gerard, '"All that the heart wishes": Changing Views toward Sentimentality Reflected in Visualizations of Sterne's Maria, 1773-1888', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 34 (2005), 197-269 (238-240).

[75] Gerard, *Visual Imagination*, 137, 144, 147; Catherine M. Gordon, *British Paintings of Subjects from the English Novel, 1740-1870* (New York, NY; London: Garland, 1988), 263-7.

[76] William Cowper, 'The Task', in *William Cowper: The Task and Selected Other Poems*, ed. James Sambrook (London: Routledge, 2016), 74.

'a cloak of satin trimmed with lace, and hat with splendid ribbon bound' (535-536). After falling in love 'with one who left her, went to sea, and died' (538), she is now a wandering wastrel whose 'bosom heav'd with never-ceasing sights' beneath her tattered attire (552). Whilst Kate did not garner as many visual representations as Maria, the more impoverished aspects of her characterisation (though 'pinched with cold' (556), she asks for no assistance and only begs an 'idle pin of all she meets' (553)) were drawn out in representations by Thomas Barker of Bath [Figure 2.4] and George Shepheard [Figure 2.5]. These show her as beautiful, barefoot and alone on a stormy plain. In contrast to Maria's elegant and decorous visualisation, with her chief motif being the wizened yet sturdy tree underneath which she sits, the swirling, dark clouds that beleaguer Kate stress a more troubling mental state. Critically, Kate's pathology was one accessible to a range of classes, accentuated by her former working-class role. Perhaps seen in a print shop window, or read of in a periodical, Kate's humble poverty provided a relatable lower-class example of love's madness. At the same time, her popularity with the middling to upper classes is demonstrated by multiple public performances that shared her story: the *Morning Herald* described how it was 'among the various readings' given at the Society of Gentlemen in 1788, and *The World* reported its inclusion in a performance at the Theatre Royal that same year.[77]

One more love-mad character demands attention: that of Ophelia from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c.1599-1601). Mad, bawdy and, eventually, suicidal, Ophelia pines after Prince Hamlet and mourns the death of her father. Serving as 'the embodiment of a single authoritative pattern of female lovesickness' during the Renaissance,[78] the late eighteenth century saw Ophelia gain visibility within both theatrical productions and visual culture.[79] This was partly due to the addition of her mad scene and Gertrude's account of her drowning into the performance in the 1780s, and partly due to the opening of the Shakespeare Galleries on Pall Mall, which exhibited illustrated scenes from the plays.[80] Georgian renditions of Ophelia have previously been conceived as harmless, pious and pretty — exemplified by Thomas Stothard's *Ophelia: Macklin's Shakespeare Gallery* from 1783 [Figure 2.6]. Elaine Showalter has argued that it was not until the

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[77] *Morning Herald*, 1 February 1788; *The World*, 28 April 1788.
[78] Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 47.
[79] Kimberley Rhodes describes how 'from 1831 onward, more Ophelias were exhibited at the Royal Academy per decade than were shown between 1791 and 1838', but still maintains that her role within eighteenth-century visual culture was significant. See Rhodes, *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture: Representing Body Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2008), 4.
[80] Jane Kromm, 'The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation', *Feminist Studies,* 20, 3 (1994), 507-535 (511-513).

mid-nineteenth century that Ophelia became a suicidal figure of unrepressed sexuality, stating that the

Georgians were so discomforted by the discordant elements of her character that 'her lines were cut and the

part was usually assigned to a singer rather than an actress'.[81] Discussed further in chapter five, Kromm has

demonstrated that this censorship was exaggerated, listing the Georgian actresses who played Ophelia and

joining a chorus of other scholars who argue for a more energised, sexual and intrusive characterisation of

Ophelia in the late eighteenth century.[82] Visual examples that testify to this more complex reading include

Frances Legat's engraving of *Act IV, Scene V*, after Benjamin West (1802), and Robert Edge Pine's *Ophelia*

(1782-4) [Figure 2.7 and Figure 2.8].[83]

      With the decade already awash with representations of love's madness, and *The Task* published just

the previous year, we may expect to find Nicholson's behaviour in 1786 codified in this manner. Certainly,

the desertion of the valet gave artists and printmakers a clear motivation for portraying a love-mad assailant.

A number of visual representations *do* nod towards this reading, adorning her with the key iconographical

features of the craze, the most expressive being *Margaret Nicholson attempting to assassinate the King*

[Figure 2.9]. The print shows Nicholson looking downwards despondently, lost in thought. Mirroring

Maria's sombre gaze, she is feminine, soft and pretty. The dark fabric around her shoulders nods to the

familiar motif of shawls within love-mad iconography, the leafy background reminiscent of the lovelorn

woman's placement within a natural setting. Nicholson's body language, drawing away from the King whilst

also twisting her head towards him, seems almost flirtatious, situating him as the primary object of her

affections.

      Other prints include a few minor love-mad features — a draped shawl, beautiful yet mournful looks,

a bucolic setting and a submissive or humble stance — but to say that these wholeheartedly consolidated

Nicholson within this trope would be misleading. A print published in the *Lady's Magazine* [Figure 2.10]

uses body language to reference Nicholson's complex relationship with her sovereign. Nicholson bows to the

King in a sumissive stance which might call to mind Maria or Kate's unassuming modesty. The presence of

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[81] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), 11.

[82] Kromm, 'Feminization', 511, 532-533, f.n. 14; Susan Lamb, 'Applauding Shakespeare's Ophelia in the Eighteenth Century: Sexual Desire, Politics, and the Good Woman', in *Women as Sites of Culture: Women's Roles in Cultural Formation from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century,* ed. Susan Shifrin (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 105-123, 106, 112-113; Mary Floyd Wilson, 'Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: "Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds"', *Women's Studies*, 21, 4 (1992), 397-409 (407).

[83] Lamb, 'Applauding Shakespeare's Ophelia', 112-3.

the knife, however, held in a tightly clenched fist and positioned alarming close to the King's heart, subverts a love-mad reading. As Nicholson's gaze fixates on its tip, we struggle to align her with the mournful and harmless renditions of love's madness embodied by those characters. Appearing serene and wistfully gazing into the distance, it is the King, not Nicholson, who captivate all around him. As one bystander removes his hat, and a figure on the frame's right edge stares in revery, it is clear that the spectacle here is the King's compassion rather than the madwoman's frenzy. With these onlookers preoccupied with the self-conscious forms of gazing that Brewer and others have discussed, this print offers the contemporary viewer an idealised representation of sentimental looking in action. Avoiding any explicit love-mad characterisation of Nicholson, instead including several more aggressive signs, the printmaker has bestowed her with *just* enough mildness so that the King, his followers, and subsequently the print's viewer, can react sympathetically. Available for leisurely perusal in the widely read and easily accessible *Lady's Magazine*, this image extrapolates a set of instructions on expectations around looking at the suffering madwoman to a wide audience, its inclusion in a popular publication evidencing the widespread appeal and circulation of this event.

In 1786, another etching was published that, as with the *Lady's Magazine* print*,* combined the sentimental aspects of the attempt with the more sinister motivations behind it. Etched by Francis Juke and Robert Pollard after a painting by academician Robert Smirke, *The Attempt to Assassinate the King* [Figure 2.11] shows the moment that Nicholson steps towards the King, knife concealed behind her body. In the background, leafy Green Park beckons, and a menagerie of onlookers cluster around the etching's right-hand side. The King's raised hand and movement *away* from Nicholson signals his concern, his gentle stance contrasting with the horrified reactions of those around him. Reacting with 'great coolness and humanity', the inclusion of a version of the King's words ('Do not hurt the Creature — she appears to be insane') along the print's edge makes it clear that this print is intended to celebrate his response, whilst instructing others to follow his hortatory behaviour.

Nicholson's presentation initially seems sympathetic. She is feminine, pretty and youthful, with charming features and a fragile frame — all signalling potential affiliation with the love-mad trope. Yet the innate spectacle that the scene deploys, as a multitude of onlookers react in horror, suggests a more complicated interpretation. Nicholson loses the pensive gaze found in *Margaret Nicholson attempting to assassinate the King* [Figure 2.9], and instead is actively focused, intent on harm, with an expression similar

to the *Lady's Magazine* print. Using the petition as a decoy, her eyes are fixed on the King's face as she steadily brings the knife into view. In opposition to reports that stated Nicholson had *accidentally* pulled the dessert knife from her pocket in a moment of confusion, Juke and Pollard's etching suggests a more sinister, premeditated and obsessive motive. Not an innocent love-mad victim, this example sees Nicholson momentarily become a beguiling and beautiful *femme fatale.*

Cast as a more seductive or focused figure within these two examples, the emotional intensity that Nicholson directs towards the King could be read as turning him into her love-mad surrogate, standing in for the valet who had deserted her. Other love-mad examples also utilised a male figure to replace the object of their affections: having lost her betrothed, Maria was often framed alongside Yorick, her male companion. Whilst the primary object of these women's heartache was absent, including another male figure within the frame might prompt additional readings. Given Poole's interpretation that her petitioning revealed Nicholson's desire to *marry* the King, allusions to romantic love or desire can be identified within these examples of Margaret and George III, pre-empting arguments discussed in chapter five that some contemporaries may have viewed Maria and Yorick as a courting couple. Suggestive of Nicholson's affections for the monarch, this pairing might have strengthened the intrigue, sympathy or outrage around Nicholson's absurd behaviour. Adding some love-mad messaging to the proceedings, these elements intensify the drama redolent in these images, Nicholson's audacity of believing herself, a lower-class needlewoman, a worthy match for the King proving outrageous, and denoting either a totally deluded nature or a staggering sense of pride.

That said, and in comparison to other prints analysed throughout this chapter, these works still portray Nicholson in a relatively sympathetic light. These examples show that images that accentuated the King's compassionate response, functioning as the sought-after 'laconic guide' and positioning Nicholson as an emotional aid, worked best when utilising a younger, slighter, prettier figure — even if she presents an active, harmful and deluded threat. Within these images, Nicholson embodies just the right amount of femininity to serve as an emotional prompt, bestowed with one or two features that link her to love's madness. Yet these works also reveal a reluctance to categorise Nicholson too specifically within the sentimental love-mad craze. Nicholson's wicked and unfeminine daring in relation to the nation's figurehead meant that an outright love-mad reading, aligning her with values of harmlessness and helplessness, was impossible. Perhaps if one artist had taken the plunge, and cast Nicholson as a solitary, pensive figure,

wandering the streets of London singing a lovelorn ditty and penning odes to her lost love, others may have followed. Instead, several prints of Nicholson uneasily nod towards the love-mad trope but refuse to place her at its heart.

Margaret as Spinster

That a more feminine and beautiful depiction of Nicholson ushered in the King's sympathetic look is evidenced through a hand coloured etching from August 1786. Published by the satirical printmaker Samuel William Fores, *An exact representation of an attempt made by Margaret Nicholson to stab his majesty on Wednesday Augt 2 1786* [Figure 2.12] depicts Nicholson in an ill-suited cloak, exaggerated skirt and oversized hat. Each holding an edge of the neatly folded petition, the King and Nicholson stand opposite one another, seemingly relaxed. The lackadaisical nature with which Nicholson points the flimsy knife towards the King's breast is almost laughable, given the horror that imbued so many accounts of her crime. The only bystanders to the scene are the two guards to the left. One is the only real source of any activity, as he moves towards Nicholson with his arms outstretched to grab her oversized bustle. Behind him is the sketchy outline of his faintly coloured counterpart, who stares forward with the glazed expression of a doll.

Unlike other prints produced immediately after the attack, Fores's rendition eschews detail. It is simplistic, relying on exaggerative shapes and forms. Portrayed in graphic lines and bold colour, this treatment of Nicholson fails to ignite any pity in the viewer. Unlike the soft tonal quality of *Margaret Nicholson attempting to assassinate the King* [Figure 2.9] or the carefully rendered detail of *The Attempt* [Figure 2.11], Nicholson's crude depiction alludes to her outlandish nature, reinforced by the fact that she physically occupies far more space than in previous works. The materiality of Fores's print — a coloured etching, rather than an engraving or etching with aquatint — might have reinforced this cruder conception, but so too do the iconographic prompts that Fores gifts his subject. As Andrews and Scull have argued, 'whilst some [representations] morbidly romanticized her history, others offered condemnatory readings of her as vain, degraded and vicious'.[84] Many images presented Nicholson as 'ugly and bizarre, outfitted in ridiculous garb, a thwarted spinster who might be pitied but was far more to be blamed for

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[84] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker,* 243.

delusively and perversely refusing to accept her lot'.[85] With plenty of representations rejecting sentimental motifs and capitalising on the more troubling aspects of Nicholson's past, crime and ongoing behaviour, it is these issues that were made manifest in Fores's print, along with several others that this section considers.

As mentioned in the introduction, Nicholson's belief that she was above her rightful place in society was discussed in various accounts. *Authentic Memoirs* describes how Nicholson first assumed 'the most arrogant airs of insolent superiority' in the early 1780s, after being promoted when serving in the home of Mrs Boothby. This promotion, the chapbook tells, 'kindled the latent sparks of pride which lay hid in the recesses of her heart'.[86] These ideas chime with circulating anxieties about corrupt, haughty and prideful servants. As Eliza Haywood had previously lamented:

> Is it not to be wondered at, that in an Age abounding with Luxury, and over-run with Pride, Servants should be in general so bad, that it is become one of our Calamities not to be able to live without them: Corruption, tho' it begins at the Head, ceases not its Progress til it reaches the most inferior Parts, and it is high Time to endeavour a Cure of so growing an Evil.[87]

Able to engage with the world of consumerism and luxury like their masters, servants were increasingly conceived as individual agents, selling their labour for the best price — something that Nicholson's checkered employment history supports. At the same time, female servants were often portrayed as enigmatic figures of unmanageable sexual desire.[88] Historians have argued for the oscillating nature of the servant role; Kristina Straub has stressed how descriptions in polemic and satirical literature tended to rhetorically 'other' domestic servants, 'placing them in opposition to the families that employ them'.[89] Accounts of Nicholson were suggestive of these issues. Displaying her 'delicate and chaste ideas', Fiske reports Nicholson admonishing the sexual activity of her masters. Yet she too had allegedly been found tangled in an affair with a member of the household staff.[90] Given that Nicholson had 'never moved in a higher sphere than that of a house-maid',[91] her grandiose sense of self, connected with the airs and graces which she exhibited in her profession and underpinning her claims to the English crown, bothered many.

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85 Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker,* 245
86 *Authentic Memoirs*, 11.
87 Eliza Haywood, *A Present for a Servant-Maid: Or, the Sure means of gaining Love and Esteem* (Dublin: George Falkner, 1743), 3.
88 Kristina Straub, *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism and Violence between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkin's University Press, 2009), 6-12.
89 Straub, *Domestic Affairs,* 4.
90 Fiske*, Life,* 11; Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 217.
91 Fiske, *Life,* 8-12.

Nicholson's follies of pride and vanity were not only improper to her sex, class and occupation, but were also viewed as a 'route to crime and madness'.[92] Several medical treatises of the period saw prideful delusion as part of a broader symptomology of insanity. As physician William Rowley wrote in 1788, 'mad pride' saw the mentally ill 'conceive themselves emperors, kings, or great personages […] they are generally tyrannical, pompous, observe a reserved, distant behavior, and expect great homage; which if they receive not, are ferocious, vindictive, revengeful, or sullenly mischievous'.[93] Such principles were shared across culture, with Hogarth's eighth print of *A Rake's Progress* (1733-34) depicting a madman who thought himself a monarch, and Henry Mackenzie's (1745-1831) *Man of Feeling* (1771) describing one inmate at Bethlem who believed himself the 'Khan of Tartary'.[94] The fact that these were all mad *men* suggests that Nicholson has committed another *faux pas* via her alignment with a more masculine disorder.

Some contemporary narratives suggested that her prideful nature had elevated her solitary status, insinuating that she was responsible for her mental decline. On 4 August, the *London Chronicle* described Nicholson's failure to integrate herself within a life of 'society and variety': 'With a temper already prone to melancholy, an accumulation of thought and distress must increase intense thinking […] Society and variety are necessary to remove the ill consequences of melancholy; neither of these it appears she sought for'.[95] Having failed to address the potential consequences of a melancholic temperament, at forty-one years old she was by common standards past the 'marrying age', viewed as too old to have children.[96] Here, her crime becomes an accretion of time spent alone, along with her social situation as an unmarried, childless spinster.

How were these charges made manifest across print culture? Some, as we see in Fores's print, employed a satirical schema surrounding her body, clothing and countenance, focusing on poor fashion choices, unattractive features and an exaggerated form. Newspapers described Nicholson as a small, slight woman, yet her body is substantially enlarged in Fores's print. Her bottom is absurdly large and is mirrored by the oversized hat, almost four times the size of her face. With many of London's fashionable ladies and

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[92] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 229.

[93] William Rowley, *A treatise on female, nervous, hysterical diseases; apoplexy and palsy* (London: C. Nourse, E. Nerbery and Hookham, 1788), 285; John Johnstone, *Medical Jurisprudence. On Madness* (Birmingham: J. Belcher, 1800), 4.

[94] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (London: Eighteenth Century Collections Online, 1800), Wellcome Library Website ebook, 56.

[95] *London Chronicle*, 4 August 1786; see also *Plot Investigated*, 50-52.

[96] For more on the average age for a woman to marry, see Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1998), 307-308.

the country's aristocratic duchesses wearing oversized headwear themselves, Nicholson is again shown as sartorially positioning herself as ahead of her class, even if the effect is somewhat comical.

Fores's print was not the only one to use dress to accentuate a critical reading. Produced by Francis West in 1787, *A View of the Garden Entrance of St James's Palace* [Figure 2.13] was part of the rise of urban topographical scenes, published in an album that showed views of contemporary London life.[97] Within this scene, parkland gives way to a recognisable cityscape. The action takes place towards the right-hand side of the print, with the left reserved for the three-dimensional walls and architectural features of St James's Palace. Placed into the background, Nicholson is visibly confused, displaying a surly and disgruntled expression. Whilst the previous prints discussed followed newspaper reports that Nicholson was wearing 'a flowered linen gown, black gauze bonnet, black silk cloak and a morning wire cap',[98] these more feminine sartorial details break down in West's retelling. Nicholson loses the pointed shoe, intricately patterned dress, tumbling hair, or any attractive features at all, and instead she is presented wearing an oversized dress and unflattering hat, engulfed by fabric.

On the one hand, whilst half-nakedness or a state of disordered undress was often used to signify madness, so too was the use of 'outlandish fantastic garb'.[99] Nicholson's unflattering attire, and her disregard for appearance at which it suggests, thus serve as an allusion to her derangement. Nicholson was in fact often described as being extremely preoccupied with her appearance: Fiske tells how she endlessly attended to her 'personal attractions', regularly powdering her face and being absorbed by her physical desirability.[100] On the day of the attack, when it became apparent she only owned one change of clothes, Nicholson was reportedly unhappy with the price of the set that were ordered for her, retorting that she thought the new garments were 'infinitely too mean for her'.[101] With this evidence suggesting that Nicholson took pride in her appearance, the printmaker's choice to dilute any sartorial flare and downplay one of the few positive aesthetic features at their disposal, suggests a desire to imbue these prints with negative and condemnatory meaning.

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[97] Ann Payne, 'Itinerant view takers', *British Library* <https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/itinerant-view-takers>.

[98] *The Times*, 4 August 1786.

[99] Jonathan Andrews, 'The (un)dress of the mad poor in England, c.1650-1850, Part 1', *History of Psychiatry,* 18, 1 (2007), 5-24 (7).

[100] Fiske, *Life,* 8, 12; Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 227.

[101] Fiske*, Life*, 46-47; Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker,* 230, 336, f.n.143.

As above, a few examples *did* dress Nicholson up. Published at the end of September 1786, an etching of Nicholson from the *New Lady's Magazine* [Figure 2.14] shows Nicholson wearing ribbons, feathers and pearls in her elaborate hairstyle, a shawl over her dress. These clothes do not seem appropriate for a lower-class servant-maid turned needlewoman, and Nicholson's elegant presentation once more suggests circulating charges of overblown vanity. Also striking is her measured, slightly haughty expression. Suggestive of intent, even malice, her steely gaze is directed outside of the frame, fixed on something out of view. Despite the lettering below declaring that Nicholson was 'judged insane', the impression is not that we are viewing a maniacal lunatic, but a plotting criminal. The many interpretations of Nicholson's appearance bolster Andrews and Scull's argument about how artists and engravers were 'at liberty to attribute to Nicholson more or less whatever physical attributes they chose to adopt in presenting her case'.[102] Nicholson's looks were subjected to frequent reappraisals, as demonstrated in another image published five days after the attempt in Fiske's *Life and Transactions* [Figure 2.15]. Shown in profile, and providing a rather different interpretation of her appearance, Nicholson is here depicted as short, stout and swarthy, with a 'somewhat eccentric style of dress'.[103]

Returning to *A View* [Figure 2.13], West's choice to negate the more attractive sartorial elements of Nicholson's appearance may have been designed to heighten the presence of the elite female woman who takes centre stage. That Nicholson resembles a less acceptable and more subversive mode of femininity is reinforced by the figure who stands alongside her; a woman who represents everything that Nicholson is not. Healthy, beautiful and maternal, this genteel lady serves as a model for the ideal eighteenth-century woman. Contemporary viewers may have drawn comparisons between this figure and Queen Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, wife of George III, who functioned as a contemporary emblem of motherhood.[104] By alluding to the female members of the royal family, viewed as successful reproductive agents and symbols of a refined domesticity, Nicholson's reproductive failure is reinforced. This female ideal acts as a foil to Nicholson. Providing the viewer with a clear parallel between more and less acceptable modes of eighteenth-century femininity, her inclusion suggests that it is the subversion of feminine values that demands our attention, rather than the heinous act itself. Across these examples, Nicholson's sartorial, corporeal and

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[102] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker,* 249.
[103] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 228.
[104] Joanna Marschner, ed., *Enlightened Princesses: Caroline, Augusta, Charlotte, and the Shaping of the Modern World* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale Centre for British Art: Historic Royal Palaces, 2017), 11.

aesthetic female identity is at the whim of those representing her, able to deploy whichever visual strategies they desired to secure their place in a crowded and competitive print market. Nicholson's poor fashion choices and oversized female frame made a mockery of her reported vanity, whilst her loss of looks and intensification of age highlighted her single status. Combined, these different attributes highlight Nicholson's failure to comply with a range of societal expectations and pressures that surrounding the ideal female and servant.

A View also illustrates another pictorial device used to lambast Nicholson: the crowd. A number of images show the disdainful expressions of those around her. One frontispiece from an edition of *Authentic Memoirs* [Figure 2.16] sees the King draw away from his assailant with a disgruntled expression. In November 1786, the print-seller Carington Bowles produced *Margaret Nicholson attempting to assassinate his Majesty King George III* [Figure 2.17]. Depicting the aftermath of the attack, an older and distinctly less attractive Nicholson is drawn away from the King, who holds the petition as if just snatched from her hand. Looking at his assailant with disdain, a similar expression is mirrored in the blank and sombre faces of the crowd around them. It is not only Nicholson's dowdy frame and miserable expression that incites dislike; in addition, the judgmental faces of the crowd around her prompt a critical gaze, sanctioning a more disdainful and critical reading of Nicholson and the affair for those that look upon these prints.

These more critical modalities of looking were reinforced when framing the Nicholson affair within the realms of urban spectacle — reinforced by *A View's* contextualisation in a series of urban topographical scenes of London. As Mark Hallett has argued, the late eighteenth-century's focus on visuality led to a rise of engraved social satire which fused polemic and humour 'with an acute sense of the city as a succession of environments to be deciphered and imagined: the streets, squares, public buildings and pleasure parks of the capital were dramatised as a grid of spectacle and narrative that constituted the subject of artistic practice'.[105] For Hallett, deformed vagabonds, bawdy prostitutes, tittering onlookers and raving lunatics all unite within the topography of the capital; 'Soho, Bedlam, St James's, the Strand and Butcher's Row' are integrated into a 'strikingly coherent representational schema', with shared compositions, iconography and stereotypical characters.[106] Hallett argues that representations of different urban spectacles — be they cultural, criminal,

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[105] Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1999), 170.
[106] Hallett, *Spectacle of Difference,* 177-178.

medical, and so on — shared a number of iconographical crossovers, corresponding features and compositional patterns: as shown by the gang of 'tittering onlookers' who move across various visualisations of the Nicholson affair.

In *A View,* for example, a transposable group of curious spectators are evident in the print's right-hand corner. This group is also present in other prints, such as Figure 2.17, which portrays a squeezing, struggling crowd behind the main action. Within these images, the specificities of the spectacle in question are inconsequential; it is the general atmosphere of spectacle which proves enticing. Like the aforementioned prints that prompt the sentimental and sympathetic look, the overlapping representational strategies used by printmakers emphasise that these scenes were to be looked at through a spectacular gaze. Viewing a deranged woman in St James's might function like watching a sideshow at St Bartholomew's Fair, the lions at the Tower of London, or a domestic drama unfold in the streets of Soho. With these types of spectacle so often linked to the exhibition of difference, as the next section discusses, the affair is thus framed as a titillating urban spectacle, ripe for voyeurism. Within these works, it is the actors that populate the spectacular London street, rather than the compassionate behaviour of the King, who become the 'laconic guide'. Taking their cue from the gazes visualised in these examples, viewers of the print are encouraged to look at Nicholson in this critical, judgmental and voyeuristic manner.

It is worth noting that images that adduced a more sympathetic appraisal of Nicholson also employed a spectacular visual lexicon, as a comparison between *A View* [Figure 2.13] and *The Attempt* [Figure 2.11] reveals. As well as the crowd, a range of architectural features displayed in these prints — of open coach doors, rounded archways or windows overlooking the drama — frames London's cityscape as a series of spaces to look *through.* These arguments call to mind the work of architectural historian Lucy Gent, used by Christine Stevenson to suggest the different scopophilic opportunities available when looking at asylums and hospital buildings, as concrete environments succumb to more liminal spaces such as thresholds, corridors and window-ledges.[107] The events that unfold in *The Attempt,* for example, are framed by an open carriage-door and a neoclassical doorway — surely designed to heighten the scene's theatrical atmosphere and suggest the imaginative potential of the scene through the metaphorical extension of space. Likewise,

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[107] Lucy Gent, *Albion's Classicism, Visual arts in England, 1550-1650* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1995); Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British Hospital and Asylum Architecture, 1600-1815* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000), 95.

doorways and windows pepper *A View*. Looking at these prints, the viewer might envisage entering or exiting the scene, perhaps placing a figure at a window, or imagining another excited group who rush to observe the spectacle, just out of view. Providing a clear sense of the different levels of viewing, of the multiple planes and surfaces available, the use of entryways, exits, windows and arches in these prints bolstered their innate sense of spectacle. As such, they encourage a more voyeuristic, potentially less refined, type of gaze.

That said, it is noteworthy that the critical depictions of Nicholson take place within a more urbanised setting, devoid of the natural foliage or leafy environs that frame a more feminised and youthful Nicholson. Those found within pastoral scenes such as Figure 2.10 and Figure 2.11 undoubtedly embody a certain clientele; refined and compassionate, their hushed and horrified countenances are guided by the King's actions, reinforced by the replication of his kind words that were often etched onto the plate itself. In contrast, the clear topographical references found in *A View,* within an album of urban topography that depicted recognisable environs around and beside the palace, welcomes a very different type of onlooker. Housing a far more insalubrious cast of cross-class characters than the more genteel spaces, the crowd and spectacular features of these less sentimental works combine with a characterisation of Nicholson that wholeheartedly rejects her delicate features or feminine costume. As a result, these urbanised prints prompt a more critical, curious, voyeuristic look — in part invited by Nicholson's visual failure to conform to stereotypes of femininity or class.

These two sections have shown how alternative visualisations of Nicholson's beauty and dress interact with issues of gender and class, as well as the causes of her madness. Roughly grouping these prints into two loose camps, we can deduce some form of chronological development, however sketchy. To the best of my knowledge, a total of fifteen visual examples of Margaret Nicholson were created following 2 August 1786, though more may have been shared across chapbook form that no longer exist. Of these, I have argued that three can be linked to the love-mad archetype. The rest, I believe, some still to be considered in this chapter, can be grouped through the more condemnatory interpretations they suggest, and their evocation of blame over pity. Between September 1786 and the end of the century, all other depictions of Nicholson produced fall into a more critical, freakish or satirical camp, suggesting that, as time passed, more sympathetic renditions of the Nicholson affair collapsed. To maintain public interest, printmakers may have searched for new ways to maintain Nicholson's commercial appeal, an argument reinforced in examples

given below that discuss the spectacularisation of the affair. Maybe they were responding to waning interest in the love-mad trope, as audiences became tired of poetic versions of this narrative, anticipating arguments that sentimentalism began to wane towards the end of the century.[108] Either way, the representations discussed so far were soon joined by a cluster of representations that showed Nicholson in a decidedly different light.

Freakish Iterations: Margaret as Exhibited Object

Following the news of the attack, the *Morning Post* reported that 'every avenue to the Court was filled with people, who testified their joy, on again seeing their Sovereign safe'.[109] But it was not just the King who was in demand. Within days of the attempt, Nicholson's former quarters had become a tourist destination, with Fiske entertaining 'all ranks of curious people' who flocked to his door asking questions about his former lodger.[110] As well as visiting Nicholson's home, some wished to embody Nicholson more literally. By the time she was incarcerated in mid-August, one woman was found parading the streets of Stirbeck, masquerading as Nicholson on the run from Bethlem.[111] Others sought experiences where they might encounter Nicholson and her madness in some tangible way, through items related to her crime. As this section explores, these instances provided an important commercial opportunity.

Nicholson's chosen 'weapon' fascinated many. The Home Office report had described the knife as one used for breakfast or dessert. Old and with a rounded tip, it was 'of a sort that was far from being proper for the intended wicked purpose as it would probably have been bent by a little resistance'.[112] On 7 August, the *Times* stated how 'a gentleman present at her first examination tried the point of it against his hand, when the knife bent almost double without piercing the skin'.[113] We might expect such an unthreatening and flimsy object to be the subject of ridicule, but for many printmakers, the knife represented an object of morbid intrigue and a useful hook — as seen in Fiske's portrait of his lodger [Figure 2.15].

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[108] Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), 129, 136, 141.
[109] *Morning Post*, 5 August 1786.
[110] *Public Advertiser*, 8 August 1786.
[111] *The Times*, 17 August 1786.
[112] 'Account of Margaret Nicholson's Attack upon the King' , 2 August 1786, PRO, Home Office, 42/9.
[113] *The Times*, 7 August 1786.

Before long, a number of strange ad-hoc 'exhibitions' sprung up around the country. Enterprising pubs and inns, such as one public house in Devon, were exhibiting the 'original knife 'or its 'exact replica' for lucky punters to view for a small fee.[114] Positioning Nicholson as a figure of commercial entertainment in her own right, sensational narratives advertised and accompanied these displays. One broadsheet pasted outside a London pub proclaimed that 'had (the king) not instantly shrunk back it would have plunged into his heart', declaring that the 'poignard, will be kept as a remembrancer of this horrid act'.[115] Compared with the actual size of the knife, this description of 'poignard' — a long thrusting knife traditionally used by knights or nobility — is ludicrous. The mythologizing of this object recasts the affair as something threatening, exciting and dangerous: a retelling that streetwise innkeepers promoted with aplomb. Upon Nicholson's death in 1828, the *Liverpool Mercury* reminisced about the absurdity of the situation with wry irony, whilst also making plain the gratifying 'economical terms' that the scandal encouraged:

> A fellow, taking advantage of the deep interest with which everything connected with "mad peg" was regarded, put over his door the following irresistible temptation to the cockneys: "Here you may see the knife with which Margaret Nicholson attempted to stab his gracious majesty. god bless him! admission two pence". Another fellow, who lived opposite, finding the knife so attractive that the doors of the exhibition were literally besieged, and that hundreds could be gain admission at all, hit upon an admirable expedient to profit by the popular mania, and to gratify it also on very economical terms. He accordingly put up a rival inscription to this purport: "Here may be seen the fork that belonged to the knife with which Margaret Nicholson attempted the life of his gracious majesty. admission only one penny". and thus, those who could not get a peep at the knife, or could not afford twopence, were gratified by a sight of the fork.[116]

Be it real, partially true or completely false, this passage illustrates the public frenzy that surrounded this 'irresistible' object. The satirical description of how the exhibition of the knife was 'literally besieged' suggests that hundreds were willing to pay to glimpse this memento of the affair. Other places cashed in on the display of further cutlery: lucky punters could get a view of the 'accompanying fork' at a hostel between Marlborough and Devizes.[117] For those unable to make the journey to London to visit Margaret's apartments, or view her body within a waxwork exhibition, they could thus 'view' her via this strange material substitute.

Sometimes, new elements were thrown into the mix. In 1831, one nostalgic account described a landlord reminiscing about the affair:

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[114] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects,* 80.
[115] *High Treason,* 1786.
[116] *Liverpool Mercury*, 5 September 1828.
[117] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects,* 80.

> Upon the landlord's being desired to produce the treasure, he brought out an old deal case, in which was an old-fashioned fork, with a green handle. To heighten the humour, and increase credulity, the lid had the following inscription: — "This fork, and the knife belonging to it, were the dessert knife and fork of Mr. Burn, the famous Irish giant, to whom Mrs. Nicholson is cousin, three times removed".[118]

Functioning as a light-hearted retelling, this account is illuminating in what it reveals about the affair's imaginative afterlife. Most potent in this passage, however, is the mention of 'Mr. Burn, the famous Irish giant', posed as Nicholson's distant relative. One of Georgian London's freakish celebrities, Mr Byrne was a seven-foot tall 'giant' who exhibited himself in a number of well-known spaces throughout the 1780s.[119] Thomas Rowlandson's *Surprising Irish giant of St. James's Street* [Figure 2.18] visualises this unusual type of exhibition: Byrne is surrounded by a smattering of fashionable and not-so-fashionable personalities, who jostle to enter the crowded room to gawp at his height.[120]

John Watkins's account may have been produced with notable hindsight, yet it reveals that Nicholson's infamy was yoked to Byrne's extraordinary type of celebrity. The spectacular alignment of these two figures — here suggested to be related — places Byrne and Nicholson within a broad spectrum of difference that elides mental and physical distinction. If Nicholson's cultural currency was bolstered by her association with a freakish individual, what does this reveal about the contemporary understanding of madness? In an attempt to 'heighten the humour and increase credulity', were entrepreneurs casting their net to include more 'freakish' aspects of Nicholson's personality and behaviour? And, critically, could the mad be freakish in their own right?

Scholarship found within freak studies sheds light on the cultural meanings and anxieties elicited by the Nicholson affair. In her explorations of the anomalous body and its public reception, freak scholar Rosemarie Garland Thomson delineates a set of mediating narratives that enable the creation of the freak, a

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[118] John Watkins, *The Life and Times of "England's Patriot King", William the Fourth* (London: Fisher, Son, and Jackson, 1831) 118.
[119] *Morning Herald*, 24 September 1782.
[120] As well as Byrne, individuals such as the armless and legless Matthew Buchinger and the female dwarf Caroline Crachami were frequently exhibited within London's spectatorial circuit. Further details on the history of exhibiting freaks in London can be found in Richard Altick, *The Shows of London* (London: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978), 253-267; Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 11.

process that David Hevey has dubbed 'enfreakment'.[121] Supported by other scholars such as Robert Bodgan, this argument observes that individuals who harbour physical, mental or behavioural difference only become freaks once placed within a socially constructed framework of display.[122] Freaks are *made*, not born, via a 'frame of mind, a set of practices, a way of thinking about and presenting people'.[123] It is the social construction and framing of the freak, most earnestly seen in the freak show itself, that turn the freakish body into one of corporeal otherness. Garland Thomson demonstrates the different tenets of this framework, including an oral spiel delivered by a showman; a textual account of the freak's extraordinary life; a form of staging, such as a performance or a costume; and the distribution of souvenirs, such as photographs or postcards.[124]

Different commentators have debated the meaning of freaks and their effects on their viewer. In her work on British Victorian freak shows, Nadja Durbach emphasises that the unstable nature of the freakish body meant that the freak 'could be both male and female, white and black, adult and child, and/or human and animal at the same time'. She maintains that it was their corporeal and cultural volatility, inhabiting two categories at once, and straddling cultural, corporeal, racial and sexual distinctions, that made the freak 'so socially and politically disruptive and thus so frightening'.[125] For Garland Thomson, freaks function to make the non-freakish comfortable, with their failure to conform to a standard cultural category actually proving reassuring. With freak shows heightening the distance between viewer and freak, the former is 'rendered comfortably common and safely standard by the exchange'.[126]

At the same time, Garland Thomson insists that this evasion of familiar cultural categories means that freaks function 'as magnets to which culture secures its anxieties, questions, and needs'; as unique sites where culture maps its concerns 'as meditations on individual as well as national values, identity, and direction'.[127] These arguments reveal that freak shows and their freaks were not merely designed to frighten, titillate and entertain the voyeuristic masses. Rather, displays were sites of debate, raising important

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[121] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (London: New York, NY University Press, 1996), 10; David Hevey, *The Creatures That Time Forgot: Photography and Disability Imagery* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 53.

[122] Robert Bogdan, 'The social construction of freaks', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body,* ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (London: New York University Press, 1996), 23-37, 27-28.

[123] Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago, IL; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 3.

[124] Garland Thomson, *Freakery*, 7, 10.

[125] Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity,* 3-4.

[126] Garland Thomson, *Freakery*, 5.

[127] Garland Thomson, *Freakery*, 2.

questions about the 'social and political meanings attached to human bodily variation'.[128] Rachel Adams argues that 'freak shows performed important cultural work by allowing ordinary people to confront, and master, the most extreme and terrifying forms of Otherness they could imagine'.[129] Drawing upon Leslie Fiedler's work on the ways that freaks function as an uncanny double, or a 'secret self', Adams expands how the exchange of gazes between performer and spectator at the freak show leads to an 'unpleasant stirrings of mutual recognition', tweaking issues not only on the subject's corporeality but their psychological state.[130]

Could the mad be freakish? Scholarly definitions of what it means to be a freak suggests they could. Elizabeth Grosz argues that the marginalised placement of the freak on the peripheries of society, provokes an 'overpowering need to look, a horror of and pity toward' these individuals.[131] Her definition identifies the capsule of spectacle, voyeurism and pity that the freak embodies, propelling the mad into a similarly nebulous cultural category. Bodgan has also defined freak shows as the 'exhibition for amusement and profit of people with physical, mental, or behavioural anomalies, both alleged and real'.[132] Although he does not provide any concrete examples of those with 'mental' anomalies, the characterisation of freaks being those who stray from conventional modes of behaviour suggests that we *can* conceptualise the mad in general, and Margaret Nicholson in particular, within this framework. In terms of her madness, Nicholson's freakish nature might function in two ways: firstly, for being judged mad in the first place, and secondly, for not complying to a category of lovelorn melancholy or raging mania. Her behaviour inspired a cacophony of conversation over her potential disorder and its cause; amongst this noise, few conclusions could be made surrounding her deluded grandeur, her romantic disappointment, her confused nature, her crazed jibberish and manic laughter. This ambiguity was ultimately unsettling and can be read as heightening her freakish nature and characterisation. At the same time, a freakish framework crystalises previous discussion of Nicholson's role as a figure who strayed not just from normative codes of madness, but of social behaviour — as a disruptive servant, unfeminine woman and childless spinster. With displays of freakery focusing on

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[128] Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity,* 1, 32. See also Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 153.

[129] Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago, IL; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 2.

[130] Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.,* 7-8; Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York, NY: Anchor, 1993).

[131] Elizabeth Grosz, 'Intolerable Ambiguity: Freaks as/at the limit', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body,* ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (London: New York University Press, 1996), 55-66, 56.

[132] Bogdan, *Freak Show,* 2. Neither Bodgan or Grosz specifically discuss how those who suffered from mental abnormalities could be freakish; likewise, Nadja Durbach's work on freak shows in the Britain from the mid-nineteenth century does not consider this idea.

individuals who deviated from the typical, it is these polyvalent subversions that place her into the category of the uncategorical, thus making her freakish.

Applying the steps of enfreakment to the Nicholson affair supports this reading. Textual accounts of Nicholson's life were readily available within chapbooks, periodicals and newspapers; evidence of the oral spiel, given by enterprising publicans or chapbook authors, is also ample. That Nicholson's body was commodified for financial gain was further seen through material souvenirs associated with the scandal — objects which might be cheaply bought, shared, gifted and discarded. These might include the chapbooks themselves. Cheap to buy and easy to swap, collect or pocket, they were published widely in periodicals and papers: an advertisement for *Dreadful effects of insanity*, for example, highlighted the 'elegant engraving' that accompanied the text.[133] Prints and frontispieces of Nicholson found in periodicals, such as the two prints published in *The Lady's Magazine* and *The New Lady's Magazine*, might be cut out and kept, pasted into albums, posted to friends, or even stuck onto walls. Her visage was also found on a popular snuff box [Fig. 2.19]. The wider spectacularisation of the affair — from the absurdist promotion of cutlery or insatiable demands to view Nicholson's lodgings — also comply with the commercial hyperbole and social arrangement that freak scholars maintain were necessary for the manufacture of freakish bodies. Across these examples, Dias's reflective, self-conscious audience seem distinctly absent. Instead, the voyeuristic spectators that dominated the more critical iterations of the Nicholson prints are evoked. These spectators appear to swallow these yarns with relish, storming apartments and waiting enthusiastically for a glimpse of 'Nicholson', in whatever form she might take. In line with arguments that view freaks as cultural devices designed to titillate and make money, these ideas position Nicholson as yet another abject spectacle along London's spectatorial landscape.

Yet, as demonstrated, freaks were more than just spectacles that prompted voyeurism. They could also serve as dialogical tools. Nicholson's spectacularisation, commercialisation and appropriation across visual and material culture might prompt further debates about taste, morality, exploitation, celebrity and labour.[134] Her behaviour may have elicited questions about one's own alliance to normal configurations of behaviour as well as one's own mental state, or provoked debate over the treatment of lunatics in general. This interpretation recalibrates Nicholson's audience as more self-conscious, curious or puzzled, rather than

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[133] *Morning Post*, 9 August 1786.
[134] Adams, *Sideshow*, 4.

merely gawkish and insatiable, allowing us to rethink the function of voyeurism and the spectatorial urban crowd in the more critical prints.

Thinking of the ways Nicholson's body might function as a magnet for wider social, political or cultural issues also proves illuminating. Her placement on society's margins meant that external yet related fears surrounding women, madness and class might also be marginalised by imaginatively or physically interacting with her, and the cultural output that she provoked. Anxieties surrounding a pretender to the throne might be safely stowed within Nicholson's irrational body; so too might worries about the pride of the rising lower classes, or the unmanageable sexual desire of female servants. Discussed further in chapter five, the King's own descent into madness surely triggered various anxieties surrounding the threat of madness to the elite; having a delirious lower-class needlewoman waiting in the wings meant that these fears might be somewhat assuaged. Nicholson functioned as a strange yet reassuring surrogate for these thorny dilemmas, reminding concerned citizens that maniacs were typically deranged, subversive and prideful — nothing like their family-orientated and compassionate figurehead. All these issues might have underscored representations of Nicholson. Prints that visualised her subversions can therefore be read as an extension of this freakish reading, making manifest the innate differences of Nicholson's body, brain and behaviour to those around her.

That more complicated psychoanalytical experiences existed surrounding Nicholson is suggested through a specific object: a snuff box. Produced in 1786, this small enamel box was hand painted to depict the attempt [Figure 2.19]. Dressed in pink and yellow, the miniature King takes centre stage through his gentlemanly pose of cool compassion. Though the box is not finely detailed, the figure of Nicholson, wearing a dense black shawl, is significantly darker. Her elongated arm just touches the King's body, the knife a small, pointed line. Her eyes, two black flecks, seem to squint with malice. As above, material examples such as snuff boxes highlight another step within the process of enfreakment: telling the story in miniature handheld form, the snuff box symbolises the public desire to not just *view* Nicholson, but to own her.

While chapter five considers the ownership of and meanings attached to objects that represented love's madness, the collapsing of Nicholson's body into a pocket-sized, non-threatening material object relates to Garland Thomson's discussion of the freakish making the non-freakish more comfortable and secure. These ideas also relate to the addition of a wooden frieze that depicted the attempt on a pew at St

George's chapel at Windsor Castle [Figure 2.20]. Physically enclosing the affair within a royal narrative, Nicholson's threat is tightly contained three times over: by the carved figures of the King and coachman, the thick wooden parameters of the frieze, and the architectural enclosure of the chapel itself. We can read the purchasing and possession of miniature objects that told the story of Nicholson and her madness as signifying this act of containment further. Whilst the frieze signifies the public and collective commemoration of the event, an ephemeral object like the snuff box serves as a compelling souvenir that connects to an individual's own private psychological processes surrounding the affair. Tracking the lifecycle of the snuff box, as it is bought, used, then put away or discarded, Nicholson's threat is downsized, its owner taking control. Carefully contained within the private object-scape of one's home or pocket, the snuff box might also serve as an item which allowed the owner to contemplate the event, and its medley of social and political ramifications, in their own time.

These ideas call to mind wider issues about the threat of one's mental deterioration, with an object such as this perhaps embodying one's very private fears about going mad. Sander L. Gilman has discussed the widely felt psychological spectre of mental collapse:

> The fear we have of our own collapse does not remain internalized. Rather, we project this fear onto the world in order to localize it and indeed, to domesticate it. For once we locate it, the fear of our own dissolution is removed. Then it is not we who totter on the brink of collapse, but rather the other. And it is an-other who has already shown his or her vulnerability by having collapsed.[135]

Resonating with material discussed later in this thesis, objects and images depicting Nicholson thus become bitesize domesticated projections of this fear. Surely, fears over losing one's own mind was at the heart of many of these representations, with Nicholson serving as a reminder of potential disorder that lurked behind the surface of even the 'sanest' member of society.

This section has charted the way that the freakish body constituted a site where culture maps, projects and negotiates its concerns surrounding identities and values, linking to discussions put forward in the introduction on the female body's function as a 'text of culture'. The nature of Nicholson's crime, subversion of conventional behaviour modes, and indeed the ambiguous status of her madness itself, meant she was spectacularised as a creature of difference. It is striking that, across the aforementioned examples,

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[135] Sander L. Gilman, *Diseases and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to Aids* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 1.

not once is Nicholson aligned with iconography linked to mania. Her mental illness was rather suggested by subtle markers — the morbid knife, her oversized attire, or a confused expression. Relating perhaps to the ambiguous nature of her madness itself, the suggestion is that portraying a female maniac in the throes of maniacal passion in close proximity to the King was too outrageous and distressing to visualise. Yet in a series of satires which saw Nicholson contextualised within the political sphere, a slightly different, more threatening series of representations that imbue Nicholson with a more manic quality, come to the fore.

Manic Margaret and the Satirical Gaze

Discussed in the last chapter, the madwoman had the capacity to function as a political symbol.[136] Kromm's *Art of Frenzy* argued that the latter decades of the eighteenth century saw the madwoman's cultural power gain greater potency as revolutionary fears circulated.[137] Often visualised through the language of politically charged mania, the madwoman's 'traditional effects of furor' functioned as 'signs of protest against governing tactics' during George III's reign.[138] This political atmosphere, and the dissemination of representative strategies used during these years to suggest mania, undoubtedly impacted responses to Nicholson. Petitioning was viewed as a political act,[139] and alongside her deluded thinking that she was rightful heir to the British throne, Nicholson was often castigated for daring to believe she had a place within the world of political petitioning. Increasingly depicted in political spaces alongside public male figures, Nicholson was often used as a tool through which to mock the establishment. At the same time, her daring to engage in contemporary political discourse through her petitioning campaign was repeatedly translated into something comic. As this final section shows, throughout the weeks, months and years that followed Margaret's attempt, prints that depicted her often used her pathology to make a wider political point, whilst minimising her threatening presence though a vitriolic satire.

The first print to draw Nicholson into a political realm was the sensational *A ministerial fact or squib of the First Day* [Figure 2.21], printed just three days after the attack by William Holland. In this print, Nicholson becomes Charles Fox, the leader of the Whig Opposition. George III grabs Fox's left breast in a

[136] Showalter, *Female Malady,* 5.
[137] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 134-136.
[138] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 156.
[139] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects,* 74-77.

gesture that reconfigures Nicholson's swipe for the King's heart with the knife, and Fox stands in a decidedly masculine pose: legs astride, grabbing his crotch and staring at his opponent menacingly, the knife brandished in his right hand. The antagonism between the King and Fox in the mid 1780s was well known; following Fox's failure to win the 1784 election, satirists and viewers alike would have enjoyed the suggestion that Nicholson was in fact Fox in disguise. Aligning the assassination attempt directly with the Opposition, the print fizzes with aggression and intensity, as Fox/Nicholson's body becomes one of powerful, brutish strength.[140] Poole reports how the prime minister William Pitt the Younger utilised Nicholson as a symbol of the insane consequences of 'disloyal opposition', with some Foxites '[believing] themselves victims of a whispering campaign to associate them with Nicholson'.[141] Using Nicholson's crazed potential to full effect, Nicholson becomes a foil with which to lampoon the Whig politician during an intense moment within British politics, her mental illness exploited to make a wider political joke at Fox's expense.

Seeing a female figure opposite Fox may have called to mind comparisons with Georgiana, the Duchess of Devonshire. Georgiana was a frequent subject of profound public criticism, in part due to her support of Fox during the 1784 election campaign, and her public image was regularly ridiculed across politic satire.[142] As chapter one discussed, critiques of political women might be visualised through the application of maniacal iconography, with Duchess of Gordon's incarcerated and dishevelled representation in Rowlandson's *Hospital for Lunatics* [Figure 1.7] providing a prime example. In the case of Georgiana, *The Devonshire Amusement* [Figure 2.22] imbues her with allegorical features associated with female mania: as Kromm has noted, her wild hair, sexualised disarray, loosened garter and 'pendulous breasts of a fury […] corroborate [her husband's] comment that his wife has gone "politic mad"'.[143] Regardless of class, this example shows how a woman engaging with public and political affairs might be tarnished with a deranged brush, with various forms of female 'misbehaviour' treated to a maniacal makeover.

On 23 August 1786, another interpretation of the affair positioned Nicholson amongst the leading politicians of the day. A political satire, James Ridgeway's twelve-page chapbook *The Maniacs: A Tragi-Comical Tale* took Nicholson's interrogation by the Privy Council as its subject matter. Written in verse,

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[140] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 178-180.
[141] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects*, 73.
[142] Colley, *Britons,* 245.
[143] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 176.

Ridgeway's publication details the petty squabbles of a group of politicians during this examination. Written by 'Mr Nobody', it includes several individuals who were not present during the actual examination, including the King, Queen and Pitt, the prime minister.[144] The work was described by the *English Review* as a 'ridiculous turn […] remarkable only for its indecency, grossness, and stupidity'.[145] Whilst the chapbook's text barely mentions her, its frontispiece uses Nicholson to belittle the political administration [Figure 2.23]. In this print, Nicholson bowls into the Privy Chamber and snatches the wig from 'Woolsack', the Lord Chancellor. As Nicholson declares, 'Give me the Crown yet traitors bold', Woolsack angrily retorts: 'You Bitch give me my Wig'. Nicholson's ambush and aggressive declaration is coupled with signifiers of mania, felt through her flowing hair, wide eyes and sartorial disarray. In line with *Authentic Memoirs*'s declaration that Nicholson had 'Renounced all the Decent Tenderness of her Sex',[146] the accompanying text also highlights her subversion of feminine behaviour:

> My Lords, I have a strong surmise
> No woman this you've seen
> No Lord in Council, save Woolsack
> Has got so male a mien.[147]

Here, the subversion of Nicholson's feminine values is reinforced by the application of maniacal features that denote masculine behaviour. She may be a semi-attractive presence in this print, but the connotations that these manic features imply — of aggression, violence, unruliness and strength — are decidedly male, further highlighting her contravention of typical feminine values, whilst perhaps adding an additional layer of intrigue and humour to the print.

These ideas are intensified through Nicholson's snatching of Woolsack's wig. Within both late eighteenth-century fashion and portraiture, the wig functioned as a distinctly masculine symbol; as Marcia Pointon has argued, 'it was universally recognised that masculine authority was vested in the wig'.[148] The *loss* or *removal* of a wig, Pointon expands, was a recurrent theme in literature and art, 'synonymous with exposure, causing a breakdown of social order and the threat of sexual disturbance'.[149] Not wearing a wig

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[144] *Maniacs*, 8.
[145] *English Review,* 7, 1787, 72.
[146] *Authentic Memoirs*.
[147] *Maniacs,* 7.
[148] Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1993), 110.
[149] Pointon, *Hanging the Head*, 120-121.

had further problematic connotations for a man, denoting him as 'eccentric, exceptional and deviant'.[150] On one hand, stealing an expensive item such as Woolsack's wig thrusts Nicholson into a criminalised role; at the same time the removal of this object of male authority, snatched from a powerful man's head, further signals her own masculine daring and recklessness. With the removal of a man's wig also linked to sexual disturbance and social breakdown, the print reinstates Nicholson's threat to the social order, and the problematic effects of a woman meddling in public affairs.

The use and exchange of iconography and objects typically deemed masculine within this print speaks of a wider issue: that of gender crossing. Discussed in chapter one, the 1780s and 1790s have been conceptualised as a time when 'gender play' collapsed into 'gender panic', as Dror Wahrman has argued.[151] Criticisms with Wahrman's hypothesis aside, his arguments attest to public anxieties surrounding gender that the final decades of the century witnessed, anxieties which reverberate through these examples. Through this reading, the stealing of a masculine object, alongside proclamations that stressed the denouncement of her sex, propels Nicholson into this confusing gender crossing realm. As Matt Houlbrook has argued in regard to cross dressers, those who contravene gender norms are both 'a source of massive cultural anxiety and a figure of humour and intrigue'.[152] The treatment of Nicholson within these images, as a feminine figure who unabashedly grabs and snatches masculine objects, or — in the case of *A ministerial fact* [Figure 2.21] — *becomes* a familiar man, illustrates the anxiety her behaviour might cause. Revealing public fascination and horror at the notion that a *woman* could commit such a crime,[153] it also stresses how humour could rectify this anxiety. Given the troubling connotations of lower-class women's involvement in politics, laughter may have been a welcome reaction to these prints. In the same way that laughing at a freak proves, to quote Adams, 'a way of asserting distance from the object of derision',[154] within *The Maniacs*'s frontispiece [Figure 2.23], fear, anxiety and criticism are negotiated through the use of ludicrous comedy.

Of course, women could prove threatening in other ways aside from politics, and another image surfaced during these years that connected Nicholson to other troubling modes of female behaviour. Published in 1790, *The Repeal of the Test Act. A Vision* [Figure 2.24] shows a room of men debating the

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[150] Pointon, *Hanging the Head,* 117.
[151] Dror Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2004), 42-44.
[152] Matt Houlbrook, 'The Man with the Powder Puff in Interwar London', *The Historical Journal,* 50, 1 (2007), 165-186, (165).
[153] Poole, *Troublesome Subjects*, 80.
[154] Adams, *Sideshow,* 78.

English penal laws that tested the Church of England doctrine for men taking public office; something Fox was trying to repeal. Amidst this cluttered scene, a lone woman — presumably Nicholson herself — sits reading a book titled: 'Margt Nicholson her Book'. Absorbed with issues of rights and claims, Nicholson was a frequent letter writer as well as penning the multitude of missives that detailed her 'claim' to the throne. Despite her lowly status, *Authentic Memoirs* tells how Margaret's parents had indulged her with 'an education something superior of ordinary tradesmen in that part of the country'.[155] Throughout her time in Bethlem, she putatively penned letters to newspapers such as *The Times,* addressed to pseudonyms such as 'Mr Prettyman'.[156] Whilst these may have been further satirical productions rather than penned by Nicholson herself, her perceived literary output strengthened her position as a pretender, and a threatening political presence. Considered in chapter three, descriptions of visiting Nicholson's cell at Bethlem typically describe a calm and collected Nicholson presiding over a space cluttered with pens, paper, and books. Her role as an ardent writer and reader begs further questions about female expression, and the threat that female education might pose. A politicised madwoman was bad enough within the revolutionary atmosphere of the era; a literary madwoman even more problematic. The fact that, four years after her fate, we see Nicholson appear in a seemingly unrelated print, suggests that it was the more unusual or threatening aspects of her character — her threat to the social order, here symbolised by her intellectual threat — that continued to pique the interest of printmakers and their audiences.

Finally, Nicholson is bestowed with full maniacal regalia in Thomas Rowlandson's *A peep into Bethlehem* [Figure 2.25]. Politics, literature and menacing humour collide in this disturbing print, which positions a frenzied Nicholson within the world of revolutionary discourse. Set in the confines of Bethlem, she is bystander to a conversation between the day's revolutionary figures: Edmund Burke (1729-1797), naked from waist up, who communicates his raving principles to the satirist and poet, John Wolcot, otherwise known as Peter Pindar. Political texts surround them, including *Ode upon Ode,* Wolcot's satire on George III, and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. In the background, a crazed Nicholson roams. There is little doubt that she is in the throes of full-blown mania here. Amongst the strewn revolutionary texts, her upright hair, straw-filled clenched fists and her intense expression radiates a manic frenzy, testifying to Kromm's assertion of the connection between fear of female political empowerment and increased manic iconography

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[155] *Authentic Memoirs,* 6.
[156] *The Times*, 31 August 1786; *The Times*, 22 September 1792.

in the 1790s.[157] The tripartite composition of this print bears a striking resemblance to Hogarth's *Satan, Sin and Death* (1735-40) [Figure 2.26]. An illustration of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Hogarth's unfinished oil sketch shows Satan and Death on either side of the canvas, with Sin visualised as a naked woman between them. Burke would later discuss this passage from Milton in his *Enquiry into the sublime and the beautiful* (1757), providing an ironic twist and heightening the humour in Rowlandson's rendering of Burke as the half-naked figure of death. As Nicholson moves between the two men, despite being clothed, it is the figure of sin she embodies.

Despite her crazed features and visual alignment with sin, Nicholson's threat is once more circumvented. Rowlandson may present her as alarming and active, but ultimately, she skirts the sidelines of this drama, reinforced by Burke's outstretched arm that bats her away. As Pindar leans forward, transfixed by Burke, it is the two recognisable men who take centre stage. Functioning as a form of representational currency or visual fodder, the physical attributes of her frenzied body are utilised to reinforce the radical personalities, politics and beliefs of these men. Used to contextualise their threatening intellectualism within a space of derangement and disorder, Nicholson's exaggerated raving iconography further punctures any seriousness that we may garner from her political or literary threat. Her bulging arms, clenched fists and manic facial features are distinctly masculine, an absurd contrast with her scribble of hair, puffy sleeves and ample skirts. Rowlandson's print is the first and only time we see Nicholson as a *truly* maniacal figure, but instead of proving terrifying, the satirical nature of the print frames her as a 'sub-literate, raving foil'.[158] Her innately ludicrous belief — that she had a rightful claim to the throne — meant that she was a perfect vehicle for satirising a political world gone mad. Humour is once more used as a valuable cultural mechanism through which to puncture Nicholson's threat. With the familiar frame of satire in place, these prints give us a clear set of signifiers as to how to look at these images: through a humourous lens, so that the threats of mental breakdown, of female political power, of female literacy, are reduced to something comical.

In line with Kromm's discussion of the late eighteenth-century development of 'gender poetics to gender politics' within visual representations of madwomen, these ideas imply that initially sympathetic stereotypes of Margaret Nicholson break down into 'an increasingly contemporary politicised position'.[159]

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[157] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 156.
[158] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 186.
[159] Kromm, 'Feminization'*,* 525.

Suggesting that it is the deviant, unnatural and transgressive aspects of female madness that garnered attention, proved commercially viable and continued to most ardently catch the public eye, these arguments also demonstrate that what was most fascinating about Nicholson's madness was not so much her mental illness. Rather, it was the subversion of her sex and status, her long-lasting belief that she rightful heir to the throne and was related, be it through family or romantic desire, to the King of England. As one anonymous Irish writer put it in 1786: 'A woman's, it is true, and a lunatic's, was the hand which rais'd the weapon, and his Majesty's royal clemency instantly forbad any rigour to be used towards her. […] The very *idea* of such a crime must kindle every latent spark of fervour and loyalty in every honest breast through his dominions'.[160] As *Authentic Memoirs* claimed, 'all trembled' following the dramatic attack; the shockwaves rooted in Nicholson's subversion and rejection of her rightful place in society — as a woman and a servant — rather than just the deterioration of her mind.

Conclusion

The Margaret Nicholson affair offered the British public a medley of contradictions. Delusional and irrational yet well-educated and an avid reader, Nicholson was a lower-class needlewoman and an unmarried spinster who believed herself heir to the throne, attaching herself to the King of England. Described by the poet Jane Elizabeth Moore in 1796 as a 'Daemon', a 'fell monster' and 'scorn of thy sex',[161] this chapter has demonstrated that it was not necessarily Nicholson's madness, but rather her subversion from socially acceptable behaviour that proved most compelling to contemporaries. Nicholson's essential deviance from normative feminine values was repeatedly peddled to explain her behaviour, reminding us that no matter a woman's crime, or indeed her physical or mental state, it was her failure to comply and conform to anticipated female behaviour (married, maternal, stable, domestic and passive) that held attention. The scandal of female deviance proved easier to swallow than the scandal surrounding her derangement; in line with arguments from Rachel Bennett, Catherine Cox and Hilary Marland that 'women required saving twice, firstly from their criminality and then from their deviance from anticipated female behaviour'.[162]

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[160] John Almon, ed*., An asylum for fugitive pieces* (London: printed for J. Debrett, 1799), vol. 3, 261.
[161] Jane Elizabeth Moore, 'Congratulatory', *Miscellaneous Poems on Various Subjects* (Dublin, 1796), 51.
[162] Rachel Bennett, Catherine Cox and Hilary Marland, 'Disturbed minds and disruptive bodies', 29 August 2018 <https://wellcomecollection.org/articles/W0jWFyYAACgAbZho>.

Whilst its initial aftermath produced a number of representations that suggested an alignment with the love-mad trope, this framework soon slipped, and it was other portrayals that toyed with Nicholson's subversions that overtook. The complexity of her crime, the putative violence of her premeditated actions, her failure to marry and have children, her innate sense of deluded grandeur and her daring to engage in the masculine world of politics: these factors all mingled within the more freakish, sensational and satirical representations that eclipsed a more sympathetic portrayal. This chapter has also shown that representations of Margaret Nicholson did not employ a straightforward dichotomous language of melancholia or mania, the nature of her crime meaning that she resisted categorisation in either of these familiar tropes. Whilst a few examples found within political satire imbue Nicholson with maniacal features to further signify the masculine nature of her crime and heighten the humour of her representation, most of the examples gathered in this chapter eschewed these iconographical features, instead accentuating Nicholson's role as a spinster, or a freakish or satirical figure, her uncategorical nature seeing her categorised as a figure of difference.

What these various representations shared was the positioning of Nicholson as a vehicle for widespread social, cultural and political issues — arguments that a freak studies approach has expanded. As detailed in the introduction, female bodies have long been conceptualised as entities on which society's ideals and stereotypes, as well as a range of other issues linked to women, were mapped.[163] Scholars such as Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, Mary Poovey, Nancy Armstrong and Kathryn Shevelow have attested to the ways in which certain female stereotypes appeared at particular historical moments 'to perform a specific cultural function', projecting paradoxical messages of fond desire and deep anxiety.[164] The combination of threats that Nicholson's body captured — of madness and mental decline, but also of gender-bending, national insecurity, radical politics and tensions between the classes — suggest anxiety rather that desire, but audiences were undoubtedly drawn to her. Some searched for meaning and edification, others entertainment or distraction. As chapter three argues, Nicholson's appeal, alongside her subversive and contradictory status, continued in Bethlem. Placed under lock and key, she was confined within the criminalised arena of the cell, yet she did not behave like a raving lunatic there. Instead, she wrote letters, read Shakespeare, wore

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[163] See Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), 5.
[164] Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming subjects,* 10. See also Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987); Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1989).

gloves and drank tea. Having already subverted codes of gender, class and madness, within Bethlem we see her subversion of expectations surrounding how an incarcerated maniac should behave further intensify. Evoking feelings of detachment and proximity, the paradoxical status that the madwoman might embody — the tantalising process of pushing away and pulling towards — was by no means only reserved for Nicholson. As chapter three shows, it was also felt in other settings that housed or contained madwomen.

CHAPTER THREE

The Gaze of the Sane: The Incarcerated Madwoman on Display

In a letter to Reverend John Newton, dated 19 July 1784, the poet William Cowper reflected on his feelings when visiting Bethlem as a boy. Cowper recalled that, whilst 'not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives', it was 'impossible not to be entertained' by the 'whimsical freaks' that populated the notorious asylum. Finding his encounter with Bethlem's multitude of characters entertaining, Cowper lamented how, 'at the same time I was angry with myself for being so'.[1] This response testifies to the dialectical relationship between entertainment and unease that was redolent in many responses of asylum tourists during these years; a response latent in the representations of Margaret Nicholson that chapter two explored. Bearing in mind Cowper's reflections on the compelling psychological tensions that these encounters evoked — of sympathy and squeamishness, interaction and detachment, push and pull — this chapter interrogates the role of incarcerated madwoman within the public asylum.

Bethlem had been open for visitors since the beginning of the seventeenth century, part of a roster of tourist attractions that entertained the city's 'holiday ramblers'.[2] Henry Mackenzie had consolidated Bethlem's role as an important urban spectacle in 1771, writing in his *Man of Feeling*: 'Of all things called Sights in London, which every stranger is supposed desirous to see, Bedlam is one'.[3] Yet by the century's latter decades, as chapter one discussed, attitudes towards the asylum had evolved. Closing its doors to casual visitation in 1770, visiting was now reserved for the privileged few. A new ticketing system acted as a social filter, whereby only the educated elite were able to access the asylum through the permission or invitation of a governor.[4] Visiting thus continued at Bethlem, as well as other national institutions, so long as the practice was viewed through a charitable and humane guise.

Asylum tourism was part of the wider phenomenon of spectatorial sympathy. Described in chapter

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[1] William Cowper, 'Letter to Rev. John Newton, 19 July 1784', in *The life and works of William Cowper* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1835), vol. 2, 289.

[2] Cowper, 'Letter to Rev. John Newton', 289. Jonathan Andrews argues how 'Sightseers — of an approved kind — were positively courted by the Governors. The ideal visitor was the 'person of quality', who came to the Hospital with the intention of doing 'the poor Lunatiques' good '& reliving them'. See Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker and Keir Waddington, *The History of Bethlem* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 180-182; Bethlem Committee General Minutes, 25 February 1709, fol. 465, 180-181.

[3] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (London: Eighteenth Century Collections Online, 1800), Wellcome Library Website ebook, 51.

[4] Andrews, *Bethlem,* 189-191.

one, this period witnessed a new focus on the importance of philanthropic activity and interaction with displays of suffering. Historians such as David Solkin and Karen Halttunen have argued that this philanthropy assumed its most visible form through the proliferation of institutions that enabled the gentry and aristocracy to flex their humanitarian muscles.[5] Uniquely placed to encourage and facilitate the display of humane behaviour, asylums and hospitals were critical to this philanthropic activity. With late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century asylums relying on benefactors and charitable donations — particularly voluntary subscription hospitals such as Bethlem and St Luke's — an individual could become a governor through an annual subscription or provide a one-off donation as a benefactor. Solkin has argued that the institutional reliance on prominent members of the aristocracy and gentry was predominantly ceremonial, lending the enterprise a 'patina of prestige' as most financial support came from the urban commercial classes.[6] The prestigious patina, however, worked both ways. Thanked in newspapers or on printed documents displayed in asylums themselves, elite benefactors were publicly aligned with the benevolent values of the day. In addition to financial involvement, and alongside orphanages, prisons, workhouses and hospitals, asylums remained important sites to visit, allowing elite individuals another route through which to consciously — and, perhaps more importantly, publicly — engage with suffering.

A range of sources attest to the fact that tourists were accessing both voluntary and state-funded institutions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Newspapers describe visits from celebrated figures, visitor books detail the responses of guests, and governor minute books illustrate the visitation of inspectors. Opening in 1751, St Luke's Hospital had originally declared 'That the Patients in the Hospital be not exposed to publick View'.[7] Despite this proclamation, St Luke's allowed visitation from elite and philanthropic guests, as its visitor books show. Opening in 1797, the York Retreat welcomed guests from around the world who were eager to view and inspect this bastion of moral therapy. The new state-funded asylums that opened across England's counties following the 1808 Asylum Act also welcomed guests; at the same time, from the early nineteenth century onwards, professionals were hired to inspect asylums, prior to

[5] David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1992), 199; Karen Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American culture', *American Historical Review,* 100, 2 (1995), 303-334 (307)
[6] Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 158.
[7] *Reasons for Establishing, and Further encouragement of St Luke's Hospital for Lunaticks* […] (London: March & Son, 1790), 22.

an effective national system of formal visitation in 1845.[8] With most visitor books not beginning until the early decades of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to account for visitors numbers at these sites. We can speculate, however, that weekly visitors were in their tens rather than hundreds; not quite humming hives of tourist activity, visitor books reveal a steady flow of gentry, aristocracy and royalty from England and overseas, as well as clergymen, reformers and doctors.

Whilst there has been much scholarship on charitable visiting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, historiography on asylum visiting is relatively limited. Janet Miron's *Prisons, Asylums and the Public* included conceptual thinking about lay-visiting of asylums, but it focused on American institutions.[9] Graham Mooney and Jonathan Reinarz's edited volume on hospital and asylum visiting provides critical discussion on these practices, but adopts a nineteenth-century focus.[10] Leonard Smith's chapter in this volume gives helpful analysis of visitation in Georgian asylums, but pays attention to the role of the asylum *inspector* than to public responses to these spaces.[11] Mentioned in chapter one, architectural historians have conceptualised asylums as both buildings and spaces that reveal 'complex social, cultural and medical phenomena', tackling macro themes such as publicity and self-image alongside micro matters surrounding patient experience.[12] Other scholars have focused on the visible characteristics of European asylums, with Christine Stevenson's research on asylum architecture and Jane Kromm's work on asylum sculpture significantly contributing to the field.[13]

Jonathan Andrews's chapter on visiting in *History of Bethlem* provides crucial analysis of why casual visiting ended in 1770. Discussing why tourists chose to visit Bethlem when it was open *before* 1770, Andrews suggests a range of motivations: some were visiting relatives, some engaged in philanthropic

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[8] Leonard Smith, '"The Keeper Himself Must Also Be Kept": Visitation and the Lunatic Asylum in England, 1750-1850', in *Permeable Walls: Historical Perspectives on Hospital and Asylum Visiting*, eds. Graham Mooney and Jonathan Reinarz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 199-222, 199. See also Graham Mooney and Jonathan Reinarz, eds., *Permeable Walls: historical perspectives on hospital and asylum visiting* (Amsterdam: Rodolphi, 2009), 7.

[9] Janet Miron, *Prisons, Asylums and the Public: Institutional Visiting in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

[10] Mooney and Reinarz, *Permeable Walls.*

[11] Smith, 'Keeper'. See also Leonard Smith, *Lunatic Hospitals in Georgian England, 1750-1830* (London: Routledge, 2007), 57, 174.

[12] James Moran and Leslie Topp, 'Introduction: Interpreting Psychiatric Spaces', in *Madness, Architecture and the Built Environment: Psychiatric Spaces in Historical Context*, eds. Leslie Topp, James E. Moran and Jonathan Andrews, (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 1-2.

[13] Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British Hospital and Asylum Architecture, 1600-1815* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000); Jane Kromm, 'Site and Vantage, Sculptural Decoration and Spatial experience in early modern Dutch asylums', in *Madness, Architecture and the Built Environment: Psychiatric Spaces in Historical Context,* eds. Leslie Topp, James E. Moran and Jonathan Andrews (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 19-40.

pursuits, and others seeking a morally instructive experience. Begrudgingly, given his attempts to nuance traditional accounts that sought to 'other' Bedlam's mad and the voyeuristic spectacle they embodied, Andrews admits that a key enticement for many was the lure of 'entertainment, the *frisson* of the freakshow'.[14] Moving onto visiting's curtailment, Andrews first considers arguments that position the ban within the story of humanisation, whereby the mad were transformed from animals to patients.[15] Whilst Andrews admits this paradigm is persuasive, he stresses that 'there is more to visiting Bethlem than meets the eye'.[16] Elite pressure and enlightened sensibility, he argues, was perhaps the most important reason, but it was one of many.[17] Charting the evolution of the hospital's charitable status, he demonstrates that whilst its dependence on charity had 'rendered public access to Bethlem economically expedient', by 1770 it was financially self-sufficient.[18] Simultaneously, he adduces that pressure from sentimental circles to shut Bethlem's doors was not only due to moral concerns about the ethics of viewing madness, but a new squeamishness surrounding the uncensored viewing of pain and suffering within the asylum.[19]

Of Andrews's extensive analysis on the practices and motivations of visiting, most important to this chapter is his statement that by 1770, 'the educated elite condemned anyone that derived "any degree of pleasure" from a visit to the asylum'.[20] Despite the self-consciously humane role that both institutions and their guests sought to maintain, the spectre of a pleasurable and voyeuristic spectacle loomed large during these philanthropic endeavours. A range of scholars have shown that spectacle was a vital framework through which to experience suffering during these years: historians including Andrews, Kromm, Solkin, Mooney and Reinarz all contend that asylum and hospital spaces were innately spectatorial, peppered with strategies and techniques that produced and promoted specific perceptions and emotions.[21] Governors of asylums had to maintain a humane identity to attract the support and patronage of visitors, but as Solkin states when discussing philanthropic eighteenth-century institutions, 'if people were to be persuaded to part with their money, strategies had to be devised to bring them on to the premises'.[22] As such, asylums were

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[14] Andrews, *Bethlem,* 180-188, 186. See also Jonathan Andrews, 'Bedlam revisited: A history of Bethlem hospital 1634-1770' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1991), 38-72.
[15] Andrews, *Bethlem*, 191.
[16] Andrews, *Bethlem*, 178.
[17] Andrews, *Bethlem,* 191.
[18] Andrews, *Bethlem*, 191.
[19] Andrews, *Bethlem,* 191.
[20] Andrews, *Bethlem*, 188-189; *London Chronicle*, 21-23 May 1761, 491.
[21] Andrews, *Bethlem,* 191; Mooney and Reinarz, *Permeable Walls,* 15; Kromm, 'Site and Vantage', 36.
[22] Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 159-160. Tanya Evans has shown how the Foundling Hospital 'was consciously and deliberately designed to appeal both to the emerging philanthropic community and to a wider public audience'. See

spatial, visual and material arenas where both philanthropic and voyeuristic viewing might merge — in line with Cowper's mention of the grappling experiences felt within the space.

Since the publication of Andrews's research in the 1990s, little additional work has been done to question the function of visiting at Bethlem — or any other asylum, for that matter — and on the emotional effects that visiting might have upon the visitor. Additionally, with Andrews only mentioning post-1770 visiting a few times in his lengthy text, no sustained research has been carried out on asylum tourism following Bethlem's closure to casual visitation. Nor has a gendered lens been applied to these debates, meaning the madwoman's role within the asylum visit has yet to be fully unpacked. Building on Andrews's scholarship and considering a range of dominant emotional frameworks that influenced the way individuals might encounter suffering within these spaces, this chapter tackles these unresolved issues. It tests philosophical standpoints around the observance of suffering through a selection of fictional and non-fictional case studies that document encounters with madwomen within the asylum space, including: the diary of an upper-class German tourist, Sophie Von La Roche (1786); a letter from an aristocratic Earl, William Knollys, to his mother (1786); Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* (1771); and the diary of a country squire, Sir George Crewe of Calke Abbey (1833).

Inspired by scholarship that considers tourism within other popular cultural spaces (such as the English country house), these accounts fuse with documentary sources and visual material to determine 'how historical agents in the past looked'.[23] Navigating the potent relationship between interaction and detachment, pleasure and pain, entertainment and unease, I outline the ways in which eighteenth-century actors might adhere to a range of experiential modes of viewing, thus keeping the psychological threat of madness, and the repercussions of enjoying the look — or, as we see in Cowper, looking too *closely* — at bay. In response to arguments put forward by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) on pity's failure to instil action, I question the ways that the structure of the asylum might provide tourists with an ideal space to move through, experience, and then *leave* once the performance of pity was complete. In line with wider arguments posited throughout this thesis, this chapter also considers the myriad of emotions that the female

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Tanya Evans, *Unfortunate Objects: Lone Mothers in Eighteenth-Century London*, (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2005), 75.

[23] See Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape and Architecture in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7. See also Jocelyn Anderson, *Touring and Publicizing England's Country Houses in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018)*, 14.

maniac might stir in the asylum tourist, from fear and repulsion, to pity, pleasure and desire, and how these emotional encounters interacted with stereotypical modes of female madness.

The structure of this chapter mirrors the visitor experience. It moves through spaces of expectation, encounter and reflection, from macro exterior spaces of reception to micro experiences of the cells. Throughout, it uses Sophie Von La Roche's detailed diary account of her visit to Bethlem as a guide, whilst also considering experiences encountered in other English asylums along the way. I begin by exploring prints and guidebooks seen ahead of an asylum visit. I then examine exterior views and asylum architecture, before moving into shallow spaces, wards and cells. The final section considers the reflective spaces of a visit using visitor books. Whilst I predominantly focus on the London-based voluntary asylums of Bethlem and St Luke's, this chapter also looks towards Nottingham asylum and the York Retreat.[24]

Pleasurable Pain, Sterile Pity

Cowper was not the only visitor to express conflicting, paradoxical feelings when experiencing the pleasurable torment of spectatorial sympathy. Plenty of other eighteenth-century commentators were intensely preoccupied with the tantalising interstices between pleasure and pain. To be sympathetic and sentimental was to feel a 'dear delicious pain'; or, as critic Anna Laetitia Barbauld put it, an 'exquisite pleasure'.[25] The relationship between pleasure, pain and performance was discussed at length by French, Swiss and English writers on aesthetic experience throughout the eighteenth century. A range of commentators, including the Abbé Du Bos (1670-1742), Denis Diderot (1713-1784), David Hume (1711-1776), Adam Smith (1723-1790) and Rousseau, grappled with concepts of suffering, sympathy and pity, whether witnessed in life or in art.[26]

A crucial thinker on the relationship between suffering, sympathy and society was Adam Smith. Smith's seminal text, *The Theory of Modern Sentiments* (1759), identifies pity and compassion as

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[24] Whilst the York Retreat was privately run, its celebratory status as a symbol of moral therapy meant that it serves as a unique site, crossing the private and public divide. For more on its unusual set up, see Anne Digby**,** *Madness, morality, and medicine: a study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[25] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 'An Inquiry into those kinds of distress which excite agreeable sensations', in *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, With a Memoir by Lucy Aikin* (Boston: David Reed, 1826), vol. 2, 133-145, 144.

[26] Key works include The Abbé Du Bos, *Critical reflections on poetry, painting and music* […], trans. Thomas Nugent, 5th edn. (London: John Nourse, 1748); Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre,* trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Agora Editions, 1968); Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Second Edition* (London; Edinburgh: A. Millar, A.Kincaid and J.Bell, 1761).

'appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others', whilst sympathy denotes feeling 'with any passion whatsoever'.[27] Smith advocates that it is the virtuous and humane who felt these emotions most strongly, and that the expression of such emotions displayed one's 'amiable virtues, the virtues of candid condescension and indulgent humanity'.[28] Crucial to Smith's moral philosophy was the notion that sympathy is a counter-force to a self-interested society, and that the good work of the humanitarian community was compensation for the plight of the unfortunate.[29]

Key to these feelings was the act of *imagining* the plight of another. David Marshall argues that the key epistemological and aesthetic problem with sympathy is its reliance on the faculty of one's imagination, as any attempt to place ourselves in another person's shoes essentially depend on the strength of our sympathetic reasoning and imagination.[30] Subsequently, as Julie Candler Hayes stipulates, the sympathetic self is by nature a spectator, 'not only of another being but of oneself observing the other being'.[31] These arguments expound how self-observation, 'imaginative projection' and performance were perceived as critical to the expression of sympathy or pity.[32] Because it is impossible to know another's sentiments, Marshall argues, the act of imagination was 'structured by theatrical dynamics that […] depend on people's ability to represent themselves as tableaux, spectacles, and texts before others'.[33] Marshall's mention of text may refer to a whole host of content here — from plays to novels to poetry to song, and perhaps to circulating texts providing instructions on how to behave in sympathetic spaces.

These ideas firmly position the subjective sympathiser as both spectator and spectacle, expanding arguments laid out in chapter one about the spectatorial nature of sympathy. As Halttunen states, Smith built on the work of his Scottish predecessors, David Hume and Francis Hutcheson, in treating 'ethics as a matter of sentiment, sentiment as a matter of sympathy, and sympathy as a matter of spectatorship'.[34] Lisa Freeman builds upon these claims, persuasively arguing for the inherent interactivity that made up the space of the

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[27] Smith, *Moral Sentiments,* 6. Despite this qualification, the terms 'compassion', 'sympathy' and 'pity' are typically used interchangeably within these texts.
[28] Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, 41.
[29] Smith*, Moral Sentiments*, 15, 17.
[30] David Marshall, *The Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 5.
[31] Julie Candler Hayes, 'Reflection: The French Theater of Sympathy', in *Sympathy: A History,* ed. Eric Schliesser (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 199-207, 204.
[32] Norman S. Fiering, 'Irresistible Compassion: An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 37, 2 (1976), 195-218, (210).
[33] Marshall, *Sympathy*, 5.
[34] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 307.

eighteenth-century theatre. Freeman traces the ways in which the theatre constituted a place in which 'emerging culture could develop and test new ways of representing and explaining itself'.[35] At the same time, the compartmentalisation of social groups within boxes, pits and galleries, each site speaking of a conventional role that its occupants were expected to perform before the rest of the public, meant that the audience were 'as much as a part of the performance as the players. No single controlling gaze regulated the space of performance in the eighteenth century; the power of the performance was routinely shared and exchanged between audience and performers'.[36]

Whilst Smith and Diderot stressed the social necessity and utility of sympathy, celebrating communitarian engagement evoked through 'imaginative participation', others found the enthusiastic display of pity an essentially empty enterprise, bordering on the insincere. Rousseau's critique of 'sterile pity' argued that the theatre turned audiences into useless spectators, rather than active agents of social change.[37] Questioning the authenticity of the complex emotional encounter between spectator and spectacle, these arguments form the bedrock of this chapter.

Permeable Walls or Closed Sites?

In her book on country house visitation and the domestic tourist in Britain, Jocelyn Anderson provides a clear notion of normative eighteenth-century tourist rituals. Describing MP and writer Richard Joseph Sulivan's visit to Stourhead, she explains how

> his visit was one defined by tourist practices: he knew what he expected to see, he was staying at an inn which catered to tourists, he was accompanied by a guide who specialised in offering tours of the grounds, and he was well informed about what he saw and how he might describe it.[38]

Anderson offers her reader an intriguing description of the practices that made up Sulivan's physical and psychological journey, emphasising the importance of expectations and prior knowledge to his visit. A similar model was available for the asylum tourist during this period. A prospective visitor might have heard

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[35] Lisa Freeman, *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 4.
[36] Freeman, *Character's Theater,* 5.
[37] Rousseau, *Theatre*, 24; Fiering, 'Irresistible Compassion', 213.
[38] Anderson, *Touring*, 1.

about an asylum scandal, visited a similar institution or read a travelogue that documented such a visit. They may have encountered a topographical representation, read a newspaper article or had a conversation about a physician associated with the asylum; all of which contributed to an opinion of the institution prior to a visit.

The eighteenth-century tourist would have visited Bethlem at its Moorfields site.[39] Designed by Robert Hooke at the end of the seventeenth century, the building was completed in 1676. Set on the spacious Moorfields in east London, with decorative features such as pavilions, Corinthian pilasters, coats of arms and cupolas, descriptions of Bethlem often centred on its palatial aesthetic. On his visit to London in 1705, French tourist César-François de Saussure described Bethlem as resembling the 'Louvre in Paris, being in fact built on that model'.[40] Hooke had allegedly modelled the asylum on a Parisian palace, either the Louvre or the Tuileries, with its length, shallowness and use of pavilions reminiscent of the French style.[41]

Combining concepts of charity, order, spectacle and reception within its splendid form, Bethlem was one of London's real showstoppers.[42] Its grand architecture served multiple purposes. First, it evoked Georgian values of politeness and improvement, its ordered and symmetrical aspects conveying visual messages of regulation and civility. This might have encouraged financial contributions, and bestowed eminence to all involved with the institution and its running.[43] At the same time, as the chapter introduction discussed, Bethlem's governors were 'deeply bound up with the view that charity and its objects required the medium of spectacle in order to be fully appreciated'.[44] The building was peppered with architectural elements that promoted looking, beginning with a series of ten-foot apertures that ran along the exterior front wall, functioning as open grates that served as 'transparent windows' to allow passers-by to look inside Bethlem's yard.[45]

Bethlem also enjoyed a virtual existence in guidebooks and topographical prints. Experienced as part of portfolio collections featuring London's architectural highlights, or viewed as illustrations in guidebooks

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[39] Bethlem was originally the Royal Bethlehem hospital, founded in 1293 as a religious priory at Bishopsgate. In the late 1600s, plans began to relocate to a new building at Moorfields, which was completed in 1676. Housing around 100 patients at Moorfields, in 1815 it moved to a larger building at St George's Fields, now the site of the Imperial War Museum. For more on Bethlem and its history, see Andrews, *Bethlem.*

[40] César-François de Saussure, *A Foreign View of England in the Reign of George I and George II*, ed. and trans. Madame Van Muyden (London: J. Murray, 1902), 92.

[41] Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence,* 33.

[42] Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence*, 33-34, 41.

[43] Charlotte Newman, 'A mansion for the mad: an archaeology of Brooke House, Hackney', *Post-Medieval Archaeology,* 49, 1 (2015), 156-174 (160).

[44] Andrews, *Bethlem,* 170.

[45] Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence,* 64-65.

and travelogues,[46] the topographical hospital or asylum print was a popular genre in the eighteenth century, showcasing institutions such as the Foundling Hospital and London's military hospitals of Greenwich and Chelsea. Weighty topographical tomes such as John Stowe's book of maps (1734-35) placed asylums alongside a roll call of London's impressive non-medical institutions, such as St Paul's Cathedral and Buckingham House.[47] That asylums and hospitals were swept up in broader notions of civic pride was manifested visually at the Foundling Museum, which displayed eight roundels depicting London's hospitals — including the Foundling — in its majestic Court Room.[48] Bethlem was included in this line up, revealing that it too facilitated a sense of national pride.[49]

Bethlem was first represented in Robert White's *Hospitium Mente-Captorum Londinense*, 1677 [Figure 3.1], which shows the building before two wings for 'incurables' were added in 1739. In front of Bethlem's ornamental features and decorative façade, a smattering of pedestrians approach its closed gates. Despite the fact that the asylum was open to all before 1770, White's print highlights an ordered clientele in this print. In line with the governors's request for well-behaved visitors and 'person[s] of quality' to attend Bethlem, the figures presented here are genteel, respectful.[50] Significantly, White does not allude to those living behind the asylum's imposing exterior.

Following White's lead, Thomas Bowles's *The Hospital of Bethlehem* from 1747 [Figure 3.2] also depicts a genteel space, in which elegantly dressed individuals wander the foreground. Originally a book illustration, W. Watkins's print (1811) sees Bethlem become the backdrop for a pastoral scene of a boy sailing a toy boat across a pond [Figure 3.3]. This engraving seems to be based on another print, which had also contextualised Bethlem within a leafy, pastoral setting [Figure 3.4]. Downplaying the putatively alarming individuals inside, Watkins's print visualises Bethlem's environs as decorous and serene. Views of country houses followed similar compositional conventions as those displayed here, with a populated foreground making way for the majestic prowess of the house itself, as seen in Peter Tillemans's pastoral scenes from the early eighteenth century [Figures 3.5 and 3.6]. Other images, such as Thomas Shepherd's

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[46] Ann Payne, 'Itinerant view takers', *British Library* <https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/itinerant-view-takers>.

[47] John Mottley, *A survey of the cities of London and Westminster, borough of Southwark and parts adjacent* […] (London: J. Read, 1734-1735).

[48] Solkin, *Painting for Money,* 165. See also Andrews, *Bethlem*, 189.

[49] Leonard Smith, 'The Architecture of Confinement: Urban public asylums in England, 1750-1820', in *Madness, Architecture and the Built Environment: Psychiatric Spaces in Historical Context*, eds. Leslie Topp, James E. Moran and Jonathan Andrews (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 41-61, 41, 44.

[50] Andrews, *Bethlem*, 180.

book illustration of the new Bethlem, having relocated to a new building at St George's Fields in 1815 [Figure 3.7], depict a busier scene. Whilst the viewer of the illustration has a clear view over the boundary wall to the building beyond, the pedestrian's view is blocked, the wall towering above head height. Shepherd's print thus frames Bethlem as an important sight to walk *past*, linking the building to other London attractions viewed as popular places to stroll by.[51]

Moreover, these prints all depict Bethlem as a space *behind* a wall. Viewers may enjoy a clear view of the asylum's front — something that the strolling pedestrians did not — but no further view of its interior are offered, our virtual access *into* the building barred. The only suggestion of the objects of elite attention that lodged within Bethlem's galleries and cells are the miniature renditions of Cibber's twin statues of mania and melancholy, languishing atop Bethlem's gates [Figure 1.8]. Though rendered diminutively within this print, chapter one stressed the domineering influence that these two sculptures had upon the public imagination. In the context of these prints, their presence serves as the only outward visualisation of the mad inside, and thus a compelling imaginative prompt of the unseen irrational objects that the asylum housed.

With the topographical print now functioning as a tool through which the viewer's interest might be piqued, these ideas intensified within other prints of asylums that prioritised the depiction of enticing vantage points or hidden views. Several prints of Bethlem offered opportunities for peeping and peering via oblique views and unusual compositions, seen in White's detail of an individual peering through the grates of Bethlem's wall on the print's left-hand side. Both Watkins's and Prior's unusual perspectives [Figures 3.3 and 3.4], combined with the line of trees that block our gaze, also create an intriguing boundary that the viewer is invited to imaginatively penetrate.[52] Viewed through the safety of the bucolic frame, these images encourage fresh ways to look at, and into, the building — even if this was just done virtually. Rather than viewing Bethlem from its front, this unusual perspective suggests the availability of other views. Using these prints as a guide, the viewer might also imagine observing the asylum from a distance to get a better view, perhaps catching a glimpse of some activity in the galleries beyond the windows. Perhaps, the viewer might virtually follow the line of trees that both prints utilise in search of a better view, skirting around the asylum's parameters in search of their own unique vantage point.

[51] Hannah Grieg, '"All Together and All Distinct": Public Sociability and Social Exclusivity in London's Pleasure Gardens, ca. 1740-1800', *Journal of British Studies*, 51 (January 2012), 50-74 (56).
[52] This is a technique also found in topographical country house views, in examples such as Arthur Devis, *Sir John Shaw and his Family in the Park at Eltham Lodge, Kent*, 1761.

Other representations of the hospital in its final years at Moorfields reveal fragmentary scenes around Bethlem's side-streets. In an etching from John Thomas Smith's *Public Architecture: Parts of London Wall and Bethlem Architecture* [Figure 3.8], the fixed boundary of the asylum's high wall gives way to a unique and fleeting perspective. As a muck scraper bends down in the print's right-hand corner, it is the pathetic hand and windmill toy that emerges from a high cell window's empty grate that holds our gaze. The lone scraper is just one aspect of a multi-layered visual narrative here: the bottom rung in a ladder-like composition that draws the viewer's eye up towards the intriguing objects staged across one of Bethlem's windows. Shrubs and vegetation grow along the ramshackle and disorderly outer wall of the asylum, with these lower levels giving way to more rigid brickwork, a peaked gable roof form, and its regimented windows.

Whilst the scraper seems uninterested, with each horizontal layer our fascination of what might lurk behind Bethlem's austere façade grows. The window grate from which the windmill toy peeks becomes another tantalising boundary, semi-permeable whilst still enclosing the patient within. Yet the clear aesthetic differences between these two boundaries — the unkempt and tumbledown border of the stone outer wall at the bottom of the print, versus the ordered, neat structure at its top — reinforces the distinct divide between those who were only able to view Bethlem from the streets below, and the privileged few who the governors invited to enter, thus accessing this ordered structure. Albeit fragmentary, these different viewing options offered new perspectives for those looking at these prints. Simultaneously, they are suggestive of the different levels of access to actual asylum spaces, marking the divide between those who skirt the parameters, and those able to physically penetrate its walls through a visit. Highlighting the scope for virtual voyeurism still redolent within these images, they also reinforce the satisfying sense of privilege for those viewers who were able to move past the façade to the interiors and patients beyond.

St Luke's also enjoyed frequent representation by topographers. First based at Windmill Street in Upper Moorfields, the original building was void of any decoration. Often depicted as Bethlem's antithesis, it was designed with a distinct *lack* of ornamentation: 'a neat but very plain edifice' with 'ranges of small square windows on which no decorations have been bestowed'.[53] This plain aesthetic proved crucial to its public persona, suggesting its charitable goals and supposed distaste for visiting. As such, it functioned as a

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[53] J. Dodsley, *London and its environs described containing an account of whatever is most remarkable for grandeur, elegance, curiosity or use* (London: J. Dodsley, 1761), 205.

'counterpoise to the architectural extravagancies of new Bethlem'.[54] In 1776, it relocated to a new building in Old Street, designed by George Dance the Younger. Whilst again plain, the new building wielded architectural influence, leading the way for the first group of post-Bethlem asylums that prized values of containment and order over ornamentation and decoration.[55]

St. Luke's Hospital [Figure 3.9] depicts the building's impressive lunette windows, one of its most striking architectural features. Despite the print's starkness, the engraver still includes a group of onlookers, who point to the façade in admiration. Shepherd also produced a print of St Luke's [Figure 3.10] in a small London guidebook. Appearing alongside views of other esteemed building's around the city, Shepherd bolsters the architectural standing of these asylums whilst simultaneously framing them as sites that were difficult, if not impossible, to enter. With an impressive stone wall, impenetrable doorway and line of trees blocking the front entrance, the angle of our vantage point once again shows pedestrians walking *past*. With St Luke's initially marketed as a space which disapproved of visitation, the print presents the asylum as a sealed-off site, somewhere to pass by whilst reflecting philanthropically on the fates of the patients inside.

As of images of Bethlem, Shepherd's print of St Luke's reinforces the notion that access to the asylum was reserved for visitors of the 'approved kind'.[56] For those who had previously gained entrance, looking at these prints in a guidebook, print shop window or topographical album would have had a very different effect to those who had never ventured into the asylum's walls. This might happen in two ways. For anyone who *had* visited Bethlem as a tourist pre-1770, viewing these prints may well have led to a sense of unease, shame or guilt, in line with contemporary narratives that lambasted anyone who derived 'any degree of pleasure' from a visit.[57] With asylum tourism *post*-1770 being conceptualised as a philanthropic activity only available for the privileged few, those who had visited Bethlem or St Luke's during these years may have felt Solkin's satisfying 'patina of prestige' when viewing representations of these sites. Entering these impressive architectural edifices evoked one's social status: an evocation that the topographical prints reiterated to the viewer through the visualised divide between the outside and inside world. This latter group of viewers might imagine their previous act of passing *beyond* the façade, enjoying once again that special

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[54] Smith, 'Architecture of Confinement', 47.
[55] For more on the architecture of St Luke's, see Smith, 'Architecture of Confinement', 46-50.
[56] See Andrews, *Bethlem*, 180-182.
[57] *London Chronicle*, 21-23 May 1761, 491.

sense of privilege they had experienced 'live' at the asylum — perhaps paired with a ripple of pleasure, even titillation.

In her discussion on the pornography of pain in the eighteenth century, Karen Halttunen discusses the use of 'strategic omission' within humanitarian writing. Halttunen's work will be considered in more detail later, but her comments on the ways in which humanitarian writers 'offered a variety of narrative strategies designed to distance themselves from any imputations of sensationalistic pandering' sit effectively within this discussion of prints depicting pleasing and ordered edifices of madness.[58] Through textual examples, Halttunen highlights how the strategy of *not* mentioning certain issues, or suggesting that certain issues were too horrible to mention at all, exacerbated intrigue about the issue in question, making it even more ghastly, vivid or enticing. Of the topographical views discussed in this chapter, it is only Cibber's two statues who sit atop Bethlem's gates, or the pathetic windmill depicted in Smith's print, that refer to Bethlem or St Luke's *raison d'êtres* — the mad who live beyond the neat façade. These aesthetic omissions serve as an imaginative catalyst for the viewer, the composed and ordered nature of the surface heightening the scopophilic thrill of what lurked inside. No face joins Smith's windmill at the empty window, nor does a mad figure peep back at us through the grate. For the uninitiated or ignorant flipping through a guidebook, these images function like other representations of prestigious London landmarks. But for those who wish to penetrate the interiors of these asylums, the erasure of familiar iconography within these prints creates a titillating spectral silence, with what is omitted igniting unsavoury interest and imaginative speculation in the viewer. Partial or suggestive views exacerbated these processes, as viewers searched for further references to patients and their pathologies, scouring the prints for other hidden details or tantalising fragments.

This account of the architecture and representations of Bethlem and St Luke's highlights the ways asylums sought to present themselves as esteemed and humane sites, encouraging certain types of genteel visitors whilst placing institutions within wider commentaries of civility and philanthropy. Through topographical prints and architectural features, asylums promoted impressions of order, sociability and charity, which in turn elicited financial donations. For some, these representations raised the issue of privileged access. Unlike the idle bystanders who peer through the asylum walls, or stroll on towards the next destination, the educated elite who had already been invited into these spaces might imaginatively re-

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[58] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 328.

enact their privilege and prestige via their viewing of these prints. For those planning and anticipating a future visit, viewing a print might cast them into the role of an esteemed visitor *before* they had even set foot on the asylum's grounds.

At the same time, these prints emphasise the role of voyeurism that remained in these encounters; even if, at this stage, the encounter was an imaginary one. Regardless of their social standing or prior relationship with the asylum, some viewers may have found the strategic omission or unusual vantage points that these prints embody titillating. Igniting an excitable frisson, fragmentary views might function as an exclusive sneak preview, arousing the viewer's interest, and perhaps, unsavoury thoughts. These prints thus embody the intrinsic tension between charity and spectacle inherent in an asylum tour, suggesting that, despite official attempts to weed out voyeuristic visitors, these sites still functioned as spaces where titillation took hold. As we move into the asylums and interrogate various framing devices and mediated views within them, this tension intensifies.

Arriving at the Asylum

German tourist Sophie Von La Roche (1730-1807) begins her diary account of her visit to Bethlem in 1786 by telling her reader that she 'always had a horror at such establishments'.[59] Describing what she encounters upon arrival, Von La Roche's begins with the long avenue, moving from statue, to façade, to gardens, to the building itself:

> I traversed the fine avenues of that magnificent, though somewhat solitary, Moorfields, and was much affected by the two statues of the sad and raving above the entrance, by the sculptor Cibber, regarded as masterpieces for the penetrating truth of their expression, and deservedly. With a heavy heart I then approached this palace of greatest human misery. It is indeed a palatial building, 540 feet in length, with two large wings either side and fine gardens, where the poor people can enjoy fresh air.[60]

Von La Roche was a German writer and diarist, publishing the successful *History of Fraulein von Sternheim* in 1771. Described by her editor and translator as an 'eighteenth-century globetrotter', she had recently completed tours in Switzerland and France, setting off to England in the August of 1786. Her detail-rich

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[59] Sophie Von La Roche, *Sophie in London 1786, being the Diary of Sophie v. la Roche*, trans. Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), 166.
[60] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London,* 166.

account of Bethlem shows that her asylum visit was part of a busy day out in London, taking place on 15

September 1786. Before visiting Bethlem, she saw the Voluntary Society for the Improvement of Agriculture

and the Arts, as well as enjoying oysters for the first time at a fish-market on the Thames. Afterwards, she

went to a book shop and a silversmith.[61] Moving from 'trifling remarks' to 'tragic pitch', the panoply of

urban experiences enjoyed or endured by Von La Roche evince the wide range of spectatorial activities

available to the London tourist. Her diary also exemplifies the significance of hospitals and asylums for

international visitors. Bethlem is described by Clare Williams as 'a shrine of pilgrimage' for Germans,

situated amongst an expanding roster of medical institutions that showcased London's humanitarian spirit.[62]

Like many visitors, Von La Roche self-consciously identified her motivation for visiting Bethlem as

philanthropic, stating it would 'test the truth of her philanthropy'.[63]

Von La Roche would have most likely passed into Bethlem's yard via the side door that flanked the

gates — customary for all apart from distinguished guests such as royalty.[64] Here, she paused to review

Cibber's infamous figures, the familiar landmarks that served as 'a grim foretaste' of the forthcoming

experience.[65] Commenting on the 'palatial building' and providing its specifications, Von La Roche's

account shows how Bethlem was understood as an architectural destination in its own right. At the same

time, her discussion of the two 'sad' and 'raving' masterpieces that 'much affected' her, relates to the self-

conscious mingling of spectacular and charitable values within an asylum's aesthetic features. Kromm has

analysed this phenomenon in her work on seventeenth-century Dutch asylums, arguing that across such

spaces, decorative features like sculptural decoration or exterior friezes were didactic, demonstrating the

'charitable values maintained within in order to solicit assistance from without, from passers-by, and from

the community at large'.[66] Cibber's statues exemplify this partnership between didacticism and exploitation,

charity and voyeurism. Calling upon the philanthropy of passers-by, they serve as evidence that the visitor

experience was carefully considered. Whilst pairs of statues were standard devices for entrances in the

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[61] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London,* 173.

[62] Clare Williams, ed., 'Introduction', *Sophie in London 1786, being the Diary of Sophie v. la Roche*, trans. Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), 45-46.

[63] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London,* 166.

[64] Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence,* 39.

[65] Fiona Haslam, *From Hogarth to Rowlandson: Medicine in Art in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1996), 151.

[66] Kromm, 'Site and Vantage', 36.

eighteenth century, seen in various examples around the capital,[67] Cibber's emotive pair were used to entertain, excite and intrigue visitors on arrival.

Organised around a central axis, visitors crossing Bethlem's threshold passed through a narrow passage that led to the main hall. Stevenson has categorised internal spaces such as hallways, passages, thresholds and stairs as surface-based, shallow spaces of reception. These liminal areas gave way to more immersive spaces where patients were viewed, including the galleries, cells and yards, 'made deeper, as spaces, by the simple presence of the iron grilles with their locked gates'.[68] At this crucial moment, passing from external to internal, a fascinating set of objects greeted visitors. Here, we meet the madwoman for the first time. Two alms boxes, placed on either side of the entrance inside the narrow passageway, took the form of two life-size maniacs: one male, one female [Figure 3.11]. As the topographer Smith described, after entering the asylum past Cibber's statues, 'the eye of taste is again arrested by a statue of a maniac, holding a money bottle; that on the right represents a man, and that on the left a female'. Created in the 1670s, two tablets at the foot of each box bore the words: 'Pray remember the poor Lunaticks, and put your "Charity into the Box with your own hand"'.[69] Whilst this text explicitly appeals to the visitor's philanthropy, the objects clearly fuse didacticism with spectacle, as Smith's arrested eye suggests. Serving as a tangible manifestation of the institution's humanitarian motives, alms boxes were an important part of an asylum visit and were also used at St Luke's.[70] Thresholds and entryways functioned as a first step in casting these initial impressions, bolstering both the spectacular status of an institution and its charitable function. Not only did these liminal areas propel the visitor further into the asylum's physical space, but also into the role of compassionate spectator.

Breasts exposed and eyes crossed, the female alms box serves as an early indication of how the mad female body was utilised within these spaces. Her bare breast complies with typical iconography surrounding female madness, seen in later representations such as Thomas Lawrence's *Mad Girl* (1786) [Figure 1.1]. Unlike this later depiction, which uses chains and straw to signify the madwoman's mania, the alms box's madness is felt almost entirely through her state of undress and disarray. Andrews has discussed the various

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[67] The entrance to Eleanor Coade's sculpture gallery on Westminster Bridge in London, for example, welcomed the public with sculptures that flanked its doors. See *European Magazine and London Review*, 41, 1802.
[68] Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence,* 40, 95.
[69] John Thomas Smith, *Ancient Topography of London: Embracing specimens of sacred, public and domestic architecture from the earliest period to the time of the great fire 1666* (London: J. Mcreery, 1815), 34.
[70] For a discussion of how the Foundling also used similar visual cues to inspire charity, see Solkin, *Painting for Money*, 165.

connotations of a maniac's dishevelment; including moral degradation, animality or 'a direct appeal to charity and relief'.[71] Here, we see the female figure used to induce further compassion from the visitor, her loose drapery and wrapped blanket signalling poverty and deprivation.[72] At the same time, the bare breast expresses sexuality and desire. Kromm's work on the iconography of female frenzy highlights how, on the one hand, her madness meant a 'disregard for the apparel of civilised behaviour'. The madwoman's undress and physical exposure was an important signifier of unleashed sexualised abandon that mania could enable.[73] The female alms box might be a far cry from the obstreperous sculptures of writhing madwomen analysed by Kromm, but her nudity was still part of a visual economy of female undress which had additional meaning relating to desire and unrestrained sexuality.[74]

Analysing the visual phenomenon of the bare breast within fourteenth-century Tuscan images of the Virgin Mary, Margaret R. Miles has argued that these could be read as signifiers of maternal nourishment, creating a comforting aura of 'unpretentious accessibility'.[75] But she stresses that the breast conveyed additional messages, ineluctably wrapped up in issues of sexuality: 'visual depictions of the nude body are never so thoroughly devoid of sexual associations as to become a perfect vehicle for an abstract theological message'.[76] Despite the alms box's humble and charitable overtones, the choice made by Bethlem's governors to show a half-*naked* madwoman on arrival must have been deliberate, perhaps signalling the promise of further titillating spectacles to come. If titillation was the desired outcome, serving as an invitation of an erotic response, then we can identify the heterosexual *male* gaze as being the privileged viewpoint here. That the inclusion of a half-naked woman on an asylum's threshold was seen as an effective and evocative visual tool can be seen by a proposed design from John Soane, submitted in 1777, for the new St Luke's hospital. Soane's plan included a frieze depicting two female figures with languid limbs, loose

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[71] Jonathan Andrews, 'The (un)dress of the mad poor in England, c.1650-1850, Part 1', *History of Psychiatry,* 18, 1 (2007), 5-24 (5).

[72] In her work on asylum photography, Sharrona Pearl discusses the cultural connotations of blankets and shawls and poverty. See Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 158-160.

[73] Jane Kromm, *The Art of Frenzy: Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500-1850* (London: Continuum, 2002), 83-84; Jane Kromm, '"Marianne" and the Madwomen', *Art Journal,* 46, 4 (1987), 299.

[74] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 83-84.

[75] Margaret R Miles, 'The Virgin's One Bare Breast: Nudity, Gender, and Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture', in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History,* eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York, NY: Icon Editions,1992), 27-38, 29, 32.

[76] Miles, 'Bare Breast', 33. See Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (California, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

features and bare breasts [Figure 3.12].[77] Given the asylum's stance against overly decorous architectural features, it is unsurprising that these plans were rejected, but his suggestion to include two bare breasted female figures to its exterior still speak of the dominating, ever present male gaze.

The dominance of this viewpoint was even replicated by the physical placement of the alms boxes themselves; though the male's body turns away, his head looks back over his left shoulder towards his female counterpart. As he looks towards her, his view would have been interrupted by the visitor who walked between the two boxes to enter the asylum. This immediate confrontation almost serves as a mirror for the visitor, chiming with arguments already laid out about the inherent interactivity and overlapping gazes found within these spaces of spectatorial sympathy. If the visitor in question was already engaging in the scopophilic admiration of the bare breasts on show, perhaps this look from her male protector felt judgmental, evoking shame. Given the animalistic connotations that the mad carried for centuries, alongside the humane mode of viewing demanded by contemporaneous philanthropic sentiment, any sexual response or desire prompted must have felt uneasy. This uncomfortable process, however, may have worked in the governors's favour: to assuage their shame or guilt, visitors may have placed more money *into* the functioning female alms box upon entry or exit. The bare breast revealed the immodest poverty of the madwoman, and thus the impecuniousness of the women inside; yet any erotic connotations that might excite visitors, adding to the spectacular frisson of the experience and thus encouraging a donation early on in one's visit, would most probably have been welcome.

Upon Bethlem's threshold, then, we see the twin ideals of charity and spectacle mingle. The female alms box simultaneously exacerbated concern through her humble poverty and desire through her exposed body parts — as well as any other number of personal feelings and emotions stirred in the men and women that passed her. Her presence highlights how shallow spaces in the asylum saw oscillating values of spectacle, voyeurism and titillation rally with charity, pity and compassion. Within exterior and shallow spaces, the former set of feelings might be expected to dominate. It is later, within the set of spaces that Stevenson categorises as the site of the second stage of viewing, that the viewer's compassion and pity might be more fully realised.

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[77] Kromm's analysis of Soane's reconceptualisation of Cibber's statues as two *women* positions these designs as an articulation of the current thinking on 'gender and disorder that the tenets of sensibility did so much to popularize'. See Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 149.

Viewing in the Long Gallery

Leaving the alms boxes behind, visitors next entered the lobby, where an impressive stairway rose to the first floor. Von La Roche's account illustrates how climbing the stairs intensified her growing dread, as 'on every step of the stairs by which we ascended my fear increased'.[78] At the top was the governors room with a balcony which looked over Moorfields.[79] Von La Roche, however, does not pause in these spaces, rather moving into Bethlem's star architectural attraction: the gallery.

Sometimes described as 'wards', the galleries at Bethlem and St Luke's were impressive architectural feats, unprecedented features within the context of a lunatic asylum.[80] Bethlem's gallery was the longest of its kind in England, contributing to the building's status as an architectural destination. In 1689, the grilles that separated it from the stairwell were removed, giving it a more continuous effect, and allowing patients and visitors to roam freely through the space. Along the back of the gallery's wall were cells, within which patients could be viewed through wickets in each door.[81] The new St Luke's followed a similar layout. Split over three floors, two identical sides of apartments for men and women were divided by a central stairway, with grilles and gates leading to the long galleries.[82] The layered nature of these spaces meant that the mad were viewed from multiple vantage points; some in cells, some behind closed doors and others seen wandering or chained within public spaces, mingling amongst the visitors.

In 1786, William Knollys (1763-1834), son of the 7th Earl and Countess of Banbury and later the 8th Earl of Banbury, wrote to his mother about his visit to Bethlem. Having entered the army in 1778,[83] Knollys had arranged his visit through a personal acquaintance with a governor whilst on 'City Guard'. His letter is dominated by descriptions of the gallery:

> We were surrounded by mad People as we walked through, and were obliged to encourage their Rant, and saw some shocking objects chained to the Floor. Some raving, and those wearing Blankets and straw Hatts of a Kind of matting, others stapled to the Wainscot, others chained down to the Bed. In the Women's Ward, it is wonderful they ask for nothing, but Snuff & Tea – I cannot forget the miserable objects I saw, many have been confined these twenty & eighteen years.[84]

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[78] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London,* 166.
[79] For a description of the Governors room, see Smith, *Ancient Topography of London,* 34-35.
[80] Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence*, 41-43.
[81] Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence,* 41.
[82] John Howard, *An account of the principal Lazarettos in Europe* […] (Warrington: T. Cadell, J. Johnson, C. Dilly, and J. Taylor, 1789), 139. See also Smith, 'Architecture of Confinement', 48.
[83] Victor Slater, 'Knollys, Charles, styled fourth earl of Banbury', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* 28 September 2006 <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15754>.
[84] William Knollys, 'To the Countess of Banbury', 30 August 1786, 1M44/90/15, HRO.

Knollys's account illustrates the use of chains within Bethlem's galleries, supporting later reports that patients were chained to the wainscot, tables and walls.[85] His descriptions of the 'mad people' that surround him and his party — ranting and chained, some stapled to skirting boards, others to beds — comply with cultural representations that presented the asylum gallery as an overwhelming and chaotic space. Bethlem's most iconic image, Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (1735) [Figure 1.2] emphasises the gallery's spaciousness and the multitude of characters on view. Similarly, Rowlandson's print of the woman's ward at St Luke's [Figure 3.13], discussed later in the chapter, depicts a lofty space packed with women displaying varying degrees of maniacal and melancholic disorder.

Key to the gallery's representation in both these images is the range of disorders on display — something also acknowledged in first-hand accounts. Saussure's description of Bethlem attests to the range of cells, 'where lunatics of every description are shut up'.[86] Smith has argued that, from the late eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth, 'classification by type of disorder of behavioural presentation was largely absent' within asylums[87] — something that contemporary accounts of Bethlem and St Luke's support.[88] In Knollys's account of Bethlem, the women's ward is juxtaposed as a space of momentary respite: a calmer, almost comforting space, where women 'ask for nothing' and drink tea. Reminiscent of Cowper's description of a modest Crazy Kate in 1785 who 'asks for no assistance', these women are likened to the submissive and, importantly, unthreatening icons of love's madness discussed in chapter two.[89] John Howard also describes women at St Luke's as a soothing antidote to the effect of more turbulent patients ('several women were calm and quiet, and at needle-work with the matron'),[90] categorising them as a welcome relief from more frightening individuals, perhaps because these women upheld their feminine values and complied with a more recognisable mode of melancholic mildness.

It is worth noting here the strong associations between the gallery space and the English country house. Developing within country house architecture in the fifteenth century, the gallery form originated as a

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[85] Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee appointed to consider of Provisions being made for the better Regulation of Madhouses in England, BPP, February 1816, vol. 6, 41.

[86] Saussure, *Foreign View,* 92-93.

[87] Smith, 'Architecture of Confinement', 50.

[88] Howard, *Lazarettos*, 140.

[89] William Cowper, 'The Task', in *William Cowper: The Task and Selected Other Poems*, ed. James Sambrook (London: Routledge, 2016), 74.

[90] Howard, *Lazarettos,* 140.

lengthy covered walkway, free from decoration. These then became enclosed spaces, used for indoor exercise during bad weather and, later, to display portraits.[91] For an aristocrat such as Knollys, well-versed in the act of country house perambulation and this performance of dynastic domesticity, the parallels between this familiar space and the asylum gallery may well have felt disquieting. Calling to mind contemporary debates about the ethics of spectatorship, the function of the gallery as a space for the display of portraits could cast asylum visitors into a problematic, scopophilic realm. As we shall see, the portrait/patient connection was easy to grasp, with even Hooke noting the relationship between art and the gallery form, as he 'in a pre-Freudian slip, […] referred to the 'Bedlam *picture gallery*' in his Diary.[92]

Mediated Views, Capsule Narratives

In 1833, Tory politician and philanthropist Sir George Harpur Crewe (1795-1844), the 8th Baronet at Calke Abbey in Derbyshire, took a pony and trap to Nottingham Asylum. Visiting the asylum to enquire after a former acquaintance, Crewe demonstrates genuine horror when encountering strait-jacketed bodies at the asylum — a response considered later in this chapter. But when meeting two women within the asylum's yard, his account is rich and comprehensive:

> There was a woman, about the age of 26 or 28, of whom Mr. Powell told me "She had no reasonable propensity whatever". That of her it could only be said that altho bearing the Human Form she was a mere animal. Nothing whatever, he said, could ever induce her to lie down upon a bed. On the floor on a heap of loose straw, arranged or not as the fancy took her, she would lie like an animal […] In the same yard with her was the most violent looking person I saw, who altho she made so much noise was not the most dangerous. Her whole employment all day is walking up and down or round the yard, talking all the time.[93]

Crewe's discussion of the role of the asylum's director, Mr Powell, is significant here. Following Bethlem's official closure, visitors needed a guide to access the asylum; a typical practice in most institutions. This was widely publicised, and one newspaper report described a tour of Bethlem coming to an end when a governor

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[91] As Mark Girouard expounds, 'an Elizabethan magnate, as he paced up and down his gallery, could look at the faces of his friends, his ancestors and relations […] and be inspired to imitate their virtues'. See Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), 101.

[92] Christine Stevenson, 'The Architecture of Bethlem at Moorfields', in *The History of Bethlem,* eds. Jonathan Andrews, Asa Briggs, Roy Porter, Penny Tucker and Keir Waddington (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 230-259, 246.

[93] Colin Kitching, ed., *Squire of Calke Abbey: Extracts from the Journals of Sir George Crewe of Calke Abbey, South Derbyshire, 1815-1834* (Cromford: Scarthin, 1995), 114.

fell ill during a visit.[94] The guide's role was to be an escort, but they also functioned as mediators of the

sights on show. An important source of information within an asylum tour, the guide turned the ghastly

histories and experiences of the patients into digestible chunks or moral vignettes to succinctly explain their

incarceration — something that I will refer to henceforth as a 'capsule narrative'. At Nottingham, Mr. Powell

provides Crewe with a pleasing description of each patient, and Crewe warmly recalls: 'I was much pleased

with his manner, varying of course according to which he knew to be the circumstances of each case'.[95]

Von La Roche's account likewise remembers pleasing interactions between visitors and staff at

Bethlem. Unlike Knollys and, as later discussed, Crewe, she does not find the gallery overwhelming. Instead,

she buoyantly describes an agreeable scene, where 'a number of men were pacing calmly to and fro, saluting

the inspector in friendly fashion'. Displaying adulation at the 'forethought and humanity of the authorities',

she recollects weeping for joy when hearing about Dr. Monroe's 'gentle handling' of the patients.[96] In their

text on Monroe, Andrews and Scull note how Von La Roche's narrative was 'constructed to reflect well on

the medical regime at Bethlem',[97] and her descriptions given here certainly interpret the asylum as an

ordered space of humane and kindly care.

These ideas can be situated amongst sociological arguments that consider how asylum proprietors

and visitors engaged in a reciprocal relationship, whereby provision of access and a provocative emotional

experience was exchanged for an auspicious review. Erving Goffman's work on the theatrical performance

of institutional visits attests to the stage management that occurred within these sites, whereby carefully

orchestrated routines provided mediated views for the visitor.[98] Typically, asylum visits were limited to

certain days of the week and a specific schedule, meaning that staff had plenty of time to prepare, or even to

rehearse, visits, in order to convey certain impressions.[99] The importance of a mediating presence was

encouraged within medical treatises too, with commentators such as George Nesse Hill stressing how 'no

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[94] *The Times*, 25 Aug. 1815, 2.
[95] Kitching, *Calke Abbey*, 114.
[96] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London*, 167-168.
[97] Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull, *Undertaker of the Mind: John Monro and Mad-Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England*, 249-250.
[98] Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates* (London: Penguin, 1961), 96-99.
[99] Mooney and Reinarz, *Permeable Walls,* 15-16.

interview should take place between a patient and his friend without the presence of the attendant or medical man'.[100]

In *History of Emotions,* Rob Boddice argues that whilst institutions are often identified as the 'agents of emotional prescription', the emotional maintenance of a space also comes from 'the people who guide and control them'.[101] And undoubtedly, this structure of mediation ensured that unacceptable sights were navigated and correctly handled. Von La Roche's account sees the staff temper the intensity of her emotional experience, which in turn, help her to perform pity, and fulfil her role as a compassionate spectator within the asylum's more theatrical spaces. Within more chaotic areas like the gallery and the outdoor yard, the stabilising role of the asylum guide manages the psychological effects of looking at the mad, whilst creating a compelling triangulation that strengthens the reassuring distance between the observer and the observed.

These strategies of distance were also reinforced by the gallery's spatial dynamics. Housed in an architectural form that bore distinct similarities with the spectatorial realm of the country house picture gallery, a reassuring distance between the chaotic patients and the refined, perambulating viewer was intensified. Mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this distance recalls the dialectic between pain and pleasure found within Edmund Burke's formulation of the Sublime in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). His text described that whilst pain and danger are 'simply terrible […] at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful'.[102] Burke's articulation is suggestive of another productive metaphor through which to conceptualise the asylum experience: Lucretius's parable of the pleasurable thrill of watching a shipwreck from the safety of the shore. Lucretius claims that, the closer we get to the spectacle, the harder the terrifying scene is to watch, and we have to look away. For some eighteenth-century philosophers, this example stresses the 'natural sympathy' that spectacles of suffering stir in spectators.[103] For others, as Marshall shows, the Lucretius parable was paradigmatic

for the aesthetic experience of watching someone suffering from a position of distance and

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[100] George Nesse Hill, *An Essay on the prevention and cure of insanity: with observations on the rules for the detection of pretenders to madness* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1814), 60.

[101] Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2018), 169.

[102] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: 1757), 14; Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 309.

[103] Du Bos, *Critical Reflection*, 13. See Marshall, *Sympathy,* 22.

non-identification. Thus, in condemning the lesson of difference and indifference supposedly taught by philosophy, Rousseau is condemning a point of view that allows people to look at others from the position of an audience, through a distancing frame that is associated with the theatre.[104]

Charting the tension between spectacle, suffering and the theatre, Rousseau's *Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre* (1782) argued that the theatre taught eighteenth-century audiences how to view suffering *remotely*. Consequently, when viewing suffering in real life, those audiences would be unmoved.[105] Mentioned above, this led to the production of 'sterile pity': an illusory and vain emotion which 'feeds on a few tears and which has never produced the slightest act of humanity'.[106] In Rousseau's critique, spectators are able to partake in a pitiful encounter without giving proper relief, attention, work or consolation to 'the unfortunate people in person'.[107]

These metaphors dovetail with museological debates that conceive of museums as 'carefully designed, framed spectacles, enabling and encouraging visitors to form various distinctions' between the spectators (us) and the displayed (them).[108] With the theatrical nature of the asylum gallery objectifying its patients, who appear like painted portraits within a country house gallery, visitors thus become part of Rousseau's detached audience. Enabling viewers to express their pity from the 'safe distance of the shore', this spectacular framework and mediating figurehead serve as mechanisms that allowed visitors to *cope* within these spaces. With these emotional management strategies now explained, we can consider another way that the threat of the mad could be circumnavigated to fully display the visitor's pity: through an encounter with the madwoman.

'A Dejection of that Decent Kind': Women and Tears within the Wards

Viewing the male wards, Von La Roche describes a roster of professions, including a feverish French cook, a murderous incurable and a ship's captain. A similar role-call of masculine identities is seen within novelist Henry Mackenzie's descriptions of a mathematician, stockbroker and the 'Chan of Tartary' when his

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[104] Marshall, *Sympathy*, 139.
[105] Rousseau, *Theatre,* 23-24.
[106] Rousseau, *Theatre,* 24.
[107] Rousseau, *Theatre,* 25.
[108] Edward. L. Schwarzschild, 'Death-Defying/Defining Spectacles: Charles Willson Peale as Early American Freak Showman', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body,* ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (London: New York University Press, 1996), 82-97, 82.

protagonist Harley visits Bethlem in *Man of Feeling* (1771).[109] As well as this range of professional roles, the male patients display a far broader range of symptoms in these accounts, bringing to mind the rag-tag team of magicians, astrologers, religious men and mathematicians within the Hogarthian view of Bethlem, each with their own form of madness. From delusional gesticulating to quiet contemplation, religious mysticism to unadulterated frenzy, the range of disorders on show in the male ward starkly contrasts with the singular trope of lovelorn melancholy evidenced in both Mackenzie's novel and Von La Roche's account of the female wards.

Understood as *the* sentimental novel of the eighteenth century, *Man of Feeling* is made up of a series of fictional moral vignettes, whereby Mackenzie's protagonist Harley encounters different scenarios that allow him to display his virtuous sentimentality. One of the 1770's bestsellers, the novel was reprinted in dozens of editions in Britain and America.[110] Crucial to its popularity was Harley, the quintessential man of feeling who readily displays his virtue through the watery conduit of tears. As chapter one detailed, the latter decades of the eighteenth century saw men now expected to 'shed tears (gushes, wellings, droplets) over "interesting objects", ranging from blasted trees to crippled dogs to virgins in distress'.[111] Despite plenty of contemporary speculation that Mackenzie's novel was a parody, given the intensity with which Harley *feels*,[112] other contemporary responses to the novel were deeply moved by the scenes it describes. As one reviewer noted, any reader 'who weeps not over some of the scenes it describes has no sensibility of mind'.[113]

Within Bethlem, Harley exhibits the correct response to suffering when he cries on four separate occasions during his visit. Harley's first 'tribute of some tears' is prompted when he meets an unnamed *female* lunatic:

> Separate from the rest stood one, whose appearance had something of superior dignity. Her face, though pale and wasted, was less squalid than those of the others, and showed a dejection of that decent kind, which moves our pity unmixed with horror: upon her, therefore, the eyes of all were immediately turned.[114]

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[109] Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling*, 56.

[110] Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling,* 10.

[111] Claudia Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentimentality in the 1790s – Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 5. See also Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 89; Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 98-100.

[112] Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave, 'Introduction', in Henry Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xxiv.

[113] 'The Man of Feeling', *Monthly Review*, 44, May 1771, 418.

[114] Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling*, 57.

The keeper who accompanies the tour explains how this woman 'was born to ride in her coach and six'. After falling in love with a poorer gentleman, who died when in the West Indies, she was forced to marry 'a rich miserly fellow […] the poor young lady was reduced to the condition you see her in'. In response to Harley's tears, the madwoman addresses his group — 'My Billy is no more! Blessings on your tears! I would weep too, but my brain is dry; and it burns, it burns, it burns!' — before singing a mournful tune about her lost love.[115] The party weep unanimously ('there was not an unmoistened eye around her') and Harley takes her outstretched hand and 'bathed it with his tears'. On their departure, Harley gives two guineas to the keeper, instructing 'Be kind to that unfortunate'. He promptly bursts into tears once more and leaves the asylum.

The end of this vignette conveys the tightly wound tension between pity, altruism and sentimentality against the exploitative, self-conscious and indulgent theatricality, found within both fictional and actual accounts of asylum visits.[116] On the one hand, in line with Adam Smith's arguments about sympathy as the counter-force to self-interestedness, Harley's tears serve as a morally consoling expression of his humanity. The madwoman's sympathy-inducing tale lets Harley imaginatively engage with her plight, following Diderot's arguments that psychic participation prompts self-understanding and communitarian engagement.[117] At the same time, objections around a more self-serving, empty form of sympathy are evoked. Harley clearly *enjoys* this emotional overspill, chiming with Du Bos's observation that we feel 'a greater pleasure in weeping, than in laughing at a theatrical representation'.[118] Additionally, Harley pays two guineas to the keeper in exchange for this tearful encounter. This act may nod towards an earnest gesture of practical charity, yet Harley's self-indulgent outpouring of emotion means that it is the cynical spectre of exploitation that is most keenly felt. As Harley's experience crescendos in one final elaborate display of tears, Rousseau's characterisation of pity as a 'fleeting and vain emotion' is exemplified, the authenticity of Harley's feeling called into question.

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[115] Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling*, 57-60.

[116] Stephen Ahern, 'Between Duty and Desire: Sentimental Agency in British Prose Fiction of the Later Eighteenth Century' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, McGill University, 1999), 3.

[117] Denis Diderot, *The natural son; a novel; in two volumes*, trans. Joseph-Marie Loaisel-Tréogate (London: T. N. Longman, Paternoster Row, 1799) 122.

[118] Du Bos, *Critical reflections,* 2; Hayes, 'Reflection', 202.

Indicating the frequent slippages between cultural representation and historical experience during this period, clear parallels exist between Henry Mackenzie's fictional account, and Von La Roche's diary record. With Harley's behaviour proving exemplary for many, Mackenzie's novel served as a useful guide of how, and when, to weep for those visiting Bethlem. Other 'guides to look' circulated during the eighteenth century regarding an ideal asylum tourist: newspapers and periodicals likewise functioned as didactic texts which advised readers how to look at ill, vulnerable or impoverished individuals, with one *Guardian* writer encouraging individuals to 'pass a whole day in making oneself profitably sad' at Bethlem.[119] Von La Roche would have certainly had these circulating expectations in mind when visiting Bethlem, and, like Harley, she weeps on several occasions during her visit.

Having already wept for joy after hearing that several unfortunates had recently been cured, Von La Roche next meets the 'unfortunates of my own sex'. Encountering a woman with 'beautiful eyes and perfectly regular features', as well as a group of other women who were 'sitting in the passage all huddled together, pensive and melancholy', Von La Roche bestows them with 'tearful glances'.[120] Compared to the excessive tears shed with the staff, these glances may feel measured. With the general consensus that women were more susceptible to emotional overflow, Von La Roche may have been wary of exhibiting too *much* emotion at Bethlem. As Mackenzie describes, when faced with the more 'shocking' patients, it was 'the female part' of the group who begged their guide to move on.[121] Yet commentators also noted the unique relationship between female visitors and female patients, and plenty evoked the value of the same-sex exchange — even suggesting that it accelerated recovery. These ideas were solidified by the writer, diarist and philanthropist Catherine Cappe in the early nineteenth century, who asked 'May there not be a variety of minute circumstances which may occasion great distress, and may retard, if not wholly prevent recovery, but which can be communicated only to a female ear'.[122] Perhaps Von La Roche was attempting to harness her emotional response to be of service to the beautiful madwoman she meets. This woman, in turn, is described as being capable of great emotion herself, being 'deeply moved' by Von La Roche's attention.[123]

[119] *The Guardian*, 11 June 1713, 312-313.
[120] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London,* 168-169.
[121] Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling*, 52.
[122] Catherine Cappe, *Thoughts on the Desirableness and utility of Ladies visiting the Female Wards of Hospital and Lunatics Asylums* (London: 1816), 378.
[123] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London,* 169.

Prompting questions about the relationship between morality, rationality and corporeality, it is striking that, within Mackenzie and Von La Roche's accounts, it is the beautiful maniac, not just the melancholic, that produces the required reaction of pity. Read together, both texts position the physical body as a site of signification, with encoded visual signs indicating the moral integrity of the madwoman. With such focus on looking and appearance in the eighteenth century, it is no surprise that the 1780s and 1790s saw the revival of physiognomy — the idea that character and inner disposition could be read through one's face.[124] Within Bethlem, Harley chooses to engage with a madwoman whose face 'was less squalid', showing a 'dejection of that decent kind'. Likewise, Von La Roche's commentary on the beautiful female lunatic with 'perfectly regular features' corresponds with the Lavaterian notion that physical beauty and moral virtue were synonymous. Appearance now serves an allegorical function, with the innocence of the lovelorn madwoman understood through her youthful, pretty features. Later, Von La Roche describes 'one poor, melancholy creature' from whom she 'bought a little basket of plaited straw. She ran quickly into the cell with the money, a lovely slim figure which filled me with compassion'.[125] The transactional nature of this exchange is felt through both Von La Roche's pity and her payment for a basket of straw, something that the maniac's slender, attractive body encourages. Compared to the unnerving gallery space, these accounts frame female wards as reassuring areas, home to melancholic, beautiful, youthful and emotionally responsive women — the archetypal and familiar prompts of sentimental feeling and pity. This is reinforced by Knollys's letter, which he ends by mentioning the 'miserable objects' on display in the women's ward that alleviate the chaos of the galleries beyond.

The transactional quality of some of these encounters — with Von La Roche purchasing a basket from a maniac and Harley paying the keeper two guineas for his teary experience — speaks of the commodification of the madwoman's body, something that the Margaret Nicholson affair also demonstrated. Whilst arguments in chapter two considered a more spectacular mode of commercial entertainment, here money is exchanged for an *emotional* encounter — or, as Philip Martin has described Mackenzie's vignette of Bethlem, to purchase access to feeling.[126] With public asylums generally reserved for poorer individuals and pauper lunatics, and asylum tourists post-1770 being made up of the upper classes, these ideas tease out

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[124] Melissa Percival and Graeme Tyler, eds., *Physiognomy in profile: Lavater's impact on European culture* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 17.
[125] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London*, 170.
[126] Philip Martin, *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987), 19.

the class element at play within these exchanges. Critically, visitors would have the financial means to donate to the asylum, along with the social status that granted them access in the first place. The act of dropping a coin in an alms box or tipping the guide would often be the first step in a wider financial relationship, ahead of a larger donation or becoming a governor. In this sense, the madwoman was not just positioned to elicit sympathy: she became a commodified object within the asylum visit, positioned to literally elicit a financial donation from the visitor. Whilst mild nervous behaviour was a symptom of refinement and thus culturally linked to individuals of a certain class, this was never intended to end with incarceration. If it did, as chapter four shows, this would have led to a stint in a private madhouse, an expensive option but one which was affordable to the upper classes. In contrast, love's madness was a disorder that expanded this narrow conception of aristocratic nervousness to include impoverished individuals — mentioned in chapter two and detailed further in chapter five. Any women could fall in love, and the archetype often included impoverished, lower-class individuals. Thus, Mackenzie and Von La Roche's encounters with the love-mad figure within the asylum had another dimension. It was not all about the sane meeting the mad, but the rich encountering the poor. For the esteemed visitor, then, the philanthropic act may have ignited an additional sense of superiority, reiterating their own wealth and status.

How was the beautiful madwoman's sexuality — already suggested by the bare breasted alms box — translated within face to face encounters? Did her beautiful allure conjure an erotic response in the (male) visitor? With the asylum guides frequently describing the love-mad disorders of these women, these may have led to a number of unanswered questions. Perpetually framed as individuals who had experienced a form of intimacy, love and loss, the capsule narrative provided may have felt frustratingly incomplete; presenting only a brief snapshot, it left plenty of opportunity for speculation. Also unpacked further in chapter five, the love-mad trope invited further associations with erotic behaviour. The lack of certainty over whether the madwoman had engaged in any such sexual transgression might be a source of further titillation for both the male or female viewer. In a similar way that the viewer of the topographical print could take delight in what the printmaker had left *out,* the gaps in knowledge about the love-mad female may have also been arresting.

These arguments stress that the melancholic, love-mad woman was not a straightforward figure. Not absolutely pure or chaste, she was also not guilt-free. To quote Kate Retford, in the eighteenth century, 'the desirable accompanies the didactic and the virginal is redolent with sex, whether through its potential to be

lost or its necessary preoccupation with that possibility'.[127] Even the melancholic madwoman might prompt

sexual possibility, and this ambiguity might have created a tinge of discomfort for the viewer; a tinge that

many might have felt necessary to hastily circumvent through the display of pity, demonstrated through

tears. As Lynn Nead has argued in regard to nineteenth-century prostitution, anxiety and alarm around the

sexualised female body could be avoided through pity. 'Pity', Nead writes, 'deflects the power of that group

and redistributes it in terms of a conventional paternalist relationship organised around social conscience,

compassion and philanthropy'.[128] Halttunen too has argued that, whilst 'spectatorial sympathy claimed to

demolish social distance, it actually rested on social distance'.[129] The more negative emotion expressed by

Knollys and Von La Roche at other moments of their visit — such as the horror Von La Roche describes as

she approaches the asylum — is thus negotiated through the expression of pity within the female ward. First

describing the overwhelming gallery space, Knollys's narrative collapses into familiar ground when he

celebrates the 'wonderful' women who 'ask for nothing' in the female ward. Whilst Small has suggested that

the tearful dialogue between Harley and the madwoman threatens to break down the distinction between

them,[130] the arousal of pity was not just about the performance of philanthropy and the collapsing of

boundaries between mad and sane. Rather, it now joins the ranks of other distancing mechanisms present in a

tour, of mediating guides or theatrical spaces, designed to soothe or assuage uncomfortable asylum

experiences. Providing distance yet performing sentimentality, the pitiful response could function in a

myriad of ways. It could also be completely usurped, as demonstrated when Von La Roche meets Margaret

Nicholson in her cell.

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[127] Kate Retford, '"The Crown and Glory of a Woman": Female Chastity in Eighteenth-Century British Art', in *A Companion to British Art: 1600 to the Present*, eds. Dana Arnold and David Peters Corbett (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) 473-501, 496.
[128] Lynn Nead, 'The Magdalen in modern times: the mythology of the fallen women in Pre-Raphaelite painting', in *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*, ed. Rosemary Betterton (Pandora: London, 1987), 83.
[129] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 309.
[130] Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 12.

Intimate Viewing: Margaret in her Cell

One of the asylum's 'star attractions', Nicholson had been incarcerated within her cell immediately upon entering Bethlem in August 1786.[131] Chapter two argued that Nicholson was typically conceptualised through her failings as a reproductive, attractive or nurturing agent of femininity. Understood by the public as an intriguing yet unstable presence, Nicholson's subversion of sane or normative female behaviour meant that sympathy often gave way to criticism and spectacularisation. By the time that Von La Roche visited Nicholson, just a few weeks after her incarceration, most sympathetic responses had been eclipsed by more critical representations that focused on her deviance and delusion.

Perhaps taking these representations as a guide, Von La Roche does not shed tears upon seeing Nicholson. Rather, she 'shudders', describing her encounter using theatrical, sensationalised language:

> 'And now', said the supervisor, door key in hand, 'I will show you Mistress Nicholson'. I shuddered at seeing a person with murderous instincts. She sat there, tidily attired, her hat upon her head, with gloves and book in hand; stood up at sight of us, and fixed her horrible grey eyes wildly upon us. Meanwhile the inspector had noticed a number of pens lying on the ground. 'Are these pens no use, Mistress Nicholson?' he asked kindly. She answered rapidly, 'No, not one', taking a paper on which she had written with a really good hand. 'See here, the first lines were good, but I cannot let the prince see the rest'. Then the inspector assured her she should have good pens, and called a nurse immediately to take those away and bring fresh ones, for which the sad woman thanked him. Then he asked her whether she still had anything to read. 'A few pages, as you see', while she passed her fingers through them. 'I will send another part at once', he answered. She nodded thanks, sat down again, and continued her book. It was Shakespeare which she was reading so intently.[132]

As if seeing a prisoner who has committed a terrible crime, Von La Roche fixates on Nicholson's 'horrible grey eyes' and her 'murderous instincts'. Painting her mental illness as something immoral rather than health-related, we are reminded of Susan Sontag's discussion in *Illness as Metaphor* of the 'long tradition of ascribing moral significance to disease, of reading illness as a punishment for, and a metaphor of, moral corruption'.[133] Documenting the details of her visit with cold clarity, Von La Roche offers her reader a

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[131] Andrews and Scull state how 'virtually overnight, Meg Nicholson became one of Bethlem's star attractions […] sought out by all the hospital's most distinguished visitors'. See Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 243.

[132] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London,* 169.

[133] Christopher Rivers, '"The sickness turned her Inside Out and now Her Soul Was on Her Face": Disease, Disfigurement, and the Physiognomical Conclusion of Laclos's *Les Liasions dangereuses* and Zola's *Nana*', in *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater's Impact on European Culture,* eds. Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 137-149, 141; Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* (London: Penguin, 1983), 59.

unique insight into the debris of Nicholson's cell, rejecting the sentimental language we see elsewhere and the supposedly required displays of pity.

In her study of nineteenth-century physiognomy, Sharonna Pearl broadens the notion of physiognomy to include hair, posture, accessories and clothing.[134] When considering the impact of the madwoman on the visitor, particularly in an enclosed environment such as the cell, these additions serve as associative framing devices that impacted the viewing of the mad. The description of Nicholson as 'tidily attired' in hat and gloves disrupts the natural state of disorder and chaos which we expect within an asylum. So too do the books, paper and pens with which Nicholson surrounds herself. Within this tightly enclosed space, these objects — traditionally associated with intellect, rational thinking and sanity — prove unsettling. After failing to conform as a loyal subject, reproductive agent and feminine figure, Nicholson's failure to conform with the traditional notion of the disordered madwoman in mental disarray is highlighted. Von La Roche's description presents her as a somewhat uncanny inversion of traditional expectations of madness, shown as overly decorous and collected, sitting primly and receiving guests. Reinforced by the theatrical flourish with which the supervisor reveals Nicholson 'key in hand', the tableau created is a striking one: the female lunatic, wearing a hat and gloves, surrounded by books and scrawls to the prince, concealed behind a locked door.

There are various possible reasons for Von La Roche's cold response. She could have been unabashedly enjoying the privilege of an unadulterated view of Bethlem's 'star attraction', following negative commentary about Nicholson's prideful crime. The physical space of the cell may have also coloured her reaction. Mapping the essential techniques utilised by different disciplinary institutions, Michel Foucault stresses how the model of the 'monastic' cell embodied ideas around enclosure, solitude and rank. Foucault also stresses how cells link to classification, organised within a wider structure of categorisation and discipline, creating complex spaces 'that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical'. This turns the 'confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities, or *tableaux vivants*'.[135] In an unusual paradox, the cellular space invited visitors to classify patients as dangerous or violent whilst creating a satisfying sense of order within the wider asylum; something that the chaotic gallery could not do. Entering

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[134] Pearl, *About Faces*, 8.
[135] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), 148.

the cell, therefore, reinforced the contradictory feelings felt within asylums — the familiar push and pull, expressed by Cowper. The notion of the cell as a disciplinary space, designed to enclose violent patients, meant that Von La Roche was responding correctly; not shedding tears, but remaining wary of this criminal inmate.

It is Von La Roche's inability to place Nicholson within a conventional trope of female madness, however, that is arguably at the heart of her detached response. Images that juxtaposed Nicholson's mild melancholia with the King's kindness allowed pity to be displayed; yet here, the absence of this regal foil means that pity quickly transgresses into criticism. Whilst other women tell tragic tales or engage in feminine tasks, Nicholson rambles in her cell, writing strange letters to the royal family. Von La Roche may also have been disturbed at seeing a lower-class madwoman, previously a servant, self-fashion herself as an educated individual. In line with arguments put forward in chapter two, Nicholson is depicted as a strange figure who has deviated from expectations and ideals surrounding gender, class and madness. Functioning within an unnerving middle ground between raving mania and lovelorn melancholia, Von La Roche struggles to locate Nicholson within a familiar framework and is thus unable to imagine her plight and feel pity. Clearly, madwomen who upheld certain feminine characteristics were understood as being on the 'correct' side of madness, yet if Nicholson had been chained, framed via maniacal paraphernalia, at least a specific type of reaction would have been prescribed. Instead, her ambiguous behaviour warrants wariness, and detachment. In order to provoke pity, madwomen had to conform to a particular stereotype: beautiful, youthful, melancholic. Critically, Von La Roche's reaction shows that a pitiful response was not always adhered to when encountering the madwoman, illustrating the range of interconnected and shifting factors which might influence a response.

The Madwoman Chained: The Pornography of Restraint

Proudly declaring to his mother that 'This morning I went through the Wards of Bedlam, and visited Margaret Nicholson', Knollys's account of this encounter is also a paradoxical one:

> She was sulky & seemingly very proud, and said although she was chained by the Leg nobody could prevent her Dying – she has a Dictionary to read & plenty of Paper to write upon, & talked with great Glee of the Death of the King & her Marriage with the P. of Wales she is chained by a long

chain & they will not suffer her to eat anything, by way of cutting, so she is obliged to tear her meat to Pieces with her Teeth.[136]

Nicholson is sulky yet gleeful; proud yet suicidal; engaged in literary pursuits, while plotting the King's death and even a marriage to his son. The dictionary is starkly juxtaposed with her chains and the animalistic way in which she tears her food; somewhat ironically, given her chosen weapon, Nicholson is shown deprived of a knife. In this snapshot, Nicholson once more fails to comply with melancholic modes of female madness; at the same time, she does not fit within a bestial, violent or manic category either.

Seeing a famous individual, chained by the leg, within a prison-like cell, in a notorious asylum, would surely have been both captivating and disquieting. Whilst Knollys alludes to Nicholson's suicidal tendencies — 'nobody could prevent her Dying' — it is the chains that prove most vivid in his account, mentioned twice. With some asylums moving to more humane methods of treatment by the 1780s, the use of chains might have been problematic for Knollys. The growing influence of the 'moral' approach that these years witnessed was made manifest with the opening of the York Retreat in 1796, ten years after Knollys's visit. Within a contemporary context that was proposing milder methods of care over coercion, viewing Nicholson in chains might have stirred a moral dilemma in the viewer.

Visual culture of the late eighteenth century also saw additional meaning attached to the iconography of women and chains. As detailed in chapter one, political prints of the 1760s-80s utilised representations of a fettered Britannia, interpreted as symbolising parliamentary and monarchical turmoil. Examples such as *Britannia in Distress* (1769) [Figure 1.4] show Britannia chained and surrounded by men, suggestive of public concerns about the loss of individual liberties and the King's abuse of power.[137] The political connotations of the chained female body are also redolent within two examples by the pro-liberty, radical Scottish artist Robert Edge Pine (1730-1788), including a mezzotint engraving of *Madness* from 1775 by William Dickinson, after a painting of Pine's from 1771 [Figure 3.14].[138] Pine's aggressive rendition of incarcerated female mania was a progression from an early painting of the same subject from 1760, titled *A Madwoman* and engraved by James McArdell in the same year [Figure 3.15]. Both of these paintings were lost in a fire in 1803, but their existence as engravings is illuminating. The fact that McArdell, a highly

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[136] Knollys, 'Countess of Banbury', 30 August 1786.
[137] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy,* 128-129.
[138] Kromm has discussed Pine's 'feisty engagement the egalitarian artistic societies' and his association with John Wilkes. See Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 131.

successful printmaker, made an engraving of *A Madwoman* in 1760 suggests that this was a subject printmakers were keen to take on; a point reinforced by the use of mezzotint in Dickinson's engraving — a technique that was faster than engraving, producing more impressions, and most importantly, was extremely fashionable.[139]

Exhibited at the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Artists in 1760, the print reveals an incarcerated female with exophthalmic eyes denoting her 'barely contained belligerence'.[140] Whilst this earlier image dresses the inmate in a loose shift, by 1771 she is adorned in what appears to be fur. Dickinson's treatment of the mezzotint, accentuating the contrast between light and dark tones, heightens the drama of this latter print, particularly felt through the shadowy background of the cell itself and dark contouring of the face. In the earlier image the mad girl wears a crown of straw, but by 1771 this is replaced with electrified, sporadically placed sprigs. Unlike her later companion, the 1760 version is not in chains — though her folded arms suggest a restricted pose. Nodding to the intensified visual language in Pine's later work, Kromm has argued that Dickinson's mezzotint highlights a more acute 'degree of distress', with her wild hair, fur, exposed breast and clenched fists all suggestive of 'a further sign of anger and rebelliousness', of 'bestial and Amazonian undercurrents of furor'.[141]

Madness was one of four paintings by Pine to be exhibited at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition of 1772, a year that was dominated by Johan Zoffany's *Portraits of the Academicians of the Royal Academy*, which drew a particularly dense crowd.[142] The *Morning Chronicle,* however, included a positive write up of the work:

> Raging madness is so admirably marked in the countenance of this woman, that you are led to think your only security lies in her being in chains: but this expressive painter, like our great poet Shakespeare, seems to have been so taken up with his main design, that he has neglected the under parts; as her arm, though on the strain, has none of the swelling of the veins, so analogous to the situation of her mind.[143]

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[139] Martin Postle, ed., *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity* (London: Tate, 2005); Carol Wax, *The Mezzotint: History and Technique* (New York, NY: H. N. Abrams, 1990).
[140] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 131.
[141] Kromm, *Art of Frenzy*, 134-136.
[142] Charles Robert Leslie and Tom Taylor, *Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds: With Notices of Some of his Contemporaries* (London: J. Murray, 1865), vol. 1, 446; Meredith Gamer, '1772: Zoffany's *Academicians* in the Great Room', in *The Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition: A Chronicle, 1769–2018*, eds. Mark Hallett, Sarah Victoria Turner and Jessica Feather (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2018) <https://chronicle250.com/1772>.
[143] *Morning Chronicle,* 4 May 1772.

The expectation of the reviewer is that the mad body should mirror the mad mind, with the 'swelling of the veins' symbolic of the irritated nerves that many contemporaries attributed to be the primary cause of madness. The 'security' that the chains were seen to foster is significant, linking to the work of Rebecca Wynter on the Staffordshire Asylum. Wynter has argued that women were twice as likely to be restrained as men, as 'instances of female violence, confrontation, abandon and exposed flesh corrupted moral therapy, thereby jeopardizing the success of the asylum. Swift restraint would then realign the image of therapeutics and the appearance of the inmates' femininity'.[144] Positing that restraint reinforced morally therapeutic treatment methods, serving as an antidote to outbreaks of aggression, violence and nudity, her arguments suggest that restraint reinstated a madwoman's femininity whilst casting the asylum in a positive light. Pine's rendition of a chained madwoman certainly does not suggest the reassuring context of a morally therapeutic environment; but, as the reviewer suggests, the tethered female body contrasts with the threat of unrestrained physicality. Through this reading, items of restraint become a further boundary within the asylum experience and, like the cellular space, provide a measure of order, even comfort, for the visitor.

Given their ready association with animals, chains might also function in a dehumanising capacity, strengthening the boundary between spectator and spectacle. Many contemporary reports made this connection: newspapers often placed madwomen within an animalistic, almost sub-human category, with one providing a deeply unsettling account of a confined female lunatic with hands 'so deformed that they resembled fins'.[145] Mackenzie, too, described the terrifying, animalistic cries of Bethlem's inmates that Harley and his guests heard on arrival at the asylum, too awful to be seen.[146] Jumping ahead to the 1830s, Crewe explicitly describes the woman he encounters at Nottingham lying on straw in the yard as 'a mere animal'.[147] Despite its widespread use as asylum bedding, the presence of straw ineluctably reinforced these associations, due to its natural connotations with animals and farm yards. While these connotations served to dehumanise patients, this discourse also allowed further sympathy to be attached to these individuals, due to the eighteenth-century upsurge in viewing animals, like the mad, through a humanitarian lens.[148]

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[144] Rebecca Wynter, "Good in all respects': Appearance and dress at Staffordshire County Lunatic Asylum, 1818-1854', *History of Psychiatry*, 22, 1 (2011), 40-57 (49-50).

[145] *Morning Post*, January 1831.

[146] Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling,* 52.

[147] Crewe, 'Calke Abbey', 114.

[148] Jamie Rosenthal, 'The Contradictions of Racialized Sensibility: Gender, Slavery and the Limits of Sympathy', in *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830,* ed. Stephen Ahern (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 171-188, 171-172.

Paradoxically, uniting chains with the naked female body may have prompted ambiguous and unwanted sexual feelings, associated with coercive pornographic objects and practises. Whilst bondage and chains were not a feature of pornographic material in the late eighteenth century, Julie Peakman reports that flagellation was considered a legitimate sexual activity and pornographic trope.[149] Additionally, the implied act of breaking *out* of chains suggested an unrestrained sexual frenzy that representations of wandering women lacked.

After viewing Nottingham asylum's yard and moving into the galleries, Crewe's description in 1833 presents restraint as a source of serious moral anxiety:

> I scarcely know how to describe either the sights which I witnessed or the sensations to which these thoughts gave me. Generally speaking, in the lower Wards the patients were of a class which it was impossible to look at long. Indeed in some instances I thought the moments we pause to look round the room much too long. The Patients that I saw were at the time […?] but few of them violent. Two — one man and one woman — had the straight waistcoat on and the man was confined by a strap to the Bench upon which he sat.[150]

Written over fifty years apart, Knollys and Crewe's passages sharply differ. Knollys *does* note the chains and the conditions of the female wards, and may well have been affected by them, but his measured retelling contrasts with the agonised tone of Crewe's later account. Blending somatic sensation with deeply troubled thoughts, Crewe struggles to put into words the sights and sensations experienced at the asylum. Whilst his account might not mention chains, rather commenting on the use of restraint clothing and straps, it is clear that the tableaux of the restrained man and woman seriously disturbed him.

Crewe's intense reaction might be due to a variety of reasons, linked to unwelcome erotic imagining or the dehumanising association with animals outlined above. Another key reason may have been its social context. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, the moral therapy movement was in full swing. The strait-jackets, strait-waistcoats and straps that Crewe notes were not to become objects of controversy until the late 1830s, part of the non-restraint movement that saw Lincoln and Hanwell asylums ban any form of restraint in favour of solitary confinement.[151] Whilst Wynter has argued for the comforting role of restraining objects, serving as an 'antidote to outbreaks of aggression, violence and nudity', Crewe does not appear

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[149] Julie Peakman, *Lascivious Bodies: A Sexual History of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), 250. See also Haltunnen, *Humanitarianism*, 315.

[150] Crewe, 'Calke Abbey', 113. Noted in the text, this transcription has several omitted words.

[151] Leslie Topp, 'Single Rooms, Seclusion and the Non-Restraint Movement in British Asylums, 1838-1844', *Social History of Medicine*, 31, 4 (2018), 754-773, 754.

comforted by their use at Nottingham. The sense is that these objects did not comply with his prior notion of the institution, and he was not prepared for such a scene.

Considering an image that sits between Knollys and Crewe's accounts lends weight to these ideas. Published within a three-volume text by Rudolph Ackermann between 1808 and 1810, *Microcosm of London* featured illustrations from Augustus Pugin and Thomas Rowlandson. The inclusion of Rowlandson's interior of St Luke's [Figure 3.13] in the second volume demonstrates that it was not simply the country's asylums that functioned as spaces of civic pride, but female spaces in particular. Rowlandson shows a lofty space with two distinct sets of female maniacs. To the left are the 'most distracted inmates' — five female figures who freely roam the ward. Whilst these women pull their straw-dressed hair or mope morosely, the group who gather on the print's right-hand side exemplify a new model of domestic asylum behaviour, rooted in the therapeutic ritual of everyday tasks.[152] Rowlandson's image speaks of the new *ideal* of the female asylum patient that the early nineteenth century offered, of 'psychiatric contemporaneity and conventional domesticity', as noted by Kromm.[153] Contrasting with her idle and melancholic or frenzied and manic counterparts, these women are engaged in the domestic and calming pursuits that proponents of moral therapy argued aided one's recovery to sanity.[154] Suggestive of the growth of a new female ideal, it is significant that no objects of restraint — for either group — are depicted. Rowlandson's print illustrates evolving expectations surrounding the behaviour and treatment of incarcerated female patients — expectations that the Nottingham asylum did not meet.

Further social developments during these years intensified the uneasy relationship between women, restraint and poor treatment. In response to the failed 1814 bill to repeal the 1774 Madhouse Act, a Select Committee report from 1815-16 concerned itself with grievances surrounding poor treatment at Bethlem and York asylum — many of which involved women.[155] Widely published, a key issue was the horrific treatment of Bedlamite James (sometimes known as William) Norris, who had been chained for 'more than twelve years'.[156] Visualised in a print by George Arnald from 1815 [Figure 3.16], a gloomy Norris is chained to his

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[152] Jane Kromm, 'The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation', *Feminist Studies,* 20, 3 (1994), 507-535 (515); Elaine Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', *Victorian Studies*, 23, 2 (1980), 157-181 (158).
[153] Kromm, 'Feminization', 515.
[154] Leonard Smith, *Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody: Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 3.
[155] Report of the Select Committee on Madhouses in England, BPP*,* 1814-15, vol. 4; Third Report of the Committee on Madhouses in England*,* BPP*,* 1816. vol. 6; Smith, 'Keeper', 206.
[156] *The Times*, 25 Aug. 1815, 2.

cell wall by an iron bar. The report also contained details about the treatment of confined women. Evidence given by philanthropist Edward Wakefield at the Select Committee spoke of the 'unfortunate women […] locked up in their cells, naked and chained on straw' at Bethlem: 'each chained by one arm or leg to the wall; the chain allowing them merely to stand up by the bench of a form fixed to the wall, or to sit down on it. The nakedness of each patient was covered by a blanket gown only'.[157] This increasingly dominant image of the chained, naked and maltreated female body may well have weighed heavy on Crewe's mind at Nottingham, impacting his emotional response.

Further light can be shed on his intense reaction through a series of compelling arguments from Halttunen, who maps changing attitudes towards pain during this period. She expounds that the representation of pain had become a source of moral horror by the nineteenth century, transitioning from something unavoidable to something loathsome, horrifying and revolting.[158] In order to establish pain's unacceptability and 'arouse popular opposition to the evil practices they hoped to eradicate', Halttunen argues, humanitarian reformers deemed it necessary to display those practices in all their horror'.[159] This somewhat contradictory stance was reflected in the narrative strategies of humanitarian literature. On the one hand, the visceral and detailed expressions of slave plantations or carceral institutions were designed, not to exploit the reader's curiosity, but to instruct them in their own demonstrations of horror and disgust.[160] On the other, and as noted when discussing topographical prints, omission was a popular strategy. Sweeping over visceral scenes with a broad brush, reformers such as English abolitionist Thomas Clarkson frequently left out scenes 'too horrid and indecent to mention' whilst inferring the 'very material it purported to set aside'. This strategy allowed humanitarian writers to simultaneously recall yet castigate sensational descriptions of pain.[161]

Written during the heart of this movement, Crewe's account of Nottingham grapples with these expressive strategies. Appalled, he castigates the length of time spent in the lower wards; at the same time, he is vague, avoiding descriptive detail when recording these painful sights, and instead euphemistically

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[157] *The Times,* 25 Aug. 1815. 2. Wakefield was a philanthropist who 'combined his business travels as a land-agent with philanthropic tours of inspection of asylums in England'. See William Ll. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 250.
[158] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 310.
[159] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 330.
[160] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 330.
[161] Thomas Clarkson, *An Abstract of the Evidence Delivered Before a Select Committee of the House of Commons in the Years 1790, and 1791* (London: James Phillips, 1791), 75; Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 328-329.

commenting that it was 'impossible to gaze at long'. The difference between this passage and the detailed description of the female maniacs he encounters in the asylum yard — whilst manically pacing and rolling in hay like wild animals, they do not receive such a horrified response — reveals how the restrained individuals jarred in a way in which the unchained madwoman did not. These examples suggest an awareness of, and compliance with, a range of cultural scripts found within the humanitarian writing of the day.

Fundamentally ambivalent, these arguments illustrate the range of reactions that the restrained female body might provoke. Objects of restraint might create an ameliorating boundary between the sane and the mad; paired with nudity, chains might accentuate an erotic reading, dehumanise the madwoman or reinforce her pitiful status. Likewise, discomfort over restraint might have intensified as the moral therapy movement gained publicity. With asylums increasing reframed as domesticated institutions, the new ideal of the madwoman as agent of her own recovery may have meant that seeing the restrained woman proved particularly troubling. On the other hand, as Wynter has suggested, it might have contributed to an atmosphere of security, via the containment of the madwoman's unruly body.

'Practical Hints': Recording Responses in Visitor Books

Before leaving the asylum, visitors had the opportunity to sign their name in the visitor book. Placed in public areas, responses within these books reveal mixed stances on looking, action and sympathy, straddling critical, sentimental, reflective and practical engagement. They thus function as unique objects in which spectacle, philanthropy, social expectation and performance meet, their status as *public* documents meaning that they accentuate the asylum's role as a space of self-conscious performativity. To make these points, the final section of this chapter interrogates existing visitor books from the 1810s, 1820s and 1830s from Bethlem, St Luke's and the York Retreat.

Looking first at Bethlem, its visitor book is striking in that it contains a plethora of different languages, scripts and comments from high profile aristocratic and royal visitors. A visit from the 'grand duke Nicholas' of Russia in February 1817 was followed by the Duke of Gloucester, who 'expressed great satisfaction'. Later that same day, this phrase is echoed in another entry: 'The Duchess of York accompanied by Mademoiselle D'Orleans visited the hospital and expressed the highest satisfaction at everything'. County

magistrates, in their role as visiting inspectors, as well as individuals inspired to start their own medical

institutions join these royal and aristocratic responses. This roll call illustrates Bethlem's place as part of a

philanthropic asylum circuit: the Grand Duke Nicholson went on to visit the Retreat after Bethlem, as did the

Duke of Wellington in July 1821.[162]

Understood as an international site of psychiatric inspiration, responses to the Retreat were

unwaveringly glowing. One American tourist in 1815 described how the establishment 'far surpasses

anything of the kind he has elsewhere seen'; another categorised it as 'the neatest, cleanest and most elegant

place of this kind in the world'.[163] Similar rhetoric was used to describe the London institutions. One entry in

Bethlem's book from 1818 describes the hospital as 'an honour to the English Nation'.[164] Mimicry and

repetition is evident within these books, with visitors parroting opinions and phrases such as 'great order',

'comfort' and 'very much gratified'. A wave of responses to St Luke's over the summer of 1831 uniformly

mention the cleanliness, good order and comfort of the institution.[165] Conforming to a pithy and positive

lexicon, these examples suggest that visitors glanced through the previous pages before leaving their own

comment.

With the proliferation of morally therapeutic texts around asylum management and non-restraint,

visitor books gave the educated elite and interested professionals the opportunity to make their own

recommendations on how to improve the management of the hospital.[166] As the nineteenth century

continued, public access was increasingly viewed as providing protection against abusive staff, and visitors

believed they were fulfilling an important inspectorial role to 'ensure the maintenance of proper

standards'.[167] When Richard Till of London Bridge visited Bethlem in 1816, he was gratified by the 'extreme

cleanliness of the whole building', but took 'the liberty of suggesting the necessity of a contrivance to keep

open the window frames in the galleries'. Other comments referenced the need for new fireguards or the

dampness of the ground-floor wards.[168] These were bolstered by written responses by well-known

philanthropic reformers. In April 1831, Quaker reformer Elizabeth Fry detailed her reaction to St Luke's,

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[162] Visitors Book, Bethlem Hospital, 1815-1831, VBB-01, Series Box Number D05/1, BMMA.
[163] Visitors Book, York Retreat, RET/1/4/4/1, 1798-1822, BIA.
[164] Visitors Book, Bethlem.
[165] Visitors Report Books, St Luke's Hospital, H64/A10, 1829-1916, LMA.
[166] Samuel Tuke, *Practical Hints on Constructing and economy or pauper lunatic asylums; including instructions to the architects who offered plans for the Wakefield asylum and a sketch of the most approved design* (York, 1815).
[167] Smith, 'Keeper', 203.
[168] Visitors Book, Bethlem.

identifying issues alongside a range of practical solutions. The galleries were too cold, the patients bored, and she was anxious about their lack of clothing as 'the straw must irritate the skin'.[169] Whilst a Quaker such as Fry would have been actively involved in various humanitarian institutions, most of these entries were made by medical professionals or philanthropic guests as part of a wider tour; interested individuals who might later become asylum benefactors or patrons.

Whether written by aristocrats, clergy, professionals or philanthropists, concepts of social performance pervade these texts. The physical act of committing one's name to paper served as a ritual through which one's polite and philanthropic role could be performed, a demonstration of their understanding of what kind of advice to give and their fluency in certain topics. One strategy typically used to express one's utility was an emphasis of the amount of time spent, or distance covered, within the asylum. Contrasting with Crewe's aforementioned disgust at time spent in the Nottingham asylum's gallery, one visitor boasted how he had seen 'every patch of the institution' of Bethlem. Another discussed the 'satisfactory hour' spent at that asylum.[170] Given the controversy that had surrounded visiting asylums, and particularly Bethlem, in the century's middle decades, publicly and self-consciously displaying the validity and usefulness of one's visit may have been important for many. These instances are linked to feelings of obligation surrounding the amount of time one *should* spend with the suffering. The combination of sycophantic responses, repetitive language, elaborate signatures and emphasis on the length of a visit shows how individuals were keen to express their commitment to these spaces; again, highlighting the philanthropic milieu of the age.

The act of *leaving* the space so shortly after submitting a comment, however, complicates the engaged nature of this encounter, reinforced by the lack of detail that many of these entries embody, or their focus on conditions and staff, rather than patients. With the visit recorded, one's response succinctly placed on the page, the signing of the book resonates with arguments on the emptiness of performative interactions that avoided real engagement — as expressed by Rousseau. The theatricality of this act is felt visually within Bethlem's book, with many visitors spending longer on their decorative signatures than the entry itself. The materiality of the books contributes to these arguments: weighty impressive objects, their aesthetic reinforced the theatricality of signing one's name. The visitor books thus embody a redemptive ritual,

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[169] Visitors Report Books, St Luke's.
[170] Visitors Report Books, St Luke's; Visitors Book, Bethlem.

providing an ameliorating endpoint to a visit's psychological strain. With the visitor's compassionate role now successfully performed, this ritual signals a further step within the process of detachment that I have argued the asylums considered in this chapter enabled.

A final qualification is necessary here. A guiding factor in noting one's response succinctly, or leaving a broader comment that failed to meaningfully engage with any patients, may have been a self-conscious move *away* from scopophilic viewing practices. In response to circulating texts and prevailing opinion that admonished anyone who had derived enjoyment from a visit to an asylum,[171] it was crucial that any pleasure expressed within one's lengthier sign-off was linked to the excellent work of the staff. Additionally, with many of these entries appearing to self-fashion the writer as a pseudo-inspector of the asylum, the visitor books align themselves with another important discourse of the period: that of civic humanism. Emphasising active citizenship, civic humanism stressed how the bourgeois citizen was first and foremost part of a wider public.[172] John Barrell describes how this strand of philosophical aesthetics was about contemplation rather than action, one related to public spirit rather than practical acts of public and heroic virtue.[173] Significantly, strands of civic humanism prioritised the extensive, rather than the narrow or confined view.[174]

These ideas relate to similar models posited by Shaftesbury or Kant on 'disinterestedness'; a less subjective and relatable aesthetics that worked in opposition to other, more engaged, aesthetic encounters.[175] Following models posited by Shaftesbury or Kant, writers such as Elizabeth Bohls have defined this aesthetic experience as a less subjective, experiential and relatable set of aesthetics, working *against* other aesthetic encounters which focus on wholehearted sensory experience. In opposition to sensibility's psychoperceptual ideas of consciousness and expression,[176] this mode of looking aligned with commentary that called for a more remote cultural contemplation, promoting a rational and refined way of seeing.[177]

[171] *The World*, 7 June 1753, 138; Mackenzie, *Man of Feeling*, 51.

[172] John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: The Body of The Public* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1986), 4.

[173] Barrell, *Political Theory*, 27.

[174] Barrell, *Political Theory,* 79-80.

[175] Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, 'Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times'*, in Aesthetics: A comprehensive anthology,* eds. Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 77-86, 77-79; Immanuel Kant, 'Critique of Judgement', in *Aesthetics: A comprehensive anthology,* eds. Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 421-426.

[176] G. L. Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xvii.

[177] Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London: Routledge, 1995), 5.

On the one hand, these entries might be written shortly *after* a visitor's expression of an all-encompassing sensory experience, already felt on the asylum tour after an emotional encounter. For many, ending a visit in floods of tears or physically shocked may have been problematic, perhaps disrupting the flow of the philanthropic circuit. Whether the emotional display was genuine or overblown, visitor books provided a temporal space of reflection, in which visitors could compose themselves. On the other hand, these responses might be strategies of succinctness, used to illustrate the prioritisation of non-consumptive and disinterested forms of looking. In her discussion over non-consumptive viewing practices, Carole Fabricant argues that eighteenth-century tourist models promoted brief, surface-based encounters, due to dangers of the displacement of rationality for passion or possession.[178] By 1803, contemporary commentators in guidebooks were warning against 'an affectation of sensibility', in line with Small's arguments that the turn of the century saw an 'attack of sensibility', as overzealous sentimental expression begin to go out of fashion.[179] Responses that appear to eschew genuine engagement can thus be understood as part of a self-conscious process of detachment, and an attempt to avoid expressions of sensibility that might seem too frenzied or passionate — emotional expressions embodied by the lunatics they had just viewed.

This is not to argue that all visitor book entries relate to these discourses: not all were well-versed with the humanitarian writers of the day, nor intimate with Shaftesbury or Kant. Similarly, this is not to say that instances of expression were never performative. Plenty of empty, sterile gestures might be made throughout an asylum visit, and we should be wary of taking self-congratulatory accounts of a visit at face value. But the types of people who were being admitted into England's asylums — learned professionals, medics, philanthropists and the elite — would have been familiar with some of these circulating narratives, and perhaps were careful not to appear too enthusiastic during their tour's final moments. Considered together, these arguments nuance any straightforward discussion of the visitor books in particular, and an asylum visit as a whole. Arguing that *all* tourists were engaged in an active form of philanthropy is one dimensional, as is taking a purely cynical and reductive approach to the range of responses that this chapter has collected. Throughout the asylum tour, we have been subjected to all manner of tensions: between

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[178] Carole Fabricant, 'The Literature of Domestic Tourism and the Public Consumption of Private Property', in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, Literature,* eds. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York, NY; London: Metheun), 254-275, 254-255. See also Shaftesbury, 'Characteristics'*,* 78-79.
[179] Anon, *A view of London, or, The stranger's guide through the British metropolis* […] (London: B. Crosby, 1803-1804), 112. See also Small, *Love's Madness,* viii, 14.

charity and spectacle, pain and pleasure, genuine philanthropy and sterile pity, push and pull. Now, it is the tension between interaction and detachment, or emotional expressiveness and rational refinement, that further illustrates the turbulent ideological and emotional landscape of the asylum space in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

Upon approaching the asylum, it was the horror of what lurked behind its façade that troubled Von La Roche. When leaving, she has another reflection, noting how she prayed to God 'to keep my intellect fit unto the end'.[180] This chapter has at times been wary of Von La Roche's emotional outbursts and demonstrations of pity, keeping in mind advice from other scholars that suggest taking her sentimental discussion of Bethlem with a pinch of salt, as she 'viewed the institution through spectacles that were strongly rose-tinted by naïveté and affected sensibility'.[181] Yet her admission upon leaving the asylum is instructive. It suggests that her optimistic buoyancy was protective, even strategic, designed to help her journey through this powerful and potentially formidable space. As with Halttunen's discussion of the use of obscenity within eighteenth-century narratives on pain — functioning not as a form of voyeurism or titillation, but rather as an aid to articulate the horror of several painful practices[182] — expressions which feel empty or sterile might be indicative of further psychological coping mechanisms. Yes, we can read Von La Roche's response as staunchly performative on the surface, but this performance might have been linked to her own fears surrounding the mad and illness. In line with arguments made at the end of chapter two, once more it is the innately troubling idea of one's own mental demise, here envisaged through the raving lunatic in a cell or the heartbroken woman wandering the galleries, that might have conditioned her response. Framing asylums not as degenerate spaces of transgression or debauchery, these sites become dialogical zones in which visitors could imagine themselves within the 'tableaux, spectacles and texts', to borrow from Marshall, of philanthropic, spectacular and public life.

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[180] Von La Roche, *Sophie in London,* 170.
[181] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 253.
[182] Halttunen, 'Humanitarianism', 330.

Conclusion

A trip to Bethlem in the late eighteenth century was one of expectation and anticipation, of encounter and engagement, of reflection and recollection. Having successfully acquired a ticket from the governor, a visitor might see Hooke's print of the asylum that depicted a throng of genteel individuals in its foreground [Figure 3.1]. Perhaps they had spotted Smith's print [Figure 3.8] in a print shop window and felt a rising thrill of titillation upon seeing the tiny windmill protruding from a cell. They might have read Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling,* horrified by the descriptions of the mad howling like animals, or possibly finding it a useful tool of emotional prescription for the experience to come. Crossing the open expanse of Moorfields on the day of the visit, perhaps that 'patina of prestige' was felt, one's place within a select clique solidified. Passing the maniacal and melancholic icons atop Bethlem's gates [Figure 1.8] might instil a satisfying sense of familiarity — or perhaps it was disquiet, an eerie announcement that the visit had begun.

Once inside, the female alms box might catch them off-guard [Figure 3.11]. Confronted with her cross eyes and bare breasts, a coin or two might be placed in the container she cradles to assuage mixed feelings of unease, arousal and compassion. Moving upstairs, the loud, chaotic and disordered galleries could be alarming — the guide a welcome source of comfort or information. Perhaps the visitor crossed to the women's ward and found a cluster of love-mad melancholics drinking tea, more reassuring than the strange presence of Mad Peg, reading Shakespeare in her cell. Upon seeing a chained patient, anguish or moral anxiety might rise; or, the visitor might feel relief to see such an individual restrained. All the while, a sense of detachment from the spectacles on view might be growing. As the visit came to a close and the guide thanked, they might write a congratulatory remark noting their impression in the visitor book, or merely sign their name so as to leave the asylum as quickly as possible. Their visit might stay with them for many days, months, even years to come. They might boast about it to peers or have felt ashamed that they went in the first place.

Through close examination of the many steps of an asylum tour, and the ways in which the sane interacted with the mad, their keepers, spaces and objects, this chapter has emphasised the rich emotional cocktail that an asylum visit proffered. It has identified the experience as one rife with contradictions, bound to the twin pillars of charity and spectacle that have loomed large across this chapter. Each architectural area embodied its own emotive dynamics, enabling various levels of interaction or detachment, relating to charity

or spectacle in different ways, though at times simultaneously. Embodying tensions between ideals and reality, prescription and behaviour, the different spaces and objects that made up a tour propelled visitors into *both* philanthropic and voyeuristic roles. With asylums functioning as bastions of philanthropy and psychiatric care, this chapter has argued for the broad range of circulating narratives, including humanitarianism, moral therapy, civic humanism and moral philosophy, alongside more specific issues of care, restraint and pain, that permeated and governed these spaces. It has demonstrated the impact that these narratives and issues had upon the emotional complexity of one's response — stressing that these sites were by no means divorced from the social issues of the day.

Across these arguments, the pitiful response has been interpreted in various ways: as a positive and proximity-signifying emotion; a sterile performance; a distancing strategy; a coping mechanism. Expressing pity might be authentic, or it might be excessively evoked to demonstrate the visitor's understanding of sentimental codes. As Von La Roche's closing remarks suggest, it may have been a psychological strategy, employed in order to experience and then exit the public arena of the asylum psychologically unscathed, before contemplating the true nature of what one had witnessed in private.

Alongside pity, I have identified a host of alternative emotions experienced within these spaces, many of which were prompted by the incarcerated woman. Serving as an embodiment of charity and spectacle, she often functioned as a valuable icon of spectatorial sympathy. Bolstering arguments given in chapter one about the civilising effects of the late eighteenth-century woman, meeting the melancholic woman might enable an emotional encounter, a positive impression and a financial transaction. Often an antidote to unfamiliar modes of madness, the persistence of the melancholic paradigm has been illustrated through these examples. Yet this chapter's focus on responses and repercussions has revealed that the madwoman was more than an idealised prompt of sentimental feeling. Not always ameliorating, or producing a positive emotional reaction, the madwoman interacted with issues of sex, money, recovery, politics and poverty, proving animalistic, learned, sexualised. The unique environment of the cell offered an unprecedented experience of proximity to the decorous madwoman, whilst the alluring beauty of the commodified love-mad object might be disquieting. The madwoman in chains might provoke a debauched thrill in the viewer, produce unspeakable horror, or prove strangely reassuring. Security, intrigue, horror desire, guilt, shame, fear, and self-reflection: all of these emotions might be evoked through an encounter with the madwoman, within this potent and unique space.

CHAPTER FOUR

Narratives of Insanity: The Female Experience in the Private Madhouse

In 1781, a newspaper reported that a 'wandering maniac' had been found in a small village close to Bristol. Wandering alone all day, come nightfall this mysterious woman 'took up her Lodging under an old Haystack'. Shortly thereafter, Louisa, 'Lady of the Haystack', found herself remanded in a local Private madhouse.[1] In 1791, Dorothea Fellowes was moved against her will into Fisher House, a private madhouse in Islington, describing her confinement as 'the greatest act of violence and oppression that was ever offer'd to an innocent woman'. She would remain there until her death, twenty-six years later.[2] In September 1796, *The Times* reported a 'dreadful scene' of a lifeless mother and a wild daughter. Mary Lamb, later dubbed by Roy Porter as one of the most 'famous Georgian mad people', had murdered her mother in the family kitchen.[3] A few weeks later, she too was moved into the Islington madhouse. In 1817, Euphemia Boswell, daughter of the biographer James Boswell, wrote a ballad from 'her solitary prison-room, in Dr Sutherland's Mad-House, in which she was forcibly detained, in the full powers of reason'.[4]

Uniting these multifarious narratives is the backdrop of the private madhouse. Be it in London or the South West of England, each of these women spent time embroiled in what scholars have named the 'private madhouse trade'.[5] Whilst chapter three interrogated representations of and reactions towards anonymised women through the lens of spectatorial sympathy, this chapter uses an array of letters, journals, newspaper reports, accounts and private madhouse records, to untangle the experiences of four identified women within the private madhouse system. With early Gothic texts often utilising the scandalous setting of the private madhouse and the threat of wrongful incarceration to drive sensational plot-lines, this chapter also identifies slippages between cultural representation and historical experience — as evidenced by the parallels between novelist Henry Mackenzie and diarist Sophie Von La Roche's complementary accounts of Bethlem in the previous chapter.

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[1] 'A Tale of Real Woe', *St James's Chronicle*, 10-13 November 1781.
[2] Letters and Accounts regarding stay in Islington Madhouse, NRO, FEL 656,554X4.
[3] Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 324; *The Times*, 24 September 1796.
[4] Euphemia Boswell, *Ballad, Written in 1817 by Euphemia Boswell, the daughter of the biographer of the yet-unrivalled Johnson in her solitary prison-room in Dr Sutherland's Mad-house in which she was forcibly detained in the full powers of reason* (London: C. Facer, 1836).
[5] William Ll. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

Noted in chapter one, private madhouses were one of three types of institutional provision for the mentally ill in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Alongside voluntary institutions such as Bethlem, funded by benefactors and sponsors, and state-funded asylums that sprung up following the County Asylums Act of 1808, the private madhouse was part of a wider consumer movement in which patients or their families paid for their own treatment.[6] Unlike their voluntary and, later, state-funded counterparts, private madhouses catered predominantly for a middle and upper-class clientele due to the fees involved — although some parishes did pay for pauper lunatics to be cared for privately.[7] As Charlotte Mackenzie has noted, private madhouse fees 'represented a relatively expensive option, particularly for long-term care'.[8]

Until recently, William Parry-Jones's *The Trade in Lunacy* (1972) remained the only comprehensive text dedicated to the private madhouse.[9] As its title suggests, Parry-Jones's study situated these establishments within a wider context of *trade*, part of a growing national commercialism that the late eighteenth century witnessed, as Neil McKendrick and others have claimed.[10] Building on Parry-Jones's text, Porter's *Mind-Forg'd Manacles* (1987) gave greater nuance to the spectrum of experiences that private madhouses offered their patients, drawing important connections between madhouses and growing patterns of consumption in eighteenth-century England.[11] The last thirty years has borne several institutional specific studies including Charlotte Newman's work on Brooke House in Hackney and Charlotte Mackenzie on Ticehurst Private Asylum in Sussex.[12] Supporting the scholarly conceptualisation of the private madhouse as a commodified space that relied on the entrepreneurial nature of England's leading medical men, Leonard Smith's recently published work on English private madhouses between 1640 and 1815 is a welcome addition to this scholarship.[13]

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[6] Leonard Smith, *Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody: Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 5-7.
[7] Leonard Smith, *Private Madhouses in England, 1640-1815: Commercialised Care for the Insane* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 4.
[8] Charlotte Mackenzie, *Psychiatry for the Rich: A History of Ticehurst Private Asylum, 1792 - 1917* (London; New York, NY: Routledge: 1992), 15.
[9] Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy;* see also Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1969), 322-328.
[10] Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, eds., *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1982).
[11] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles,* 136-147.
[12] Mackenzie, *Psychiatry for the Rich,* 15; Charlotte Newman, 'A mansion for the mad: an archaeology of Brooke House, Hackney', *Post-Medieval Archaeology,* 49, 1 (2015), 156-174; Leonard Smith, 'Eighteenth-Century Madhouse Practice: The Prouds of Bilston', *History of Psychiatry*, 3 (1992); Leonard Smith, "God grant it may do good two all': the madhouse practice of Joseph Mason, 1738-79', *History of Psychiatry*, 27, 2 (2016), 208-219.
[13] Smith, *Private Madhouses.*

Thus, as British industries boomed, so too did the madhouse trade. A combination of this entrepreneurial atmosphere and the increasing need for the provisioning of the mentally ill amongst England's middle and upper classes meant that, by 1807, there were 28 registered provincial private madhouses, mostly located in the South of England. By 1819, forty of these madhouses had been licensed.[14] Prior to 1774 anyone could open a private madhouse, but — responding to growing concerns — the Act for Regulating Madhouses of that year ensured that madhouses were licensed and inspected. The Act was also intended to safeguard the sane from illegal confinement, though its successes were mixed.[15] From this date onwards, family members needed to seek professional confirmation of an individual's insanity prior to incarceration, obtaining a medical certificate from a physician, surgeon or apothecary.[16]

Whilst this legislation provided new regulations, it did not regulate conditions or fees. With madhouses often spilling into the households of their proprietors, they were typically haphazardly run and ad-hoc in nature.[17] Fees varied widely, depending on the accommodation, medical care and additional provisions available.[18] For a private madhouse to command high fees and attract a certain type of patient, it had to uphold high standards of comfort and care. Access to outdoor space, pleasant grounds, genteel furnishings and an esteemed resident physician were all important factors in building a madhouse's reputation, which in turn governed how much it was able to charge.[19]

As Newman has noted, 'accused of being driven by commercialism and greed, private madhouses often suffered an appalling reputation'.[20] Throughout the eighteenth century, private institutions had come under fire from cultural commentators and concerned reformers alike. Complaints typically fell into two broad categories: shocking conditions and wrongful confinement. Published in 1825, John Mitford's visceral text about London's network of notorious private institutions such as Whitmore House in Hoxton and Bethnal Green's White House described these madhouses as dungeon-like hellholes, in which indifferent

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[14] These figures are given in Mackenzie, *Psychiatry for the Rich,* 14 and Newman, 'Mansion for the mad', 157.

[15] Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1993), 24-25.

[16] Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy*, 9-11.

[17] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 140.

[18] Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy*, 124.

[19] For examples of how private madhouses were marketed, see Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy,* 102-112.

[20] Newman, 'Mansion for the mad', 157. See also Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull, *Undertaker of the Mind: John Monro and Mad-Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 148-53; Smith, *Private Madhouses,* 9.

staff left stricken patients chained for months on end.[21] During an era which prized the freedom of the human body through legislation such as the Habeas Corpus Act (1816), the issue of wrongful confinement also permeated depictions of the private madhouse.[22] To be sure, grievances about public *and* private establishments were discussed in tandem. The published findings of 1815-16's Select Committee report shared the more troubling aspects of life within both these institution types. Hard-hitting exposés by incarcerated men and women such as Urbane Metcalf and the lesser-known Sarah Newell told of the horrific realities of perceived wrongful imprisonment within both private and public spaces.[23] The previously unregulated nature of the private madhouse, however, in addition to its status as a secretive and singular site, meant that its reputation often suffered. As Jonathan Andrews and Andrew Scull have argued, its intrinsically closeted character invited a host of gothic and sensational fantasies, of abuses taking place behind its walls.[24] Given sensational texts and government reports, scandals about the private madhouse and the incarceration of innocent individuals were kept firmly in the public eye.

Across Gothic literature, the dramatic possibilities of the Hanoverian madhouse made it a well-placed setting for scenes of terror and cruelty; an ideal backdrop for tales of evil husbands, terrifying doctors and desperate women.[25] As well as framing the Hanoverian madhouse as a terrifying space where 'ignorance and cruelty [combined] in a waking Hogarthian nightmare',[26] the Gothic also utilised the 'terrifying injustices' of wrongful confinement in compelling plot twists.[27] Whilst fictional characters of both sexes were often depicted within the context of cruel captivity, it was the trope of the male relative and doctor conspiring to incarcerate a helpless woman that loomed largest in the popular imagination. Going to four editions between its first publication in 1726 and 1790, Eliza Haywood's (1693?-1756) novel, *The Distress'd Orphan, or Love in a Madhouse*, was a vivid tale of female confinement, with its heroine Annilia wrongfully confined by her uncle after inheriting a large fortune and refusing to marry her cousin.[28] Published

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[21] John Mitford, *A description of the crimes and horrors in the interior of Warburton's private mad-house at Hoxton, commonly called Whitmore House* (London: Benbow, 1825).

[22] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 149; Smith, *Private Madhouses*, 250-257. See also Sarah Wise, *Inconvenient People: Lunacy, Liberty and the Mad-Doctors in Victorian England* (London: Bodley Head, 2012).

[23] Urbane Metcalf, *The Interior of Bethlem Hospital* (London, 1818); Sarah Newell, *Facts connected with the treatment of insanity in St Luke's Hospital* (London: Effingham Wilson. 1841).

[24] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker*, 148.

[25] Helen Small, 'Madness', in *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, ed. Marie Mulvey Roberts (Macmillan Press: Hampshire, 1998), 152-57, 152.

[26] Small, 'Madness', 152.

[27] Bridget M. Marshall, *The Transatlantic Gothic Novel and the Law, 1790-1860*, (Ashgate, Surrey: 2011), 1.

[28] Eliza Haywood, *The Distress'd Orphan; or Love in a Madhouse* (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1995).

posthumously, Mary Wollstonecraft's (1759-1797) *The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria* (1798) was also driven by these themes. With its titular character incarcerated by an abusive husband, the novella detailed the 'crushing hand of power', the 'exercise of injustice', and the 'systemized oppression' of the madhouse system.[29] By the 1850s, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* told the story of Anne, a mysterious figure who was cruelly confined in a private madhouse by the evil Percival Glade.[30] Part of a wider 'female Gothic genre', which peddled the physical containment of heroines within 'mysteriously intricate or uncomfortably stifling' spaces,[31] images of female enclosure, entrapment and escape proved all-pervasive during these years. Titillating for some, these representations fuelled the negative image of the private madhouse further.

These stereotypes were somewhat revitalised in early feminist literature. Arguments from Phyllis Chesler and Jane Ussher built on Foucault's model of anti-psychiatry and social control, which characterised the moral therapy movement and its institutions as a system of confinement, restraint, repression and uniformity.[32] Scholars have since shown that private madhouses were far more accommodating, comfortable and open spaces than both cultural characterisation and previous scholarship have allowed. True, some scholars have agreed that various establishments exceeded even their most terrifying cultural representations,[33] but many provided their residents with humane care, comfortable lodgings and even close relationships with staff. As the first chapter demonstrated, historians such as Porter acknowledge that a number of provincial madhouses, including Laverstock House near Salisbury, Ticehurst Asylum in Sussex and Brislington House near Bristol, were sites of therapeutic innovation.[34] Inspired by the work of the York Retreat, these establishments prioritised home-like spaces, milder methods of care, and therapeutic daily routines geared towards patient recovery.[35]

This chapter also interacts with issues of wrongful confinement and retrospective diagnosis.

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[29] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary; Maria*, ed. Jane Todd (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1991), 61, 64.

[30] Wilkie Collins, 'The Woman in White', in *Novels of Mystery from the Victorian Age: Four complete unabridged novels*, ed. Maurice L Richardson (London: Pilot Press Ltd., 1945), 1-471.

[31] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn. (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000), 83; Ellen Moers, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 90-9.

[32] Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1972); Nancy Tomes, 'Feminist Histories of Psychiatry', in *Discovering the History of Psychiatry,* eds. Mark Stephen Micale and Roy Porter (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 348-383, 352-355.

[33] Andrews and Scull, *Undertaker,* 153.

[34] For more on these institutions, see Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy*, 112-121; Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 140, 159, 227; Smith, 'Practice of Joseph Mason', 216.

[35] Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy;* Smith, *Private Madhouses*, 3.

As chapter one showed, feminist commentary framed female confinement as a by-product of patriarchal power structures, within both the family and the medical profession, arguing that unfeminine, independent or eccentric behaviour might lead to a woman being labelled insane and incarcerated against her will.[36] These issues have since been raised within more granular scholarship on the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Elizabeth Foyster has considered the relationship between eighteenth-century 'women's rights over their bodies, personal liberties and identity within the law', whilst Sarah Wise's *Inconvenient People* shares experiences of sane people being declared mad. Describing the wave of nineteenth-century 'lunacy panics', she considers how medical professionals might be viewed as curbing 'individual freedom by labelling unconventional behaviour as a pathological condition, in need of cure or containment'.[37]

With these ideas in mind, this chapter grapples with the illnesses of its case studies. Staying alert to the dangers of projecting modern diagnoses of historical illnesses on past actors, it resists concrete diagnosis of the women it analyses whilst simultaneously deeming it productive to ask a range of thorny questions about historical illnesses: on whether these women were really insane, if their incarceration was justified, and if these case studies suggest the pathologising of unconventional or eccentric behaviour. Rather than searching for a monolithic diagnosis for the historical patient, and guided by suggestions put forward by Axel Karenberg, it builds up a 'window of opportunity' through which to better understand medicalised perceptions of the past, via careful use of primary sources and historic context.[38]

It does this through close analysis of the lives of the four individuals introduced in the first paragraph: Louisa, 'Lady of the Haystack' (d.1800); Dorothea Fellowes (d.1817), Euphemia Boswell (1774-1837) and Mary Lamb (1764-1847). Beginning with Louisa, I chart her publicised journey from freedom to incarceration. Connecting themes of philanthropy with conventional stereotypes of female insanity, I argue that it was Louisa's characterisation as a wandering and free maniac that was celebrated across cultural sources, despite that fact that she was moved into a private madhouse in 1781. With the mysterious and family-less Louisa serving as a singular case, the remainder of the chapter considers Dorothea, Euphemia and Mary, three women who all spent time in the same private madhouse — Fisher House in Islington,

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[36] Jane Ussher, *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (London: Prentice Hall, 1991), 7; Chesler, *Women and Madness*, xx-xxi, 52, 56.
[37] Elizabeth Foyster, 'At the limits of liberty: married women and confinement in eighteenth-century England', *Continuity and Change,* 17, 1 (2002) 39-62 (40); Wise, *Inconvenient People,* xvii.
[38] A. Karenberg, 'Retrospective Diagnosis: Use and Abuse in Medical Historiography, *Prague Medical Report*, 110, 2 (2009), 140-145 (144).

London — between the 1790s and the 1810s. With Fisher House only mentioned fleetingly by Parry-Jones and Smith, this chapter extends historical knowledge of a reputable, London-based madhouse.[39]

These case studies form a tight body of material that allows a closer look at a range of social, familial and economic factors that affected experiences of madness. In contrast to Louisa's solitary condition, and in line with Akihito Suzuki's discussion of kin serving as 'important actors in psychiatric decision making', striking across the Islington trio is the key role of their siblings, due to the absence of paternal involvement.[40] Their experiences give weight to Ruth Perry's arguments about the impact of older brothers on the affairs of their younger sisters.[41] These women were of middling to high social status: Mary was the daughter of upper-middle-class servants, but also part of a well-known literary set; Euphemia was the daughter of the renowned author James Boswell (1740-1795); Dorothea part of an aristocratic Norfolk family. They thus functioned differently to the nameless madwomen considered in the previous chapter, revealing some surprising experiences.

Whilst the case of Dorothea highlights shopping, consumption and consumerism at work within the madhouse, Euphemia and Mary evoke questions about the employment of a 'compelling discourse of interiority' — to borrow a phrase from Lesel Dawson — when sharing their plight with others.[42] Keen letter writers, archival material generated by these women proffer valuable insight into their lived experiences, as well as how others perceived their madness. Whilst Mary has been the subject of previous scholarship, the stories of Dorothea and Euphemia have been neglected to date. Prioritising this glut of primary material, I argue that these women deployed various strategies to negotiate their situations — not securing their freedom but experimenting with the cultural weight levied by the figure of the wrongfully incarcerated woman. Complicating the notion of the private madhouse as a uniformly terrifying site of entrapment, repression and cruelty, this chapter assesses the ways in which popular stories and stereotypes coloured responses towards the madwomen confined within.

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[39] Smith, *Private Madhouses*, 95, 160, 180; Parry Jones, *Trade in Lunacy,* 124.
[40] Akihito Suzuki, *Madness at Home: The Psychiatrist, the Patient, and the Family in England, 1820-1860* (London: University of California Press, 2006), 1.
[41] Ruth Perry, *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 109.
[42] Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 97.

Into the Madhouse: The Case of the Wandering Maniac

In November 1781, *St James's Chronicle* published 'A Tale of Real Woe'. Anonymously authored by the female philanthropist, Hannah More (1745-1833), this intriguing account described the discovery of an 'unfortunate lady' in the sleepy village of Flax Bourton, near Bristol, in 1776. Found begging for 'the refreshment of a little milk', the woman took up lodgings under a haystack:

> There was something so attractive in her address and appearance, as to engage the attention of all around her. She was extremely young, and strikingly beautiful; her manner's graceful and elegant, and her countenance interesting to the last degree. Her deportment and conversation bore visible marks of superior breeding; yet there was a remarkable wildness and incoherence in all that she said and did.[43]

This was Louisa, soon nicknamed the 'Lady of the Haystack'. Bearing signs of insanity and frequently described as a wild maniac, Louisa was simultaneously understood as a harmless, beautiful stray. Despite her supposed 'superior breeding', she spoke poor English and was unable to fully communicate her plight. She therefore blended an array of contradictory values: exhibiting clear markers of social standing and a 'disarming sweetness', she was incoherent and sometimes manic.[44]

Following the publication of More's piece in 1781, cultural interest in Louisa's puzzling case saw her celebrity grow. Throughout the 1780s, she became the subject of a painting, poem and various textual accounts which speculated about the history of this mysterious wanderer.[45] In 1785, a narrative 'made its appearance on the Continent', giving clues about Louisa's 'breeding' and 'peculiar accent'.[46] Titled *L'Inconnue*, the account claimed that Louisa shared identical scars to the illegitimate daughter of Francis I of Austria, and therefore, was the half-sister of Marie Antoinette. Rumours circulated that she had been driven out of the country to avoid scandal, a story peddled further when the Reverend George Henry Glasse published a translation of the text in 1801, titled *Louisa: A Narrative of Facts*.[47]

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[43] *St James's Chronicle*, 10-13 November 1781. Identical accounts were later shared in texts including 'Louisa, The Lady of the Haystack', *The Lady's Monthly Museum*, 1 June 1801.

[44] Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55.

[45] See Figure 4.1, William Palmer, *Louisa, the celebrated Maid of the Hay-Stack*, 1788; Ann Yearsley, 'Clifton Hill', in *Poems, on several occasions. By Ann Yearsley, a milkwoman of Bristol [poems only]*, 2nd edn. (London: T. Cadell, 1785), 107-127; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 55, 2, 1785, 720-722.

[46] G. H. Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror: Reflecting a Faithful and Interesting Delineation of Male and Female Characters* (London: James Cundee, 1806), vol. 3, x.

[47] G. H. Glasse, *Louisa: A Narrative of Facts: Supposed the Throw Light on the Mysterious History of the "Lady of the Haystack"*. 2nd edn. (New Brentford: P. Norbury, 1801).

Disseminated as the love-mad craze proliferated, alone with nature and her thoughts, Louisa's romantic appeal was clear. Like Crazy Kate, she was frugal (she takes 'no food except milk, tea and the most simple diet'), innocuous ('her way of life was the most harmless and inoffensive') and lacked vanity (she was reported as shrugging off pretty clothes given to her).[48] As such, she serves as a fascinating example of a living embodiment of the melancholic, acceptable and harmless madwoman. These features come together in a portrait of Louisa, painted by William Palmer in 1788 and later disseminated as a print and book illustration [Figure 4.1]. Framed within a bucolic setting, a serene Louisa gazes at the viewer, one hand on her breast, the other outstretched with an open palm. In line with arguments put forward by Sharonna Pearl, and as mentioned in chapter three, the blanket wrapped around her bears intriguing connotations of poverty. Pearl explains how within tableaux of suffering, wearing a blanket suggested rescue, placed on the sufferer for comfort and warmth.[49] Despite allegedly being of high birth, this iconographic connection with rescue and poverty creates a fascinating inversion for those familiar with her story. A formerly rich woman, linked with European royalty, is now reduced to a shawl and haystack.

Aside from this iconographical nod, no other reference to her madness is given, contrasting with other publications that describe Louisa's psychic disarray. More's text noted that Louisa's 'Recollection seems impaired, and her whole Mind visibly disturbed',[50] yet this portrait instead focuses on her youth and mild innocence. Louisa's idealised beauty grabs the viewer's attention, serving as a visual hook; indeed, alongside the bottom of the print are the directions: 'For a Full Account of this remarkable person, see 'The Tale of Real Woe' & 'A Narrative of Facts''. A further intriguing addition to this print is the bundle that Louisa clasps to her breast. If we did not know the context, we might take Louisa for a Foundling mother clutching her illegitimate child. Perhaps piquing the viewer's intrigue further, this hint towards motherhood feels ironic, given Louisa's solitary, child-free status.

Louisa had, in fact, already spent time at a local asylum — St Peter's Hospital — before being found by More:

> I pass over this Period of her History — it is too touching for my own Feelings — it would too tenderly affect the Sensibility of the Reader — At Length she was released; with all the Speed her small Remains of Strength aloud she flew to her beloved Haystack […] her rapture was in

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[48] Wilson, *Eccentric Mirror*, xxii, 105.

[49] Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 160.

[50] *St James's Chronicle*, 10-13 November 1781.

expressible on finding herself again at liberty, and once more safe beneath this miserable shelter.[51]

Not dwelling on this aspect of Louisa's story, More instead emphasises her intense resistance to leaving her outdoor space. She explains how, when one local women offered to accommodate her, Louisa refused, insisting that 'trouble and misery dwelt in houses, and that there was no happiness but in liberty and fresh air'.[52] The celebration of Louisa's 'primitive' and 'natural' condition chimes strongly with the Rousseauian ideal of man's free and natural state. This philosophical stance, seen to best effect in Rousseau's novel, *Emile* (1762), would have been familiar to many. Emphasising the importance of childish innocence over human wisdom, as well as the positive impact of the natural world, the novel states that 'the more nearly a man's condition approximates to the state of nature, the less difference is there between his desires and his powers, and happiness is therefore less remote'.[53] Louisa's association with the pastoral, and her distaste for living within civilised society, thereby helps to explain her popular appeal.

Circulating after her death, *The Affecting History of Louisa, the Wandering Maniac* (1803) also included an illustration [Figure 4.2]. This one mingled her charming features with manic iconography, as signalled by the text that runs alongside the print's edge: 'Dishevelled, lo! Her beauteous tresses fly, And the wild glance now fills the staring eye'.[54] Sheltered by the neatly presented haystack — which in fact appears more like a cottage than a mound of hay — Louisa's soft features are animated by her mania. Her hair is loose and flowing, her eyes wild. The well-dressed man and woman she looks towards appear to cause her concern, and she raises her hands in a protective gesture. Perhaps she is calling out to them. Both this and the previous image accentuate Louisa's position as a lone individual; a single woman removed from the idealised expectations of a daughter, wife or mother. Louisa was consistently framed as single within written accounts too: More describes her as 'alone, a stranger, and in extreme distress', whilst in 1785 local poet Ann Yearsley described her as a childless 'slow-paced Maid': 'no mother's bosom the soft maiden befriends'.[55] Despite several texts on Louisa's case highlighting the role of *female* supporters, with More twice mentioning the 'neighbouring ladies' as Louisa's 'constant and unwearied benefactors', it is significant

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[51] *St James's Chronicle*, 10-13 November 1781.
[52] *St James's Chronicle*, 10-13 November 1781; Wilson*, Eccentric Mirror*, 3.
[53] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or, Education* (London: J. M. Dent, 1911), 45.
[54] Anon, *The Affecting History of Louisa, the wandering maniac, or, "Lady of the hay-stack" […] A real tale of woe* (London: A. Neil, 1803).
[55] Written in January 1785, Ann Yearsley's *Clifton Hill* gives a lengthy account of Louisa. See Yearsley, 'Clifton Hill'.

that the image portrays a heterosexual couple. The implication, then, as we saw with Margaret Nicholson, is that the absence of a desirable domestic relationship might be behind Louisa's madness.

Given Louisa's alignment with love-mad iconography, it is worth questioning whether contemporaries saw her through a lovelorn lens. Some accounts posited an ill-fated romantic attachment as responsible for her condition, suggesting that she had fled after an affair gone wrong. In this way, as Smith has claimed, she might function as a 'modern morality tale' for men, as the author of her obituary explicitly stated:

> The conviction that it is possible for any man, making pretensions to honour, or even distinction from a brutal nature, so to betray, and so to abandon, in a foreign land, youth, beauty, the strongest sensibility, and perhaps the most engaging innocence, fills the mind with horror of the deed, and with shame and indignation for the character![56]

There was no real evidence, however, that this was the cause of Louisa's mental demise, and her behaviour invites further interpretations. Statements from sympathetic individuals, such as More and the Reverend John Wesley (1703-1791) suggest that she suffered from some form of very visible and troubling mental illness. Yet her insistence on sleeping outside suggests stubborn eccentricity, not full blown mania. With historians such as Wise discussing the ways in which the medical profession curbed freedom by 'labelling unconventional behaviour as a pathological condition',[57] Louisa's behaviour might be interpreted as peculiar and erratic, rather than hysterical and disordered.

In December 1781, Louisa was moved to a private madhouse in the small town of Hanham, east of Bristol.[58] This move was, somewhat remarkably, masterminded and funded by More, who initially paid £50 for Louisa's room and board in a generous act of philanthropy. Run by Methodist schoolmaster Richard Henderson, an advertisement in a local paper announced that patients were in 'every Way compassionately attended to. Moreover every Assistance in Reach shall be employed for their cure'.[59] Of the few narratives that discussed Louisa's confinement, all were positive about Henderson's care. Following her death in 1800, the house was declared to have 'the best reputation for the reception of persons in her unhappy

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[56] *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 31 January 1801; Leonard Smith, 'A Tale of Georgian Madness and Mystery', Unpublished Conference Paper.
[57] Wise, *Inconvenient People,* xvii.
[58] *St James's Chronicle*, 10-13 November 1781; Henry Thompson, *The Life of Hannah More: With Notices of Her Sisters* (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey and A. Hart, 1838), vol. 1, 50.
[59] *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 15 January 1780.

circumstances', with Louisa 'most tenderly taken care of'.[60]

Material that discusses Louisa post-incarceration focuses on issues surrounding freedom, treatment and her fading beauty. Writing to Mary Hamilton in 1783, Horace Walpole was concerned to hear that Louisa had been confined in a cell:

> You say, the poor Louisa is confined, from necessity, to a cell — if *by necessity* is meant the want of money, I will most gladly contribute towards removing that necessity; but as she has found so much humanity, I rather imagine that the deplorable state of her mind necessary occasions her confinement to a cell destined to lunatics — but if the former sense is implied, I beg to know it, and how I may most speedily relieve her.[61]

Walpole was reassured that Louisa was residing in a comfortable chamber, but his fears reveal anxieties that a cell was an unsuitable space for someone of her alleged class. These discussions echo contemporary worries that were raised in the late 1780s and 1790s about the treatment of George III during his bouts of mania. The disturbing image of a strait-jacketed and restrained monarch troubled many, as did the realisation that 'the same fate awaited any gentleman or woman, however high-born, suffering from the same affliction'.[62] With texts such as *Gentleman's Magazine* printing multiple pages about Louisa's high birth and contextualising her within a network of aristocratic families based in Bordeaux, Vienna and Brussels,[63] Louisa's placement within the culturally loaded space of a private madhouse was troubling, even if these institutions were reserved for higher-class individuals.

Another issue was Louisa's diminishing looks. Louisa's beauty prior to her confinement was often discussed, amplified by her graceful, elegant manners. For a short while, these positive descriptions continued. When Wesley visited Louisa at Hanham in March 1782, his response prioritised descriptions of her beauty:

> Such a sight, in the space of fourteen years, I never saw before! Pale and wan, worn with sorrow, beaten with wind and rain, having been so long exposed to all weathers, with her hair rough and frizzled, and only a blanket wrapped round her, native beauty gleamed through all. Her features were small and finely turned; her eyes had a peculiar sweetness; her arms and fingers were delicately shaped, and her voice soft and agreeable. But her understanding was in ruins.[64]

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[60] *The Lady's Monthly Museum*, 1 March 1801, vol. 6.

[61] 'To Mary Hamilton, 7 October 1783', in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence,* ed. W. S. Lewis (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937-1983), 207. Mary Hamilton was a prominent late eighteenth-century diarist and courtier, close friends with Horace Walpole and members of the Bluestocking circle.

[62] Macalpine and Hunter, *George III*, 277.

[63] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 720-722.

[64] Nehemiah Curnock, ed., *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: Charles H Kelley, 1915), vol. 6, 343-4.

Louisa's weather-beaten skin and frizzy hair may have caused alarm, yet her sweet eyes, delicate fingers and soft voice still suggested her 'native beauty'. In contrast, returning to the madhouse two years later, Wesley detailed Louisa's further demise and 'much-altered' looks:

> I spent a few melancholy minutes at Mr. Henderson's with the lost Louisa. She is now in a far more deplorable case than ever. She used to be mild, though silly; but now she is quite furious. I doubt the poor machine cannot be repaired in this life.[65]

In the 1782 letter, Louisa is still a 'sight' that permits a lengthy description, but by 1784, Wesley spends only a few minutes with the furious Louisa. This change was apparently felt by Louisa herself. In October 1783, More had also written to Mary Hamilton, describing how Louisa was moved by her own, much declined, reflection, when she

> looked at herself in a little glass I had carried her, but was shocked at her own figure, tore off the ribbons and wrapped herself up in her bed cloths full of grief and disgust remembering, I fear, with what a different Spectacle that glass used to present her.[66]

Earlier statements about Louisa's lack of vanity are now replaced with self-conscious despair, as even Louisa is filled with 'disgust' at her own reflection. This statement prompts questions about how beauty links to morality, raised in chapter three. As her beauty fades, reactions to Louisa become more negative, her declining looks equated with her diminished rationality and the more energised and angry mode of madness she now represented. Later in this letter, More considers this tension in a striking confession, as she describes how Louisa 'has almost lost all that beauty and elegance which I am afraid had too great a share in seducing my affections. I dare not ask myself whether it was her calamity or her attractions which engaged my heart to serve her'.[67] The notion of beauty *seducing* the affections and sympathy of her spectator is a powerful one, bringing us back to Sophie Von La Roche's delighted appraisal of a sweet, skinny madwoman at Bethlem, whereby the physical body becomes an embodiment of one's moral worth and fine feeling.

In opposition to issues of sterile pity raised in chapter three, Louisa's case suggests an active form of philanthropic engagement. That argument demonstrated how acts of pity were consolidated by tossing a few

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[65] Curnock, *Wesley*, 415.
[66] 'Letter to Mary Hamilton, 21 October 1783', cited in Stott, *Hannah More*, 56.
[67] Cited in Stott, *Hannah More*, 56.

coins into an asylum's alms box or jotting one's signature in a visitor book. I argued in favour of complicating this at times limiting conception of an asylum encounter, stressing that a performative response may have been motivated by other psychological factors. On the one hand, the dedicated emotional, material and financial provision of More and her circle speaks of engaged compassion. Various accounts about Louisa reported how neighbouring ladies enthusiastically supplied Louisa 'with the necessaries of life', entreating her to sleep inside their homes.[68] This support was intensified by the financial donations of 'Miss Hannah More and her sisters', with More's immediate circle also funding Louisa's move into Hanham madhouse.[69] Yet Louisa also represented an opportunity, during a time when aristocratic women were encouraged to behave as 'influential exemplars of domesticity' and 'practitioners of philanthropy'.[70] Well-known texts such as the *Lady's Magazine* described these women as 'active advocates of humanity', celebrating their endless 'accommodations of the poor solitary stranger'.[71] For women of the landed classes who typically aided the poor on their estates and surrounding villages, Louisa served as an idealised object of female philanthropic attention, bestowing them with David Solkin's aforementioned 'patina of prestige'.[72]

There was also a sentimental titillation at play here. In line with arguments put forward by Susan Lamb, in the days of Sterne and sensibility, coming across a wandering madwoman would have been an exciting prospect, 'a chance object of interest to a lucky tourist'.[73] Louisa's prior links to aristocracy, even royalty, and her potential descent into madness following an affair gone wrong, may have strengthened this romantic appeal. Forsaking grand rooms and luxurious comforts for the simplicity of the haystack, Louisa encapsulated the compelling frisson of a fall from grace. Her story serves as a tantalising reversal of Richardson's *Pamela*, which saw a maidservant climb the social ladder to marry her employer, Mr B., a wealthy landowner.[74] Encountering a mysterious individual, once moving within aristocratic or royal circles, now resigned to a haystack, was a fascinating inversion that may have increased Louisa's enticement. Alongside compassionate motivations, local gossip may have had a significant part to play in securing the

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[68] *St James's Chronicle*, 10-13 November 1781; *Affecting History*, 7.
[69] *Affecting History*, 8.
[70] Dorice Williams Elliot, *The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2002)*, 5, 57.
[71] *Lady's Monthly Museum*, 1 March 1801.
[72] David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-century England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1992), 158.
[73] Susan Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home to England: Tourism, Gender and Imaginative Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 151-189, 190.
[74] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, ed., *Pamela* (London: Everyman, 1966).

interest of local women. Perhaps a sense of satisfaction was awakened in these women too, as they evidenced their superior status over this once-elevated figure.

Extending arguments from chapter three on the madwoman's role as a philanthropic spectacle, Louisa embodied a far less troubling, even celebrated, mode of madness when wandering free in nature, in line with melancholic stereotypes circulating elsewhere. Despite being confined in Hanham madhouse from December 1781, and being moved to Guy's Hospital, London, in January 1790,[75] it was the image of Louisa as a harmless wanderer that endured. More continued to provide Louisa with financial aid up until her death in 1800; though perhaps, as her confession to Mary Hamilton suggests, her heart was no longer in it. Cultural interest in Louisa certainly waned as her incarceration continued; whilst several texts and Palmer's portrait surfaced in the 1780s, by the 1790s publications had significantly dwindled. As one local newspaper wrote in 1791, 'Louisa, the once celebrated Maid of the Haystack, of Bristol, is now forgotten in one of the lunatic apartments of Guy's Hospital'.[76] As Louisa steadily disappeared from public view, now only the subject of a few letters written by a small network of supporters, there is a strong sense that her image as a free, harmless stray struggled to reconcile with her incarcerated status. Her death in 1800 saw a flurry of fresh material on 'the wandering maniac', her story once more enthusiastically shared in periodicals, textual accounts and, by 1803, a play.[77] Within these interpretations, it was Louisa's previous characterisation as a harmless stray, contained within the reassuring foil of her natural habitat, that was celebrated, rather than her disturbing afterlife as an incarcerated creature.

Building on these arguments, the rest of this chapter examines a London madhouse, and the experiences of its inhabitants, in greater detail. Despite well-meant philanthropic activity, Louisa was predominantly alone. A penniless individual, with no family, she only found herself in the madhouse because of an act of philanthropy which was fuelled by romantic interest in her past and beauty. In contrast, the women at Fisher House were a part of wider familial networks meaning their experiences of confinement were very different from Louisa's, as the rest of the chapter examines.

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[75] Smith, 'Georgian Madness and Mystery'.
[76] *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 7 November 1791.
[77] James Boaden, *The Maid of Bristol: A Play in Three Acts* (London: Longman and Rees, 1803).

'Comforts in her calamity': Madness and Consumption at Fisher House

The case of Dorothea Fellowes has been somewhat eclipsed by that of her nephew, John Charles Wallop, 3rd Earl of Portsmouth. Elizabeth Foyster's *The Trials of the King of Hampshire* sheds light on the compelling tale which saw Wallop, the son of Dorothea's sister, Urania (1743-1812), become the subject of a Commission of Lunacy to establish whether he was of 'unsound mind'.[78] As Foyster reports, Urania's marriage to the 2nd Earl of Portsmouth had, for the Fellowes family, 'opened the door to the exclusive world of the aristocracy'.[79] A lively domestic drama full of sexual depravity and violent behaviour, Foyster's text dedicates only a few pages to Dorothea's fate.[80]

One of five children, Dorothea was the daughter of local MP and later sheriff of Devon, Coulson Fellowes, who owned the Eggesford estate in Devon, and property in London and Cambridgeshire. Sister to Henry Arthur (d. 1792), William (d.1804), Urania and Mary (who died in 1788, three years before Dorothea's incarceration), the death of Dorothea's parents in the 1760s meant that care and responsibility of her fell to her three remaining siblings. As Ruth Perry states, brothers were 'bound to protect and preserve their sisters to the extent that they valued the blood that ran through their veins'.[81] As we shall see, the roles of Dorothea's siblings were distinctly gendered; her brothers were involved in the logistical side of the early steps to incarceration, with Urania focusing on her sister's comfort once confined.

Dorothea's troubling behaviour began in the mid 1780s. Over a four-year period, her health worsened, and her siblings debated how to care for her. Named 'Reasons for Confinement', a document from 1791 details how Dorothea had become increasingly frightened by those around her, 'giving & taking offence any where, when the provocation seemed totally imaginary, in the street or in any public place'.[82] No longer trusted to live alone, 'no servant who could be depended upon would live with her'. Without a servant, she failed to take her medicine or conform 'to any Regimen prescribed'. By August 1791, Henry was writing to William, explaining how Dorothea's mind was 'certainly very much distemper'd'. Insisting that they needed to find a 'place of security' where she could be housed safely,[83] a few weeks later, another

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[78] Elizabeth Foyster, *The Trials of the King of Hampshire: Madness, Secrecy and Betrayal in Georgian England* (London: One World: 2016), xiv.
[79] Foyster, *King of Hampshire*, 5.
[80] Foyster, *King of Hampshire,* 77-84.
[81] Perry, *Novel Relations,* 109.
[82] Reasons for Confinement, September 1791, HA, R32/7; List of Questions, 5 September 1791, HA, R32/7.
[83] Henry Arthur Fellowes, Letter to William Fellowes, 21 August 1791, HA, KR/R35/7.

letter describes an upcoming visit from Dr Robert Darling Willis, who had been summoned to examine Dorothea in exchange for a small fee.[84] Believing Dorothea to be 'perfectly rational on all common topics' and merely taking up 'some peculiar ideas', Willis concluded that 'there is a probability of the symptoms wearing off by time alone' and recommending that the patient should 'visit her relations or friends' to provide distraction from her negative thoughts.[85] Not satisfied with this diagnosis, the family quickly sought a second opinion and began 'simply shopping around for another doctor'.[86] Thus, Dr Samuel Simmons (1750-1813), the physician of Fisher House, was consulted. After meeting the patient on 11 September 1791, he immediately certified that 'Mrs. Dorothea Fellowes of Fleet Street, spinster, is in my opinion insane'.[87] Dorothea spent the remainder of her life, until her death in 1817, confined at the madhouse in Islington.

Described as a 'select establishment',[88] Fisher House was one of London's more reputable private psychiatric establishments. It was certainly small, and thus exclusive, with only 16 patients recorded in 1815.[89] As such, it charged some of the highest fees in the country. Typically, patients paid around £200 per year for basic medical care and board: in modern terms, this equates to £15,352.[90] This fee would vary from patient to patient, depending on their medical care and the type of rooms they inhabited. Towards the end of her time in Islington and once her disbursements, lodgings and additional healthcare fees had been added to her annual bill, Dorothea was paying around £400 per year.

One of London's leading insanity specialists and also a physician at St Luke's, Simmons was an entrepreneurial figure who treated King George III in 1803.[91] Moving amongst the fashionable echelons of London high society, he and his madhouse were well placed to care for those from the genteel classes, and he attracted them through a carefully maintained image of respectability.[92] Whilst the exact date of Fisher House's opening is unclear, licensing records tell us that its first recorded proprietor was a 'Mr Robert

[84] Henry Arthur Fellowes, Letter to William Fellowes, 31 August 1791, HA, KR/R35/7.
[85] Dr. Willis's opinion, 29 August 1791, HA, R32/7.
[86] Foyster, *King of Hampshire,* 82.
[87] Dr. Simmons's report, 10 September 1791, HA, R32/7.
[88] P. Bull, Esq., 7 Richard Street, Limehouse Fields, near Stepney Church, London, 25 November 1823, OHA, W/P/5/xxxviii.
[89] Significantly smaller than most private institutions, Smith describes how Hoxton accommodated over 700 patients, and Laverstock housed 100. See Smith, *Private Madhouses*, 139.
[90] According to the National Archives Currency converter: 1270–2017, accessed 2 September 2020, £200 was worth approximately £15,352 in 2017 <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter>.
[91] Leonard Smith, *Lunatic Hospitals in Georgian England, 1750-1830* (London: Routledge, 2007), 79, 99; Smith, *Private Madhouses*, 180.
[92] Newman's work on John Monro and Brooke House in Hackney makes a similar case for the relationship between a madhouse's respectability and the reputation of its resident physician. See Newman, 'Mansion for the mad', 159.

Holmes'. His license began in 1795, and four years later it was taken over by his widow, Ann. Until his death, the couple ran Fisher House together, acting as managers, with Ann as matron and providing basic care to the patients. Providing the House's medical expertise, Simmons officially took over the license in 1807. The following year, it was taken over by his successor at St Luke's, Dr Alexander Sutherland.[93]

The madhouse was situated on what is now the Essex Road, Islington; a leafy, green area away from the city's main hubbub. Built at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the building had been an academy for teaching 'young ladies Latin and Greek' before becoming a madhouse in approximately 1780.[94] In 1845, following its closure, the *Illustrated London News* featured the house in its nostalgic 'Nooks and Corners of Old England' segment, portraying the house as a 'spacious mansion', with 'beautifully laid out' lawns and flower gardens. An accompanying image revealed an open gate, tall poplar trees and large windows, with open curtains and visible interiors [Figure 4.3].[95] The same vision is presented in an undated painting of Fisher House, in the collection of the Royal College of Physicians [Figure 4.4].

Before discussing Dorothea's experiences at this establishment, it is worth asking: was she really insane? Whilst this chapter resists concrete diagnosis of Dorothea's mental illness, the behaviour of her family means that it is fair to assume that their motivations surrounding the incarceration of their sister were mixed. The speedy search for a second opinion suggests that embarrassment, shame and a lack of patience were decisive factors. Adding a slightly sinister air to proceedings, so too does the transactional quality of ascertaining Dorothea's diagnosis. Indeed, a list made by William in the months following Dorothea's incarceration, discussing the dismissal of servants and packing of Dorothea's things included the instruction: 'say that Mrs D. Fellowes is gone into the country to visit'.[96] These examples prove suspicious, suggesting a family cover-up and the suppression of Dorothea's voice, reinforced further by the vague pseudonyms ('the patient' or 'that Certain person') used to describe Dorothea in their letters.[97]

Other evidence suggests the Fellowes's genuine concern for their sister. Ample correspondence between the siblings evince an ongoing moral struggle, as they made copious lists of tasks to complete and

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[93] Mad-house accounts, Treasurers's account book, RCP, MS2104.
[94] Thomas Cromwell, *Walks through Islington* […] (London: Sherwood, Gilbert & Piper, 1835), 230-231. It seems that the building had been used as a madhouse since the 1780s, being bought by Mr James Hayers. Hayers owned the house until 1821, renting it out to Simmons and later, Sutherland. See *Standard*, 19 June 1837.
[95] *Illustrated London News*, Saturday 14 June 1845, 372.
[96] Accounts and Vouchers regarding house at Twickenham, NRO, FEL 653, 554X3.
[97] Urania Portsmouth, Letter to Robert Fellowes, 8 February 1792, NRO, FEL 557/2/30; Urania Portsmouth, Letter to Robert Fellowes, 29 August 1792, NRO, FEL, 557/1/6; Henry Arthur Fellowes, Letter to William Fellowes, 16 August 1785, HA, R35/2/3

questions to ask. Urania regularly expressed concern over her sister's comfort, writing in June 1792 to her cousin, Robert Fellowes: 'I confess, I do wish [for Dorothea] to have two Rooms. In the first Place, she has been used to more than one, & it must be shocking and uncomfortable to… be so like a bird in a Cage!'[98] Urania looked into sending Dorothea to the more spacious West Malling Asylum in Kent, run by Dr William Perfect, who had published *Methods of Cure, in some Particular Cases of Insanity* in 1778.[99] Urania's letter reveals she had read this text, finding it 'favourable' and adding it to a list of reasons as to why West Malling might be a good move for Dorothea, along with its access to countryside and roomier apartments.[100] Dorothea never did move to another madhouse, and it is unclear whether extra rooms were ever made available for her in Islington. Regardless, Urania's letters reveal the different issues that preoccupied relatives of the incarcerated during this period, evidencing anxieties surrounding comfort, care, and living quarters. Whilst natural to warily view the decisions of Dorothea's siblings as carefully plotted machinations to ensure the secret incarceration of their troublesome sister, the spectrum of emotion evident in the family correspondence, from shame and guilt to concern and sadness, suggests a less straightforward situation.

Either way, Dorothea believed herself to be falsely confined, claiming in a letter of September 1799 that her case served as 'the greatest act of violence and oppression that was ever offer'd to an innocent woman. If there has been greater injustice, it has not come within my knowledge'.[101] Her writing, however, complicates the notion of her 'innocence', with many instances of exaggeration, elevated false claims and delusional thinking. One letter describes imaginary plans to be 'let out, in two or three days, if the beatings did not come'. She continues: 'Dr Simmons will set me at liberty this evening, or, tomorrow morning, by ten o'clock' and 'Miss Macdonall, I will pay five hundred pounds, as soon as I can get the money from the Bank'.[102] There were no plans to release her from the madhouse, and that proposed payment was a grandiose sum, surely made during bouts of delusion. Another series of letters from May 1799 detail Dorothea's belief that she was being poisoned, writing that she was convinced that her milk had been spiked with 'different drugs', and that she was fearful of eating her salmon, 'so that I am starving, as well as poisoned'.[103] On the one hand, the inclusion of milk and salmon in Dorothea's diet shows that she was being well fed with

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[98] Urania Portsmouth, Letter to Robert Fellowes, 22 June 1792, NRO, FEL 557/2/20.
[99] William Perfect, *Methods of Cure, in some Particular Cases of Insanity: the Epilepsy, Hypochondriacal Affection, Hysteric Passion, and Nervous Disorders* (Rochester: T. Fisher, 1778); Parry-Jones, *Trade in Lunacy,* 91.
[100] Urania Portsmouth, 22 June 1792, NRO.
[101] Letters and Accounts, NRO.
[102] Letters and Accounts, NRO.
[103] Letters and Accounts, NRO.

nutritious foods. On the other, these letters show Dorothea's conviction that she was being mistreated, illustrating common fears and preoccupations of female patients surrounding freedom and violence. Perhaps she was trying to gain the sympathy and support of her family? Maybe she was affected by stories heard or read elsewhere surrounding cruel treatment, evil proprietors and grim conditions? From these points, it seems fair to suggest that Dorothea endured bouts of delusion, rather than continuously suffering from derangement. This is supported by the contemporary diagnosis of her doctors — one of whom believed her delusions to be fleeting, despite the other deeming them serious enough to incarcerate her for life. Endowing her with a certain amount of psychic awareness, this more fluid diagnosis suggests Dorothea built positive psychological associations with certain consumer rituals and the objects that populated her rooms at Fisher House, as the rest of this section discusses.

Whilst Dorothea's letters paint a picture of abusive staff and oppressive violence, her spending at Fisher House tells a different story. As Porter has argued, the commercial character of the private madhouse meant that a patient could 'exercise considerable sway in the medical market space', simply by 'possessing choice and the power of the purse'.[104] Given the ways that private madhouses have been understood as commercialised spaces within the history of psychiatry, it is useful to consider the ways in which their inhabitants became agents of this consumerism. Alongside her sister's consumer behaviour, as she shopped around for alternative accommodation, Dorothea's spending habits from *within* the madhouse's walls reveals Porter's sway, choice and power in action. Taken from archival accounts of Dorothea's incarceration that have not yet been considered by scholars, this spending disrupts the cultural notion of the private madhouse as a sealed institution of neglect and poor treatment. By pairing archival evidence with sources on eighteenth-century consumption and consumerism, additional questions can be asked about patient identity, agency and lived experience within these spaces.

Having inherited £10,000 from her father in 1769, as well as receiving a steady income of around £75 per year from the rental of her house on Twickenham Common, Dorothea was able to bear the costs of her own confinement.[105] As well as necessary annual expenditure, such as her annual care, accommodation and maintenance, Dorothea spent considerably on additional goods, listed as 'disbursements' in her receipts.

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[104] Roy Porter, 'The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from below', *Theory and Society*, 14, 2 (March 1985), 175-198 (189).

[105] Household and Estate Bills for House at Twickenham Common, bills for medical treatment at Fisher House, HA, KR 35/7/2; Bundles, Letters and Account of Dorothea Fellowes, 13 July 1799, HA, R32/7.

Alongside consumable items that supplemented meals provided by the madhouse, luxury objects associated with physical appearance, self-fashioning and display were purchased. When first moving into Fisher House, her yearly spend was around £200. By 1800, that had risen by another hundred pounds per annum. Over the next few years, the costs of her annual care, accommodation and maintenance grew. By June 1805, it was £327,12s, and the larger total, also including medicine, disbursements and gratuities, came to £393,18s. Four years later, her annual bill had risen again, amounting to a sizeable £406,13s.[106]

Described by Claire Walsh as a 'complex of procedures', shopping in the eighteenth century was a very different business than today.[107] During this period, 'the person who selected the goods, the person who went to the shop to collect them, the person who met the shopkeeper to settle the account, and the person who handed over the cash in settlement were often different people'.[108] Amongst Dorothea's class, it was standard for shopping to be done by proxy, with family, friends or staff making purchases on one's behalf. Archival material sheds light on how Dorothea's shopping and spending worked, evidencing a complex pathway which conformed with standard ways to shop during these years. It seems that Dorothea *chose* additional items, not included in her annual board, perhaps placing some orders directly with tradespeople or with the help of Mrs Holmes. Roughly every six months, Dr Simmons would forward a bill to William Fellowes, which included a breakdown of costs incurred for medical care, medicines, gratuities to the nurse and disbursements. William then contacted his bank, asking them to pay Dr. Simmons, and Dorothea's bank, requesting reimbursement for those payments.

Over a four-month period between June and October 1794, Dorothea purchased stockings, gloves, handkerchiefs, aprons and ribbons, as well as pieces of silk, gauze and lace. A summary of her accounts from the previous year included regular payments to a linen draper, a shoemaker and a milliner. Other non-essential goods were purchased, such as wine, seltzer water, figs and French plums. Looking at some of Dorothea's bills more closely, it seems fair to surmise that her spending bordered on the excessive, based on the number of items she was buying and the rate at which she was buying them. A typical disbursement bill, from September 1799 to September 1800 and totalling £22,11s, provides a good example. This includes

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[106] Accounts and Vouchers, NRO.

[107] Claire Walsh, 'Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America. 1700–1830,* eds. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 151-78, 170, 172. See also Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2010), 127.

[108] John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America. 1700-1830* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 8.

goods linked to physical comfort and gratification, such as fruit and wine (£8,0s,6d), as well as material items linked to her appearance. Sums were owed to the haberdasher (£1,13s), mantua maker (£16,4s), milliner (£16,4s) and shoemaker (£1,8s). By the end of the year, Dorothea had racked up another bill. Alongside around £5 on fruit and £11 on wine, she had spent £2,18s on hosiery, £3,13s at the haberdasher, 16 shillings and 6 pence at the mantua maker, £6,14s on the milliner, and £2,3s on the shoemaker. Having already spent £22 a few months before, Dorothea then spent an additional £26 on luxury items. A few months later, on 11 March 1801, more money was spent at the milliner, haberdasher and shoemaker, alongside an order placed for oranges, figs, tape, pins and wine. Only a small segment of Dorothea's outgoings during her 26-year incarceration, these examples reveal her spending habits in fascinating detail; habits which carried on, year on year, until her death in 1817.[109]

At first glance, this shopping might propel Dorothea into the familiar role of a compulsive shopper. Stereotypes surrounding the 'voracious appetite' of the female consumer have proved persistent in both cultural and scholarly examples. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace stresses how late eighteenth-century sources often presented female consumption as a 'kind of depletion that "eats up" everything in its path'.[110] Likewise, Walsh emphasises how unrestrained female spending might potentially lead to personal, familial, and even national ruin.[111] Past scholarship has often confirmed that view of the female shopper as a frenzied individual, engaging in an insatiable 'orgy of spending'.[112] As John Styles and Amanda Vickery retort, much scholarship has 'had it in for the female consumer', typically derided for her desire to 'shop till she dropped'.[113] The ways in which both contemporaries and earlier scholars described this type of spending — as mindless, frenzied and manic — invite easy parallels with the behaviour of the mentally ill. Dorothea's spending, therefore, can be conceptualised as part of this over-zealous feminised ritual.

Of course, there was more at play in female shopping, proxy or otherwise, than unrestrained spending, and arguments that present Dorothea's spending as solely excessive run the risk of subscribing to stereotypes that align her behaviour with mindless materialism. Relying less on stereotype, and more on

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[109] Islington Madhouse, NRO.
[110] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), 3.
[111] Walsh, 'Shopping', 165.
[112] McKendrick et al., *Birth of a Consumer Society*, 10; Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, 6.
[113] Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, 2; Amanda Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods: a Lancashire consumer and her possessions, 1751-81', in *Consumption and the World of Goods,* eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 274-301, 277.

material evidence and personal accounts, recent analysis of the history of shopping favours a more nuanced approach. Attempts to reframe this problematic narrative has come from scholars who argue that the late eighteenth century saw shopping emerge as a 'sophisticated, multi skilled activity', involving 'complex decision making' and 'the application of thrift and good judgement'.[114]

Dorothea's consumption can be conceptualised within this framework. Firstly, several former practices and rituals that linked to her erstwhile role as mistress of her own house continued at Fisher House. In one letter, she writes: 'I will satisfy Mrs Holmes, according to the sum she mention'd this morning. One hundred pounds. Anne Pocock the same'.[115] In another missive, dated 9 December 1799, Dorothea sets out detailed instructions about renumeration for the executors of her will, claiming that she has allotted 'a thousand pounds to those who had the trouble of doing the business'.[116] Dorothea's statements about releasing significant sums of money from her bank reinforce arguments that was delusional, yet the discussion of paying bills, even if fictitious or exaggerated, indicates that she saw herself as a cog within a wider economic machine. Her authoritative tone positions her as in charge of the purse strings, exercising financial control from her private rooms, and finding it psychologically reassuring to do so. Financial acts such as tipping the nurse at Christmas, alongside the selecting and ordering of certain goods, would have been familiar, linking back to her previous role as an upper-class, genteel woman. Making an order to a milliner, even if the order was made via Mrs Holmes, show that the confines of the madhouse were not going to curb Dorothea's former habits of consumption or dress. She may have been a 'Bird in a Cage', but she still sought the luxuries, clothing and comforts to which she was accustomed, during a period in which shopping was becoming 'less commodious, more indulgent and habitual'.[117]

Processes linked to Walsh's points about choice and expertise were definitely at play within Dorothea's rooms. The act of choosing items was not just about familiarity, but also functioned as agency-inducing activity involving taste and expertise. Liaising with Mrs Holmes, sending a worn item for alteration or inspecting a new hat from her preferred milliner: all was part of a range of consumer activity that would have contributed to Dorothea's self-image. Choosing certain milliners or patronising a favourite wine-merchant allowed Dorothea to exercise sway within a consumer marketplace, whilst expressing her *own*

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[114] Walsh, 'Shopping', 162.
[115] Letters and Accounts, NRO.
[116] Islington Madhouse, NRO.
[117] Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects,* 77.

taste.[118] What is more, it would have provided her with a greater sense of control, choice and agency. As Rachel Bowlby has argued, 'women's consumption could be advocated unequivocally as a means towards the easing of their domestic lot and a token of growing emancipation'.[119] Whilst not suggesting that Dorothea serves as a symbol of female freedom within the madhouse, her conduct does lends itself to a more complex understanding of the psychological repercussions of consumption in this context. Dorothea could not control much in her life, but she was able to control the objects she purchased, the food she ate and the clothes she wore.

It was not just Dorothea's engagement with familiar *practices* of consumption that proved meaningful. Historians of material culture agree that objects functioned as complex markers of identity,[120] and that personal accoutrements and material objects enabled the outward display of one's social position and aspirations. With one's possessions contributing to a tableaux of manners, dress and overall appearance relating to self-fashioning, consumerism was not just about appropriating objects offered for sale, but also the creation of 'the self as a social subject', relating to a certain 'lifestyle'.[121] The individual *objects* that Dorothea procured, purchased and possessed contributed to both her public and private sense of self. From figs or French plums, to new clothes, hats or aprons, the objects which Dorothea coveted served as social signifiers of what kind of woman she was and her material lifestyle, both prior to and during incarceration.

All this ineluctably begs the question: who was this display for? The letters between the siblings seldom mention visits to the madhouse; yet, from time to time, Robert did visit his cousin.[122] When describing her incarceration at Fisher House, discussed in detail below, Mary Lamb suggests a close group of women made up of staff and patients — with their stays overlapping, the same community would have been present during Dorothea's extended incarceration.[123] Dorothea's letters also reference the female patients around her; whilst they are not always positive, they allude to a community much like one might expect to find in a care home today. These arguments suggest that Dorothea did have a small audience of visitors, staff

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[118] Dorothea's preferred milliner seems to be one 'Mrs Ashley', with new items purchased from her every few months. Bundle of Household, Estate and Tax Accounts, NRO, FEL 709, 554X9.

[119] Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (London: Routledge, 2009), 12.

[120] Grant McCracken*, Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988); Styles and Vickery, *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture*, 9.

[121] Bowlby, *Just Looking*, 17.

[122] In a letter to Robert from September 1792, Urania mentions his 'Recent Visit' and thanks him for proposing a further 'Visit at Islington'. Urania Portsmouth, Letter to Robert Fellowes, 9 September 1792, NRO, FEL, 557/1/7.

[123] 'Charles Lamb to Coleridge, 3 October 1796', in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb,* ed. Edwin W. Marrs Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University. Press, 1975-78), vol. 1, 51-52.

and patients to witness her self-fashioned appearance. Even if this audience was not actively engaged with looking at her projected display, their existence meant that she was not completely invisible. Her public persona was indisputably limited, but the procurement of objects linked to appearance suggests that the projection of an elegant persona facilitated a sense of confidence and self-worth, however muted.

Alongside arguments around choice, agency and self-fashioning, work has also been done on the emotional baggage of the object — as delineated in chapter one. With plenty of historians prioritising arguments that look towards the complex emotional role of the object within the eighteenth century,[124] these ideas and methodologies can be applied to Dorothea's material world, allowing us to infer that procuring and possessing luxurious objects meant something very personal to her. Whilst some items would have provided physical comfort, others, such as her preferred foods or a dress in a much-loved pattern, may well have felt psychologically consolatory and comforting. Having familiar and favourite objects around would have been soothing, recalling Urania's statement from 1792 that Dorothea should have 'Comforts in her Calamity'.[125] These items would have come with their own private, positive associations for Dorothea, unknowable to us but relating to her own life before incarceration. Perhaps possessing talismanic properties, they may have proven associative of experiences encountered beyond the madhouse's walls, reminding their owner of happier times. Classifying these objects as miniature souvenirs of her memories, experiences and past life, they become conduits through which a variety of feelings could be relived virtually, reflected upon within her rooms at Fisher House.

Discussions of Dorothea's consumer behaviour and emotional world at Fisher House are not to diminish the challenges she faced there. Nor are they designed to apply misplaced claims of female and consumer empowerment onto a dismal situation. Historians have critiqued scholarship that presents easy routes to self-fashioning and agency via the simple act of spending money on specific goods and arguments that frame marginalised individuals as 'savvy consumers' have since been characterised as misleading.[126] Dorothea's letters evince a perpetual struggle that proxy shopping could not magically solve. Yet the unique realm of the private madhouse provides a highly unusual space through which marginalised figures *could*

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[124] Vickery, 'Women and the world of goods', 284-288; Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010)*,* xviii-xix.
[125] Urania Portsmouth, 9 September 1792, NRO.

[126] Jonathan White, 'A World of Goods? The 'Consumption Turn' and Eighteenth-Century British History', *Cultural and Social History*, 3, 1 (2016), 93-104, 94, 99. For more on the debate between agency and the female consumer, see Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects*, 149-150.

negotiate a more complex, potentially enhancing emotional experience, via consumer activity. Dorothea's shopping illustrates that more nuanced experiences of consumerism was available for patients within the English private madhouse. Whilst cultural sources or hard-hitting exposés documenting madhouse life had little room for patients with spending power, the receipts and bills that litter the Fellowes's archival boxes reveal a hidden world of choice and agency. From these arguments, the female patient operates within a wider economic machine, connecting with both her own emotional experience and the wider world through shopping, spending and possessing meaningful objects.

'Daughter in Distress': Euphemia Boswell's 'Tale of Woe'

The tale of Euphemia Boswell and her descent into madness has been told by historian Frederick Pottle and, more recently, Michael Kassler.[127] Born in 1774, the second daughter of James Boswell, famed biographer of Samuel Johnson and one of London's literary celebrities, Euphemia had grown up in Scotland, living at the Boswell family estate in Auchinlack between 1796 and 1801. She then moved to Edinburgh, where she lived until 1805, at which date she moved to London. Little information is available about the period between 1813 and her incarceration. By 1816, Euphemia was confined in Fisher House under the care of Dr. Sutherland, Dr. Simmons's successor, and she remained there for the next twenty years. Echoing Dorothea's situation, Euphemia's brothers stepped up in the absence of a father to fulfil societal expectations regarding care for their sister. They agreed to pay £218.8s for annual board, maintenance and medical care at Fisher House, whilst keeping her government pension of £50 a year and her annuity of £140 a year, presumably to cover these fees.[128] In July 1836, after not being paid for seven years, Dr Sutherland discharged Euphemia as 'Convalescent'. Moving to a new home on Grafton Street, London, she died the following year.[129]

Letters exchanged by Euphemia's brothers allege that drunken behaviour and excessive spending were primary reasons for Euphemia's incarceration.[130] Supposedly running up a huge hairdressers bill, her brother Alexander reported in 1804 how, 'in less than four years she had spent all her share of the Executry

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[127] Frederick A. Pottle, *Pride and Negligence: The History of the Boswell Papers. The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1982), 32; Michael Kassler, 'Samuel Wesley's 'madness' of 1817-18', *History of Psychiatry*, 14, 4 (2003), 459-474.
[128] Pottle, *Pride and Negligence,* 32.
[129] Pottle, *Pride and Negligence,* 43
[130] Quoted in Pottle, *Pride and Negligence,* 32.

and the value of her Annuity — one hundred pounds a year from her father's settlements after his death in 1795 — making her expenditure about £700 a year'.[131] This spendthrift narrative is reinforced by Pottle, who describes Euphemia as 'strong-willed, independent and incurably extravagant. She bought expensive and unsuitable attire and entertained lavishly, taking especial delight in private musicals'.[132] He explains how Euphemia

> hung loose upon (London) society, making efforts to support herself as a writer and musical composer. She was most of the time in desperate straits because of her debts, and wrote urgent begging letters to her father's friends and to various great personages of the day, representing herself as cruelly neglected and repressed by her family.[133]

Constantly in debt due to the 'lavish purchase of household supplies', or 'ordering clothes from a distance', Pottle frames Euphemia as a voracious and thoughtless shopper, mirroring the annoyance of Euphemia's frustrated brother, who described one £50 payment to Euphemia as 'I suppose for stockings! […] infatuated creature'.[134] Pottle's analysis chimes with various stereotypes surrounding women, spending and madness. It relates to aforementioned scholarship which implicates the insatiable consumerism of the greedy female shopper, characterising extravagance as an 'incurable' condition. At the same time, he declares that her insanity was 'probably because of physical prostration or some particularly outrageous act of self-advertisement'.[135] Stereotypes of the weak female body mingle with Euphemia's outlandish and attention-seeking behaviour, lending weight to arguments made by feminist commentators that independent or unconventional women were often incarcerated against their will.[136] Devoid of footnotes and full of empty suppositions, Pottle's text is deeply problematic. Often misogynistic, it makes a number of unfounded assumptions about Euphemia's behaviour and descent into madness, presenting a speculative pathobiography rooted in the hyperbolised pathologising of her extravagance and spending.

That Euphemia had financial problems is made clear by her own attempts to circumvent her plight. Pottle does reference a number of pre-incarceration examples which alleviated her financial troubles, such as a newspaper report from the early 1810s which explained how the Prince of Wales 'has been graciously pleased to present Euphemia the daughter of the late well-known James Boswell, Esqr. with 50l. as a tribute

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[131] Pottle, *Pride and Negligence,* 24.
[132] Pottle, *Pride and Negligence,* 17.
[133] Pottle, *Pride and Negligence,* 32.
[134] Pottle, *Pride and Negligence,* 24.
[135] Pottle, *Pride and Negligence*, 43-44.
[136] Chesler, *Women and Madness,* 52, 56.

to her excellent and moral conduct under the frowns of fortune'. As well as this, Euphemia advertised a subscription for herself in the newspapers and wrote to Sir Joseph Banks to appeal for a pension.[137] An additional letter to the Committee of the Literary Fund, designed to support literary talent, gives a more detailed account of how Euphemia tried to solicit extra funds. After the fund had given Euphemia £10 in May 1811, she thanked the Committee for

> the relief you afforded to me under difficulty that presented the horrors of a prison which to a female of feeling and agitated mind must be dreadful. Indeed my difficultys have not been caused by follys or by luxurys but by severe bodily distress which has for some time so defused my spirits I have not been able to execute myself in my former pursuits by which I did my utmost to exist.[138]

Other letters likewise outline Euphemia's fear of imprisonment, lowness of spirits and awareness of criticism surrounding her 'luxuries', as she entreated the fund for more finances. In one letter from June 1811, she describes how the 'suffered daughter' of Boswell — 'an author that did honour to his country and literature at large' — is now unable to pay her rent. In a later letter, Euphemia describes herself as a 'daughter in distress', imploring the Committee to help her again on the basis of her position as Boswell's daughter.[139] As Perry and Margaret Doody have noted, the father-daughter relationship was a significant one within the make-up of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century family, with the 'cultural investment' in the purity of this relationship pulling 'at the heartstrings of the eighteenth-century English public like no other'.[140] In the hope of securing further financial aid, Euphemia utilises this popular cultural trope in her letters. In opposition to Pottle's analysis, she appeared to be struggling to pay for very basic provisions — her rent — rather than needing money for hairdresser fees or stockings. Whilst she may have been exaggerating her circumstances, the urgent tone and volume of these letters suggests that Euphemia was endeavouring to manage the practicalities of her living arrangements — not engaged in a frenzied tangle of frivolous spending, as posited by her brothers and, indeed, Pottle.

To make her case, and strengthen her claim to these funds, Euphemia draws upon powerful imagery around the female body. One letter describes her 'horror of jail', another the 'severe bodily distress' she was

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[137] Pottle, *Pride and Negligence,* 32.
[138] Euphemia Boswell, Letter to the Committee of the Literary Fund, Undated, BLWM, Loan 96 RLF 1/269/.
[139] Euphemia Boswell, Letter to the Committee of the Literary Fund, 18 November 1812, BLWM, Loan 96 RLF 1/269/.
[140] Perry, *Novel Relations,* 78; Margaret Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life of the Works* (New Brunswick: Rutyers University Press, 1988), 25.

experiencing.[141] These written tactics continued once incarcerated, suggesting a web of strategies not just designed to ascertain financial support, but to invite compassion. Whilst previous missives had been aimed at well-to-do individuals, or those in positions of power, a ballad which Euphemia wrote in 1817 — one of the only sources that captures her experience at Fisher House — employs rhetoric seemingly aimed to engage the interest, and so the sympathy, of a broader reading public.[142] Written to be sung to the tune of the Scottish folksong, *The Merry Lads of Ayr,* the ballad refers to various Scottish military heroes and historical fighters to draw out the horrific 'tyranny' of Dr Sutherland. Named *Ballad, Written in 1817 by Euphemia Boswell, the daughter of the biographer of the yet-unrivalled Johnson in her solitary prison-room in Dr Sutherland's Mad-house in which she was forcibly detained in the full powers of reason*, the title is interesting in its own right, designed to prick interest, imagination and sympathy. Throughout its lyrics, Euphemia stresses her sanity, maintaining that she has been 'forcibly detained'.

The skilful rendition of this ballad lends weight to Euphemia's own case surrounding her sanity. Of all the women discussed so far, Euphemia's incarceration seems to have been most bound to the idea that she was a nuisance rather than suffering from a genuine mental disorder. Her story might thus be aligned with stereotypes of wrongful confinement, cruel family members and misogynistic medical practices which sought to curb certain types of female behaviour. On the one hand, Euphemia's confinement by her brothers does suggest the archetype of the cruel male relative, peddled by both contemporary sources and feminist manifestos,[143] suggesting that Euphemia's male relatives cared little for their sister. With her brothers failing to pay their sister's fees to Sutherland, the family's economic wellbeing during this period is also called into question. The failed payments suggest the family were genuinely struggling financially, so the confinement of their spendthrift sister could be seen as a necessary evil to keep the rest of the Boswells afloat. These ideas, however, rely more on speculation and stereotype than proper historical evidence. A lack of archival material documenting these circumstances means that the intricacies of Euphemia's case are unclear; her story and symptoms far less vivid than that of Dorothea, and as we shall see, Mary. Whilst we can surmise that she was locked away to restrict her spending habits, other factors may well have been at play.

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[141] Boswell, 18 November 1812; Euphemia Boswell, Letter to the Committee of the Literary Fund, 15 January 1812, BLWM, Loan 96 RLF 1/269/.
[142] Boswell, *Ballad*, 1836.
[143] See Wollstonecraft, *Maria*; Chesler, *Women and Madness,* xx-xxi.

Either way, it is clear that Euphemia experienced moments of clarity during which she was able to pen elegant and stylistic ballads. Drawing upon her heritage as the daughter of a well-known Scotsman, Euphemia identifies herself as a 'sane lass of Ayr', aligning herself with both her father and the famous poet, Robert Burns: 'And my memory and my fame / Be sung with Burns and Boswell's name'. Given the huge success of contemporary texts about Scotland during these years, the self-conscious alignment with her Scottish heritage may well have been an attempt to bolster her commercial appeal. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a significant upsurge in interest in Scottish, and particularly Highland, culture — an upsurge with which Euphemia utilises with aplomb. Peter Womack has argued how today's cultural understanding of the Highlands as a picturesque site of stunning scenery, purple heather, kilted clansmen and ancient language was part of a cultural process which began in the second half of the eighteenth century, epitomised in the creation of the Highland Society in London in 1778.[144] By 1814, three years before Euphemia wrote her ballad, Maria Edgeworth was stating that 'the novelty of the Highland world as discovered to our view powerfully excites curiosity and interest'.[145] Following the commercial success of pro-Highland publications such as Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake* in the 1810s,[146] Euphemia's ballad exposes an awareness of this growing interest in the region, particularly vivid through her frequent discussion of the military prowess of the men of Ayr, who would 'buckle of their swords' and 'avenge my wrongs' from 'morn till night' if they only knew 'the *half*' of her treatment.

Navigating a familiar moral language, Euphemia's letters and poetry are clearly anchored to an awareness of contemporary demands surrounding a sympathetic reaction towards vulnerable women. As Lynn Nead's work on the mothers who left their babies at the Foundling Hospital shows, these women knew 'more or less what the Foundling Hospital was looking for and how their stories needed to be told'.[147] Discussing the micro-techniques and strategies that they might deploy, she states how these were 'real women in a desperate fix' who had to use 'their wits around them sufficiently to think tactically — to try and use their power in an otherwise powerless and nearly invisible situation'.[148] Employing a self-consciously

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[144] Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 1-2; Charles Withers, 'The Historical Creation of the Scottish Highlands', in *The Manufacture of Scottish History*, eds. Ian Donnachie, Christopher Whatley (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992), 143-156.
[145] A. J. C. Hare, ed., *The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth (*London, 1814), 226-231.
[146] Womack, *Improvement,* 2.
[147] Lynn Nead, 'Fallen Women and Foundlings: Rethinking Victorian Sexuality', *History Workshop Journal,* 81, 2 (Autumn 2016), 177-187 (184).
[148] Nead, 'Fallen Women', 184.

sympathy-inducing language, and stressing that her situation was not due to 'follys or luxuries' but 'severe bodily distress', Euphemia likewise utilises various narrative strategies to procure financial or psychic support from her reader. Indeed, both she and Dorothea end their letters with heart-rendering epithets ('the Unfortunate Euphemia' or 'the Miserable Dorothea'), sign-offs which are reminiscent of contemporary novels which told stories of women in similar fixes — such as Haywood's *The Distress'd Orphan*.[149] Whilst Euphemia signs off earlier letters to the Literary Fund with sincere thanks and her full name, her mounting desperation sees her signature become more poetic, and she becomes a 'daughter in distress', a 'suffer'd daughter', and 'your suffering, devoted servant'.

Taking ownership of their own capsule narrative, both Euphemia and Dorothea package their stories within this familiar sympathy-inducing form. Whilst we cannot be certain if Euphemia read texts that documented wrongful confinement in a private madhouse, as a daughter of a literary figure, we can surmise that she would have been familiar with Wollstonecraft's *Maria*, or Haywood's *Distress'd Orphan.* Adopting the epithet of 'Distress'd' on several occasions suggests a self-conscious alignment with the protagonist of Haywood's 1726 novel, who continued to serve as a prototype of wrongful confinement during these years. These stories may have also facilitated troubling preconceptions about what life was like when incarcerated, intensifying Euphemia's horror and outrage when confined even if experiencing something more genteel, comfortable or therapeutically mild. With stories of the brutal incarceration of sane women in mind, Euphemia may have convinced herself that she, like the wrongfully incarcerated heroines of eighteenth-century literature, was also completely sane, and the subject of male tyranny and violence.

These arguments might linger uneasily in the problematic territory already discussed, whereby the savvy consumer implemented 'micro-strategies' to induce agency — or in this case, sympathy.[150] In light of Pottle's demeaning remarks, it is certainly tempting to bestow further agency upon Euphemia's situation. Yet these arguments, like those concerning Dorothea's spending, undoubtedly complicate our understanding of the voiceless incarcerated woman. Experiences set out here further subvert feminist stereotypes surrounding female silence and total oppression. They also recall arguments from Amanda Vickery given in chapter one. There, I set out Vickery's castigation of the ways that ideologies of ultra-femininity permeated through early

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[149] See Haywood, *Distress'd Orphan*; Eliza Haywood, *The Perplex'd Duchess: or treachery rewarded* (Dublin: George Risk & William Smith, 1727).
[150] White, 'World of Goods', 99.

scholarship on women in the eighteenth century — scholarship that characterised women as sheltered prisoners within domesticated realms, drained of any economic purpose.[151] Here, despite their confinement, Euphemia and Dorothea become active residents, involved in economic pursuits and processes of negotiation that might alter their position or identity within the madhouse walls, even if just in their own eyes.[152] Drawing upon powerful imagery of wronged and powerless woman, or evoking the romantic notions of Highland culture, Euphemia exaggerated her case and harnessed the contemporary vogue for certain tropes or styles in her writing. Though ultimately unsuccessful, her attempts to maintain lucrative ties and win sympathy from literary committees, wealthy individuals, madhouse staff, her family and even the wider reading public, reveal an attempt to negotiate her dismal situation.

'Mad Mary Lamb'

At the end of the eighteenth century, a sketch was made by Henry Fuseli (1741-1825) that was later described as 'the only real entry of Romanticism's most famous madwoman into its art' [Figure 4.5].[153] Fuseli's sketch portrays an alluring yet dangerous bacchante, the lusty female worshipper of the Greek God, Dionysus. The deviant menace in the woman's eyes, the incomplete date and the inscription of 'Mary Anne' and 'Maria' suggests that this is an image of 'Mad Mary Lamb' created shortly after the murder of her mother Elizabeth in the family kitchen, during a fit of insanity on 23 September 1796. Wearing an expression of manic delight and sneering at her viewer, Mary clutches the extended leg of what Philip Martin has identified as a deer. Deer were animals often linked to Dionysus, thus reinforcing Mary's role as a blood-thirsty figure of Greek mythology. Subverting conventions that showed the madwoman solely as a love-mad casualty of 'frustrated desires and broken promises', Mary becomes a murderous and frenzied figure, more Lady Macbeth than Sterne's Maria.[154]

Despite this violent murder, Mary managed to avoid both a criminal trial and incarceration in a public institution — the latter being the usual fate for a criminal lunatic, as the Nicholson affair

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[151] Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal,* 36, 2 (June 1993), 383-414, (387).
[152] Sarah Chaney, 'No "Sane" Person Would Have Any Idea': Patients' Involvement in Late Nineteenth-century British Asylum Psychiatry', *Medical history,* 60, 1 (2016), 37-53 (52).
[153] Philip Martin, *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987), ix.
[154] Martin, *Mad Women,* ix.

demonstrated. Instead, until her death in 1847, Mary continued to suffer periodic bouts of illness, typically lasting one to three months, and spent time in several madhouses across London's private psychiatric network.[155] The sister of essayist and poet Charles Lamb (1775-1834), ten years her junior, and part of a literary circle that included Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), William Hazlitt and William Wordsworth, Mary went on to have a successful writing career.[156] The subject of various biographies, much of Lamb's story has already been told.[157] Whilst some scholars have situated Lamb firmly within the context of her literary output,[158] none have unpacked her experience within London's private madhouses. This omission prompts this final chapter section.

Functioning differently from the women already discussed in this chapter, Mary's social status emanated from her role within a literary network, rather than wealth or class. Her parents had both served a well-regarded barrister in the Inner Temple of London until 1792.[159] Charles worked as a clerk at the East India House, and Mary contributed to the family income as a mantua maker. In addition, the Lambs were well educated and keen letter writers. Parts of Mary's correspondence, and much of her brother's, provide valuable details about her illness and experiences of incarceration, some of which took place at Fisher House in the months immediately following her mother's death. Whilst her stay at Fisher House was much briefer than Dorothea and Euphemia's, Mary's case undoubtedly broadens historical understanding about the madhouse stereotype in general. Furthermore, her experience punctures various myths and stereotypes perpetuated across both contemporary cultural examples and early feminist scholarship, on the troubling dynamics between cruel male relatives and helpless incarcerated women. Most importantly, this section examines the ways that Mary's madness was *packaged*, by both herself and her brother, into something more palatable, and less damaging, through the careful management of her image.

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[155] After her stint at Fisher House, Mary would spend several intervals at Hoxton House, including the spring of 1802 and six weeks in 1807. See Susan Tyler Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb: Lunacy and Murder in Literary London* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 61, 129, 177.

[156] In the early nineteenth century, the Lambs rose to fame through the publication of their *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), which made Shakespeare's plays accessible to the young. Other texts written by Mary and Charles include *Mrs. Leicester's School: The Histories of Several Young Ladies, Related by Themselves* (London: M. J. Godwin, 1809); *Poetry for Children (London:* J.M. Dent & Sons, 1903).

[157] Kathy Watson, *The Devil Kissed Her: The Story of Mary Lamb* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Sarah Burton, *A Double Life: A Biography of Charles and Mary Lamb* (London: Penguin, 2003); Appignanesi, *Mad, Bad and Sad.*

[158] Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2003).

[159] Hitchcock, *Mad Mary Lamb*, 21, 26.

In line with Fuseli's interpretation of a bloodthirsty bacchante, early descriptions of Mary's madness showed a wild and murderous figure. The first newspaper to break the news of Mary's murder of her mother was *The Times*:

> The young lady seized a case-knife laying on the table, and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her apprentice, round the room. On the calls of her infirm mother to forbear, she renounced her first object, and with loud shrieks approached her parent. The child, by her cries, quickly brought up the landlord of the house, but too late. The dreadful scene presented to him the mother lifeless, pierced to the heart, on a chair, her daughter yet wildly standing over her with the fatal knife, and the old man her father weeping by her side…

The report concluded: 'It seems the young lady had been once before deranged. The Jury of course brought in their verdict, Lunacy'.[160] Identical reports were shared across various papers, including the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Gentleman's Magazine*.[161] The *Whitehall Evening Post* extended this original report, naming 'the above unfortunate young person' as 'Miss Lamb, a mantua maker, in Little Queen-street, Lincoln's inn-fields' and describing her move to an 'Islington mad-house'.[162]

This move was not without contention. Given the nature of her crime, Mary's older brother John was determined to send her to Bethlem rather than treat her privately.[163] This idea appalled Charles, whose letters reveal that moving his sister into a more refined establishment was the only option. Given the family's lower economic status, various factors helped to alleviate the financial impact of a move into a private madhouse. In October 1796, Charles explained to Coleridge that the 'lady at this mad house assures me that I may dismiss immediately both doctor and apothecary', suggesting that cost-effective measures were put in place to reduce fees. Charles also stated that he and his father would economise to 'spare 50 or 60 at least for Mary while she stays at Islington'.[164] Mary's incarceration was also limited to brief spells, meaning that she paid substantially less than the other women discussed in this chapter. This is evidenced by Charles's mention to Coleridge at the end of 1796 that his sister was 'likely to be as comfortably situated in all respects as those who pay twice or thrice the sum'.[165]

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[160] *The Times*, 24 September, 1796.
[161] *Morning Chronicle,* 24 September 1796; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 24 September 1796.
[162] *Whitehall Evening Post*, 24-27 September 1796.
[163] 'Lamb to Coleridge', 3 October 1796, 50.
[164] 'Lamb to Coleridge', 3 October 1796, 49.
[165] 'Charles Lamb to Coleridge, 28 October 1796', in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb,* ed. Edwin W. Marrs Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University. Press, 1975-78), vol. 1, 56-57.

The symbolic power of Mary's act — conjured by Fuseli's bloodthirsty bacchante — meant that both she and her family were no doubt aware of the cultural significance, and damaging publicity, that the event precipitated. By the 1790s, violent acts committed by women were of increasing ideological consequence. Initial euphoria following the fall of Bastille in the summer of 1789 had given way to a rising tide of public apprehension. France had declared war on various European countries, abolished its monarchy, and partaken in a series of horrifying massacres.[166] As demonstrated in chapter one, violent female behaviour was understood as subverting the proper ordering of the sexes and disrupting the notion of separate spheres — and a woman's symbolic meaning was amplified during times of turmoil. Adding insult to injury, Mary committed murder exactly one day after the fourth anniversary of the Republic, amidst events that equated the female body with destructive violence, such as the Women's march on Versailles during the October Days of 1789, and the Terror.[167] Whilst these anxieties might have been pinned on public women in France, they could also be lumped onto women, such as Mary, within the English domestic sphere. Drawing together the jostling ideological forces that surrounded the female body during these years, Fuseli's portrait 'is a rare celebration and elevation of Mary Lamb's aggression into political allegory'.[168] Utilising the potent image of the bacchante to represent 'the destructive potential unleashed by the Revolution as a whole', Mary's violence is contextualised within a 'larger arena of women's violent struggle'.[169] Like her French counterparts, Mary's body becomes a vehicle for a range of political and social anxieties, all the more troubling because she has moved *into* the home, threatening the security of the domestic space.

With these issues in mind, we might expect Mary's violent and vicious crime to be seized by the periodical press, and a flurry of other deviant pictorial representations to ensue. Yet no further visual record from these years survive and, aside from *Whitehall Evening Post,* no other newspaper even mentioned Mary by name. That a more benign image of Mary was mobilised and remained in the public imagination is visualised in a double portrait of her and her brother, created fourteen years before her death [Figure 4.6]. In this painting, Mary is fatigued, mild and harmless — though elderly, no suggestion of her maniacal behaviour survives. Given the violence of Mary's murderous crime, how did the Lambs avoid a media frenzy

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[166] Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1823* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 233-234.
[167] Craciun, *Fatal Women,* 39.
[168] Craciun, *Fatal Women,* 39.
[169] Craciun, *Fatal Women,* 41

that capitalised on the more deviant aspects of her behaviour, so ardently seen with Margaret Nicholson ten years before? Some writers have suggested that the Lambs were part of a 'conspiracy' to 'repress' the events of September 1796,[170] seeking to manage both the family's reputation whilst ensuring that Mary did not suffer the fate of a criminal maniac and face incarceration in a public facility. Given examples already discussed in this thesis surrounding the satisfying packaging of female madness, we can interpret this interesting cultural inversion — whereby we see the *de*-spectacularisation of a spectacle event — as further evidence of the use and efficiency of the capsule narrative. We do not know the cause of Mary's madness, but her violent actions, vivid descriptions of manic episodes from her brother and own discussion of her poor mental health suggests that at various intervals she was mentally unwell, with some bouts being more serious and violent than others. Whilst chapter three argued that stories told by asylum staff served to temper the madwoman's threat into something palatable, we can likewise understand Charles's handling of events as enshrouding his sister Mary and her sporadically violent bursts of mania within a mediating framework that promoted the more reassuring aspects of her behaviour, thus downplaying its threat.

This happened in a number of ways. First, the speedy removal of Mary from public life and placement into a reputable establishment reserved for the upper classes may have helped to suppress the publicity of these events, and the danger her condition posed. Charles shared the news with friends but focused on the temporary nature of Mary's insanity. On 3 October 1796, he wrote to Coleridge: 'My poor dear dearest sister, the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgments to our house, is restored to her senses […] I found her this morning calm and serene'.[171] Other letters emphasised Mary's state of 'reason and composedness of mind', noting that he visited her 'very frequently'.[172] Whilst these letters do not conceal her madness, Charles's discussion of Mary's quick return to reason serves to alleviate her threat.

A similar positive spin is felt when Charles discusses his sister's new home. Across his correspondence, Fisher House is unwaveringly portrayed as a civilised institution of kindly care. A letter from October 1796 describes Mrs Holmes as 'the good lady of the Mad house', describing her daughter as

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[170] Katharine Anthony, *The Lambs* (London: Hammon, Hammon and Co., 1948), 56; Bonnie Woodbery, 'The Mad Body as the Text of Culture in the Writings of Mary Lamb', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 39, 4 (1999), 659-674 (659).
[171] 'Lamb to Coleridge', 3 October 1796, 47.
[172] 'Lamb to Coleridge', 28 October 1796, 56.

'an elegant sweet behaved young lady'. Both, he maintains, 'love [Mary] & are taken with her amazingly'.[173] A later letter explained how 'the people of the house are vastly indulgent to her […] They love her, and she loves them, and makes herself very useful to them', going on to state that Mary would 'make one of the family' if she stays.[174] Mary is depicted as both a cheerful recipient of institutional care and a diligent, helpful patient, with Charles's comment that his sister was 'making herself useful' recalling arguments about the ideal patient within the moral therapy movement, who lived happily with a domestic regime. Unlike the moping and idle love-mad heroines no doubt familiar to this literary clique, Charles stresses that his sister is beloved by staff, has got to know her keepers, and thrown herself into madhouse life. That Mary was determined to get better during her bouts of illness is evidenced in a later letter, written by her to close friend Sarah Stoddart (1775-1840), wife to Hazlitt. In March 1806, Mary discusses her resolve to 'turn over a new leaf with my own mind', vowing to 'bend the whole force of my mind to counteract [my] fretful temper'.[175]

Though Charles's letters paint a picture of a feminine network of community and care, Mary's own correspondence implies a more ambiguous experience. Writing to Coleridge on 17 October 1796, Charles recounts a letter from his sister which, whilst at first appearing upbeat, suggests a more chaotic space than the other letters suggest: 'I have no bad terrifying dreams. At midnight when I happen to wake, the nurse sleeping by the side of me, with the noise of the poor mad people around me, I have no fear'.[176] Charles continues that, despite his daily visits to Fisher House, he and his sister write frequently, 'for we can scarce see each other but in company with some of the people of the house'. It is unclear whether he means other patients or staff here, but the letter indicates scrutiny, a confined space and the presence of the other 'poor mad people'. In November 1805, Mary wrote to Sarah, following the news that her mother had been incarcerated in Salisbury's Laverstock Hospital — a therapeutically innovative institution.[177] Mary advises Sarah not to 'let her unhappy malady afflict you too deeply'. She explains how she speaks 'from experience':

> Think as little as you can, and let your whole care be to be certain that she is treated with *tenderness*. I lay a stress upon this, because it is a thing of which people in her state are uncommonly

[173] 'Lamb to Coleridge', 3 October 1796, 49, 50.
[174] 'Lamb to Coleridge', 28 October 1796. 56.
[175] 'Mary Lamb to Sarah Stoddart, 14 March 1806', in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975-78), vol. 2, 218-220.
[176] 'Charles Lamb to Coleridge, 17 October 1796', in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb,* ed. Edwin W. Marrs Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University. Press, 1975-78), vol. 1, 52.
[177] For more on Laverstock, see Smith, 'Practice of Joseph Mason', 216.

susceptible, and which hardly any one is at all aware of, a hired nurse never, even though in all other respects they are good kind of people.[178]

A second letter describes how the fate of Sarah's mother had brought to Mary's mind 'the many poor souls' and 'all the mismanagement with which I have seen them treated'.[179]

Mary's discussion of mismanagement and tenderness suggest she encountered a more complex experience of care than her brother admitted, or indeed, knew about. These ideas chime with arguments put forward by Bonnie Woodbery, who traces instances of brutal treatment or abuse within Mary's poetry. Arguing that works such as *Mrs Leicester's School* and *Poems for Children* were laced with references to intense pain, horrific water treatments and claustrophobia, Woodbery pinpoints the ways that injured insects, powerless bodies and cruel treatment pepper these narratives.[180] As Mary stayed at numerous other madhouses after her stint at Fisher House, we cannot know for sure whether she was referring to Simmons's establishment specifically. If Fisher House *did* utilise more coercive modes of treatment, it seems likely that Dorothea and Euphemia's accounts would have discussed these more explicitly. Nevertheless, we cannot know for sure whether Mary was definitively *not* referring to the Islington Madhouse. Not explicitly implicating it, nor framing it as a straightforward space of kindly care, the letter indicates that Mary may have witnessed or encountered a range of experiences across the London madhouse circuit as a whole.

On the one hand, these admissions give weight to the notion of a more oppressive and troubling madhouse space, at Fisher House or elsewhere, found within cultural stereotypes of the period. Yet maybe, and in line with Charles's attempt to master his own narrative, Mary was employing Euphemia's technique of eliciting a compassionate response from her reader. Woodbery has interpreted Mary's poem, *The Butterfly,* as embodying 'an interesting mechanism for coping with cruelty: making oneself as object into a subject for which one could feel compassion', suggesting that Mary 'may have employed this method with her caretakers'.[181] This reading prompts a reconsideration of Mary's letter to Sarah. Not only concerned about her mother, Mary may have been attempting to inspire the compassion of her friend. Presumably wracked with guilt over her own mother's death, the discussion of Sarah's maternal figurehead may have

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[178] 'Mary Lamb to Sarah Stoddart, November 1805', in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975-78), vol. 2, 184-185

[179] 'Mary Lamb to Sarah Stoddart, 9-14 November 1805', in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975-78), vol. 2, 185-186.

[180] Bonnie Woodbery, 'The Silence of the Lambs: Anti-Maniacal Regimes in the Writings of Mary Lamb', *Women's Writing*, 5, 3 (1998), 289-304 (291-301).

[181] Woodbery, 'Silence of the Lambs', 296.

proved distressing for Mary, the enlisting of her friend's sympathy consoling. Given her brother's management of her incarceration and movement between madhouses, Mary might have also been attempting to reclaim ownership of her experiences. Dawson has argued that melancholy 'provided a compelling discourse of interiority' whilst simultaneously divulging one's learning and understanding of elite cultural codes.[182] With Charles's writing often smoothing over the more troubling aspects of her illness, Mary may have wanted to illustrate her own knowledge of certain codes surrounding melancholic expressiveness, along with a written reminder that she had *survived* incarceration in a madhouse. At the time of writing her letter, Mary was not only free, but cured, able to conjure past experiences with authority, passing on her learning and advice. Whilst highlighting her ascendency out of a pitied group, Mary still utilised the cultural capital that an experience of incarceration enabled, using past experiences to stir the emotions of her reader and establish herself as a figure worthy of pity rather than fear or contempt.

Returning to the notion of the capsule narrative, these arguments suggest that Mary also engaged in the mediation of her public image, through the arousal of sympathy and admiration. Whilst the first smatterings of publicity that surfaced after the murder focused on her violence, these were quickly replaced with positive appraisals of her personality and behaviour in the asylum. We cannot assume that Charles was always exaggerating positive moments or more benign aspects of Mary's illness — yet the complete lack of public discussion over his sister's scandalous behaviour suggests that her close friends and family *did* seek to avoid scandal, via the swift management of her story. Effectively keeping his sister out of a public asylum and thus shielding her from additional pressures, Charles also protected the public from the potentially unstable insanity of his sister.

Conclusion

The socio-economic backgrounds of these women have proved vital to this chapter, highlighting the ways that family, class and finances impacted a woman's psychiatric experience. Unlike the nameless, family-free female maniac from chapter three, the setting of the private madhouse means that it housed women who were educated, could be privately housed, and could spend money on luxuries. At the same time, their status

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[182] Dawson, *Lovesickness*, 97.

means that their experiences are easier to trace, their letters often catalogued within family archives or published in edited collections. In line with Nancy Tomes's statement that, within certain psychiatric institutions, 'women patients exercised choices, despite the constraints imposed by their mental condition and their inferior status in society',[183] archival evidence, if at times fragmentary, has revealed a range of experiences available for the privately incarcerated woman, more varied and visible than first assumed.

These more hopeful interpretations of female incarceration are not to whitewash the difficult aspects of life within the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century private madhouse. As Arlette Farge has written on women's voices in the archive, 'violent aggression and forced submission were part of [women's] daily lives, and we should not lose sight of this out of the ideological desire to portray women as autonomous and independent'.[184] Standing apart from the other case studies, Louisa's story proves a more tragic case. Philanthropic interest surrounding her pre-incarceration illustrates that, despite her strange behaviour, she functioned as a compelling symbol of *idealised* female madness during this period— pretty, elegant, free and unthreatening. If Louisa had not matched this prevalent trope, or been ten years older, perhaps More would never have told her story in *St James's Chronicle.* More's admission that Louisa's *beauty* had initially hooked her interest demonstrates the impact that the prevailing stereotypes of the charming love-mad female had upon attitudes towards living madwomen during these years. Moving into the madhouse, the deterioration of Louisa's health, looks and public image hardly signals an empowering, agency-inducing or expressive opportunity. Aspects of Dorothea and Euphemia's story likewise comply with Chesler's conception of female madness as an unequivocal experience of brutality, shame, fear and denial.[185] The silencing of Dorothea's voice and her erasure from aristocratic society adheres to conventional stories surrounding the wrongfully confined women, as do details of Euphemia's incarceration, with her ballad painting a desperate picture of freedom lost. Likewise, Mary Lamb's discussion of her experience when confined proves ambivalent, and not uniformly positive.

Yet this chapter has demonstrated how the 'broad spectrum' of madhouse provision available on the late eighteenth-century market — 'some good, some bad, some indifferent'[186]— meant that some spaces

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[183] Tomes, 'Feminist Histories of Psychiatry', 360.
[184] Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives,* trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2013), 38.
[185] Chesler, *Women and Madness,* 25.
[186] Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles*, 145.

could furnish a more nuanced experience than previous cultural and scholarly stereotypes have suggested. The steady stream of items coming *into* Fisher House certainly puncture monolithic understandings of these sites as closed spaces of total oppression, relating to the upkeep of Dorothea's financial, fashionable and emotional world. Despite Euphemia's financial struggles and lengthy incarceration, her attempts to procure additional funds and sympathy through her position as Boswell's daughter nod towards an experience that proves more ambiguous than traditional notions of silence and repression. These case studies reframed the private madhouse as a more permeable, less damaging, space, where varied experiences of consumerism, self-fashioning, creativity and care could unfold.

Considering the ways that contemporary stereotypes, such as wrongful confinement, might impact a woman's experience of incarceration, this chapter has argued that women might *use* pervading stereotypes to their advantage. In line with arguments put forward by Mary Poovey on the ways that women writers expanded 'stereotypical images of the female self', turning those images into 'sources of strength' through which to 'make their presence felt',[187] Dorothea, Euphemia and Mary aligned their expressive selves with a familiar moral framework that conformed to a specific narrative surrounding women, sympathy and suffering. As they framed themselves as objects of sympathy, and in Euphemia's case, financial aid, these attempts to self-consciously control their own representation give greater texture to characterisations of the voiceless madwoman. Stressing the cultural weight of the fictionalised figure, the final section of this thesis expands arguments on the impact that a popular trope might have on one's health and identity: through the compelling case of Crazy Jane.

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[187] Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), xi.

CHAPTER FIVE

Materialising Madness: The Tale of Crazy Jane

In the final decade of the eighteenth century, a poem by Matthew Lewis (1775-1818) captured the public imagination. [1] Following the success of his Gothic novel *The Monk,* published in March 1796, the poem described an alleged episode which occurred during Lewis's evening walk in the grounds of Inverary Castle, when staying at the Duke of Argyll's estate in Scotland. Written in the summer of 1796, the story went that Lewis and a female companion had stumbled across 'a poor mad Woman […] at whose appearance the Lady was much alarmed'. [2] The four stanza poem tells of the meeting between this maniac, the broken-hearted 'Crazy Jane', and the female passer-by — presumably Lewis's companion. Abandoned by her lover Henry, Crazy Jane expounds her plight to this obliging female spectator. Functioning as an instructive tale of immoral behaviour in line with the popular trope of love's madness, Jane's story of ill-fated attachment was, according to Lewis's biographer, infused with such romance, suspense and adventure as to gain 'a degree of popularity scarcely yet abated'. [3]

By 1799, the lyrics had been put to music by leading female composer Harriet Abrams (1758-1821). [4] This publicity saw the poem widely published across the day's leading periodicals and newspapers, with Abrams's rendition becoming a mainstay of Britain's performance circuit, regularly advertised and reviewed. Produced as single-sheet scores, and bound in books, the ballad soon found its way into domestic spaces, sung by young women who could ponder the moralising lyrics. Meanwhile, numerous poetry spinoffs told Jane's story in different ways, also published in periodicals or taking ballad form. Tracking Jane's 'lifecycle', these ballads included *The Birth of Crazy Jane*, *Crazy Jane's Epitaph*, *Henry; or The Sequel to Crazy Jane*, *The Ghost of Crazy Jane* and *The Death of Crazy Jane.* [5]

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[1] Matthew Lewis, 'Crazy Jane', in *The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis,* ed. Margaret Baron-Wilson (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), vol. 1, 188-189.

[2] *Courier*, 27 March 1799; *Oracle*, 27 March 1799; *Star and Evening Advertiser*, 27 March 1799.

[3] Margaret Baron-Wilson, *The Life and Correspondence: With Many Pieces in Prose and Verse Never Before Published* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), vol. 1, 188.

[4] Leslie Ritchie, *Women Writing Music in Late Eighteenth-Century England: Social Harmony in Literature and Performance* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 110.

[5] J.B. Sale, *The Birth of Crazy Jane* […] (London: L. Lavenu, 1800); 'Crazy Jane's Epitaph', *Lancaster Gazetteer*, 20 June 1801; *The Monthly Magazine*, 1 December 1800, vol. 10, 453; *A Garland of New Songs* (Newcastle: Angus, 1790?); *The New Whim of the Night, Or, The Town and Country Songster for 1801* (London: C. Sheppard, 1801), 81.

Jane also made an appearance at festivals and masquerades. The *Morning Post* reported that, at 'Mrs Methven's Masquerade' in Ranelagh, 'Lord Pomfret unsexed himself in the character of Crazy Jane'.[6] A military fete in Horsham, held to commemorate the victory of Trafalgar in 1805, saw a parade of popular characters, one of which was 'a Crazy Jane'.[7] By the early nineteenth century, Jane was the subject of a popular chapbook, *The Tragical History of Miss Jane Arnold, Commonly called Crazy Jane […] Founded on Facts*, written by Sarah Wilkinson (1779-1831).[8] In 1824, Crazy Jane's story became a play which, in 1829, enjoyed a successful run at the Surrey Theatre, London.[9] Periodicals and newspapers advertised a popular Crazy Jane opera and ballet.[10] A print, various woodcut illustrations and a watercolour joined this cultural medley, and in the 1850s, it was reported that a 'Crazy Jane Hat' had been all the rage in the final decades of the eighteenth century.[11] Jane's popularity continued into the twentieth century: throughout the 1930s, W. B. Yeats published a series of poems about Crazy Jane, and she subsequently came to be immortalised as a character in the Doom Patrol comic series.[12]

Noted at various points throughout this thesis, Jane's popularity was part of a cultural explosion that celebrated the love-mad woman in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Whilst earlier chapters have considered a range of cultural material produced in line with this archetype, the concept of love's madness as a *genuine* pathological condition has yet to be examined. Discussed across cultural and medical commentary, love's madness was powered by the belief that women could be driven mad by disappointment in love. Published in the *London Magazine* (1778), James Boswell's 'On Love' explained that 'Disappointed Love is one of the most frequent causes of madness, as every body may be convinced'.[13] After dining with the Opies in 1804, Joseph Farington wrote in his diary, 'Fuseli mentioned that a Medical man who attended Bedlam had said that the greatest number of those who were confined were women in love'.[14] Modern historians have also charted how disappointed love was understood as an authentic cause of madness during these years

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[6] *Morning Post*, 1 May 1800.

[7] *Morning Post*, 7 December 1805.

[8] Sarah Wilkinson, *The tragical history of Miss Jane Arnold, commonly called Crazy Jane and Mr. H. Percival… Founded on Facts* (Stirling, 1820).

[9] Charles Somerset, 'Crazy Jane: a romantic play, in three acts', in *Cumberland Minor's Theatre* (London: John Cumberland, 1828), vol. 2.

[10] *Morning Chronicle*, 23 March 1805; *Monthly Mirror*, 19 June 1805.

[11] Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence*, 189.

[12] Augustine Martin, ed., *W. B. Yeats: Collected Poems* (London: Vintage Books, 1992), 264-288; *Doom Patrol,* 2, 19 (1989).

[13] James Boswell, *Boswell's Column*, ed. Margery Bailey (London: William Kimber, 1951), 82.

[14] Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington,* ed., Kenneth Garlick, Angus Macintyre and Kathryn Cave (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1978-83), vol. 6, 2288.

— not just 'a flight of literary fancy but an everyday reality'.[15] Sometimes describes as 'erotomania', psychiatric medical texts portrayed love as a prominent cause of insanity, with Joseph Mason Cox's *Practical Observations on Insanity* (1806) including a chapter titled 'On Love, Its Modifications and Effects'.[16] Chapters two, three and four all provided instances when this trope and condition was aligned with *real* women, considering how it impacted responses to Margaret Nicholson, incarcerated women in the public asylum, and Louisa, 'Lady of the Haystack'. This final chapter extends these ideas through a fictionalised case study and considers the effects this trope had upon seemingly *sane* women.

As this thesis has already set out, art historians and literary critics have stressed how the madwoman took on unprecedented significance within the dynamics of sensibility.[17] A roster of fictional love-mad heroines, including Sterne's Maria, Shakespeare's Ophelia, Cowper's Kate, and by the 1790s, Lewis's Jane, proliferated across visual, textual and material culture in the final quarter of the century. As the introduction and chapter one emphasised, analysis of these characters remains somewhat meagre, with only Ophelia attracting sustained critical attention.[18] Even these discussions tended to bypass Ophelia's eighteenth-century significance, focusing instead on later renditions of her performance and visualisation. Neglecting an important crop of eighteenth-century sources, Elaine Showalter presents pre nineteenth-century Ophelia as polite, diminutive and dull, collapsing all Georgian reactions to her into that of 'discomfort', as chapter two detailed.[19]

Though Showalter's brief analysis of Crazy Jane *does* identify her as an icon of eighteenth-century female insanity, she is not presented as a subject of significant study in her own right. 'The appeal of Crazy Jane is not hard to fathom', Showalter declares. She is a 'touching image of feminine vulnerability and a

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[15] Roy Porter, 'Love, Sex and Madness in Eighteenth Century England', *Social Research*, 53, 2 (1986), 211-242 (218); Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10.

[16] Joseph Mason Cox, *Practical Observations on Insanity,* 2nd edn. (London: C. & R. Baldwin, J. Murray, 1806), 297, 306; Alexander Morison, *Outlines of Lectures on the Nature, Causes and Treatment of Insanity,* ed. Thomas Couttes Morison, 4th edn. (London: 1848).

[17] Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), vii; Sally Holloway, *The Game of Love in Georgian England: Courtship, Emotions and Material Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 122.

[18] Elaine Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism', in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory,* eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York, NY: Routledge, 1985); Mary Floyd-Wilson, 'Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: "Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds"', *Women's Studies*, 21, 4 (1992), 397-409; Kaara Peterson, 'Framing Ophelia, Representation and Pictorial Representation', *Mosaic*, 31 (September 1998), 1-23.

[19] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), 11.

flattering reminder of female dependence upon male affection'. Collapsing Crazy Kate and Crazy Jane into

one docile characterisation, Showalter firmly conceptualises the love-mad Jane within a homogenous camp

of saccharine and sentimental women, a representational step en route to more deviant and sexualised

examples of nineteenth-century madness.[20] While other scholars have reversed Showalter's dismissal of the

eighteenth-century Ophelia (discussed in chapter two, Jane Kromm, Mary Floyd-Wilson and Susan Lamb

have readdressed Ophelia's eighteenth-century cultural role, arguing that a 'surprisingly generous' number of

records suggest a more vocal, sexualised character), in the process they too have revealed a tendency to

prioritise Ophelia over her eighteenth-century love-mad counterparts.[21]

 That said, the recent efforts of several scholars suggest a renewed attention towards the emotional

function and transgressive possibilities of other love-mad archetypes from this period. Sterne's Maria has

received increased critical attention, with William B. Gerard and Susan Lamb making important

contributions on her role as a psychosocial empathetic prompt.[22] Sally Holloway's *The Game of Love* (2019)

dedicated a chapter to cultural codes of romantic suffering, and the ways in which archetypal heroines helped

eighteenth-century women conceptualise their own emotional turmoil.[23] Holloway offers a clear sense of the

relationship between cultural heroines and lived experience, arguing that various love-mad examples 'shaped

popular understandings of how a disappointed lover should (and should not) behave and wider perceptions of

the consequences of failed relationships for courting women'.[24] Despite the breadth of Holloway's research

and the characters she considers, she fails to mention Crazy Jane. In this way, she highlights the scholarly

inclination to sideline Crazy Jane from more detailed discussions of the love-mad archetype.[25] With the

leading writers on the feminisation of madness and the love-mad convention only noting Jane's widespread

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[20] Showalter, *Female Malady,* 13; Susan Lamb, 'Applauding Shakespeare's Ophelia in the Eighteenth Century: Sexual Desire, Politics, and the Good Woman', in *Women as Sites of Culture: Women's Roles in Cultural Formation from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century,* ed. Susan Shifrin (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), 105-123, 106.

[21] Lamb, 'Applauding Shakespeare's Ophelia', 107; Jane Kromm, 'The Feminization of Madness in Visual Representation', *Feminist Studies,* 20, 3 (1994), 507-535 (511-515).

[22] William B. Gerard, 'Laurence Sterne's "Poor Maria" as Model of Empathic Response', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Affect Studies and Textual Criticism,* eds. Donald R. Wehrs and Thomas Blake (Basingstoke; Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 481-512; Susan Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home to England: Tourism, Gender and Imaginative Literature in the Eighteenth Century* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 151-189.

[23] Holloway, *Game of Love,* 123.

[24] Holloway, *Game of Love*, 128.

[25] Whilst Helen Small uses an illustration of Jane for the cover of her paperback edition of *Love's Madness* (1998), the text itself positions her as a somewhat ridiculed cog in a wider sentimental machine of pathological heartache. Susan Lamb's discussion on love-mad women in the context of Maria relegates Jane to a brief footnote; Kromm's essay on the feminisation of madness misses out Jane entirely. See Small, *Love's Madness,* 13-14; Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home,* 371, f.n. 2.

cultural appeal, an opportunity has been missed to ask more specific questions about how Georgian and Regency individuals, particularly women, related to both love's madness in general, and Jane's pathology in particular. This chapter seeks to remedy that omission.

Critical to this reassessment is the work of Renaissance scholar Lesel Dawson. Though she considers the early modern experience of lovesickness, Dawson's call for a reconceptualisation of the frail, weak and irrational lovesick woman resonates with arguments set out in this chapter. Dawson explores the *uses* of female lovesickness, brilliantly capturing the ways that the language of love's madness might allow female self-expression and self-fashioning to take place. Considering the potentially pleasurable or indulgent aspects of this trope, she evidences elite female knowledge of the cultural codes that melancholy or lovesickness represented — including loneliness, learning and interiority.[26]

One way that this chapter responds to Dawson's plea for a reconceptualisation of lovesickness is by exploring the material objects that Jane's story provoked. This thesis has already considered the dialogue between madness and material culture. Chapter two examined the material commercialisation of the Nicholson affair and the psychological repercussions certain objects might evoke, as chapbooks, frontispieces and snuff boxes depicting the scandal became available for mass consumption. In chapter three, I considered the ways in which asylum tourists might engage with objects such as alms boxes and visitor books, whilst chapter four examined how 'things' interacted with female identity in the private madhouse. This chapter turns its attention to the commodification of love's madness. With the eighteenth century constituting a transitional moment in the commercialisation of romantic customs, 'numerous fashionable articles' which commercialised love's madness were now available for material consumption.[27] Evidenced through a dazzling array of Wedgwood stoneware and jewellery that depicted Sterne's Maria, these were marketed with women in mind, as Gerard has shown.[28]

In line with Holloway's model of the nexus of eighteenth-century experience, emotion and objects, this chapter unpacks Crazy Jane's meaning through the study of several objects — including musical scores, chapbooks and even a hat — that were produced during this period. Taking as my cue the foundational belief

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[26] Dawson, *Lovesickness,* 93-94.

[27] Holloway, *Game of Love*, 18; Small, *Love's Madness*, 13; Catherine M. Gordon, *British Paintings of Subjects from the English Novel, 1740-1870* (New York, NY; London: Garland, 1988), 73-6, 79, 87-9.

[28] William B. Gerard, *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 147.

that people ascribed meaning to material goods,[29] this chapter excavates the layers of meaning attached to love-mad objects; be they collective signifiers of cultural capital and fashionability, or as embodiments of private emotional meaning. By linking arguments about the role of the fictionalised late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century madwoman to the wider historiography of material culture, this chapter seeks to revitalise and renew previous readings of the love-mad convention.

This chapter begins with an analysis of Lewis's 1796 poem, before considering the eruption of popular culture that interpreted his story. Drawing heavily on the ways in which the language of nervous disorder was linked to fashionable behaviour within the context of sensibility, it then interrogates the ways in which the Crazy Jane craze, and the fashionable items it facilitated, operated within this sentimental arena. I then consider the craze's material life through the ballad and chapbook. Though the middling and upper classes definitely engaged with these cultural forms, I argue that these mediums also enabled lower-class interaction with Jane and her pathology. Considering more transgressive readings of the love-mad woman, I contextualise the Crazy Jane chapbook within the sensational Gothic tradition and consider the impact this had on a sexualised reading of Jane. The final part of this chapter examines the emotional function of the love-mad object in greater detail.

The Story of Crazy Jane

We meet Crazy Jane in Lewis's poem once her derangement has taken hold. Its narrator is Jane herself. The poem begins with Jane entreating a 'fair maid' to stop and hear her tale: 'Stay fair maid! / On every feature, / Why are marks of dread imprest?' (1, 1-2). Describing herself as wretched and helpless, she immediately asks for the woman's trust: 'Do my frantic looks alarm you? / Trust me, sweet, your fears are vain: / Not for kingdoms would I harm you — / Shun not then poor Crazy Jane'. (1, 4-8). The next stanza embarks on Jane's story, whilst instructing her listener to avoid her fate and 'escape my woe'. She advises: 'When men flatter, sigh and languish, / Think them false — I found them so!' (2, 3-4). Lewis infers the reason for Jane's plight in the phrase 'For I loved, Oh! So sincerely' (2, 5), before expanding on the story of Jane's misplaced trust in the next stanza. Despite the fact that Lewis heavily emphasises her romantic innocence throughout

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[29] Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darren Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (Routledge: London, 2004), 89.

the poem (she has 'never loved but one' (3, 2) and will 'never love again' (2, 6)), we are told that Jane has wrongfully trusted Henry's advances: 'He seemed true, and I believed him — He was false, and I undone!' (3, 3-4). Falling for Henry's charms, these lines strongly suggest that Jane has relinquished her virginity. Not just broken hearted, her honour has been damaged as well. Now, she unravels, her lover's abandonment leading to the loss of her reason: 'Henry fled! — With him, for ever, / Fled the wits of Crazy Jane' (3, 7-8). The final stanza explains her current state. Forlorn and broken-hearted, Jane paces the spot where she last saw Henry, chanting her 'lovelorn ditty' and seeking the attention of each passer-by who 'in pity, / cries "God help thee, Crazy Jane!"' (4, 7-8). These final words make clear how spectators should react to Crazy Jane: with pity, whilst also heeding the moral lesson that her case embodies.

Jane's authoritative voice sets her apart from the silent or incoherent versions of love's madness that came before her. Cowper's Kate is speechless, and it is the male poet's voice that describes her plight. Sterne's Maria is also silent, melodically playing a mournful tune on her pipe rather than speaking to those she meets.[30] In contrast, Jane takes control, reassuring both her female spectator and reader, that she is harmless. As Leslie Ritchie argues in her work on Abrams and the ballad, Jane demands an audience, 'perhaps dispensing a form of charity herself through her cautionary tale'.[31] As she entreats each passer-by, Jane's commanding nature is reiterated through her repetitive plea. Ritchie has analysed this repetition of the closed verse form as resisting closure, suggesting an 'expectation of further repetitions. Jane will continue to tell her story to all who encounter her'.[32] As Jane directs her warning to each woman she meets, the commanding and persuasive female voice that Lewis gives her emphasises that this is a story explicitly aimed at *women,* more so than previous literary examples of Maria or Kate.

The identity of the 'fair maid' that she directs her advice towards is compelling. On the night of this alleged meeting, Lewis was enjoying an evening stroll with the daughter of his host, Lady Charlotte Campbell, later Bury (1775-1861). A celebrated cultural figure, in 1809 Campbell was described by the *Belle Assemblée* as 'the most distinguished ornament of the fashionable circle'.[33] In an interesting inversion of the distinctly gendered love-mad *woman*, it has been suggested that Campbell was the object of Lewis's

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[30] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristam Shandy, Gentleman,* ed. James Aiken Work (Indianapolis, IN; New York, NY: The Odyssey Press, 1940), vol. 9, 630.
[31] Ritchie, *Women Writing Music,* 110-111.
[32] Ritchie, *Women Writing Music*, 116.
[33] *Belle Assemblee,* London*,* 1809. For more on Campbell, see Amelia Rauser, *Art in the Age of Undress: Art, Fashion and the Classical Ideal in the 1790s* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2020), 21-23.

unrequited love. With Lewis's first biographer, Margaret Baron-Wilson (1796-1846), stating that Lewis

harboured a 'silent and hopeless devotion near the object of his passion', this conception sees Lewis become

the disappointed lover that Jane so ardently embodies.[34] Lewis's feelings aside, it is significant that within

the story's earliest telling, the intersections between fashionable society and love's madness are already at

play. Additionally, the fact that it is an *elite* woman who engages with Jane's plight suggests that this first

rendition of Crazy Jane's tale was conceived with an upper-class audience in mind.

Pacing the plain and chanting her 'lovelorn ditty', descriptions of Lewis's fair maid create an

arresting tableau that we might expect to readily lend itself to extensive pictorial representation. Despite the

visual quality of the text, it was Maria, Ophelia, and Kate who found themselves recorded in the visual

culture of the day.[35] A number of prints, however, do visualise Jane. The first was published in February

1806 [Figure 5.1]. Situated along a coastline beside a choppy sea, Jane wears a classically inspired white

dress, a simple headband and a dismayed expression. Hands folded over her heart, she looks out of the

print's frame, perhaps to the 'fair maid' to whom she directs her speech, with wide, frightened eyes. A small,

dainty shoe points from beneath the heavy folds of her dress, and her shawl falls towards the ground in a

snake-like motion. Gaping at her right bosom, her dress suggests both physical and mental disarray. At the

same time, it nods to the day's current fashions. Amelia Rauser has charted the popularity of the neoclassical

dress in the 1790s, arguing that the style was 'intensely embodied and deeply emotional'. Explaining how

neoclassicism valorised the body as a site of 'diverse sensory experience', she stresses how 'embodied

neoclassicism blurs boundaries between real and artistic bodies, art and life'.[36] Whilst the white dress was a

dominant iconographical feature for the love-mad woman, inspired by Renaissance representations of

Ophelia on stage,[37] the draped, classical style we see in this iteration situates Crazy Jane within elite

fashionable society whilst reinforcing her role as an emotional icon.

These more refined sartorial cues break down as representations of Jane developed. The frontispiece

to Charles A. Somerset's play (1824), Robert Cruikshank's version of Jane shows a far more deranged

iteration [Figure 5.2]. Admitting that 'to the ballad, this drama is indebted for nothing but the idea and the

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[34] Baron-Wilson, *Letters and Correspondence,* 187.
[35] Gerard, *Visual Imagination*, 135.
[36] Rauser, *Age of Undress*, 8.
[37] Showalter, *Female Malady*, 11; Bridget G. Lyons, 'The Iconography of Ophelia', *English Literary History*, 44 (1977), 65-74.

name', the play tells the story of the evil Lord Raymond, who is determined to marry Jane and kidnaps Henry, faking his death.[38] Jane's father, Walter — seen languishing in Cruikshank's print — insists that she marries Raymond, meaning that Jane must choose between two idealised roles: the steadfast maid or the obedient daughter.[39] When she chooses the former, her father disowns her, and madness follows. Lord Raymond's lies are exposed in the play's final scenes, prompting Jane and Henry's happy reunion. Her state of mind, however, is left ambiguous, and it is not made explicit whether her sanity returns. Set in a wild woodland, the frontispiece shows Jane clutching a bundle of twigs, while multiple garlands of flowers hang from her torso. Holding her sister's hand, she stares out of the frame with a frenzied expression and wide eyes that Amy Lehman has described as 'huge dark blanks'.[40] The inclusion of the flowing white dress, the straw that sprouts from her hair and the garland of flowers that cross her body likewise suggest the stage costumes worn by actresses playing Ophelia. At the same time, her intense stare and bedraggled hair is reminiscent of Robert Edge Pine's wild-eyed, incarcerated renditions of *Madness* from 1775 [Figure 3.14].

Shifting to a new medium, Richard Dadd's menacing painting, *Sketch for an Idea of Crazy Jane* [Figure 5.3], suggests a very different interpretation. Though outside the remit of this study, Dadd's painting from 1855 is worth engaging with. Dadd's troubling mental illness has been at the heart of art historical discussion of his oeuvre: after murdering his father in 1843, he was sent to Bethlem's criminal section, at that point situated in Lambeth.[41] Dadd's Jane displays none of the quiet and acceptable sentimentalism embodied in previous iterations, visual or otherwise. She becomes an aggressive figure, framed by a ruined tower and menacing, circling birds. Her ill-proportioned body is stretched diagonally across the frame, as she stares out at the viewer with an imposing expression of wary disdain. Draped in patchwork rags and surrounding by peacock feathers, bows and ivy, Jane wears a mixture of flowers and cloth in her hair, a few wisps of straw clenched in her hand. The transformation that Jane undergoes here may well be influenced by the biography, illness and incarceration of its creator; additionally, the difference in medium, and thus audience, that each of these iterations evince may have also impacted Jane's rendering. Yet these examples do speak of a general shift in representations of Jane. Moving from a neoclassical figure of elite despair, to a

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[38] Somerset, *Crazy Jane*, 6.

[39] Amy Lehman, *Victorian Women and the Theatre of Trance: Mediums, Spiritualists and Mesmerists in Performance* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009), 27.

[40] Lehman, *Victorian Women*, 27.

[41] For more on Dadd, see Patricia Allderidge, *Richard Dadd* (London: Academy Editions, 1974).

deranged Ophelian country girl, to a masculinised figure, these visualisations undoubtedly suggest some progression.

In 1799, Jane's tale was enclosed in a regular ballad form by Harriet Abrams — the sex of the composer suggesting that her story resonated with female creatives.[42] The ballad took Lewis's poem verbatim, thus telling Jane's story in the first person. Multiple newspaper advertisements described performances and recitals of Abrams's ballad around the country. In 1799, for example, the composer John Marsh records rehearsing Crazy Jane with a Miss Cossins of Brighton, who later sang the song at a Chichester subscription concert.[43] Meanwhile, in May 1800, 'A favourite song, written by M. G. Lewis, Esq. Author of the "Castle Spectre", "The Monk", &c. and composed by Miss Adams, called "CRAZY JANE; To be sung in character by Mrs. KEMBLE"' was advertised in the *Caledonian Mercury*.[44] Attesting to this cultural craze, Baron-Wilson (1796-1846) has commented on the ballad's immense popularity, noting that the 'popular melody' was frequently 'introduced and sung' by the celebrated Miss Abrams herself at 'fashionable parties'.[45]

The production of the ballad, and its dissemination in periodicals and newspapers, suggest that Crazy Jane's plight was shared with a much wider audience than first suggested. James Mullan and Christopher Reid have explained how single-sheet ballads, produced in their thousands throughout the eighteenth century, were sold by hawkers at fairs and performed by street singers.[46] In line with Cindy McCreery's arguments about the multifarious ways in which images were encountered across eighteenth-century visual culture,[47] Mullan and Reid have considered the different ways in which contemporaries interacted with ballad scores, whether 'read by those who collected them in their closets and those who came upon them pinned to an alehouse wall'.[48] These ballads also lived within bound volumes, meaning that a wide cross section of society would have encountered the ballad in some published form, as well as hearing it sung or

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[42] Ritchie stresses how 'the song, based on Lewis's meeting with a real "maniac" near Inverary Castle, was set by other composers, but Abrams' original work was Lewis's favourite effort'. See Ritchie, *Women Writing Music,* 110; Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence,* 189.

[43] John Marsh, *The John Marsh Journals: The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1752-1828),* ed. Brian Robins (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1998).

[44] *Caledonian Mercury*, 14 May 1800.

[45] Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence,* 189.

[46] John Mullan and Christopher Reid, eds., *Eighteenth-Century Popular Culture: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

[47] Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 15-16.

[48] Mullan and Reid, *Popular Culture,* 3.

performing it at home. The cross-class appeal of Jane will be considered throughout this chapter —

particularly given her story's retelling in chapbook form, a medium linked to the lower classes, explored

later on. For now, these points underscore the different ways that Crazy Jane's tale was available across the

class divide, revealing that it was not only elite women, like Campbell, who engaged with her story.

Fashioning Madness: Laurels, Straw and Hats

As discussed in chapter one, love's madness was part of a wider cultural phenomenon which saw the

exhibition of a mild form of nerves function as a signifier of one's virtue. Within the broader dynamics of

sensibility, whereby being emotionally expressive and sensitive to one's external surroundings was a marker

of genteel behaviour, a nervous episode or disposition demonstrated an individual's genteel, refined

character even further. Eighteenth-century physicians George Cheyne and James Adair argued that the elite

classes were disproportionately affected by an array of 'sinking, suffocating and strangling Nervous

Disorders', their 'extraordinary refinement and sensibility' meaning that they were particularly sensitive to

their exterior surroundings. As a result, such nervous diseases became aspirational.[49] Nevertheless, some

forms of madness were understood as extremely serious; plenty of commentators warned of emotional

outbursts toppling into full-blown derangement, particularly for the 'weaker' sex.[50] With the new taxonomy

of nervous disorders that the eighteenth century proffered linked to frail bodies, the putatively weaker

physicality of women was understood as intensifying the likelihood of full-blown female mental disorder.

Exhibiting a milder form of madness — of which love's madness was an important part — was still viewed

as in keeping with refined, fashionable and sentimental expectations of genteel behaviour, so long as it was

carefully managed.

The high-profile illness of King George III in the late 1780s undoubtedly contributed to a more

positive conceptualisation of nervousness within contemporary popular culture, along with its affiliation with

the elite classes. The King's deteriorating health was not only public knowledge, but was increasingly

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[49] George Cheyne, *The English malady* […] (London: Strahan, 1733), 3; Carolyn Day and Amelia Rauser, 'Thomas Lawrence's Consumptive Chic: Reinterpreting Lady Manners's Hectic Flush in 1794', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 49, 4 (2016), 455-474 (457).
[50] G. L. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2-3.

framed through a lexicon of genteel nervousness.[51] Throughout the various crises provoked by the King's ill-health, the royal party line was to focus on his *nervousness*, rather than his full-blown bouts of mania. Framed as a mild and fleeting pathology, George III and the royal court employed the language of nerves to underplay the severe implications of a mentally ill sovereign, with the King himself reassuring his court that: 'I'm nervous, I'm not ill, but I'm nervous', consequently alleviating the seriousness of certain types of madness for his subjects.[52]

A mild form of madness was not just accepted — at times, it was celebrated. Dawson has shown that during the Renaissance

> the dress, language, and posture associated with melancholy were available to women both as a form of expression and a means of self-fashioning. Nor were women confined to purely negative or pathological forms of melancholy; rather, women could self-consciously fashion themselves as melancholic to exhibit their elevated social status and intellectual disposition.[53]

The same was true of women in the late eighteenth century. Several portraits of aristocratic women from this period reference melancholy, utilising familiar signs to indicate the sitter's sensibility and elite status. John Raphael Smith's engraving after a painting by George Carter, titled *Miss Carter in the Character of Maria* from 1774 [Figure 2.1], was the first visual representation of Sterne's Maria. Miss Carter, the artist's daughter, is identified by a handwritten inscription, made after the engraving was completed. Surrounded by dense foliage, the mood here is one of isolated melancholy, a mood that this young woman was happy to emulate.[54] Gerard's analysis of this portrait/subject painting notes that Miss Carter's straining dog — a representation of Maria's sole companion, Sylvio — here becomes a neatly groomed French poodle, rather than a breed more in keeping with Sterne's initial portrayal of Maria as a local country girl. Testifying to Porter's comments that sensibility 'afforded a mode of melancholy in which ladies *par excellence* could participate',[55] this substitute 'hints at the character's popularity among the middle and upper-classes, who might possess a similar pet'.[56]

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[51] Andrew Scull, *Hysteria: The disturbing history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24.

[52] Frances Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madam D'Arbly*, ed. C.F. Barrett (London: Coburn, Hurst and Blackett, 1854), vol. 4, 239. See also Scull, *Hysteria*, 24.

[53] Dawson, *Lovesickness*, 96.

[54] Gerard, *Visual Imagination,* 142.

[55] Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 244.

[56] Gerard, *Visual Imagination,* 142.

Similarly, George Romney's *Mrs Crouch* (1787) shows a woman fully embracing the iconography of lovesick pensiveness [Figure 5.4]. Wearing a plain white dress, the esteemed actress and opera singer is seated beside a substantial tree trunk, beyond which a ship carrying her husband, Edward Rolling Crouch, sails towards the horizon. Toying with the chain of a portrait miniature that shows her spouse to be 'the subject of her contemplation', Mrs Crouch is depicted as a devoted wife, complete with a natural backdrop and youthful, pretty features.[57] Here, the love-mad woman's dedication to the deceased or absent lover reinforces the unrelenting loyalty of the sitter. Alongside refinement and emotional expressivity, channelling love's madness in particular, rather than nervousness in general, thus attributed further virtues of fidelity and steadfastness to a woman's character. The rural setting and tree, along with Mrs Crouch's good looks and expression of pensive contemplation, positions Romney's portrait within a wider visual schema surrounding this acceptable mode of love's madness. These portraits suggest a fluid visual vocabulary within both subject painting and portraits, as features including the loose white dress, downcast expression and coastal surroundings were repeated across works of both celebrated women and love-mad archetypes — as we saw with the print of Crazy Jane beside a stormy sea [Figure 5.1].

A woman's affinity with melancholic or love-mad characteristics was not only displayed through gesture, countenance or behaviour. As we see with the repeated motif of the loose white dress, it was also demonstrated through fashionable articles. As well as these visual details, material *objects* were used as self-fashioning props through which love-mad characters such as Maria or Jane, and their positive associational qualities, could be referenced. A fascinating example of this can be found in the intriguing case of the Crazy Jane hat. Written by Baron-Wilson and published in 1839, *The Life and Correspondence of M. G. Lewis* is the only publication that documents this mysterious item. Baron-Wilson described how this unusual object was 'worth mention, because it shows the extraordinary popularity which one of the merest trifles from Lewis's pen was then capable of obtaining'. Speaking of the ballad, she explained:

> After the usual complimentary tributes from barrel-organs, and wandering damsels of every degree of vocal ability, it crowned not only the author's brow with laurels, but also that of many a youthful beauty, in the shape of a fashionable hat, called the 'Crazy Jane hat'.[58]

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[57] Julius Bryant, *Kenwood, Paintings in the Iveagh Bequest* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2003), 388.
[58] Baron-Wilson, *Letters and Correspondence*, 189.

No longer surviving in any collections, other contemporary recollections from the period frustratingly fail to mention this item. Its existence as a 'missing object' aligns it with arguments put forward by curator and historian, Glenn Adamson. Accounting for the phenomenon of loss within the study of material culture, Adamson charts his fruitless search to find a single British domestic footstool dated before 1800, despite seeing representations of such an item in the second plate of William Hogarth's *Marriage a la Mode* (1745).[59] Yet the footstool, he maintains, 'was no less important to eighteenth-century Britain for being absent'.[60] Rather than proving fruitless or problematic, Adamson insists that asking questions about lost objects is a productive enterprise, their absence becoming a matter of historical interest in its own right.[61]

At this point, various hypotheses come to the fore. Was the Crazy Jane hat a mere flash in the pan? It may have been such a unique piece that only a few were ever made — although Baron-Wilson's comment that 'many a youthful beauty' wore the hat suggests otherwise. A more likely explanation is that it was more of a generic item than at first assumed. Rather than bearing an obvious, literal reference to Crazy Jane, identifiable for the modern researcher, the hat may have been recognisable to contemporaries in a different way. It may have bore a particular style, having been worn by a specific performer of the ballad or part of a costume in a theatrical production. Gill Perry's discussion of the fashionable 'Abington cap' worn by celebrity actress Frances Abington, illuminates these ideas. Perry tells of this cap becoming popular in the 1750s and 1760s, recounting how one theatre manager described that 'Abington's cap was so much the taste with ladies of fashion, that there was not a milliners shop window, great or small, that was not adorned with it, and in large letters ABINGTON appeared to attract the passer by'.[62] The item was similar to a small pointed cap adorned with feathers and red flowers worn by Abington in a later portrait, Thomas Hickey's *Frances Abington as Lady Baby Lardoon in 'The Maid of Oaks' by John Burgoyne* (1775); yet without this visual reference and association with Abington, the cap's meaning might be lost.[63] Thus, whilst today we might miss the visual and sartorial cues which align a Crazy Jane hat with its love-mad heroine, the

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[59] Glenn Adamson, 'The Case of the Missing Footstool: Reading the Absent Object', in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources,* ed. Karen Harvey (New York, NY; London: Routledge, 2007), 192-207.
[60] Adamson, 'Missing Footstool'*,* 194.
[61] Adamson, 'Missing Footstool', 192-193.
[62] Gill Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre, 1768-1820* (New Haven; CT; London: Yale University Press, 2007), 218, f.n. 64.
[63] Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations,* 121.

contemporary viewer might have immediately recognised its style or decorative features, helping to explain the apparent invisibility of this putatively popular item.

Raising issues around fashion and celebrity, sensibility and mental illness, this accessory prompts the question: what did it mean for a woman to purchase, own, wear or gift a hat associated with Crazy Jane and love's madness? If we take the craze surrounding Abington's hat as an example, we can understand Jane's popularity operating within the dynamics of *fashion*, rather than madness. To wear the hat was not to pay homage to Jane and her love-mad pathology; rather, it referenced a popular actress, singer or performance associated with Crazy Jane more broadly, thus aligning the wearer with fashionable society and its genteel entertainments. With the beautiful and stylish Campbell being the first woman to be associated with Jane, wearing such an item was a way to align oneself with, or at least aspire to, the beauty, elegance and refinement of Campbell and her circle.

A more exaggerated iteration of this ritual can be found in early nineteenth-century Paris. Following a performance of Hamlet, the straw worn in the hair of the female actress playing Ophelia — a reference to the use of straw as asylum bedding — became 'the rage of Parisian high fashion'.[64] The fact that elegant, elite women were walking around Paris with straw in their hair is not to suggest that women were *literally* attempting to look like they had escaped from La Salpêtrière, Paris's infamous asylum. Rather, the incorporation of these features into one's public assemblage was linked to its connotations with high society and the celebrated status of a prestigious performer. In 1800, the *Monthly Magazine* reviewed the latest musical Crazy Jane spin-off — a ballad titled *Henry's Return; the Sequel to Crazy Jane* — favourably, stressing how it was well received by the 'fashionable clientele for whom the pieces were written'.[65] Donning the hat or wearing a sprig of straw allowed eighteenth-century women to situate themselves alongside celebrated individuals, becoming part of this 'fashionable clientele'. Via this reading, women such as Mrs Crouch were not necessarily concerned about referencing love-mad melancholy *specifically* in their portraits. Rather, it was about aligning themselves with a fashionable trope, and those 'youthful beauties' who were at its heart.

That said, there was more at stake here than the desire to be part of a glamorous clique. As Small has stated, 'with Crazy Jane millinery, female insanity reached its nadir, becoming a fashion accessory: madness

[64] Lamb, 'Applauding Shakespeare's Ophelia', 107.
[65] *Monthly Magazine*, August 1800, vol. 61, 67.

quite literally à la mode'.[66] The popularity of the hat supports the idea that it *was* fashionable to allude to, and be associated with, certain emotional states and characteristics that milder forms of madness evoked: of emotional expressivity, fine feeling and one's innately sensitive disposition. This is demonstrated by the enthusiastic assimilation of certain love-mad objects, such as those that depicted Maria, into one's personal assemblage. Mentioned above, the 'popular infatuation' with Maria was materialised through an array of Wedgwood items made throughout the 1780s [Figure 5.5]. As seen with Abrams, it was a woman, Lady Templetown, who created Maria's popular Wedgwood motif, a basic composition of a solitary woman, dog and tree. Gerard has argued that 'it was important for Wedgwood to credit a contemporary English woman […] with the image to complete its appeal to its target audience', reinforcing the connecting between Jane, her female creator and her female audience.[67] As well as stoneware, Maria's image appeared as an isolated motif on a range of jewellery, including earrings, buckles and bracelets: one of which we see in a portrait of the Duchesse d'Orléans by Élisabeth Louise Vigée from 1789 [Figure 5.6]. 'Not only is the noblewoman depicted dressed in a loose, unstructured peasant costume like Maria's', Gerard writes, 'but she is also wearing a Wedgwood belt buckle medallion of the character, probably set in cut steel'. Gerard goes on to argue that the Duchesse's sombre gaze and pensive attitude shows that, in the 1780s and 90s, Maria was 'far more than a character in a book, but rather a regular and prominent resident in the popular imagination'.[68] This popularity was not just about cultural interest, then, but rather the personal identification with her melancholic pathology.[69]

Carolyn Day's work on the rise of a 'tubercular' mode of beauty, celebrating a female aesthetic that focused on tuberculosis, is worth engaging with here. Carefully tracking the relationship between British fashion, beauty and tuberculosis, Day's *Consumptive Chic* (2017) explored how the physical disease related to contemporary ideals of beauty and class within eighteenth-century fashionable society.[70] In an earlier article co-authored with Rauser, Day analysed the aesthetic dimensions of this relationship within Thomas Lawrence's *Portrait of Catherine Grey, Lady Manners, as Juno,* 1794 [Figure 5.7]. The article convincingly argues that Lawrence used 'the tubercular as a visual shorthand for beauty, genius, and sensibility',

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[66] Small, *Love's Madness*, 13-14.
[67] Gerard argues that Wedgwood's stoneware 'appealed predominantly to female taste'. See Gerard, *Visual Imagination*, 147.
[68] Gerard, *Visual Imagination*, 147-9.
[69] Gerard, *Visual Imagination*, 149.
[70] Carolyn A. Day, *Consumptive Chic: A History of Beauty, Fashion and Disease* (London; New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2017).

employing the tubercular language of blushing, stooping posture and exaggerated thinness as indicators of the sitter's sensibility. [71] Here, women do not merely don accessories linked to tuberculosis; rather they assimilate these visual markers into their physical body and complexion.

Day and Rauser have stressed that it was a tubercular *mode* of beauty, rather than the literal development of the disease, that Lawrence sought to highlight in his painting of Lady Manners.[72] Yet they still suggest that some women were willing to make various physical sacrifices, even if just on the canvas, to evoke this fashionable aesthetic. The visualisation of the physical thinness of one's body or the curvature of one's spine serves as a far more embodied marker of illness than the poses displayed, and the airs adopted, within portraits and paintings of love-mad women. Expressions of melancholy functioned rather differently, part of a *temporary* sartorial assemblage, or the evocation of a *mood*, rather than symbolising full-blown assimilation of an illness into the physical body. Essentially, the removable nature of the love-mad object meant that women were in control of these references and their associative features, able to engage with their positive connotations of sensibility, refinement and emotionality on their own terms. These arguments speak of a wider theme, considered later in this chapter, that has run through this thesis: that of controlling and containing the threat of madness, whether love-mad or otherwise. Additionally, from these arguments, we can understand objects associated with love's madness — be it a sprig of straw in one's hair, a piece of jewellery for Maria, or a hat for Jane — functioning as miniature associative symbols, linking their wearers or owners to the sought-after emotional qualities that the convention evoked.

These arguments have shown how the elite woman's engagement with the pathological lovestruck trope could amplify her beauty, feeling and connection with fashionable society. Before moving on, it is worth considering whether lower-class individuals engaged with love's madness. With many of these fashionable articles — such as items of jewellery that bore Maria's visage — clearly reserved for the genteel wearer, we might assume these objects were created for an elite audience. Because Ophelia was born into the Danish royal bloodline, a Shakespearean love-mad icon might suggest one's affiliation with high culture; similarly, Maria was often depicted as an elegant and decorous individual, reinforced by her neoclassical dress. Chapter three, however, demonstrated how love's madness was a disorder that impoverished individuals could relate to: any woman could fall in love, and plenty of love-mad figures populated

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[71] Day and Rauser, 'Hectic Flush', 467.
[72] Day and Rauser, 'Hectic Flush', 458.

Bethlem's galleries, which housed poorer women of the lower classes. The lack of detail that Lewis provides in his poem supports the notion that Crazy Jane might function as a lower-class love-mad icon. Later iterations of the love-mad archetype strengthened the impoverished aspects of her personality: Crazy Kate is a serving-maid who quietly begs for a mere pin from anyone she meets, whilst Wilkinson's chapbook presented Jane as a humble country girl, as we shall see. Considering Jane's reception beyond the elite, the next two sections examine objects available for lower *and* upper-class engagement: ballads, scores and chapbooks.

Performing Madness: Ballads & Scores

Once Abrams had set Lewis's words to ballad form, the lyrics and musical cadences would have been heard across music and concert halls, alehouses and domestic settings. Welcomed into the nation's households, we know that the Crazy Jane ballad was popular across a variety of homes. Part of Jane Austen's music collection, Jane Elizabeth Troughton notes that it was sung in a number of English country houses, allowing us to assume that most elite music rooms had a copy of the ballad.[73] The fact that the song was sung in first person prompts further questions on the performative and psychological processes that its public or private rendition might enable — questions linked to the emotional concerns and interior landscape of the singer or listener. What did it mean for women to sing Lewis's words and temporarily *become* Crazy Jane, particularly for non-professional performers singing the ballad within domestic spaces?

As Dror Wahrman has argued, the theatre was an arena that foregrounded experimentation and fluidity, as well as serving as a site of identity construction — an argument which can be applied to both public theatrical spaces, as well as the spectacular dynamics of the alehouse or drawing room.[74] This statement links to Ritchie's assertion that, 'for a female performer, composer or writer, there was no safer place from which to debate a woman's place in social harmony than the imagined perspective of the madwoman'.[75] Be they in public or in their own home, the singer might use Jane's performance to consider

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[73] Jane Elizabeth Troughton, 'The Role of Music in the Yorkshire Country House 1770-1850' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2014); *The Austen Family Music Books* […]. 2015.<https://archive.org/details/austenfamilymusicbooks>.

[74] Dror Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2004), 51.

[75] Ritchie, *Women Writing Music*, 109.

the more auspicious features of her love-mad persona. Channelling Jane's sensitive demeanour through song, performing the ballad may have enabled a similar process of enactment that took place in the aristocratic portraits which drew upon the melancholic trope.

The measured cadences of the ballad may have also given rise to 'the opportunity to question social attitudes towards gender issues from a protected position of affective and rhetorical control'.[76] Dawson has suggested that lovesickness provided a vital means of expressing negative emotion, allowing 'individuals to criticize those who have mistreated them whilst still appearing as passive victims'.[77] In line with these ideas, the performer of the ballad may have found herself enacting feelings she was not usually allowed to display — anger, passion or revenge. At the same time, more deviant and titillating thoughts might have entered her mind. Flirting with danger, these may have included sexuality, immorality, even death.

Coming to Jane's madness specifically, the ballad also furnished the performer with a unique opportunity to control the frenzy of the mad character represented in the lyrics. This was felt through lines that described Jane's 'frantic looks' (1, 5), her status as a 'wretched, helpless creature' (1, 3) and mention of her 'frenzied thoughts beset' (4, 26). Historians of eighteenth-century music have argued that, despite its heightened language, Abrams's version of the ballad was well-paced. The cadences embodied a sense of restraint, which in turn gave female performers the time to contemplate Jane's situation and wider ideological function.[78] Additionally, Ritchie has argued that more measured musical scores allowed the emotional excess of madness to appear controlled during performances, the 'receptive harmonic verse structure and stable diatonic setting' suggesting a connection to the rational world. Accompanied by appropriate gestures, enclosed within a predictable musical formula and the safe context of one's own home, the volatile threat of madness could therefore be momentarily contained by the singer, similar to the containment of madness within fashionable articles, described above.[79] Whilst it may have been fun or entertaining to temporarily feign madness, at the same time the predictability of the score could well have provided comfort for the performer and audience alike.

Jane's cross-class appeal and ambiguous background might have extended the frisson surrounding the performance. The lower-class singer familiar with the characterisation of Jane as a humble country girl in

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[76] Ritchie, *Women Writing Music,* 109.
[77] Dawson, *Lovesickness*, 8.
[78] Ritchie, *Women Writing Music*, 109
[79] Ritchie, *Women Writing Music*, 116.

Wilkinson's chapbook, for example, may have related to Jane's story, feeling its emotional resonance. In contrast, the upper-class or aristocratic singer might have felt a frisson at singing a country girl's words. Not only portraying a girl who was mad, she also embodied a figure of significantly lower rank, meaning that her performance enabled a flirtation with working-class lives. The adoption of a different social strata might work both ways, however, due to Jane's sometimes ambiguous background — meaning that lower-class performers who interpreted Jane as a more elegant figure could also play with a little cross-class fluidity.

These ideas begin to demonstrate that love's madness was not merely a paradigm of illness that advertised one's pensive interiority and contemplative nature, straightforwardly bearing positive connotations for those encountering, emulating or indeed wearing it. Thinking about the more ideological, ambiguous or deviant aspects of the love-mad story disrupts the notion that Jane and her lovesick counterparts functioned purely as unthreatening emblems of a mild pathology, or as vehicles of sentimentality. To see them only in this light is to underestimate the emotional response of the eighteenth-century performer and listener, and the wider issues that Jane et al. might conjure. We cannot presume that all women would have enjoyed the love-mad craze or felt compelled to emulate the love-mad tradition within their assemblage. Feeling patronised by Samuel Richardson after reading *Sir Charles Grandison*'s descriptions of the love-mad behaviour of Lady Clementina della Porretta, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wrote that the author 'should be better skilled in physic that to think fits and madness any ornament to the character of his heroines'.[80] Jane's rising popularity took place during a decade when sentimentalism was facing growing criticism, and others expressed their annoyance or fatigue with the 'school of sentiment', to quote Hannah More.[81]

Despite the typical assertion that love-mad heroines complied with widespread ideals of feminine behaviour, thus serving as a more acceptable form of melancholic madness, in many ways Jane's refusal to reintegrate into society and to spend time in the company of anyone except passers-by subverted the demands of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century women.[82] This behaviour might also be read as subverting growing psychiatric and cultural opinion on how the female asylum patient should behave. As

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[80] Brimley Johnson, ed., *Letters from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (London: Everyman's Editions, 1925), 465.

[81] Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a wife: Comprehending observations on domestic habits and manners, religion and morals* (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1808), 83-84. See also Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986) 129, 136, 141.

[82] Lawrence Klein, 'Gender, Conversation and the Public Sphere in Early Eighteenth-Century England', in Judith Still and Michael Worton, eds. *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 111.

well as failing to socialise, Jane fails to get better. Sander L. Gilman has made distinctions about what characterised 'good' and 'bad' patients in this period, arguing that a key behavioural trait of well-behaved patients during these years was their *curability.* Historically and sociologically, Gilman argues, 'bad' patients tended to be older, poorer and more troublesome, partly due to the fact that they seldom got better.[83] In contrast, a 'good' patient was active, prone to recovery. These issues were manifested in early nineteenth-century images: as we saw in Rowlandson's aquatint of the women's ward at St Luke's [Figure 3.13], explored in chapter three. The print visualised the distinctions between the actively raving and despondently pensive madwomen, alongside other female figures who quietly perform domestic duties, on the road to recovery. No longer idle, morosely pacing the plain or rooted in desolate empty landscapes, nineteenth-century female patients were increasingly visualised as engaged in morally therapeutic pursuits that helped to facilitate their recovery.[84] Nodding to the chronological issues at play, these arguments speak of the ways that changing contexts across therapeutic practice might impact responses to love's madness. Representations which depicted Jane as beautiful and young, teasing out the more sympathetic aspects of her character, may have allowed her to function as an idealised figure of melancholy. Yet as the new century progressed and fresh modes of female madness started to surface, her failure to meet developing expectations surrounding productivity and recovery may have prompted a more wary response.[85]

Returning to 1796, interpretations that position Jane as entirely innocent also overlook some of the more scandalous aspects of her tale. Lyrics such as 'he was false, and I undone' would surely have piqued the interest of, or proved titillating for, the singer, listener or reader. With Jane's insanity taking hold *after* the act of sexual intercourse, perhaps Lewis was referring to the unleashed potential of female sexuality, and the consequences of losing one's virginity.[86] Thinking about other iterations of love-mad women, Lamb has

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[83] Sander L. Gilman, *Diseases and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to Aids* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 4.

[84] Elaine Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', *Victorian Studies*, 23, 2 (1980), 157-181 (158).

[85] These ideas relate to asylum photography in the mid nineteenth century, which often positioned photographic subjects in a compelling 'before' and 'after' sequence. The cured female body was visualised within the iconographical confines of idealised domesticity, demonstrating contemporary expectations of cured behaviour. See Sharonna Pearl, 'Through a Mediated Mirror: The Photographic Physiognomy of Dr Hugh Welch Diamond', *History of Photography*, 33, 3 (2009), 288-305 (292); Sander L. Gilman, ed., *The Face of Madness: Hugh W. Diamond and the Origin of Psychiatric Photography* (New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel, 1976).

[86] Relatively little has been written on the subject of virginity and eighteenth-century love's madness. Porter asked in *Love, sex and madness*, 'how did people see the relations between sex and insanity? Within the traditional models of madness, could the lusts of the flesh by responsible for the overthrow of the mind?', but gave few definitive answers surrounding the loss of a woman's virginity. Sexual frustration has previously been interpreted as prompting insanity, with Lamb arguing that during this period, 'experts and the public alike believed that lack of gratification rather than the

argued that Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* 'was not universally read as sexually innocent'; in fact, it could be interpreted as 'downright bawdy'. Describing how some contemporaries found the work erotically suggestive, Lamb argues that contemporary paintings and book illustrations toyed with the idea that Yorick and Maria were a courting couple.[87] Catherine Gordon has argued that painters who depicted 'two character scenes' from *A Sentimental Journey* were 'well aware of the potential for scenes of flirtatious intrigue' to arouse 'licentious excitement', alerting us to the degree to which sexuality was at issue in the text.[88] Kromm also points to representations of love melancholy as apparently innocent, but 'always sexualised'.[89]

These ideas remind us of the ways in which eroticism is always and ineluctably provoked by the female body, even if overridden by other issues such as religion, maternity or illness — as demonstrated in chapter three in regard to Bethlem's female alms box. Lamb specifies that, for an erotic encounter to be publishable, it had to be innocent. As Sterne experimented with the boundary between 'harmless' and 'lewd' eroticism, he 'managed the difficult trick of telling the story of boy meets girl whilst pleasing both the readers who craved sexual titillation and those who craved representations of chastity'.[90] These ideas correspond with those put forward by Kate Retford, who looks towards the cultural polarisation of female sexuality during this period. Arguing that eighteenth-century women had to be pure *and* passionate, both the Madonna *and* the Magdalene, she explains how these dual sexual modes were 'always conceived in a dialectical relationship, antithetical yet reciprocal, each recalling and reinforcing the qualities of the other'.[91] Retford and Lamb's arguments thus encourage a double reading of the female body, at once morally reassuring and erotically charged.[92]

Challenging Gerard's statement that erotic meaning was only ascribed by those who visually interpreted Maria through paint or print, rather than Sterne's text, Lamb responds: 'I don't think one should dismiss so many other contemporaries — they would be more aware of contemporary codes that we could

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desire itself' could cause madness. See Porter, *Love, Sex and Madness,* 220; Lamb, 'Applauding Shakespeare's Ophelia', 107.
[87] Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home*, 159.
[88] Gordon, *British Paintings*, 79.
[89] Kromm, 'Feminization', 513.
[90] Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home*, 159, 186.
[91] Kate Retford, '"The Crown and Glory of a Woman": Female Chastity in Eighteenth-Century British Art', in *A Companion to British Art: 1600 to the Present*, eds. Dana Arnold and David Peters Corbett (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) 473-501, 480.
[92] Retford, 'Female Chastity', 496.

ever be'.[93] The same can be said of the listeners, the singers and performers of the Crazy Jane ballad. Just as Kimberley Rhodes has described Ophelia as embodying 'a compelling complexity resistant to the binary categories of opposition',[94] similar arguments can be applied to Jane. In various instances, imaginative singers or audience members might have relished the more unsavoury elements that the ballad evoked surrounding Jane's sexual misbehaviour — elements that were surely intensified following the publication of the Crazy Jane chapbook in 1813, which, as we shall see, dedicated more time to Jane's erotic escapades.

These arguments provide another reading of the anonymous print of 1806, turning Jane into a sensual and sexual woman with a near exposed breast — reinforced by the fact that neoclassical garb was sometimes interpreted as 'startlingly naked'.[95] When discussing Lawrence's portrait of Lady Manners, Day writes how the painting signalled the sitter's 'sensitive and artistic nature' by portraying her as slightly dangerous — or, as a 'brilliant, ephemeral flame'.[96] Unpacking Jane's sexual misbehaviour, and rethinking the relationship between love's madness and danger, we can argue that those engaging with Lewis's lyrics on the page or song sheet, or within the performance space, may have felt a surge of emotion, a pleasurable frisson — much like Lady Manner's hectic flush and the ensuing dangerous flame. These ideas are strengthened when we move onto another iteration of Jane's story, found within the chapbook.

Pocketing Madness: The Crazy Jane Chapbook

Discussed in chapter two, chapbooks were flimsy and ephemeral, yet often viewed as treasured collectibles. Ruth Richardson explains how these charming little books 'were thumbed, pocketed, and passed from hand to hand, and down the generations'.[97] Their unique positioning at the boundary of ephemeral goods, but also as objects which could hold significant emotional ties, mean that they prove a beguiling source for the

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[93] William B. Gerard, '"All that the heart wishes": Changing Views toward Sentimentality Reflected in Visualizations of Sterne's Maria, 1773-1888', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 34 (2005), 197-269 (245); Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home*, 365, f.n. 24.
[94] Kimberley Rhodes, *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture: Representing. Body Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2008), 2
[95] Rauser, *Age of Undress,* 14
[96] Day and Rauser, 'Hectic Flush', 458.
[97] Ruth Richardson, 'Chapbooks', *British Library,* 15 May 2014 <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/chapbooks>

eighteenth-century historian of material culture.[98] The brevity of their text and simplicity of language suggests that chapbooks demanded lower literacy skills from their readers; paired with their more affordable nature at 2d or less, they have typically been equated with the lower classes. But chapbooks were consumed by a wide readership. Participating in both high and low culture, they engaged the privileged *and* the working classes. Elite and well-educated readers and collectors of these ephemeral texts were common, with men of letters such as James Boswell and Edmund Burke acknowledging a familiarity with the world of the chapbook.[99] Like broadsheets or ballads, the subject matter of chapbooks was varied. Chivalric romances, ghost stories, short biographies and reports of sensational events: all were printed in chapbook form.[100] Chapbooks thus blurred the lines between fiction and reality, telling of news and politics alongside prophecies and dream interpretations. This had significant repercussions for Jane's retelling in this form.

Sarah Wilkinson's decision to rework Lewis's poem as a chapbook in 1813 provides a second example of a woman choosing to recreate Jane's story. Whilst Abrams's had utilised Lewis's prose, adding her creative flair to the musical cadences, Wilkinson retold the story in her own words, embellishing it with additional details. Critically, she made two major changes. First, she used the third person, rather than the first-person narrative provided by Lewis and then reiterated by Abrams. Second, she tracked Jane's journey from healthy and sane, to unhealthy and mad. As such, and bolstered by the chapbook's longer, more detailed form, Wilkinson's text gives a far richer account of Jane and her experience.

At first glance, Wilkinson's chapbook consolidates the notion that Jane was worthy of the reader's pity. Wilkinson illustrates the innocence of her protagonist throughout the text: 'She loved him, sincerely loved him, and she feared to lose him by ill-timed expressions of dissatisfaction or doubt; yet she knew herself to be in a situation that, ere long, must proclaim, to the gaze of every beholder, her loss of honour'. Stressing the unavoidable nature of Jane's love for Henry, and the part he played in deceiving her — 'How powerful is the language of persuasion from the lips of those we love!' — she emphasises the arresting power of Jane's feelings, who is unable to escape from the 'enslaving power of love'.[101]

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[98] That books are considered part of material culture has been discussed by a number of historians; see Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway and Sarah Randles, *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 6.

[99] Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 75.

[100] Mullan and Reid, *Popular Culture*, 8; Richardson, 'Chapbooks'.

[101] Wilkinson, *Crazy Jane*, no page number.

A key theme of the chapbook is the relation between inner turmoil and the loss of one's looks. Reduced to a shadow of her former self following Henry's departure, '[Jane's] eyes no longer sparkled with brilliancy: her lips were robbed of their coral hue, and her cheeks assumed an ashy pale'.[102] Recalling previous arguments on the connection between beauty and morality, rationality and corporeality, once more the physical body displays encoded visual signs that indicate the moral integrity of the female protagonist. Contrasting with Louisa in chapter four, Jane's diminishing beauty narrates her *moral*, as well as her mental, decline. With one's looks equated with moral character,[103] it is unsurprising that, following the sexual misbehaviour that the chapbook addresses, Jane's looks diminish. With appearance serving an allegorical function, Jane's beauty is linked to her youth, morality and innocence. Following her sexual and immoral transgression, it fades.

The chapbook's contextualisation within the Gothic tradition significantly extends the more sexualised aspects of Crazy Jane's meaning. As Martin Myrone has noted, it was Lewis himself that started the trend for a 'new shockingly graphic Gothic tale'.[104] Jane's Gothic potential had been vividly conjured in 1797 through William Nicholson's adaptation of Lewis's poem: *The Ghost of Crazy Jane*. Expanding the original poem's Gothic connotations, the first stanza tells of 'mould'ring' towers, 'drowsy bats' and hoarse ravens in a 'dark and dismal' setting (1, 1-8). The second introduces the ghostly Jane, now a phantom who glides amongst yawning graves and shaking turrets: '"Fear me not, thou tim'rous stranger, I'm the Ghost of Crazy Jane!"' (2, 7-8). No longer walking the quiet plains, Jane now haunts 'Henry's lonely bed' (3, 1-2). Like Wilkinson, Nicholson pauses to lament Jane's faded beauty. Once possessing 'winning smiles' with a 'heaving bosom' and 'lily-neck' (4, 3-5), now she is 'A faded form, and shrouded spectre (4, 7-8).[105] In 1820, a printed copy of *Crazy Jane, in Birth, Life and Death of Crazy Jane* visualised Jane's spectral characterisation [Figure 5.8]. Whilst the print on the left shows Jane upright and conversing with her 'fair maid', the right-hand representation characterises Jane almost like a spectral ghoul: lying horizontally beside a crumbling ruin, she is a haunting presence, gliding through this Gothic space.

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[102] Wilkinson, *Crazy Jane*, no page number.

[103] Melissa Percival and Graeme Tyler, eds., *Physiognomy in Profile: Lavater's Impact on European Culture* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 17.

[104] Martin Myrone, 'Fuseli to Frankenstein: The Visual Arts in the Context of the Gothic', in *Gothic nightmares: Fuseli, Blake and the Romantic imagination*, ed. Martin Myrone with essays by Christopher Frayling, Marina Warner; and additional catalogue contributions by Christopher Frayling and Mervyn Heard (London: Tate Publishing, 2006), 30-41, 36.

[105] William Nicholson, 'The Ghost of Crazy Jane', in *Tales, in verse, and miscellaneous poems: descriptive of rural life and manners* (Edinburgh: Guthrie and Anderson, 1814), 223-225.

Shown at the Royal Academy's exhibition of 1807, Henry Fuseli's *Mad Kate* [Figure 5.9] had also visualised the connection between the Gothic and the madwoman. Situated in a turbulent landscape, with thick brush strokes evoking a stormy sea, Fuseli's Kate is suffused with Gothic overtones. Originally described by Cowper as humble and meek, Kate becomes a darker, more disturbing figure in this rendition. Swirling to look at her viewer, the painting pulses with movement: her shawl spirals around her, her red-tinged hair blows back in the wind and her hands are outstretched as if to steady her. Contemporary paintings that focused on nightmares, witchcraft and magic were not always well received by audiences; as Horace Walpole had scribbled in his 1783 Royal Academy catalogue, 'Of late, Barry, Romney, Fuseli, Mrs Cosway & others have attempted to paint Deities, Visions, Witchcraft &c, but have only been bombast and extravagant, without true dignity'.[106] Despite this reception, they illustrate a growing public appetite for Gothic romances and supernatural stories, of which the madwoman increasingly featured.[107]

Taking inspiration from Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), as well as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Wilkinson's story can be understood as an important text within this tradition. Wilkinson herself has been described as 'one of the most productive and gifted of female fiend-mongers',[108] seen in the ways that she coded her chapbook with a number of important Gothic characteristics. The interplay between good and evil; women conveyed as damsels in distress or pitiable commodities; the mingling of terror with beauty; the threat of approaching danger; indulgence of imagination; and terrifying dreams linking to one's present situation: these markers of the early Gothic tradition are all present within her text. Certain sections such as that documenting Jane's sleepless nights after succumbing to Henry's charms are distinctly Gothic in tone:

> Sleep did not calm the passions of her mind; her dreams were horrific; one time she was hurled from a precipice, then dashed into the foaming and tempestuous ocean, and sinking amid the billows, calling in vain to Henry for aid. She awoke, overwhelmed with terror. It was not yet time to rise.[109]

The proliferation of Jane's Gothic qualities within Wilkinson's chapbook become an important shift in her characterisation, the apotheosis of which can certainly be felt in Dadd's painting from 1855 [Figure 5.3],

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[106] Myrone, 'Fuseli to Frankenstein', 35.
[107] Myrone, 'Fuseli to Frankenstein', 34-35.
[108] M. B. Tymn, ed., *Horror literature: a core collection and reference guide* (New York, NY; London: Bowker, 1981), 171-3. Numerous gothic novels of the era were written by women and included lovestruck madwomen, such as Sophie Lee's *The Recess* (1783-85), Clara Reeve's *The School for Widows* (1791) and Elizabeth Helme's *The Farmer of Inglewood Forest* (1796). See Kromm, 'Feminization', 533, f.n. 22.
[109] Wilkinson, *Crazy Jane,* no page number.

which depicts spectral crows and a ruined tower in the background — despite the unique standpoint of its maker.

With a key motif of Gothic fiction being the imagined or illusory spaces in which the reader can inject their own fears and imaginings, categorising the chapbook as a Gothic text reinforces Jane's characterisation as a sexual figure. More equivocal sections in the chapbook surrounding Jane and Henry's sexual escapades allowed the reader to flex their imaginative muscles and insert their own details: as Nicholson's poem states, 'strong imagination painted / All the woes of Crazy Jane!' (5, 8). As Wilkinson describes how an impassioned Henry delights Jane in the secluded grove, the cynical reader may have rolled their eyes in the face of interpretations that framed Jane as naive and innocent. References to the 'seductive power of [Henry's] tongue', or accounts of Henry gaining 'the entire possession of his affections' can now be read as staunchly erotic. Wilkinson does not give her reader any concrete details of the sexual relations between the 'ill-fated Jane' and the 'deceitful Henry', only describing Jane as surrendering her virginity as 'the guardian angel of virtue slept, and the demon of vice reigned triumphant'. Intensified by the lack of details that Wilkinson provides — and the imaginative potential embedded within the Gothic form — the chapbook become a tool for one's sexual imaginings or fantasies. For elite readers, engaged in Jane's gripping sexual antics, the fact that the chapbook was a medium more readily associated with a lower-class audience may have excused their engagement in these more scandalous aspects of her tale.

Giving the story a sexual spin may have prompted further questions as to the nature of Jane's illness. Was it the loss of her love, or her loss of virtue, that led Jane down this dark path of insanity — now dramatically rendered through descriptions of sleepless nights or, in the case of Nicholson's ballad, of Jane as shadowy spectre, vengefully dogging Henry's steps? With her faded beauty and fall from grace linked more explicitly to sexual impropriety, we can understand the Gothic retelling of Jane's story, though titillating, as simultaneously accentuating the moralising aspects of her tale. Kept in pockets, passed down family lines or swapped with friends, the chapbook's role as a portable item meant that women could materially share Jane's story, heeding the warning she gives: 'Mark me, and escape my woe' (2, 10).

That Jane represented an ambiguous, sexualised but also a moralising figure is suggested further when considering another key motif of this project: the blurred lines between living madwomen and imaginary characters. Looking back to chapter two, a similar cultural inversion occurs in various accounts of Margaret Nicholson. On the one hand, chapbooks documenting her story, along with their advertisements,

promised to provide the reader with the facts of the case, reinforced by titles such as *Authentic Memoirs*.[110]

Letters putatively penned by Nicholson in her cell at Bethlem were often published in newspapers, and it was left unclear whether these were satirical productions, or penned by Nicholson herself.[111] This ambiguity was most fully articulated by the publication in 1810 of *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* by Percy Bysshe Shelley. A compendium of romantic poetry that Shelley pretended was written posthumously by Nicholson, she was in reality alive and well, not dying until 1828.[112]

The cultural appetite for objects or characters that sat along the interstices of art and life has been highlighted by Julie Park, who has shown how the repetitive use of words such as 'life', 'likeness', 'resemblance' and 'similitude' in eighteenth-century texts reveal a strong contemporary preoccupation with the connection between reality and mimesis, imitation and the literary genre.[113] Samuel Richardson provides one of the greatest examples of this from the eighteenth century, with his texts giving rise to an enormous body of additional writing which might further confuse the reader about the story's provenance and protagonists, including 'letters to and from the author, savage spoofs and denunciatory pamphlets, bawdy rhymes and poetic encomiums, imitations and translations'.[114] With Richardson's heroines assuming that 'ambiguous aura of myth, that symbolic realm so utterly paradigmatic that we can never quite decide whether it is more or less 'real' than the empirical world',[115] we can understand the period's madwomen as also capturing this 'ambiguous aura'. The publication of a book of letters authored by Maria in 1790 supports this notion, suggesting a public desire to discover more about the lifecycle of these fictional characters, and even a confusion as to whether Maria was a real woman.[116]

Crazy Jane's ambiguous status between fact and fiction was first highlighted through publication of the poem in newspapers and periodicals. The poem was typically printed with the transcription: 'The following lines were written in consequence of a Lady having, in her walks during a residence in Scotland, met with a poor mad Woman, known by the above appellation, at whose appearance the Lady was much

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[110] Anon, *Authentic Memoirs of the Life of Margaret Nicholson* […] (London: James Ridgeway, 1786).
[111] *The Times*, 31 August 1786.
[112] Percy Bysshe Shelley and Thomas Jefferson Hogg, *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* (Oxford: T. Munday, 1810).
[113] Julie Park, *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 95.
[114] Terry i, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 5.
[115] Eagleton, *Rape of Clarissa,* 6
[116] Laurence Sterne, *The Letters of Maria; to which is added an account of her death* (London, 1790).

alarmed'.[117] The notion that Lewis and Lady Charlotte had simply chanced upon Jane was an arresting one. In line with arguments put forward in chapter four on the exciting prospect of coming across a real wandering madwoman in the flesh

> Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* intensified and gave shape to the tourist appetite for real-life women who could reliably play the role of the erotic but untouchable, public but private woman. There were practical challenges to reproducing Sterne's roles for an actual tour, with real bodies, in real time and space. Marias, for instance, were not easy to come by.[118]

Whether Lewis actually had met a maniac on his 'summer ramble' is beside the point,[119] for he is nonetheless propelled into the role of the 'lucky tourist' who had stumbled across his very own, both virtuous and sexualised, Maria. The setting of his discovery is also significant. For anyone doing a little digging, they would learn that Jane was discovered in the grounds of Inverary Castle, which stood on the shore of Loch Fyne. The castle's positioning close to the shores of the loch might explain why, in a number of visual iterations of Crazy Jane such as Figure 5.1, she is placed alongside a choppy expanse of water. Jane's status is complicated further when considering that this particular love-mad woman has been found on the *ducal* estate of Argyll. No longer lost in a barren landscape, Jane is placed somewhere very real: Scottish and rugged, but also refined, recognisable and genteel.[120] As well as blurring lines between fiction and reality, the class associations of the love-mad figure once more prove ambiguous. In the same way that Louisa was described as leaving an aristocratic world for a more humble and pastoral setting, here we have Jane literally crossing into a geographical space aligned with the aristocracy.

In an effort to heighten her tale's intrigue, Wilkinson also states that her story is 'Founded On Facts' and gives Jane an actual surname — 'Arnold'. Whilst the chapbook genre included plenty of fantastical fairy tales and myths, Jane was contextualised alongside stories that stressed verisimilitude. One bound edition, published in the 1820s, sandwiched Crazy Jane's story between 'A Collection of Scots Proverbs, by Allan Ramsay' and 'The Life and Transactions of Jane Shore', the real-life mistress of Edward IV, containing a detailed account of her 'Parentage, Wit, and Beauty'.[121] Treading an alluring tightrope between fiction and reality, this positioning complicates any straightforward reading of Jane and love's madness. Reinforced by

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[117] *Courier*, 27 March 1799.
[118] Lamb, *Bringing Travel Home*, 190.
[119] Baron-Wilson, *Life and Correspondence,* 187.
[120] Martin Coventry, *Castles of the Clans: The Strongholds and Seats of 750 Scottish Families and Clans* (Cockenzie: Goblinshead, 2008), 76-87.
[121] Sarah Wilkinson, *The History of Crazy Jane. An Affecting Tale* (Coventry, 1820).

the chapbook form that prized make-believe stories, readers — particularly of a lower-class, who may not have come across other more polite versions of Jane — might have believed that they were reading about a real woman. Perhaps it was this essential ambiguity that made Jane specifically, and the love-mad trope more broadly, so culturally popular during these years. At the same time, whilst heightening the drama of her tale, her ambiguous status between life and art cast the story further under the shadow of impropriety, reinforcing the moralising elements of her tale. If Crazy Jane was part real, she might additionally strengthen the looming spectre of love's madness, of circulating fears about falling in love, having one's heart broken, and going mad oneself. The emotional repercussions of encountering the love-mad woman were certainly manifold — as the final section of this chapter investigates further.

Materialising Madness

Chapter one outlined the various methodologies utilised by historians of material culture when deriving meaning from objects. Building on these ideas, chapter four considered a range of consumer goods designed for pleasure rather than need, and the ways in which objects harbour emotional value. Utilising a range of these methodologies, this final section considers a span of objects already discussed in this chapter — in particular, the ballad book, music sheet and chapbook — and examines the more private, imaginative and emotional lives of these love-mad items. In the absence of personal responses, or inventories which include objects linked to Crazy Jane, my approach uses the existence, dissemination and popularity of these objects, along with a sprinkling of speculation, to excavate what they meant to historical actors.[122] These objects existed, people owned them, and many of them have survived. Despite the absence of a paper trail documenting the responses they provoked, the very existence of the Crazy Jane objects undoubtedly reveals interest and engagement with this cultural phenomenon.

Susan Stewart's analysis of the role of miniature objects as souvenirs, and their place as identity-definers for the people who bought, collected and carried them, argues that

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[122] Jules David Prown, 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 17, 1 (1982), 1-19 (7-10); Karen Harvey, 'Introduction: Historians, Material Culture and Materiality' in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (New York, NY; London: Routledge, 2009), 2.

> The souvenir reduces the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional into the miniature, that which can be enveloped by the body, or into the two-dimensional representation, that which can be appropriated within the privatised view of the individual subject.[123]

Reducing public experiences to representations which can be digested in private, Stewart positions the souvenir as an object which traces authentic experience, collapsing distance into proximity.[124] If we too classify these objects as souvenirs of cultural experiences of love's madness encountered elsewhere, we can think about the psychological repercussions and emotional processes taking place within public spaces of performance, exhibition and spectacle, and understand ballad books and chapbooks as allowing these experiences to be reflected on within semi-private domestic spaces. With the love-mad trope now conceptualised as invoking ideological issues of love, sexuality, immorality and death, the associative function of these objects must have been strong. These ideas call to mind Daniel Miller's arguments about the ways in which objects 'breathe out emotions with which they have been associated'.[125] Feelings of erotic desire, anger, shame, fear or love experienced when encountering Crazy Jane in public, be it a song heard in a rowdy tavern or a genteel performance taking place in a theatre, might transfer to the souvenir and be experienced, virtually, at home.

Building on the work of Sara Ahmed, Holloway has argued for the 'stickiness' of 'things', stressing that objects gather 'positive value as they are exchanged', becoming 'happiness means' or 'happiness pointers'.[126] Even the love-mad object could harbour auspicious associations, serving as a memento of happy times spent experiencing cultural performances with loved ones. In this sense, they became tokens of positive memories within the home, perhaps gaining the same sort of emotional value felt when thumbing through a dogeared theatre programme found forgotten in a drawer or pinning a ticket from a music concert to a notice board or the fridge. At the same time, they might become markers of one's superiority, and the owner's own avoidance of falling into the naive trap which catches Jane.

Given the fashionable ramifications of the Crazy Jane trope outlined in this chapter, we can understand the act of purchasing the song sheet or ballad book — particularly after viewing a spectacular iteration of Jane in a play, performance or even as a character in a celebratory parade — as materially

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[123] Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC; London, 1993), 137-138.
[124] Stewart, *On Longing*, 135.
[125] Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 38.
[126] Holloway, *Game of Love,* 16; see also Sara Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', in *The Affect Theory Reader,* eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2010), 29-51.

participating within the wider cultural craze surrounding love's madness, regardless of one's class. Terry Eagleton has convincingly argued that, due to its ideological function, Richardson's *Pamela* was less a novel than 'a password or badge of allegiance'.[127] Objects surrounding Jane could also serve as similar cultural markers, reiterating the fact that one *belonged* to the culture that so enjoyed this craze. Rob Boddice has discussed the ways that objects might be endowed with collective meaning that links to an 'emotional community', and thus 'be construed similarly across the collective'. Describing patterns of feeling that a community might experience collectively, he stresses that certain objects, and the associations that they evoke, create a material framework that ensures the stability of the community in question.[128] Objects linked to Crazy Jane, then, might provide this sense of unity, as well as reinforcing an individual's membership to a specific collective — be it a family, small network or a larger group. Additionally, for those who encountered Crazy Jane as part of a genteel performance, bringing these items into the home was another way to engage with a fashionable trope and position oneself within the emotional, expressive and genteel community that it represented.

Ballad books, sheet music and chapbooks were all sociable items, often enjoyed as part of a public ritual. We have already considered the ways in which the Crazy Jane ballad functioned within spectacular fashionable culture across a variety of spaces. Even within the home, the rituals and practices associated with singing and performance were often viewed as semi-public, in line with Lawrence Klein's assertion that being 'at home' was not necessarily a private experience.[129] To this end, when thinking about chapbooks, it is useful to consider Naomi Tadmor's arguments that reading 'was not always a solitary private experience; often it was also a sociable one'.[130] Eighteenth-century readers thought of novels as orally performative texts, and the chapbook could operate in a similar way, read both in 'private' or in groups.[131] These sociable encounters allowed an individual to exercise their alignment with a current sentimental trend through the objects they owned. Reminding us of Amanda Vickery's arguments around self-fashioning, women could arrange these objects as part of a wider assemblage 'that came close to a self-portrait — a picture that could

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[127] Eagleton, *Rape of Clarissa*, 4-5.

[128] Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2018), 179.

[129] Lawrence Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29, 1 (1995), 97-109.

[130] Naomi Tadmor, "In the even my wide read to me': Women, Reading, and Household Life in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 162-174.

[131] Mullan and Reid, *Popular Culture*, 7-8.

be shown off, rearranged, or hidden as circumstances demanded'.[132] Women would have been able to show their friends and acquaintances that they had bought the latest Crazy Jane ballad, or had learnt the words to the poem, through the ownership and display of these love-mad objects.

Possession of items surrounding Crazy Jane might also stand for a metaphorical ownership of the concept of love's madness itself. Similar to the ways in which the Nicholson affair was commodified through objects and exhibitions, the act of purchasing, engaging with and then *putting away* the Crazy Jane music score or chapbook could assist the owner's own fears surrounding mental deterioration or the threat of the unruly, dangerous madwoman. Through this reading, the Crazy Jane object takes on talismanic properties, perhaps guarding the beholder from the threat of going mad, or serving as an unusual lucky charm against a broken heart. Signifying a similar act of *containment* as with the restrained musical score of the Crazy Jane ballad or the removal of love-mad jewellery or headwear, the putative threat of contagion of the tale told within the chapbook's pages is stifled or curbed.

What about the sexual connotations of the love-mad object? With the Crazy Jane ballad and chapbook now understood as cultural artefacts which teeter on the brink between virtue and immorality, we can see these objects as letting Jane's flame flicker. On the one hand, as Stewart highlights, souvenirs can 'display the romance of contraband, for its scandal is its removal from its 'natural' location'.[133] In this sense, the act of bringing these items into the domestic sphere of the home may have proved a little scandalous, even titillating. On the other, Stewart goes on to note how miniature objects encapsulate imagined experiences, suggesting that their associative function stretched to more sexual and seductive imaginings, serving as proxies through which individuals might navigate typically frowned upon thoughts.[134]

This interpretation is strengthened when we consider Wilkinson's chapbook and its portability. Building on scholarship that argues for the emotional significance of objects, the work of Barbara Burman and Arianne Fennetaux on women, pockets and sociability broadens understanding about the ways in which women interacted with certain items. Whilst Burman has argued that pockets constituted a 'significant gendered object' through the possession and ordering of things within, Fennetaux stresses that, in the eighteenth century, pocket-sized books were included in the list of 'things' that could be found in 'tie-on'

[132] John Styles and Amanda Vickery, eds., *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America. 1700-1830* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 9.
[133] Stewart, *On Longing*, 135.
[134] Stewart, *On Longing*, 139.

pockets.[135] A unique space of intimacy, secrecy, and even empowerment for women, Fennetaux emphasises that pockets comprised 'thresholds that articulate relationships between interior and exterior, secrecy and disclosure, self and other'.[136] Their positioning between inner and outer wear meant that the pocket's liminal status invited allusions to a more sexualised meaning. At the same time, because pockets also functioned as storage for emotionally resonant objects such as miniature portraits and mementos, the act of wearing these items close to one's body reinforce the intensity of their meanings.[137]

At times placed within these mobile vessels of intimacy, sexuality and emotional life, the chapbook is thus imbued with further ideological import concerning a woman's identity and her innermost, private thoughts. As shown, the content of the Crazy Jane chapbook allowed plenty of opportunities for imaginative speculation around one's desires or fears. Through its positioning within an intimate space, these opportunities intensified. 'As places where intimate scenarios were projected and explored', Fennetaux argues, 'pockets enabled the woman to exercise and experience her uniqueness'.[138] With this meaning now transferred to the chapbook, we can understand women as navigating private emotional experiences through these objects. No longer gawping at troubling madwomen within Bethlem, elite, middling or lower-class women were able to engage with madness and its associative issues through this imagined, private world.

Returning to the issue of the relative silence surrounding the Crazy Jane object — the fact that contemporary eighteenth and nineteenth-century sources fail to specifically mention these items, nor discuss their emotional significance — the very interiority that these objects embody can help to explain this silence. Living on the intersection between sociable objects of collective experience, and private objects of intense introspection, perhaps the latter psychological process of inwardness intensified one's desire to keep these objects secret, one's feelings about them private. As noted above, love's madness might enable more destructive impulses and elicit a range of 'impermissible emotions' such as anger, guilt, social retribution or even sexual frustration.[139] In the same way that a woman may have channelled certain feelings of anger or

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[135] Barbara Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference: Gender and Pockets in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Gender and History,* 14, 3 (2002), 447–69, 447-8; Ariane Fennetaux, 'Pockets, Consumption and Female Sociability in Eighteenth-century London', Abstract, 2017 <https://www-cc.gakushuin.ac.jp/~20070019/Abstract2017/Fennetaux.pdf>. Fennetaux explains how from the end of the seventeenth century, 'every woman, regardless of her rank or status, had one or several pairs of tie-on pockets, which were detachable items of clothing rather like bags worn under a woman's skirt and accessed through slits in her overdress'. See Ariane Fennetaux, 'Women's Pockets and the Construction of Privacy in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction,* 20, 3 (2008), 307-334 (308).
[136] Fennetaux, 'Women's Pockets', 310-311.
[137] Fennetaux, 'Women's Pockets', 319, 330, 333.
[138] Fennetaux, 'Women's Pockets', 333.
[139] Dawson, *Lovesickness*, 4, 8.

desire when singing Jane's lines, the love-mad object could function as an emotionally expressive tool, perhaps facilitating emotional processes that some women found therapeutic, or empowering.

As Park has argued, 'the eighteenth-century self reached its most lively articulation through the material objects we traditionally consider as trivial imitations or supplements of the human: dolls, machines, puppets, wigs, muffs, hats, pens, letters, bound books, and fictional narratives'.[140] Identity, Park maintains, is embodied through inanimate objects, which become media through which individuals can not only acquire knowledge about others, but also the self.[141] Park's arguments, alongside others considered throughout this chapter, conceptualise objects surrounding Crazy Jane as important conduits through which eighteenth-century individuals could explore both the era's ideological complexities, and themselves. Gaining access to Jane's voice through the first-person narrative of the original poem, combined with the blurred lines across which the imagined and real madwoman functioned, and reinforced further by the range of objects available to take into the home, eighteenth-century individuals had the opportunity to place themselves metaphorically in Jane's shoes. Representing a plethora of issues such as madness, love, sexuality, immortality, family or death in miniature, their associative function gave women the chance to reflect on their own situation or status whilst vicariously experiencing the frisson of Jane's pathology. Wistfully thinking about a husband, lover or admirer, considering the more sexualised aspects of Jane's tale, thinking about one's own brush with worrying mental ill health or rolling one's eyes at a male writer's overly sentimental prose: all these processes would have impacted one's own sense of self, expanding our conceptualisation of Jane's 'straightforward' appeal.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that love's madness was not a straightforward phenomenon, and that the convention functioned as a more complex, transgressive and mysterious trope than previously acknowledged. It has presented Jane as a strong contender for a starring role in the love-mad limelight, proving just as thorny as Ophelia, and deserving of our attention. To be sure, Jane *could* function as a consoling and acceptable emblem of female insanity. At times seen through the romanticised dimension of her loyalty, at others via the

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[140] Park, *Self and It,* 95.
[141] Park, *Self and It,* xviii, xv.

more unnerving aspects of her tale, Jane might be sweet and saccharine, or menacing and marginalised. As iterations developed her role as an innocent victim (Abrams), a sexualised Gothic heroine (Wilkinson), a spectral ghoul (Nicholson) or an androgynous figure (Dadd), we can also identify a chronological shift at play. References to her insanity or sexuality often intensified as productions developed, her pictorial treatment nodding to a steady evolution. With scholars marking the 1790s and the first decades of the 1800s as a time of waning sentimentalism, these shifting cultural values may have impacted representations of Jane. Artists might have chosen to reinvigorate tropes that felt stale or outdated with sensational details or visual hooks, in line with fresh publications that teased out her Gothic characteristics. Discussed in the conclusion of this thesis, some love-mad heroines certainly retained their melancholic attributes as the period progressed. Treatments of Jane however, perhaps galvanised by a latent ennui with the love-mad trope, were increasingly concerned with the more ambiguous and deviant elements of her story.

Be she sung, heard, performed, read, purchased, owned, displayed or pocketed, this chapter has argued that Crazy Jane functioned differently depending on where she was encountered and who was encountering her. With these stories and objects available for cross-class consumption, one's social status, occupation and financial condition would have significantly altered one's response. So too would a person's own mental or physical health, or relationship status. A woman familiar with the experience of mental collapse after the death of a husband may find renditions of the love-mad trope more distressing than those applauding a famous actress performing the 'much admired ballad' on stage.[142] A woman dealing with an adulterous marriage might well have found some of Jane's lines ('think him false / I found him so') painful to recount. Others, like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, may have found the story frankly patronising. With contemporary commentators discussing the rise of the love-mad woman within the asylum, these narratives may have proved alarming, tweaking anxieties about one's own mental state.

In his work on the spatial dimensions of emotions, Benno Gammerl notes that the dissimilar ways in which 'specific emotions like grief, happiness or affection are generated, handled and expressed depends to a large degree on *where* they occur'.[143] Through a material approach, this chapter has shown how objects connected to love's madness functioned as alluring yet provocative psychological souvenirs, their personal meaning potentially intensifying when moved *into* the home. Throughout this project, I have argued that

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[142] *Morning Chronicle,* 16 September 1799.
[143] Benno Gammerl, 'Emotional Styles - Concepts and Challenges', *Rethinking History*, 16, 2 (2012), 161-175 (164).

cultural artefacts associated with female madness, whether real or imagined, allowed the subjective spectator to contemplate their own mental situation and psychological state. Examining Jane through a material lens has demonstrated further the shifting cultural and emotional meaning attached to Crazy Jane in particular, and the love-mad trope in general.

CONCLUSION

In 1763, William Hogarth produces a revised engraving of *A Rake's Progress,* placing a raving Britannia on Bethlem's back wall to symbolise a government gone mad [Figure 1.3]. Two female visitors stroll through the scene, perusing the inmates on show. By 1770, Bethlem closes its doors to paying guests for good — in part due to circulating opprobrium related to the titillation redolent in Hogarth's perambulating women, nine years before. The final quarter of the eighteenth century sees an influx of disturbing icons of politically charged mania [Figure 3.14] exhibited across London's exhibition spaces: the maniacal frenzy of the madwoman manipulated to demonstrate the intense political instability of the day.

The 1770s witness a flurry of pictorial representations of a pensive Maria in natural settings, whose unassuming elegance has led to intense popularity [Figure 2.2]. In 1781, Hannah More shares the plight of a hapless wandering maniac, Louisa [Figure 4.1]. More's very own Maria, the 'Lady of the Haystack' exemplifies the tightly bound affinity between melancholy and nature. In 1796, Gothic writer Matthew Lewis allegedly meets a love-mad woman roaming a Scottish ducal estate; by 1799, 'Crazy Jane' is a mainstay on the fashionable spectacular circuit. A ballad documenting her fate is sung across the country's alehouses and music rooms, women wear Crazy Jane hat and female insanity is commercialised, commodified, consumed, even contained. In 1808, the County Asylums Act creates the administrative machinery for a national asylum system; the following year, Rowlandson publishes an aquatint of St Luke's women's ward in a weighty text that celebrates the capital's most benevolent and prestigious institutions [Figure 3.13]. Employed in domestic tasks, these women suggest a shift in contemporary understanding of the 'ideal' madwoman, who now shirks the idle melancholy that Louisa and her haystack had embodied, thirty years prior.

Looking ahead to representations of the idealised Victorian madwoman, what connections can we make between her and her love-mad forbear? By the middle to late decades of the nineteenth century, the home had become a central reference point within institutional life.[1] Elaine Showalter has argued that the Victorian period saw techniques of moral management mingle with a homey therapeutic environment that

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[1] Jane Hamlett, *At Home in the Institution: Material Life in Asylums, Lodging Houses and Schools in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

encouraged 'patients to develop self-control, self-respect, patience and industry'.[2] In 1860, the *Illustrated Times* published a wood engraving of Bethlem's female dormitory [Figure 6.1], depicting two women sewing together quietly. Framed as models of incarcerated female behaviour, the accompanying text instructed readers to praise the 'increase of refinement […] in the way of elegancies, which distinguish the female from the male side'.[3] On the one hand, this mention of elegance and refinement bridges the gap between the domesticated Victorian women and harmless, elegant representations of Maria of the 1770s, suggesting a rhythmical pattern of steady evolution. On the other, the intrinsic idleness that was at the heart of earlier conceptions of love's madness — her only chance of recovery via the return or resurrection of the male object of the woman's affections — disrupts this narrative. Aimless and idly pacing an empty landscape, dishevelled and without vanity, these iconographical features are hard to plot on a continuum that leads us to the driven domesticity of her dressed and diligent Victorian counterpart, often a symbol of sociability within an asylum setup that prized familial interactions between patients and staff.[4]

We can, however, track a clear trajectory between the Victorian madwoman and the group of women who scrub bed-mats or stuff straw into mattresses in Rowlandson's 1809 aquatint [Figure 3.13]. The first of several examples from the nineteenth century which present the madwoman as an active agent of her own recovery, engaging in therapeutic domestic tasks, Rowlandson's work is suggestive of pictorial innovation, a precursor to examples such as Alexander Morison's plates depicting sufferers of puerperal mania in the 1830s [Figure 6.2]. Rowlandson's image symbolises the prevalence of domesticity, industry and activity within the asylum, values that are vividly conjured in the *Illustrated Times*, fifty years later.

More contradictions arise, as Rowlandson's print portrays a second group, several of whom display a more chaotic mode of mania. Hair tearing and fist clenching, they are vexed, agitated and raving. Thus, two strands of continuity emerge from Rowlandson's print. One serves as a halfway point between the melancholic and idle forms of wandering madness, and the domesticated Victorian madwomen who work quietly at Bethlem in the 1860s. The other connects the more unruly, politicised incarnations of the late eighteenth century, of Robert Edge Pine's unabashed allegories, with another more violent form of Victorian madness: the female hysteric. Falling outside the remit of this thesis, the 1870s and 1880s offered a powerful

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[2] Elaine Showalter, 'Victorian Women and Insanity', *Victorian Studies*, 23, 2 (1980), 157-181 (158); Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), 14.
[3] *Illustrated Times*, 1860.
[4] Showalter, 'Victorian Women', 158.

visualisation of hysterical female madness, often aligned with revolt and disorder.[5] The hysteric's bodily

convulsions, unleashed physicality, exposed nudity and disregard for propriety meant that she served as an

extension of more maniacal modes of madness which the eighteenth century had witnessed, building upon,

even reacting to, those earlier politically charged examples.

Whilst we can explain these shifts through the multifarious external forces that this project has

explored — humane conceptions of madness; the moral therapy and non-restraint movements; new

legislative frameworks surrounding care and reform; intensifying political concerns; a shifting emotional

landscape; the development of Gothic fiction — it has also made a case for the madwoman's

commodification across culture, and the implications that this had upon her representation. Seen in miniature

with Margaret Nicholson, this pictorial evolution belies an eager consumer base desirous to consume new

interpretations of the spectacularised madwoman. A saturated love-mad market saw image-makers, hack-

writers, playwrights and poets revitalise certain archetypes that had become trite due to their ubiquity, thus

spurring on or teasing out certain iconographic developments or trends — as demonstrated through the

Gothic renditions of Crazy Jane in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

This is not to place the madwoman's image on a straight line of steady succession. Nor do I wish to

channel a Whiggish narrative of progress or suggest that the nineteenth-century domesticated model related

directly to a woman's experience within the Victorian asylum. There are plenty of contradictions to this

story. Prints of Crazy Kate, for example, persistently peddle her sentimental appeal well into the nineteenth

century, bothering any tidy narrative of progress [Figures 6.3 and 6.4]. Representations we might place in a

later, more Gothic camp — such as Robert Cruikshank's *Crazy Jane* [Figure 5.2] from 1824 — still retain

their melancholic markers of flower garlands or neoclassical dress. As William B. Gerard notes when

chronologically grouping representations of Maria, these categories are 'not inclusive and neatly self-

contained, but function as basic reference points',[6] points which were prone to slippages and crossover. A

running motif throughout this thesis, as exemplified by the overlapping iconography found within Thomas

Lawrence's *Mad Girl* [Figure 1.1], symbols of melancholy and mania were by no means mutually exclusive

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[5] See Sander L. Gilman, 'The Image of the Hysteric', in *Hysteria Beyond Freud,* eds. Sander L. Gilman, H. King, Roy Porter, G.S. Rousseau and Elaine Showalter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 345-436; Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
[6] William B. Gerard, *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 137.

within the pictorial frame. At times in conversation with one another, the meanings of each trope were deeply bound by context, as well as their production and materiality, and the subjectivity of their viewer. Tropes might disappear for years on end, as seen in politicised representations, then resurface within new social, political or medical landscapes. In this way, the visual representation of the madwoman during this period tells a story of gradual evolution, rather than definitive change.

<div align="center">***</div>

These arguments lend weight to others that present the female body as a site of cultural projection whereby the ideals, stereotype and anxieties of a culture might be mapped.[7] The contemporary social and political contexts that framed the madwoman, often embodied within her frenzied, pensive or ambiguous form, has been discussed throughout this study. Chapter two showed how grievances surrounding radical politics and revolution, gender-bending and class anxieties were manifested through Margaret Nicholson and her visual, textual and material representations. The chapter argued that Nicholson's meaning developed over time, as the first smattering of salutary explanations of her behaviour collapsed into more defamatory readings, often driven by political and social contexts. Throughout chapter three, I questioned how circulating social and aesthetic commentary — such as humanitarianism, moral therapy and civic humanism — impacted visitor responses to the incarcerated woman. Chapter four considered how Mary Lamb's brutal murder of her mother narrowly avoided being interpreted via a scathing revolutionary language, the careful negotiation of her public image meaning that it was only Fuseli's sketch of a *femme fatale* [Figure 4.5] that interpreted her via her deviance. These examples confirm that the madwoman might be repackaged to symbolise wider societal and political issues, indicative of ideological shifts concerning the woman's role in the public sphere during times of national turmoil or political anxiety.

Also important to this project has been a range of geographical, temporal, spatial and institutional frameworks, tightly bound to themes of spectacle. Chapter two considered the ways in which Nicholson's meaning altered depending on the geographical placement of her crime, her melancholic potential

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[7] Susan Bordo, 'The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault', in *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, eds. Alison M. Jagger and Susan R. Bordo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 13-23, 3.

exemplified when placed within a natural landscape. Supporting Benno Gammerl's claim that the ways that particular emotions were 'generated, handled and expressed' depended on their geographic and spatial location,[8] Nicholson conjured feelings of disdain, fear and ridicule when placed within familiar geographies of urban spectacle. Moving onto more domesticated and miniature geographical landscapes, chapter five situated Crazy Jane's story within a wider narrative of material culture and the history of emotions. I argued that meaning attached to Jane specifically, and love's madness generally, altered depending on the setting within which she was encountered, be that stored in a pocket, handled in a music room, or placed amongst an assemblage of other love-mad items.

Interrogating titillative thresholds, chaotic galleries and ordered cells, chapter three tackled the architectural and spatial world of the public asylum, and the emotive dynamics bound up in these spaces. It showed how institutional officials might offer 'curated' experiences for elite guests, with each step of a tour formulated by rituals and prompts that might provide a potentially self-enhancing emotional experience. Arguments on Bethlem, St Luke's and Fisher House exemplified the ways that cultural frameworks mingled with the institutional, illustrating how preconceptions, impressions and stereotypes were instrumental in forming public opinion, and demonstrating the effects this had on the madwomen that the institution housed. The incarcerated and impoverished love-mad woman might be valuable to an institution due to her positive cultural ramifications beyond its walls; yet, as chapter four demonstrated, Louisa, 'Lady of the Haystack', began to lose her innocent appeal when moved into the culturally loaded space of the private madhouse. That chapter contextualised the confined lives of Dorothea Fellowes, Euphemia Boswell and Mary Lamb amongst a plethora of negative literary tropes, stipulating that experiences of privately incarcerated women cannot be divorced from circulating stereotypes of poor treatment and wrongful confinement; stereotypes that might influence a woman's view of her own health.

The theme of spectacle has been a driving force of this thesis. I have charted the ways that these years saw audiences gaze, peruse, stare and gawp at a range of cultural spectacles which saw the madwoman take centre stage. Pine's belligerent madwomen might be viewed in a print shop window, Nicholson's mythologised knife pondered at an enterprising tavern, Crazy Jane watched in a parade. Expanding the subject/object binary which has often underpinned scholarship on both spectacle and representations of

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[8] Benno Gammerl, 'Emotional Styles - Concepts and Challenges', *Rethinking History*, 16, 2 (2012), 161-175 (164).

'otherness',[9] arguments unpacked in chapters two and three have developed scholarly understandings of eighteenth-century spectacular culture and spectatorial sympathy. Through sustained discussions of various modalities of looking, I argued that cultural scripts and iconographical prompts provided instructive advice on how to approach the spectacle of female madness.

Chapter three cast both the asylum and the madwoman as an elicitor of a *range* of contradictory gazes, some prescribed, others not. Whilst Sophie Von La Roche earnestly engaged in the sentimental look, George Crewe was preoccupied with conflicting scripts of humanitarianism, pain, and perhaps pleasure. Others provided philanthropic commentary in the visitor books or engaged in voyeuristic gazing when meeting the female alms box upon Bethlem's threshold. As humanitarian ideologies grappled with the more objectifying forms of spectacle that the asylum's spatial dynamics enabled, that chapter plotted the ways that both the asylum space and the madwoman embodied the twin themes of charity and spectacle so vital to an asylum tour — once more evincing that compelling tension between push and pull, interaction and detachment, pleasure and pain. Unpacking the paradoxical feelings conjured when experiencing the pleasurable torment of spectatorial sympathy, this discussion of spectacular viewing practices demanded a more expansive conceptualisation of what the expression of pity really meant. Complicating existing arguments found in the feminisation of madness that position the madwoman as a prompt for the pity of the sentimental viewer, I argued that whilst compassion was certainly a common reaction to *both* the melancholic and manic madwoman during this era, so too was disgust, unease, guilt, fear and self-reflection, alongside erotic feelings, pleasure and comfort — arguments that were expanded in chapter five. Critically, I argued that the subjectivity of the viewer, informed by their sex, socio-economic status and health, significantly affected their relation to and handling of the spectacle.

Theoretical frameworks used across these chapters have been broad. Connecting eighteenth-century moral philosophy to issues of spectatorial sympathy explored in chapter three, chapter two applied scholarship typically reserved for modern conceptions of spectatorship to eighteenth-century spectacle. In so doing, this thesis has shown how the history of madness can be productively theorised through museological debates not typically associated with this period. Making an important contribution to the field by drawing

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[9] Edward. L. Schwarzschild, 'Death-Defying/Defining Spectacles: Charles Willson Peale as Early American Freak Showman', in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body,* ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (London: New York University Press, 1996), 82-97, 82.

parallels between Victorian freak shows and late eighteenth-century spectacles of madness, chapter two proposed that the mad could, and did, function freakishly. Often presented as free from social categorisation, the madwoman — like the freak — had the capacity to provoke and embody deep-seated social, political, cultural and psychological anxieties. Considering the range of responses shared following Nicholson's disavowal of categories of mania and melancholy, these arguments broaden our conception of the cultural consequences of deviating from these dominant tropes. I argued that more spectacularised and freakish modes of looking were not solely voyeuristic, but rather fostered truth-seeking, dialogical thought. Further research might be done on the ways that the late eighteenth-century asylum serves as a precursor of the nineteenth-century freak show: 'both a source of entertainment and a stage for playing out many of the century's most charged social and political controversies'.[10]

Inspired by freakish discussions of the bitesize, takeaway souvenir, these chapters showed that the capsule narrative was a popular way of 'containing' the madwoman's spectacle during these years. We saw this in chapter three, where asylum keepers told their guests reassuring stories which packaged various spectacles into something more suitable: a protective shell which held the madwoman's story. Chapter four broadened these ideas through the dynamic of Mary and Charles Lamb, whereby the brother-sister duo mediated Mary's threat in several ways — focusing on the mildness of her malady and her diligent behaviour in the madhouse. I grouped the 'Fisher House trio' through their sympathy-inducing tactics, illustrating their understanding of cultural codes surrounding madwomen and pity, and likewise packaging their experiences in a manner that might compel sympathy, even financial aid.

In addition to the containment of the madwoman within the capsule narrative, emotional and material methodologies have shown how purchasing, owning, controlling and containing an item affiliated with madness had their own psychological consequences. Chapter two investigated psychoanalytical experiences surrounding Margaret Nicholson through analysis of a snuff box that documented the attempt. Arguing that the commodification of the affair related to its containment, I suggested that collapsing Nicholson into an easy-to-handle object circumvented the ideological and social dangers represented by the affair. Chapter five showed how a woman might collect an array of books, musical scores, ceramics, fashion accessories or other ephemeral souvenirs that contained the madness of her sex in a multitude of ways.

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[10] Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago, IL; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 2-3.

Through this reading, items such as a Crazy Jane chapbook, a Margaret Nicholson pillbox or even a paper ticket to Bethlem take on talismanic, protective properties. These arguments again revealed that the subjectivity of the viewer or handler of an object affected these emotional interactions, whilst demonstrating that ineluctable thoughts of the condition of one's own mental health loomed large within the spectator or handler's mind, often at the root of this emotional and material encounter.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Demonstrated by the quote adopted for this study's title — 'Renounced all the Decent Tenderness of her Sex' [11]— the madwoman's rejection of various feminine values, and the way these impacted her alignment with melancholic and manic stereotypes, has been a vital element of this project. This thesis has shown that the uses and application of these types were tightly bound to gendered conventions and expectations, illustrating that it was the subversion of feminine behavioural codes that was often portrayed as more troubling and intriguing than a woman's madness itself, as the Margaret Nicholson affair showed in abundance.

Gender and femininity have been the primary optic of this project, but they has been examined in tandem with class, wealth, marital status, age and appearance, in line with scholarship that has stressed the necessity of an aggregate approach.[12] Mining a wealth of documentary sources not previously considered in line with the feminisation debate, including asylum visitor books, female account books, archival documents and material objects, this thesis has demonstrated how these terms were not disaggregated from the treatment and diagnosis, both cultural and medical, of madness in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Ethnicity and race have not been considered in this study, a notable absence that requires deeper examination, independent of the context of this thesis.[13] Also absent are issues of sexual orientation,

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[11] Anon, *Authentic Memoirs of the Life of Margaret Nicholson* […] (London: James Ridgeway, 1786).

[12] Joan Busfield, *Men, Women and Madness: Understanding gender and mental disorder* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1996), 6; Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

[13] To date, scholarship on the intersections between psychiatry and race in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England has been limited, with existing work in the field focusing on nineteenth-century colonial psychiatry. This focus mirrors wider scholarship of the period that looks towards colonialism and slavery rather than interrogating 'a continuous black presence in Britain', as Caroline Bressey has argued. That said, important work is being done to uncover historical marginalised voices, with a focus on local black histories. See Caroline Bressey, 'Forgotten Histories: Three Stories of Black Girls from Barnardo's Victorian Archive'*, Women's History Review*, 11, 3 (2002), 351-374 (352); Barbara Willis-Brown and David Callaghan, eds., *History Detectives: Black People in the West*

particularly when considering the lives of privately incarcerated women, and the ways in which a queer gaze might impact the emotional and sexual dynamics of an asylum visit.[14]

Looking across the thesis as a whole and considering the emergence of puerperal insanity in the early nineteenth-century's medical canon,[15] it is striking that motherhood is a female condition so earnestly ignored within cultural stereotypes. Whilst none of the case studies bore examples of incarcerated mothers, contemporary case notes from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries offer plenty of references to women gone mad post birth.[16] Many women were incarcerated for committing horrific, violent and spectacular crimes towards their children such as infant mutilation and infanticide, but, aside from the Classical story of Medea,[17] none of these experiences find a home within contemporary culture. Nor do these stories surface in local newspapers or the national press.

With mad mothers and infanticidal women absent from cultural productions, we can surmise that certain types of female madness were categorically off-limits, too terrible to be engaged with in cultural form. In line with Hilary Marland's arguments on how puerperal mania was an inherently shocking disorder that represented a 'massive contravention of social norms and feminine behaviour', we can identify the mother's complete disavowal of her feminine and maternal role — her intractable melancholy making her unable to care for her baby, her ferocious mania making her a threat to her new-born infant — as being the cause of this cultural omission.[18] A play about a young woman being wronged by her lover and engaging in illicit behaviour was far more acceptable than a ballad about a woman who had brutally murdered her

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Midlands 1650-1918 (Birmingham: SCAWDI, 2010); Norma Myers, 'Black Presence through Criminal Records 1780-1830', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 7, 3 (1988), 292-307; Leonard Smith, *Insanity, Race and Colonialism: Managing Mental Disorder in the Post-Emancipation British Caribbean, 1838-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). For a wider discussion of race and psychiatry, see Suman Fernando, *Race and Culture in Psychiatry* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[14] For recent eighteenth-century scholarship on queer studies and shifting conceptions of heteronormativity in this period, see Ana De Freitas Boe and Abby Coykendall, eds., *Heteronormativity in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019); Declan Kavanagh and Ula Klein, 'Introduction: Swift's Queerness', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 43, 3 (2020), 275-281. For discussions of lesbians in the eighteenth century, see Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[15] Hilary Marland, *Dangerous Motherhood: Insanity and Childbirth in Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3; Hilary Marland, 'Languages and Landscapes of Emotion: Motherhood and Puerperal Insanity in the Nineteenth Century', in *Medicine, Emotion and Disease, 1700-1950*, ed. Fay Bound Alberti (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 53-78, 54.

[16] See the case of Sarah Fozzard in Case Book, Wakefield Asylum, West Yorkshire History Centre, WYAS, C85/3/6/1, 212.

[17] For example, see John Goldar, after Daniel Dodd, *Mrs Yates in the character of Medea*, 1777; Jane Kromm, 'Olivia furiosa: Maniacal Women from Richardson to Wollstonecraft', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 16, 3 (April 2004), 344-372 (355).

[18] Marland, *Dangerous Motherhood,* 4-5.

children or cut the tongue from her infant's mouth in a delusional fit.[19] Perhaps the sexuality of the mother gone mad was part of the problem. Whilst the frenzied character of the female maniac in disarray denoted sexual abandonment and lack of restraint, the melancholic's ambiguous innocence was part of her appeal. Neither sat comfortably with the confirmed sexuality of the mother, an issue reinforced if we consider contemporary speculations that the loss of one's virginity might lead to madness. If this was the case, this proved extremely worrying for the young woman on the cusp of marriage and sexual activity. Evidently, madness and motherhood did not mix, and culturally aligning the insane mother with familiar stereotypes of mania and melancholy was problematic, and unwelcome.

Considering the lived experiences of the women examined in this thesis, the more nuanced experiences of Dorothea Fellowes, Euphemia Boswell and Mary Lamb likewise do not have a cultural counterpart. Nor do their overblown retellings by scholars or contemporaries. Though scholarship has denounced the behaviour of the crazed female shopper, as with descriptions of Euphemia's rampant spending at the hairdressers,[20] satirical printmakers, poets or playwrights did not utilise this motif to make wider points about women's vanity, excess or obsession. Paranoid, confused or delusional behaviour also did not find its way into cultural sources. When women who exhibited these types of disorders were forced into the limelight, as with Margaret Nicholson, creatives grappled with her story, shuffling through various visual frameworks until settling on interpretive strategies that perpetuated difference and distance.

One living woman described in this thesis *did* find a willing and ready audience. Treading that tantalising line between art and life that many of the women considered in this project walked, Louisa, 'Lady of the Haystack', was wholeheartedly accepted into the cultural canon. A beautiful former aristocrat, fallen from grace, mysteriously deranged and wandering at liberty, this fascinating fusion embodied a compelling opportunity for female philanthropy, but one fuelled by romantic interest in her beauty and past. As More asked herself, clearly vexed, was it 'her calamity or her attractions which engaged my heart to serve her'?[21] Surely it was both. Louisa was not straightforward; significantly, she bore *both* manic and melancholic features. For all her beauty, origins and youth, accounts described the 'remarkable wildness and incoherence

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[19] 'Wild Martha Barnsley', Case Book, Wakefield Asylum, West Yorkshire History Centre, WYAS, C85/3/6/2, 239.
[20] Frederick A. Pottle, *Pride and Negligence: The History of the Boswell Papers. The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 17.
[21] 'Letter to Mary Hamilton, 21 October 1783', cited in Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 56.

in all that she said and did'.[22] Visualised with wide eyes, flowing hair and a manic countenance [Figure 4.2], audiences were happy to accommodate her manic strangeness because of the feminine traits she embodied; traits that faded following her incarceration, thus impacting public interest in her. A female archetype linked to dedication and devotion, disappointment and dependence was far more suitable than one associated with pride, luxury, vanity, obsession and excess. The insane female consumer, manic mother or obsessive thinker shirked her feminine duties, the origins of her illness proving too cloudy, unfamiliar and threatening to enable the commercialisation and commodification that a more idealised, feminine and dependent madwoman provoked so readily.

Throughout this study I have maintained that whilst stereotype was not indicative of lived experience, it might influence it — as these aforementioned examples show. Careful analysis of the intersections between art and life means that this thesis has also shed further light on the sentimental stereotype of love's madness and the emotional effects of the love-mad woman on historical actors. Tracking her position between virtue and vice, fiction and reality, her cross-class appeal and her increasingly Gothic representation, chapter five reassessed the figure of the love-mad woman, so often dismissed by scholars within feminisation debates. I contextualised Crazy Jane within a new realm hitherto unexplored within scholarship on madness's feminisation — the home — arguing that Crazy Jane has been undervalued by scholars. Presenting love's madness as a far more complex cultural artefact than previously acknowledged, I framed the fictionalised Jane as a figure rife with double meaning: chaste and moralising, whilst also sexual, alluring and provocative of a range of emotions including shame, fear, love and happiness.

As well as reassessing tropes, this thesis has broken down stereotypes surrounding incarcerated women and the private madhouse. Building on scholarship that characterised private madhouses as comfortable sites of therapeutic innovation,[23] I punctured prior readings of this closed and abusive institution peddled across both late eighteenth-century cultural representations and early scholarship in the history of psychiatry.[24] Presented as a variable site in regard to its conditions, comforts and care, Fisher House has emerged as a permeable space of gardens and rooms, of staff, merchants and visitors, of commercial and

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[22] *St James's Chronicle*, 10-13 November 1781.

[23] William Ll. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: A Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 112-121; Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 137.

[24] Charlotte Newman, 'A mansion for the mad: an archaeology of Brooke House, Hackney', *Post-Medieval Archaeology,* 49, 1 (2015), 156-174 (157); Leonard Smith, *Private Madhouses in England, 1640-1815: Commercialised Care for the Insane* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 239

emotional activity. Furnishing a more unique experience than perhaps first assumed, in line with Nancy Tomes's assertion that female patients exercised choices within certain asylums,[25] I have extended understanding on how these putatively marginalised individuals could negotiate a more complex, potentially enhancing, experience within the madhouse. To be sure, the experiences of Dorothea, Euphemia and Mary were mixed; moreover, the more positive aspects of their confinement was not commonplace. Women discussed in chapter four were of a particular class and status, meaning they could live at more prestigious institutions and engage in creative or consumer behaviour that might prove consoling, even therapeutic. Yet undoubtedly, chapter four showed that varied experiences of consumerism, agency and expression *were* available for patients of a certain class within certain English private madhouses, and that women engaged in imaginative, creative or emotional behaviour that nuances our understanding of the experience of female madness during these years. In unearthing previously untold female experiences, chapter four is part of a wider feminist historical agenda that aims to disrupt the male-dominated patriarchal discourses inherent in the history of psychiatry. At the same time, it makes an important contribution to ongoing research that disrupts the feminist manifestos of the 1960s and 1970s, that described a purely patriarchal psychiatric system, bolstered by unsympathetic male relatives.[26]

Ultimately, this thesis offers a new reading of the feminisation of madness. It has broadened understanding of manic and melancholic types, demonstrating that whilst these were the dominant tropes within visual representations, the madwoman was not solely understood though this cultural vocabulary. Nuancing oppositional narratives found within historical constructions of psychiatry, gender and spectacle — of mania/melancholic, masculine/feminine, mad/sane, us/them — I have shown how viewing the madwoman purely through these binary lenses runs the risk of glossing over the rich texture of responses, interpretations, encounters and experiences from which these archetypes stray — though these oppositional categories have been considered throughout. The case studies interrogated do not position responses to madness to be wholeheartedly sentimental, positive or acceptable; nor have they been only conceptualised through 'monolithic hostility', as scholars such as Jonathan Andrews and Mary Floyd-Wilson have warned against.[27]

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[25] Nancy Tomes, 'Feminist Histories of Psychiatry', in *Discovering the History of Psychiatry,* eds. Mark Stephen Micale and Roy Porter (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 348-383, 360.
[26] Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York, NY: Avon Books, 1972), 52, 56; Tomes, 'Feminist Histories of Psychiatry', 355.
[27] Jonathan Andrews, 'Bedlam revisited: A history of Bethlem hospital 1634-1770' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1991), i; Mary Floyd-Wilson, 'Ophelia and Femininity in the Eighteenth Century: "Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds"', *Women's Studies*, 21, 4 (1992), 397-409 (405).

The criminalised madwoman living in her cell might provoke a sense of order via her containment within four walls, her chained or melancholic counterpart igniting an uneasy sexual desire. A strait-jacketed maniac might embody a morally therapeutic success, a love-mad story might become a talismanic tool, or an object of anger or shame. While unpacking the conventional tropes of female madness that this period offered — of maniacal, violent rage, and sedate, despondent melancholia — this thesis has simultaneously diverged from these fixed definitions, exemplifying a range of additional ways that madwomen were conceptualised: including the mad shopper, the domesticated patient, the sporadic sufferer, the contented wanderer and the educated spinster.

The interdisciplinarity that a project of this nature has called for — in line with Julia Kristeva's call for the medical humanities to work across 'cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural' spaces[28] — chimes with a range of curatorial projects taking place within medical and museological spaces today. Traversing the medical and cultural 'divide', these examples likewise view women and madness through a bifocal lens. Institutions such as Bethlem Museum of the Mind and the Foundling Museum demonstrate a museological capacity to raise awareness of women's mental health. Providing a 'forum for new conversations and partnerships' through exhibitions, talks and workshops, both are tackling issues around women and mental health head on.[29] These examples suggest that institutions that are foundational in the story of England's healthcare system are genuinely committed to reassessing their legacy through stories of treatment, care and coercion, whilst questioning how best to display and interpret mental health in museums.[30] Examining our contemporary relationship with and experience of mental illness through historical perspectives, they reveal how the history of mental illness remains relevant and valuable to modern audiences. This thesis has contributed to this reassessment, stressing the overlap between stereotype, stigma and real experiences of mental illness, whilst emphasising the impact that cultural renditions of female madness had on preconception and experience.

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[28] Julia Kristeva, Marie Rose Moro, John Ødemark and Eivind Engebretsen, 'Cultural crossings of care: An appeal to the medical humanities', *Medical Humanities,* 44 (2018), 55-58 (56).

[29] In March 2020, Bethlem Museum of the Mind ran a workshop titled 'Women's Body Image and Mental Health' in conjunction with their exhibition 'The Four Ages of Woman'. Despite being cancelled due to Covid-19, a symposium at the Foundling Museum intended to coincide with the museum's 'Portraying Pregnancy: from Holbein to Social Media' exhibition, which focused on maternal mental health. See 'From the Curator's Desk: The Four Ages of Women, Perinatal Mental Health', *Bethlem Museum of the Mind Blog* <https://museumofthemind.org.uk/blog/from-the-curators-desk-the-four-ages-of-woman-perinatal-mental-health>;'Portraying Pregnancy: From Holbein to Social Media', *The Foundling Museum* <https://foundlingmuseum.org.uk/events/portraying-pregnancy/.>

[30] From the Curator's Desk, *Bethlem Museum of the Mind Blog.*

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