

MEDIA, LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE MADWOMAN, A
COMPUTATIONAL TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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This paper will provide a textual analysis of three types of texts from the Victorian Era analyzing the patterns found based on the word choices in the texts involving the topic of the madwoman. Focusing on literary, scientific, and journalistic examples, I used the AntConc system to collect a quantitative sample of every word listed the texts used for the analysis. The texts analyzed through the system are *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *The Physiology and Psychology of the Mind* by Henry Maudsley, *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane* by John Connolly, and the collection of newspaper articles on Mary Lawson from the *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette*.

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the many English teachers and professors who have challenged and inspired me over the years who still teach, are retired, and have passed away. Your love and support through my years of education will not be forgotten.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Imagine waking up with your tea and the morning newspaper on the table. Your eyes skim over the headlines but settled on “Local Madwoman Arrested.” The article is about a young, single woman who was arrested for hysterically crying in the streets and causing disorderly misconduct. She was arrested by police, then interviewed by a local psychologist, then committed into a nearby asylum! What a big headline and story for these newspapers, but their choice of audience and language leaves to question why the story is structured and presented the way that it is. Stories like this were not uncommon in the local newspapers of 1825-1860 in areas such as Yorkshire. A plethora of articles described women being detained by police or sent off to asylums where their behaviors were described as insane and erratic and where their bodies were subjected to “treatments” modern psychology would classify torturous and barbaric. Newly built asylums and an expanded medical system happily accepted women under the promise and prospect of receiving adequate mental healthcare, but the conditions inside the asylum and stories of “mad” behavior made for compelling reading and what should have been private information was often leaked to the press and reified the cultural connotations of women as mad. Like many of the horror and thriller films we see today as part of entertaining stores, real life madwoman in the city streets of London became the infamous stars of these newspaper articles.

Women’s stories and histories, especially those written by female authors, are often silenced or forgotten to time as “[t]exts by women, constrained by and contributing to notions of the feminine in a particular context, share certain features and differ in some though not all ways from texts by men,” (Showalter, *The Female Malady* 28-29), and this “domestication of insanity” (Showalter, “Victorian Women and Insanity” 316) showed how little information exists about

what happened to women once they were committed, or once they resumed their daily lives after withdrawal from asylums mostly due to lack of ability to publish their stories and the stigma attached to having mental illness or being committed to an asylum (318). With this lack of ability to write about their experiences within asylums or working through their mental illness, there is also a disconnect between the general public's idea of asylums and mentally ill women and the first-person experience being written by the women of the time period. In the Victorian period, there were many ways that information on topics such as mental health and madwomen were making their ways through the general public, including newspapers, fictional literature, and scientific texts, yet the ways these texts wrote about women in the Victorian era had long-term consequences for how they were treated then and now. Many of the consequences we still see today through the taboo of discussing mental health and the way we treat it for women today.

One of the ways to begin to think about how the experiences of madwomen are presented in these types of texts during the Victorian period is through communication theory, and to keep in mind the way it can affect a cultural viewpoint on certain groups. Communication theory posits that communication forms culture and culture, in turn, informs communication (Van Ruler, *Communication Theory*). It is through these different means of communication that connections among individuals and groups of people are created. One way that this communication is developed is through literature and text, which rely on a visual form of language to interact with others and develop that culture. Culture is a set of shared values that a group holds, and these values affect how people in the group think and act and the criteria by which others are judged. In other words, cultural meanings render some behaviors normal and others abnormal or mad. We can see how these differing values and ideas about culture are revealed through different types of texts, and why these abnormal or mad ideas or values affect

the way that information is communicated and created. This communication through these texts is how perspectives of madwomen and mental illness became portrayed in Victorian British society, and how the general public built their perspectives on how to feel and act in response to this group of women from at that time period to how it has possibly influenced modern perspective on women and mental health. Language and culture are two factors alongside the ways that ideas are communicated amongst large populations, and thus the ways we communicate affect those perspectives and ideals for both negative and positive viewpoints. Focusing on how communication and literature overlap, especially when focusing on specific terms and words used in public works, can reveal about how and why certain ideas are communicated. Literature is understood in a multiplicity of ways and can include oral works, novels, dramas, but journalistic texts, though each genre has different conventions. Scientific texts as well have their own space in terms of their formatting and style of their own literature that differs from the broad sense of literature. Learning to critically read for cultural cues is a difficult process that involves reading different types of texts, understanding the constraints of convention, but looking for overlapping patterns and connections between words, ideas, and cultural actions. As a close reader of texts, rhetorical scholars look for how things parallel with one another, and what it means for there to be connecting ideas between different authors, and how these similar (or even different) ways of writing and language affect the overall way people read these texts, and the meaning they take from them. Closely reading these texts to theorize the end goals and ideas being communicated can benefit in understanding how these texts either effectively or ineffectively made their points or influenced the general public. One way to use close reading is through thinking about it in a quantitative form through the number of times a word appears in a text, and the relevance of how often the words appear next to other words.

This type of close reading can be used through a computer program called AntConc, which will be discussed in further detail in this paper in terms of its significant use in textual analysis for the texts to be provided.

With thinking about communication theory as a primary connection between language and cultures, we can think of cultural influence of various literary forms as not prescriptive or consistent, and dependent on many factors when looking into the more commonly available public texts such as fictional novels, scientific texts, and newspaper articles. These can be used as examples to see the ways literature and culture overlap in influence as based in communication theory. For example, the cultural influence of the popular press was far greater during its golden age (the Victorian era) than in decades since, but the influence of both novels and newspapers was dependent on other significant cultural and technological inventions like the printing press (to print en masse) and railroads (to distribute information far and wide). “Anybody with a story to sell and the ability to write it could be paid as a freelance in the expanding market for popular news and magazines from the late Victorian period onward” (Conboy 28). Thus, with journalism becoming a booming business in selling both information and entertainment, journalism became the next way to quickly publish to the general public in a quick and consistent manner with a plethora of available topics from the sciences to local town gossip. By closely reading fictional, scientific, and journalistic texts in context of mental health in women, we can begin to understand how different forms of writing shaped people’s lived experiences. In this study, I am particularly interested in closely reading texts from the Victorian era that portray women as mad and how noticing varying patterns among the language used in these texts show these portrayals. The Victorian Era was a time of invention with many new technologies on offer (Clark 85), new avenues for expanding global commerce (Clark 85) and,

significantly, challenges to (and in some cases shifting of) gender norms (Ward). The Victorian era was an era of expanding rights for women generally, and moderately improved access to medical care specifically (Showalter, *The Female Malady*). It was also a time of great fear for women who suffered from mental illness and endured punishing conditions in asylums or did not suffer mental illness but were socially controlled by the threat from husbands, fathers, and brothers willing to send them to the madhouse. The only way one could know how women were being treated in these asylums was through the trust of the medical professionals' word and through what was available for the general public to read about psychology and the treatment of mental illness.

One of the ways that the general public was given access to learn about psychology and asylum life was through the newspapers who reported on how local asylums and researchers were doing. Newspapers found a new avenue of entertainment in the trope of the madwoman but women's mental illness were understood and through the social consequences associated to them made them a target of use for that entertainment. Slanderous newspaper articles like the one below is an example of social consequences affecting women who portray abnormal behaviors. In the *London Evening Standard* on 26 December 1845 under the section called Police: Worship Street, this article describes the arrest of nineteen-year old Irishwoman Ellen Donovan to determine if she would be taken to County Lunatic Asylum in Hanwell. Described with "remarkably expressive features" and as a lower class Irishwoman, Ellen Donovan pleads with the members of the court stating, "I am not mad, sir; indeed I am not; don't believe these men; they want to drive me really mad by their cruelty and ill treatment, to get rid of me. They've confined me-they've changed me hands and feet, and now they put these things upon me. Oh, do, do make them take these fetters off!" A surgeon named Mr. Llewellyn determined her to be

insane, and her lawyer Mr. Broughton fought to prove her sanity. While articles such as this made for good reading, they had real, long term consequences which, for this poor woman, included a lack of sympathy, very little information on the actual situation that occurred other than the comedic formatting of her behavior and arrest in the courthouse, and a negative presentation of her character (with a prejudiced tone as well given her description as an Irishwoman).

Though the relationship between (mostly) male doctors and female patients saw positive change during this time (Scull 11), the medical relationship and treatment protocols for women committed to asylums as mad, were informed by complex, evolving, and, in some cases, scientifically dubious constructions about women, femininity, and madness, constructions that were invented, circulated, and critiqued in popular literary and the popular press where publications and voices of women were both heard and unheard (Conboy 95). This thesis will look into and interrogate some of those constructions (such as relationships and influences) with their consequences for women's lived experiences in England through these different types of texts. Novels, newspaper articles, and scientific literature worked in combination during the Victorian era to construct a cultural conception of the madwoman that had consequences for the diagnosis and treatment of women in and outside asylum life. For this thesis, I propose to study Charlotte Brontë's 1847 novel *Jane Eyre*, a corpus of digital newspaper articles from the years 1830-1847, accessed through a digital database and from a widely read newspaper of the era *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette*, and a relevant chapter from the medical texts called John Connolly's *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane*, published in 1847, and *The Physiology and Psychology of the Mind* by Henry Maudsley, published in 1867. I selected each of these texts because they were available through public

domain and were digitized, thus scannable and searchable. I will organize the texts in my corpus by theme using the tool AntConc, which is a free corpus analysis toolkit for concordance and text analysis.

Using AntConc, I will search through the texts, find and highlight the areas of text that describe madwomen and the doctor-patient relationship or treatment protocols or women's mental health issues generally, and then I will analyze the similarities and differences found in and between the texts. Through mapping the similarities and differences in technical documents and literary and journalistic texts, we can see what similarities and differences the languages present about early Victorian doctor/patient relationships on multiple forms of writing available to the general public at the time, thus showing how these accessible and easy to read texts can influence the ways that the public viewed and understood mental health for women.

From the literary standpoint, the character of the madwoman became a common trope in literature, and the one of the most famous comes from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The book's portrayal of Bertha Mason as a madwoman stands out as an exemplary case for exploring the tensions of female madness at this time because Brontë's character reflects the larger cultural context and questions around woman and madness at the time. Unlike sensational news stories or antiseptic scientific texts, Brontë presents her characters in a more sympathetic light, and thus important to understanding the complexity of the madwoman and exploring the taboos of mental illness and thus normalizing treatment of women with mental illness today. Using this prominent fictional text of the period with a focus on Bertha's character will be a great example of that textual analysis to study the word choice used surrounding Bertha and Jane.

After the literary viewpoint, I will be analyzing the word choice from scientific texts during the Victorian period that were accessible to the general public to where they could learn

about psychology in a reader-friendly language at the time. I have selected *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums* (1847) by James Conolly and *The Physiology and Pathology of Mind* (1867) by Henry Maudsley as my primary scientific texts. Both scientific texts are narrowly focused on the treatment of the female asylum patient and offer a clear view of a women's mental health landscape during the Victorian period. These medical texts will also offer the scientific background and context necessary to understand the evolution and practice of psychology during the early Victorian period.

After the literary and scientific standpoint, I will be analyzing from the journalistic viewpoint through a collection of newspaper articles archived by the British Newspaper Archive from a collection of different newspaper surrounding the Yorkshire and London area. However, I will be focusing primarily on a selection of articles consistently mentioning a young woman by the name of Mary Lawson. I have selected a corpus of texts from *The Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette*, because this newspaper was published in Yorkshire, England, the hometown of Charlotte Brontë during the 1830's and 1860s. I will also read background texts by Nellie Bly, an American journalist where her short book *Ten Days in a Madhouse* was an important work of early investigative journalism on life for women in asylums at the time of publication. This will serve as background information on a female written first-hand experience in asylums (but we must keep in mind her experience takes place in New York). Mary Lawson was a woman in her early twenties from Yorkshire and the newspaper articles written during the late 1840's reporting her experiences with mental illness and conflict with the local police will serve as background and primary evidence for journalistic stories on madwomen.

I will be identifying and comparing descriptive passages of texts across these three important genres of literature, and through that I will reveal patterns of communicating and

describing the madwoman that led to common practices and specific treatments of women both inside and beyond the walls of the asylum.

Chapter Two

Victorian Journalism

The Victorian period was a period of empire and expansion, excellent fodder for the news of the world, which covered expanded British territories, advances in science and technology, local happenings, and sensational stories about crime both global and domestic. Local, national, and even international newspapers (read among the elite) were an integral part of British life and served as both entertainment and information. With this being such an important part of the British lifestyle along with being so easily accessible to the public, many stories about people and experiences going on around them became both a form of entertainment and a way to receive information about the world around them. Thus, this meant they had to put their full trust in what they were reading from these newspapers were accurate perspectives and information. As we can see from the newspaper articles to be discussed, the tone and choice of language to describe women and mental illness was one that led to negative viewpoints.

For researchers interested in this period and genre, the British Newspaper Archives online hosts an abundance of local and national newspapers as a PDF or text transcript, which allows researchers to search newspapers by date, county, tags, and city of publication. Searching by certain key terms can also bring up specific articles. For example, the word “asylum” appears 244,000 times between 1800-1849 and 1,683,997 times between 1850-1899 in all of Britain as referenced in the British Newspaper Archive search database. From a cultural linguistic perspective, this radical spike in word frequency acts like a kind of cultural marker, denoting the circulation and importance of the word and its connotations.

The term “madwoman” only appeared 167 times between 1800-1849, but from 1850-1899 it occurred 2,682 times, a 1505.99% increase in circulation and use. Such a huge increase

between these two decades shows how the topic of mental illness and women became one of greater notice and interest to the public alongside the newly published public texts on psychology at the time. The British became intrigued by the topic of psychology and asylum life, and newspapers were happy to expand on the topic and how it was intertwined into their daily lives and news.

One of the more popular newspapers during Brontë's time was *The Yorkshire Gazette*, which gave weekly information on the York Lunatic Asylum and other updated information on treatment in asylums, such as the article "Great Scientific Meeting In York. Fourteenth Anniversary Of The British Association-For The Advancement Of Science" on the 5th of October 1844 which focused on a number of scientific topics discussed including the numbers for local asylums of the number of male and female patients:

It was found that the mortality amongst insane males the public asylums exceeded that amongst the insane females. At the York County Asylum the mortality of the males was nearly double that of the females. The consequence is that out of equal numbers attacked, the existing cases of insanity in women accumulate much faster those in men, and that they necessarily are much more numerous, as compared with the occurring cases...On this principle the writer had prepared a table showing the numbers and proportion of each sex out of 48,043 cases admitted into 31 various asylums. It appeared that there were 25,541 males, and 22,502 females, consequently there was an excess on the part of the males of 13.5 per cent. In nine of the English county asylums the numbers admitted were 7041 males, and 6503 females, there being consequently an excess of males of twelve per cent. The proportion of men admitted into asylums being higher than of females, whilst the proportion of men in the general population, particularly at those ages when insanity

most usually occurs, is decidedly less than that of women. Dr. Thurnham naturally inferred that men are actually more liable to disorders of the mind than women. From a just consideration of the differences in the physical and moral constitution, as well in the general prevailing external circumstances of the two sexes in civilized communities at the present day was, he thought, a priori, highly probable that men should possess a somewhat greater liability to mental disorders than women. Not only are women less liable to the disorder than men, but when afflicted with that malady the probability of their recovery is greater, and that of their death very considerably less. After recovery, however, the probability of relapse or of a second attack is perhaps somewhat greater women than in men. (Great Scientific Meeting in York, 5 October 1844).

Newspaper articles such as this one began revealing quantitative information on asylums and the patients committed to them. Statistics and personal information on the patients became much more common in articles like these, and the general public's interest in the topic of psychology and mental illness grew its own market in both informative and entertainment circles.

Other relevant examples also show more individualized examples of mental illness and asylum commitment as we construct the madwoman in the Victorian era. Consider this example of an article about an Irish woman named Ellen Donovan. Donovan, a 19-year old Irish woman was arrested for unexplained reasons and taken to the County Lunatic Asylum in Hanwell, London. Ellen Donovan was described as having "remarkably expressive features," a euphemism for her "wildly excitement" and "extreme nervous excitement" from being handcuffed and as lower-class because of "these sentences being delivered with all that peculiar persuasiveness and eloquent gesticulation which frequently characterize the lower class of Irish,

wholly unaccompanied by anything which denoted mental alienation” which adds the additional layer of discrimination against Ellen due to her heritage as an Irishwoman, which we see as an example of alienating the “other” as seen in *Jane Eyre* with the character of Bertha Mason, a Creole woman. She told the policemen, “I am not mad, sir; indeed I am not; don’t believe these men; they want to drive me really mad by their cruelty and ill treatment, to get rid of me. They’ve confined me-they’ve chained me hands and feet, and now they put these things upon me. Oh, do, do make them take these fetters off!” Unpersuaded by her pleading, a surgeon by the name of Llewellyn, determined Ellen to be insane. Her lawyer, a Mr. Broughton, fought to prove her sanity (“Police: Worship Street.” *London Evening Standard*, 26 Dec. 1845). The article ends with Ellen being allowed to work at a workhouse rather than sent to the asylum, but “the young woman then left the court with the constable, but still appeared to be under great apprehension that she would be confined in a madhouse.” The article leaves out a lot of information on Ellen Donovan herself, such as anything regarding her personal life, her education, or anything about her medical history, and instead focuses primarily on the magistrate and doctor conversing on whether to let her continue to live homeless, be sent to a workhouse, or sent to the local asylum. The additional quotes we are given about Ellen focus on her stating her fear of being chained and sent to an asylum and repeatedly trying to prove her sanity and innocence:

Mr. Broughton having privately intimated an opinion to the relieving officer that as yet he had witnessed nothing more in the woman's language and manner than the extreme nervous excitement which might be very naturally expected to arise from the coercion which had been imposed upon her, expressed his strong disapprobation of the course pursued, as calculated to produce insanity. (*London Evening Standard* 1845)

This reaction was not uncommon and offers readers a quick glimpse at how women were often portrayed in the popular press. In this example Ellen has done nothing but act nervously around authority figures who threatened – and had the power to – commit her involuntarily. As seen with this quote from the article, the point of view is focused on the male figure and how they are reacting to the situation and describing Ellen Donovan. The focus on the male perspective on the scene and the lack of personal account from Ellen proves this disconnect to allow for a female perspective on the experience in the article.

In my analysis, I discovered that many court cases involving madwomen were short and rarely ended in women sent to prison, but instead sent to asylums regardless if they truly just needed to see a doctor, sent home, or really did need to go to prison. This injustice was often compounded by the fact that close reading of such articles also revealed judges often overruled contrary evidence, an example of previous good behavior, or testimonies from family and friends. As Alice Bonzom explains, “Courts and penal administrators were reluctant to abolish the boundary between criminality and mental illness, as it would put an end to the line between badness and madness. Women, regarded as inherently more prone to mental derangement and susceptible to deleterious influences, needed more than men to be diverted from the general carceral population” (Bonzom 15). Based on this information along with the general analysis of newspaper article thus far on Ellen Donovan, we can conclude that women were more likely to be sent to asylums rather than prison regardless of their crime.

Readers were not merely interested in scandalous stories of commitment, but also of life once committed. This article, from the *York Herald* dated 29th of August 1846, discusses the reactions and behaviors of women committed to an unnamed asylum. The article details the effects of various experimental treatment protocols and the women’s reactions to certain stimuli

as “hysteric,” meaning they acted as if they were under a powerful influence. When taken inside a chapel, for example, the women were described as reacting ecstatically or very calmly during sessions with medical examiners, language more often used to describe theatrical performances rather than mental health states (The Effects of Music on Madness, 29 Aug 1846). Though laughable as therapy by modern standards, this article demonstrates that science at the time was innovating and willing to try other means outside medication, chemicals, chains, and other dangerous therapies to help heal legitimately sick women, but the language in the article also belies the prejudices of male practitioners. The article highlights the women’s animalistic qualities and how they were unable to control themselves around the musicians, especially the male ones. Since this article was only a few sentences long, and was focused more as a review translated and copied from a journal called *Journal d l’Ain*, no additional information is available on the article’s information other than its publication in the Country News section of the *Yorkshire Herald*.

The criminalization of women’s emotions was not atypical. An article from *The London Evening Standard* dated 14th of January, 1830 under the section “Coroner’s Inquest,” describes the murder of a woman by a woman. The victim was Ann Flynn, and when police entered her home they found Sarah Morris running “raved like a madwoman” when she and a woman named Mrs. Boyd discovered Ann Flynn with a knife in a hand and vocalizing about harming herself if they came near her. Morris and Boyd were able to escape and bring police to Flynn’s home, only to discover her deceased with her throat cut. Flynn was taken to the hospital but died due to the deepness of the cut. The article ends by mentioning Flynn’s husband being away, that she consumed alcohol frequently, and the jury ruled her suicide as due to her insanity. What made the criminalization of women’s emotion dangerous was that this was an example of how

considering all emotion by a female offender was criminalized and therefore it was possible that all women were potentially mad and subject to punishment through commitment. This is shown in that the article itself focuses on describing Boyd's fear during the incident as a "madwoman" rather than taking her fears and reactions to the situation seriously. What is important to notice in this article as well is that they do not mention Flynn's death as a suicide, but rather mention her as being insane and raving three separate times, including after her death. No other information about Morris, Boyd, or Flynn's husband is mentioned in the rest of the article, or what caused Flynn to react so violently to her neighbors entering her home in the first place other than a vague mention of her being in a "low desponding condition" while her husband was away.

These newspaper articles are just a few examples of how a disconnect from the female perspective on newspaper articles describing mentally ill women or madwomen can affect the way the public reads and views women within this group. We can see how negative adjectives and discriminatory language is used to describe these women, and how when they are described as insane that there is a violent and criminal connection to their actions. There is a lack of a sympathetic perspective on these women or a chance for them to tell their own perspectives. This in turn creates a criminal connotation between women and mental illness when mentioned in these newspaper articles.

The American Viewpoint: Journalist Nellie Bly

Beyond these newspaper articles from *The London Evening Standard* and *The Yorkshire Herald*, there are additional texts, such as other newspapers and memoirs, written at the time that also benefit the analysis and understanding of how the media shaped the character of the madwomen and how real instances of insanity shaped the characterization of fictionalized

madwomen. One example of primary evidence of life inside the asylum is Nellie Bly's *Ten Days in A Madhouse*, a collection of essays that Bly has published into articles that revealed her time in a local asylum located in New York. It should be noted that while Bly's investigative report took place at an asylum in Victorian America, and the text was published in 1887, long after the publication of *Jane Eyre*, Bly's work is still important because it is one of the only credible accounts written by a woman of a woman's experience in an asylum. With the lack of the number of women-centric and women authored texts on asylums and mental illness, Bly's account, regardless of its location, is still one to take into account for its credibility and lack of possible negative frameworks such as the male gaze.

That experience included being force-fed rotten food, inadequate clothing that left her freezing, false accusations from medical staff, rape, physical abuse, and patients forced to share unclean bath towels, which spread infection and illness. Her letters about her experience on Blackwell's Island were published in the *New York World* newspaper. Though Bly bends journalistic convention by addressing her reader in an informal tone and using an epistolary format through which to document her experiences, those experiences are largely trusted by audiences and journalists because they were experienced first-hand and thus Bly's report represents one of the first and best investigative reports of the era.

What Bly details from asylum life in the States is not unlike what one finds in medical texts and novels written about asylums in England, which included experiences of shock and cruelty. Interestingly, once Bly feigned insanity to get into the asylum, she made no attempt to keep up the ruse. "I talked and acted just as I do in ordinary life. Yet strange to say, the more sanely I talked and acted the crazier I was thought to be by all except one position, whose kindness and gentle ways I shall not soon forget" (7).

Many read Bly's experience as evidence that ideas about how madwomen acted and what they looked like were so ingrained and reified in popular culture that even trained medical staff had a difficult time seeing through or past their own bias. In Bly's first encounter with a doctor, she asked why the doctor was doing what he was doing to her and he said, "You are sick, and I am a doctor" (22). This matter of fact explanation was no explanation at all, but rather, a show of power and a dangerous expression of confirmation bias. How could taking her pulse or looking into her eyes help him determine madness? Of course, Bly too was using what she had learned from popular press and research how to behave like the insane but she lacked any "real" understanding of insanity. "I had not the least idea how the heart of an insane person felt, so I held my breath all the while he listened, until, when he quit, I had to give a gas to regain it" (20). It was all performance, a performance the doctor simply recognized rather than medically deduced. "I was puzzled to know what insanity was like in the eye, so I thought the best thing under the circumstances was to stare. This I did. I held my eyes riveted unblinkingly upon his hand, and when he removed it I exerted all my strength to still keep my eyes from blinking" (22). Learning behaviors such as this from what Bly learned from other texts and articles describing insane behaviors is part of how she was able to pass as a madwoman within the asylum.

Later, when she interacts with a newer, young male doctor, she could see him struggle to work with her. "It was a terrible task to play insane before this young man, and only a girl can sympathize with me in my position" (29), meaning, she believed that the insanity she so easily performed was learned as surely as was basic math or writing, but came especially naturally to girls who had been enculturated to act certain ways and boys to read those performances as mad. She was asked questions about "home and friends, and if I had any lovers or had ever been

married” (30). Then the doctor asked Bly to stretch out her arms and wiggle her fingers, which she did without the least hesitation, to which the doctor replied, “hopeless” (31). Other patients were asked the same questions but what could such questions teach the doctor about the state of her mind, let alone whether a patient were capable of rehabilitation or release, a topic most newspapers dismissed entirely.

Overall, Bly’s story is one that was able to shed light due to how she was able to take a first-hand approach in being an actual patient at the asylum to giving a voice to women with mental illness that was not initially available at the time. While her story does come much later within the Victorian period, it still holds value as a means of giving a primary and first-hand experience in providing a chance to voices to be heard of women who were silenced and not given the appropriate treatment and attention that they needed at the time.

Mary Lawson: A Loving Lunatic

One example of madwoman described in newspaper articles also comes from a multi-part story in the *Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette* about a young woman named Mary Lawson and her multiple accounts of being arrested and being described as a madwoman. Between the years of 1848 and 1852, Mary Lawson appeared in five separate articles about her criminal behavior and insanity during her court proceedings. While there is very little information available regarding her physical characteristics, home life, and general history of mental illness, there is still a large amount of conclusive information we can analyze about Mary Lawson and her run-ins with the law. This next section gives a quick summarization of each article and its date, allowing for us to see how the story and language of these articles changed over the course

of the years before analyzing them with the AntConc system to focus specifically on certain words and phrases.

The first article I was able to find on Mary Lawson was titled “A Loving Lunatic” from the 18 June 1847. This article is extremely short at 86 words and gives very little context to the situation involving Mary Lawson regarding who she was, how old she was, and why her story is relevant for the article in the first place. The article describes her as a refugee who has escaped from the refuge at Beverly. The court orders her to return to her place of “safekeeping,” but she responded with “I shall fall in love with one of you, gentlemen; do you want a kiss?” and then she was removed from the courthouse. The article also mentions to how her “affections” were “not being prized.” The tone of this short article seems to have a light-hearted and comedic feel to it, as it uses lighter language to describe the situation and Mary Lawson herself, specifically noting the more feminine arts of their interactions such as calling her a lovely lunatic, and focusing the end of the article on her flirtations being rejected (“A Loving Lunatic”).

About nine months later on the 10 of March 1848, a second short article is released on Mary Lawson, this time with less than informal and humorous approach on her actions. Now, she is described as “The Pest of the Police Court” rather than the previous article that described her as “loving.” This negative language in comparison to the 1847 article paints her in a much more negative light including calling her “a feigned madwoman,” using “tricks” to steal a piece print from a local shop owner. Where the first article treated the situation with Mary Lawson as more of a joke, this article takes it a bit more seriously and focuses on how she has been a repeat offender for a long time before the articles on her started (“Pest of the Police Court”).

One month later on the 14 April 1848, we are given the most detailed and concise article on Mary Lawson that gives more personal information about her, her mental illness, and the

crimes she had committed. In this article, Mary Lawson's age is listed as twenty-five, and she is charged with stealing two dresses from the same local shop owner mentioned in the previous article. The article mentions how she has escaped the Beverly Asylum and Union Workhouse multiple times within recent years. While waiting at the courthouse, she is interviewed by a journalist about why she has escaped the asylum this many times and why the city sees her as crazy. The article mentions how she has been arrested four times total not only for escaping the asylum, but because she explained how she was bored and desired material things even though she had no money, and this leads to the possible assumption of Mary Lawson being a kleptomaniac. The interviewer also mentions her newest punishment, "hard labor for two months and a week in solitary confinement," to which she responds with the confusing response of not having "seven years to complete the punishment." What this article tells the reader is that Mary Lawson has been reported on multiple times since being committed into the Beverly Asylum some years ago and has been in and out of jail within those same years ("Venire Cases").

The next article on Mary Lawson does not come again until about a year and a half later post her initial punishment of solitary confinement and being re-committed into the Beverly Asylum on the 5 July 1850. This time, Mary Lawson is described as "An Old Offender," once again returning to the fact that her actions and her character are not uncommon sources of conversation in this newspaper as she has been reported on multiple times in the past. This article focuses on her crime of hiding a brass tap and lead pipe under her shawl with the suspicion to that she would hurt somebody with the object. The article then follows up with Saturday's news, with a less than informative follow up that she was reprimanded until a later date ("Police Court Friday: An Old Offender").

A few months later on 27 September 1850, Mary Lawson is reported on with charged for being drunk in public and disorderly conduct. She was also charged for throwing a stone towards a man's head but missing. During her arrest, she attacked the police officers by hitting them and yelling swear words at them, and so they committed her back to Beverly for twelve months. This article focused on more specific names and locations where Mary Lawson committed her acts, and we see her physical violence escalate with the public ("Hull Police Court-Monday")

The last available article on Mary Lawson is two years later on 26 November 1852 where the article describes her as a "presence is as familiar to the magistrates as the armchairs in which they sit." Lawson was charged for breaking into multiple windows from a street. The article mention how Lawson considered her actions as "pranks" and how she has spent the last ten months of the year in jail. Finally, the article mentions that because the Beverly asylum had not really been helping her that she has been committed to prison for the time being ("Hull Court-Saturday").

Between these available articles on Mary Lawson from the *Hull Advertiser*, we can see an increased development of detail and focus away from a comedic tone describing her actions and convictions, into one that reveals a darker, and more negative light on her. They focus on her increased violence and madness against the locals, and increased number of committals to the local jail and asylum over the course of the four years of articles. A story such as Mary Lawson's about her arrests and commitments reveals a lot between the lines and regarding how society portrayed her madness and sought out to treat her for it based on how the language of the articles changed over the years of her arrests and stories. I will use these articles on her in the AntConc System to analyze within the time period of her arrests how the language about her, her actions, and her mental illness change. This will be included along with the formatting and representation

of her stories within these individual scans of the pages of the newspapers in regards to other articles surrounded by her stories.

This information gives readers insight into how possible newspaper articles influenced fictional writings and the general public's perception of mentally ill women. We can see the problematic issues in the way these articles represented women, and how local law enforcements reacted to women who may (but often did not) display signs of mental illness. Most often law enforcement reacted by immediately placing women in the care of asylums and did not give them a proper trial or evaluation prior to their commitment. Mary Lawson's story shows us, how law enforcement often treated criminally insane women: violently, This association between women with mental illness and suspected criminal intent (Bonzom 14) from law enforcement is one that can be seen often in newspaper articles about women who behaved (or supposedly behaved) in an insane manner.

Chapter Three

Medical/Psychology Texts of the Era

The Victorian Era marked a turning point for many different areas of study and culture, medicine and psychology among them. Scientists and researchers were intensely interested in psychology and the study of the human mind, as they determined the importance of the brain-body connection but knew little about it thus, “Experimentalism proposed a fundamental reorientation of psychology’s methods” (Rylance). Scientists, but also laypeople were fascinated the human mind as well, in part because of the popularity with phrenology but also because psychology offered the promise to treat illnesses and disease that distanced Victorians from society or those they loved. Whereas many medical textbooks and experiments were kept within academic circles, stories and news about the new frontiers of mind were fascinating to the reading public. Giving the public access and attention to the ideas of psychology raised many debates and “the broad audience for psychology perceived the issues it raised as matters of common, not specialized, intellectual and cultural concern” (Rylance).

With scientific research, studies, and publications becoming more accessible to the public through newspaper coverage, public lectures, and enthusiast clubs, even the average Victorian had a chance to learn rudimentary concepts of psychology. Looking in the study of psychology itself, the subject is a complicated one that is still evolving even today as scientific understanding and research develops and expands. Hundreds of articles and books made their debut in publication during the Victorian era and allowing public access to these texts paved the way for more awareness and acceptance for the study. Two notable books on the subject that appeared in the early to mid-Victorian period were *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums* (1847) by James Conolly and *The Physiology and Pathology of Mind* (1867) by Henry

Maudsley. These two books and their focus on the structure of asylums and studies on mental health between the sexes, offer one of the best ways to see how early accessible information on psychology was presented to the general public.

The Physiology and Pathology of Mind

Henry Maudsley's text, *The Physiology and Pathology of Mind*, is one of his most important and informative works on psychology. Maudsley gained years of experience working in different asylums around Britain and eventually became co-editor for the *Journal of Mental Science (1858-1962)* (Cambridge UP). The journal was established as the *Asylum Journal* in 1853, then changed to *The Asylum Journal of Mental Science* in 1855, and finally changed to being titled *Journal of Mental Science* from 1858 to 1963 (Cambridge UP). Despite having multiple applications and job rejections to become a surgeon and physician, Maudsley's work and research within the asylums provided new information on subjects such as alcoholism and female maladies. He wrote over 10 books and 15 articles on different mental diagnoses, much of which was with primary research he conducted. His charitable works with these asylums and easily accessible books made him a popular and well-liked author on the subject of psychology.

The Physiology and Pathology of Mind focuses on the physical aspects of mental illness and ways that hereditary traits affect mentality. Split into two parts with multiple chapters, the book looks into the physical and cognitive parts of the mind, and Maudsley's own findings about the causes and treatments for insanity. His section on the causes of insanity in regards to sex focuses the most on women and insanity. Maudsley writes how certain "conditions in concurrence with the circumstances of female life" could cause insanity "more frequently in women" and that it is due to these environmental and specific conditions of the female life that

“while the number of men and women who become insane appears to differ but little” women are still much more likely to experience bouts of insanity or be placed in asylums for insane-like behavior (Maudsley 207-208). Maudsley argues that while men and women suffer from many of the same mental illnesses, especially those that are heritable such as alcoholism and addiction, he remarks that because women also menstruate and can become pregnant that this makes them more susceptible to mental illness (207), which has been proven false through further study of female biology and psychology over the past decades. One example of modern study in a collection of doctors and researchers with the Office of Women’s Health associated through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides a plethora of information and studies proving Maudsley’s arguments false by explaining the science behind menstruation, hormones, pregnancy, and quality of life that was not as well understood or studied during Maudsley’s time as a researcher. While we have access to an abundance of accurate information on women’s health and mental health today, it is still important that we understand how researchers such as Maudsley presented their arguments on female health and mental health, and how this affected the general public’s perspective on this (now proven false) information. Maudsley further argues that “The female sex is certainly the weaker” because they “suffer from the adverse circumstances of life, especially in a complex social state...has so few resources, and is enfeebled by dependence,” (207). He further notes that it is because of these biological dispositions and women living their lives in a domestic space with a lack of masculine labor and less resources compared to the male sex that over their course of a woman’s life “at puberty, during pregnancy, by the puerperal state, and at the climacteric period” that they are prone to “more frequent insanity” (207). Maudsley’s description of women as the “weaker sex” reveals a deep belief in the lesser value of women during the Victorian period, and how women were

viewed as they were studied psychologically. It is this presentation of Maudsley's argument that proves how false information and lack of appropriate evidence continued to cause women and mental health to be seen as inherently negative or unable to be appropriately diagnosed and treated. While we know and understand that much of this information is extremely outdated and archaic today, we must be aware of scientific information such as this was taken into account by other forms of literature such as fiction and newspaper articles, thus continuing the cycle of misinformation (by today's understanding) that further set the negative and false implications of women and mental health throughout the period.

In his Appendix of the first section, Maudsley lists different women he studied as he worked in the asylums, and from here there are notable common connections of language:

Two ladies of middle-age, unmarried, and cousins. They both suffered from extreme moral insanity, both revealing in the conduct the timing of a bad organization. There was insanity in the family, in one case the father being actually insane; and in both cases the parents being whimsical, capricious, and very injudicious as parents. A bad organization, made worse by bad training.

An unmarried Lady, age 40, addicted to the wildest in coarsest excesses, though of good social position in an independent means; justified in every respect her conduct, though it more than once brought her to the gaol. Family history not ascertainable, but evident not good organization in her. No aim nor occupational life, but extreme legalistic development in all regards.

A married lady, age 31, without children, and having great self feeling. She went on one occasion to a Methodist meeting was much excited by a violent sermon, and immediately went mad, fancying her soul to be lost, and making attempt at suicide.—Recovery.

A young lady, age 25, who had some anxieties at home, suffered a disappointment of her affections. Black depression running in her acute dementia.—Recovery.

A single lady, age 38, fancied herself under mesmeric influence, in a state of clairvoyance, and had a variety of anomalous sensations. Rubbed her skin till it was sore in places, bit her nails to the quick, scratched her face, etc. Quasi-hysterical maniacal exaggerations. Irregularity of menstruation, and suspected self-abuse.—Recovery.

A woman, age 30, Wesleyan, single. Suicidal melancholic, with the delusion that her soul is lost. Minstrel irregularity. Extreme devotional excitement, but evidently active sexual feelings.—Recovery. (253-257)

Based on these accounts, Maudsley argues in *The Journal of Mental Science* that there is a correlation between age, marriage, pregnancy, menstruation, and hereditary dispositions in most female mental illness. These correlations include how old they are, where they are in their timeline of puberty, other family members with mental illness, and whether they have been pregnant increase the likelihood of mental illness.

If my experience were large enough to be of any value, it would give the preponderance to the woman: of 106 persons who I admitted into a lunatic hospital, there were 50 men and 56 women. This result agrees closely with the statistics of the number of people can find in asylums in England and Wales: on 1 January 1855, there were in the hospitals, asylums, and licensed houses 10,885 females and 9608 males, and on 1 January, 1866, 15,437 females and 13,988 males—the numbers giving a preponderance of from about 5 to 6% to women. (207)

While it can be argued that Maudsley conducted a very detailed and well-rounded analysis with data and first-hand experience, this still does not change the language and value he applies to

women as he describes them and their mental illness within his studies, and we cannot see the exact methodology practices that he followed for these studies. As these studies were popular and widely available to the public in both scientific journals and newspapers, the language he uses to describe women, and especially women with mental illness, furthered the idea and expectations of women as lesser figures of society and mentally weak if not ill. Regardless of what seems to be a well-documented analysis based on the available resources for Maudsley at the time, his biased view and use of language to describe female patients only encourages the negative perspective on women and mental health.

What should be taken away primarily from Maudsley's texts is the fact that while he brings to light the idea that mental illness and addiction could be hereditary for many patients, thus ridding mental illness of some of its shame and criminality, he still advances heavily sexist views of female patients and their mental illnesses. Multiple times within his text he mentions women as the "weaker sex" (233) in terms of their mentality due to their menstrual cycles and states of pregnancy. He argues that such states are physically traumatic and it's this ongoing trauma that makes women's mental states less stable than those of their male counterparts (240). Rather than researching other causes of women's mental health, Maudsley argues that periods and pregnancy are the reason so many women are mad, and as we can see in modern analysis and studies of women and mental health, there is no direct association between menstruation and pregnancy and severe mental health issues on a the large population scale that Maudsley argues. The Office of Women's Health points out that "Hormones can affect a woman's emotions and moods in different ways throughout her lifetime" and "Sometimes the impact on mood can affect a woman's quality of life...But women with a mental health condition may have other symptoms related to their menstrual cycles or menopause." (OWH). Unlike Maudsley, we as a society are

better informed about how hormones and biological changes in a woman's lifetime can affect both her physical and mental health, but we know that this in no way makes a woman the weaker sex or makes them more susceptible to mental illness.

The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane

Beyond the research and experiments done regarding patients and studying psychology, there was also information released by newspapers and researchers to the public about treatment and diagnosis of these patients including those committed to local asylums. Asylums during the Victorian era were described as a place to give others the help they needed for their mental health, but rarely was any real treatment provided for these patients. More often than not these asylums were meant as a place to keep those who did not follow societal expectations away from the general populace and keep them in confinement away from the outside world. As Michael Brown explains in his article on asylum reform during the nineteenth century, past expectations of asylums were focused on treating madness as quickly as possible and bringing patients into custody to remove them from outside influences (Brown 427). After a number of scandals regarding inhumane practices and lack of proper preparation for large numbers of committed patients, asylum reform in the nineteenth century shifted its focus from self-interest of the administration (such as focus on making a profit and increasing asylum numbers for more funding) of those who were heads of the asylum and issues with the lack of public accountability (Brown 429). The lack of public accountability from these asylums and the general public is part of where I believe the continued issues of perspectives on women and mental health overlap due to the lack of accountability of the public and how to treat those with mental illness on top of

asylums providing misinformation to the public about the accuracy and treatment of patients within them.

In 1830, James Conolly published a text titled *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane*. In this book Conolly describes the basic foundations of asylum life and managements in Britain at the time. The book is separated into chapters describing housing, employment, clothing, religion, and diet. However, the asylums had bigger issues as well including how early original designs becomes “...usually erected merely for the supposed actual number of lunatics within the county; and, in consequence of the incurable patients not being discharged, the building becomes, in the course of 10 years, credit was nearly double the number first provided for,” (11). This issues of allocating for the actual number of patients became a huge issue for many asylums within Britain during the time. As more patients came into these asylums, less patients were given the appropriate amount of treatment and attention needed, thus increasing their amount of time within the asylum and stalling the path of their treatment, creating an environment which only made their mental health worse.

Conolly describes how male and female patients are treated within the asylums. Most notably, there is an emphasis on the different employment opportunities for the male and female patients. Conolly describes men and women patients separated by specific jobs which are not allowed to overlap or interact. Women are required to complete domestic duties such as cleaning and cooking while men did manual labor, often outside. The female patients they were offered different kinds of music and entertainment to keep them relaxes, but this was not made available to the male patients (this subject is further explored in the Yorkshire Herald article on music and asylums). Female patients’ dress is also strictly regulated down to the type of fabric, the length of skirts, and style of hair. Such restrictions are meant to control the “traumas” of periods and

pregnancies Maudsley, and others wrote about, but such restrictions actually diminished these women as humans and reduced their roles in society if released and punished them during their confinement in the asylums. Further, their interactions with male doctors were far, stricter than those of their male patient counterparts.

From what can be understood from both Maudsley's and Connolly's texts, the medical and scientific texts available to the public on both the study of psychology and the environments in which it was studied are part of creating the societal perspective of women and mental health. Researchers such as Maudsley used language to make women to be seen as the lesser sex, which was part of the influence where the general public believed such information was correct due to a well-renowned researcher saying that it is so. The same idea on women being the weaker sex due to mental illness can be presented through Connolly's text on asylums, as his language seems to create an unbiased perspective on the positives and negatives of asylums during the time, but his direct focus on the positives of separating women and pushing domestic ideas and jobs on the patients, while also ignoring the issues of the higher number of female patients in the asylums, once again creates a narrative that the general public would be viewed as normal based on what these professionals have written and published. What this reveals about the relationship between male doctors and female patients, is that there is a constant acceptance of perspectives on women and mental illness that are either completely ignored or constantly repeated amongst these circles and have now included the general public into these conversations despite the lack of evidence, proper analysis, and treatment.

With having these male researchers and authors of these scientific texts presenting these now proven incorrect and outdated ideas about women, mental illness, treatment, and asylum environments, the general public who reads these texts are left to believe that this information is

correct, and thus can be applied to the everyday women that they met. Those women who do suffer with mental illness, are met with backlash and a negative perspective, and even further, are continued to be viewed as the so-called weaker sex due to their supposed inclination towards mental illness all because of their biological traits. The language used within these scientific texts pushed this idea about women being the weaker sex and more prone to mental illness to the general public about the disconnect between male doctors and female patients.

Chapter Four

Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason, and Madwomen

Sally Shuttleworth explained the issues of social conformity and issues of normality for women in its best terms in her book *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, “Social conformity...became an index of sanity; the only measure available to the individual fearful of his or her own normality would be a willing obedience to designated social roles” (35). It is forming this idea of the removal and rebellion from societal expectations that the label of insanity or madwoman is placed on many women. Further, we see this removal from social conformity with the characters of Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason in Brontë’s text as with their connections with other patients and doctors in the novel. Originally published in 1847, Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is still considered one of the most prominent and influential female bildungsroman texts from the Victorian period. Following the story of Jane Eyre, the reader is taken through her life from adulthood and into childhood as she learns more about Victorian society regarding socioeconomics, gender, and mental illness. Alongside Jane, Bertha Mason’s character is the one most closely studied regarding mental illness, race, and experience of intense isolation within Rochester’s attic. These are the two female characters with the most interaction with doctors and language regarding mental illness. We can see the focus on their roles within the novel that will present the most amount of words and phrases relevant to understanding how Brontë presented their roles regarding these topics to the reader. Before looking further into their characters, we must first understand how the role of the madwoman has been placed into Victorian literature and enter now. This will allow us to understand how the terms madwoman, mental illness, and women have been described in used in both literature and media throughout the time period.

For many female writers, especially those starting out in the Victorian Period, there is still a distinct difference in the ways that they could versus their male counterparts. As Theresa Bell explains, “For centuries the writing of books has largely been limited to men, with women often having to mimic male genres and write under male pseudonyms in order to be published or reach a readership. Women writers who were viewed as questioning the paternal status quo faced a very real fear of involuntary confinement” (148). This involuntary confinement and isolation for female writers only gave them a few ways to express themselves creatively and present their own themes of personal experiences within their writings. This is especially presented through characters that are presented as madwomen or as insane. Mental illness for women was a topic that was not well expressed for female characters and novels written by female authors. Regardless of the characterization of the mad woman in Victorian literature, she was limited to the idea of being “confined to attics or to doppelganger tropes in gothic narratives” then continued into other parts of early Victorian literature (148). We can see within the psychological and medical works that this idea of hysteria and of the insane mad woman is primarily based around the (inaccurate and false) understanding of hormones, menstruation, and hysteria. Further, Bell argues that “The ancient Greeks believed that female hysterical symptoms were an expression of unmet sexual needs, and a sexual relationship with a male doctor was a way to fulfil these needs” (149). This coincided with the idea that the madwoman was all based around hormones and innate biological desires rather than psychology and accurate study of mental illness. “Madness often focused on deviant (usually male) behavior that was seen as largely a personal choice and a matter for the police, while insanity was seen as female, pathological and in need of confinement and cure from paternal authority” (152). This trust in science and especially in the evolution psychology and is only pushed further based on the

patient and doctor dynamics presented within novels especially on the role of the confessor as presented by male doctors in these literary novels. Bell further explains this concept by noting that “Since antiquity, women have played the role of confessor to male doctors who have provided an audience for their fantasies; the male doctor and female patient often collaborating in the creation of a hysterical female persona.” (149). As we see in Brontë’s novel in regards to the roles that Bertha and Jane play within the novel, “Women...had a long history of understanding the ambiguous creation of first and third person selves, of understanding the masks all women wear. Such masks have been used to navigate the social construction of insanity that has historically been employed to subjugate difference and the female body" (149-150). The idea of the madwoman and of the insane female are placed a in Victorian literature based on the influence of male doctors; there is still disconnection alongside the female patients that still follow the same connection and allowance for the influence through their confessions as they visit these male doctors. We can further see the same type of influence from these confessionals between male doctors and female patients through Charlotte Brontë’s novel through the characters of Bertha Mason and the other characters that influence their decisions based on their mental health. As I further analyze specific quotes, phrases, and sections within the novel, I can further discover more of these confessional moments between male doctors and the female patients or between female characters in general showing how Bell stated from the works of Foucault that “...asserts that it was through the pathological creations of the hysterical woman or the nervous woman that society, under male authority, was able to domesticate and confine women: for women were seen in the Victorian age as ‘thoroughly saturated with sexuality’” (152). Each analysis into the characters of Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason will allow for additional analysis on how they themselves interacted with male doctors and other female

patients alongside of their own roles as the female patients within the novel as represented through Victorian society. Because the DSM-I was not released until 1952, people of the Victorian period relied heavily on institutionalization and asylums to commit and study people with mental illness, especially women studied based on their different experiences from male patients (153). Insanity, psychopathy, sociopathy, and madness were more likely to be explained in their symptoms and reasons for men while women were set to be blamed in other reasons such as social or domestic. “In the past this label was used to confine infidelity, anxiety, postnatal depression, homosexuality or alcoholism, and it was women, with lower status and less economic power, who were more vulnerable to these confinements” (155). Evidence such as this proves that regardless of the level of the offense by either gender, women were held to higher expectations with regarding their actions in public and were more likely to be confined to asylums because of them.

Further, we can see this harassment by doctors and other male figures regarding the actions of mentally ill women within *Jane Eyre* such as with Bertha’s character within the novel. We see how mental illness and addiction fueled much speculation and many areas of conversation in Bertha’s life. As in Alan Bewell points out:

Mason also has darker, more personal reasons for avoiding liquor, for we learn that he is the product, in Rochester's words, of ‘a mad family-idiots and maniacs through three generations.’ His mother, a creole, was ‘both a mad woman and a drunkard,’ and his sister, Bertha Mason Rochester, through a lack of concern for the dangers of moral laxity and liquor, has also gone mad. Recent studies by both feminists and postcolonial critics have suggested the many ways in which Bertha's madness should be read across English cultural stereotypes of race and gender. (794)

These “stereotypes” are an important factor in studying and researching Bertha’s mental illness and the way British society viewed the way she acts and placed under the care of Rochester and the doctors surrounding her regarding her race.

This focus on Bertha’s race within the novel also shapes the way that her gender affects how her mental illness is viewed. Bewell continues with “Recent studies by both feminists and postcolonial critics have suggested the many ways in which Bertha's madness should be read across English cultural stereotypes of race and gender...The literature on tropical medicine complicates this issue, however, for madness is there primarily viewed as a problem for colonizers, not for the colonized” (794). As seen with Nellie Bly and her experience in the Blackwell Island Asylum in New York, Bertha’s experience is also one in a different location but with heavy English influence, and thus it is important to take into account her home location and race when understanding her mental illness and connection to the British Victorian period. Bertha’s home location in Jamaica brings forward additional issues about how this affects her mental illness in view of British society including the arguments regarding how tropical environments and colonialism have affected her character:

Throughout the nineteenth century, tropical madness was largely perceived as an occupational hazard for European colonialists, as a consequence of their maladaptation to a new environment...As a number of feminist critics have observed, Bertha's madness confirms Victorian notions of the increased susceptibility of women to insanity. It is worth adding that these ideas were even more firmly maintained in regard to the supposed impact of tropical environments on women (and children). (Bewell 796)

The locations and English attitudes towards mental illness matter in how Bertha’s character is presented and how others react to her behaviors. With Bertha having English

influences but still born as a Creole woman, her status as an “other” figure only isolates her further in her relationships and role in society on top of her mental illness.

Beyond her race and home location, her mental illness is the central part of discussion and analysis with her character. Sharmila Bhattacharjee explains this duality between Jane and Bertha:

She is a woman of mixed race—half Creole and half British. She is said to have insanity in her family and is blamed of being promiscuous by none other than Mr. Rochester, who himself had several mistresses. So, Charlotte Bronte gives us this unique character to denounce or to sympathize with. She is the opposite of Jane and yet is as passionate as her. According to Gilbert and Gubar (339) the confrontation between Bertha and Jane is symbolic of Jane’s coming face to face with her own anger and rebellious spirit. Despite the intrinsic churning of passions within, Jane is hailed and Bertha is denounced. (37)

This duality of attitudes toward Bertha and Jane, and how their behaviors are viewed by Victorian society further push this disconnection and narrative regarding their own mentalities and how the male doctors (and other male figures) of the novel interact and view them. This goes beyond the connection and parallels between male doctors and female patients, as now we must think about additional factors affecting Bertha and her mental illness that overlap and would also present additional discussion further regarding her mental illness within the novel. This same duality can be expressed in analyzing the male doctor/female patient dynamic as the two conflict in their roles and genders in society. The male doctor is praised for his efforts despite the lack thereof any actual evidence of improvement, while the female patient is constantly denounced and ignored only to be viewed as incurable or forever brought with hysteria (Liggins).

Shuttleworth explains that Brontë's fiction expresses many of the early Victorian ideals about psychology and mental health based on her home life with her father's networking with local physicians and her own experience reading Maudsley's and Connolly's work

Medical writings of the period constantly drew attention to the lurking threat of insanity which menaced all individuals. As John Connolly observed in his introduction to *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity* (1830), 'Every man is interested in the subject; for no man can confidently reckon on the continuance of his perfect reason.' With the development of the century, the sense of the omnipresent threat of insanity seems to increase, rather than decline, as theories of mental degeneration and inherited brain disease come to the fore. In a post-Darwinian period, Henry Maudsley and others emphasize the inherited qualities of brain: individuals powerless in the grip of an inherited constitution. (34-35)

Shuttleworth mentions these two medical authors because of their influence on Brontë during her childhood as her father, a Reverend, consistently kept books such as medical texts and fictional novels in their home along with all kinds of professionals entering their home to speak with him.

Brontë's own encounter with contemporary popular and medical theories of the female body was inevitable, whether through the numerous medical men who trailed through the house (including the distinguished Dr. Teal, from Leeds, author of a treatise on hysteria), her father's collection of domestic medical text, or the pages of the local newspapers.

(78)

Contemporary medical texts were nothing new to Brontë's education, and thus would have had a significant amount of influence on her and the way she perceived mental illness during her childhood and into adulthood. This also shaped the way she viewed relationships between male

doctors and female patients as she saw physicians with her mother and sister when they were ill. Dealing with incompetent male doctors was nothing new in the Brontë household as Shuttleworth explains that “Although medical authority received the full weight of patriarchal endorsement within the Brontë household, it met with fierce resistance from the younger generation. Emily’s famous refusal to see a doctor when she was dying must be placed in the context of Charlotte’s observation that ‘my sister Emily was not a person of demonstrative character, nor one, on the recesses of who his mind and feelings, even those nearest and dearest to her could, with impunity, intrude unlicensed’” (30). The Brontë’s family and their relationship with other kinds of texts could preset how mental illness and abnormal behaviors would be perceived by their family, as well as their relationship with male doctors with their family members. Additionally, Charlotte and his siblings were influenced in understanding relationships of the medical space and the female perspective from these outside and literary influences.

Now seeing how Brontë’s own home life was influenced through scientific and journalistic texts, we can see how this would affect her perspective in writing on madwomen, and what she could be possibly overlapping with in terms of the general public’s understanding and perspective on madwomen. For Brontë, her perspective differs the most from the journalistic and scientific texts because her experience is like that of the general public. Unlike the reporters and researchers, her influence and experiences are based through the texts available to her, and thus that language is what shapes how she writes Jane’s and Bertha’s stories and experiences with insanity and madwomen.

Chapter Five

Methodology

I will use AntConc to evaluate the language used to describe female patients in the asylums who interact with various physicians as described in the texts. There is a clear distinction in the ways these two authors and scientists describe the separation between male and female patients, and how this affects the way they are treated and committed into mental health facilities. Using AntConc will allow me to look through both of these texts, which are 442 (Maudsley), 183 (Connolly), 6 (Lawson), and 452 (Brontë) pages long and full of millions of words, quickly and accurately to assess how the language these physicians used to describe female patients and their mental health state. I will be looking specifically into how physicians interacted with their female patients, which may offer insights into the ways public perceptions about women were shaped by scientific practice and vice versa based on the number of times certain words and phrases are used to describe these patients and experiences.

Chapter Six

Corpus Analysis

By using the AntConc system on the four selected texts, I have been able to choose specific words relating to women and mental illness that I believe will give the most amount of variety and content for a textual analysis of fictional, scientific, and journalistic texts. I will analyze how the language between them presented their perspective on male doctor and female patient relationships during the Victorian period. I have chosen a selected number of words and phrases using the AntConc system in the texts *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *The Physiology and Psychology of the Mind* by Henry Maudsley, *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane* by John Connolly, and the collection of newspaper articles on Mary Lawson from the *Hull Advertiser*.

Listed below with each text are the listed number of Word Types and number of Word Tokens. Word Types are the number of categories of words within the text while Word Tokens are the actual number of words within a specific text. For example, one-word type may be the word “insane” but the word token would be the number of times the word appears within the text. An important note to make while looking at this list is to be aware that many of the words (since there are millions of them within these texts) are irrelevant to the data as a whole. This would include common words such as the, a, as, and, etc. The words I have chosen to include within my data are also based on a few factors (type of literature, words associated with the topic, and relevant associated words) including the type of text, relevant words based on the category, specific adjectives, and general context. The words chosen to be included in the list were based on what words were most often used in association with women and mental illness,

and this included most commonly used words found in the scholarship outside of my chosen texts.

The results from the *Jane Eyre* text are listed as shown by ranking, number of times mentioned, and the word itself (see table 1):

Table 1

Word List and Word Type Results for *Jane Eyre*

# of Word Types: 12545	# of Word Tokens: 189219	Word
70	346	jane
238	93	woman
272	78	ladies
344	61	mason
857	22	mad
866	22	women
1049	18	possessed
1059	18	solitary
1497	12	mental
2268	7	bertha
2679	6	illness

2716	6	madness
3082	5	female
3141	5	insane
3603	4	doctor
10159	1	madwoman

Using the AntConc system I analyzed the entire text for patterns. In example, the word “madwoman” only appears once in the entirety of the text, meaning that it is not as consistently used as a descriptor for women with mental illness within the text. When mentioned, only the character of Bertha’s mother is linked to it, making this significant connection to the character of Bertha Mason to Maudsley’s text regarding familial connections to mental illness as mentioned in the section about Maudsley’s text. The context of the quote is as follows: “Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard!—as I found out after I had wed the daughter: for they were silent on family secrets before. Bertha, like a dutiful child, copied her parent in both points,” (Brontë 287-288). What I found to be most interesting about the word madwoman only appearing once in the text is how often we see it as the primary descriptor for Bertha even though it is used to describe her mother. Even Gilbert and Gubar describe Bertha as the madwoman in the attic, further emphasizing Bertha’s association with the word.

The word “insane” appears five times within the text; but there are not significant words or phrases that repeat. However, there are words associated after each time the word “insane” is

mentioned that are in reference to temperature and emotion in each of the five times the concordance reveals the word “insane.” The word “doctor” is associated with female characters and descriptions of female patients in sickened states three separate times within the text based on the concordance. One section where the word “insane” is used is when Jane is describing her feelings while in Morton thinking back to her time with Rochester and how her feelings about their time together and the thought of him missing her are senseless, “Yes; I feel now that I was right when I adhered to principle and law, and scorned and crushed the insane promptings of a frenzied moment,” (Brontë 300). Another time the word “insane” is used is when Rochester is contemplating suicide after bringing Bertha back to England and her mental illness becomes much worse after being locked up: “I said this whilst I knelt down at, and unlocked a trunk which contained a brace of loaded pistols: I mean to shoot myself. I only entertained the intention for a moment; for, not being insane, the crisis of exquisite and unalloyed despair, which had originated the wish and design of self-destruction, was past in a second,” (Brontë 302). A third example is when the word “insane” is actually mentioned twice in one sentence where Jane is explaining to Rochester why she is leaving him regardless of her passionate feelings for him: “They have a worth—so I have always believed; and if I cannot believe it now, it is because I am insane—quite insane: with my veins running fire, and my heart beating faster than I can count its throbs,” (Brontë 311). Overall, there are very few noticeable patterns between language regarding psychology and mental health listed consistently throughout the text, but in significant areas of the text, such as Jane in the red room and the introduction to Bertha, are the two most notable areas where words regarding mental illness appear within the text. Emotional and descriptive terms such as scorn, entertain, heart beating, cool, and collected are the most commonly used alongside sentences and phrases describing female characters and their

experiences with mental illness within Brontë's text. From what I have gathered about the use of the word "insane" in Brontë's text, her usage of it is more in a literary sense of a hyperbole and emphasis on strong emotional feelings rather than an actual diagnosis of a character. It is also important to note that Rochester is the only character who refers to himself and who Jane refers to as being insane versus her description of certain feelings and emotions from Jane being insane. When comparing this to the journalistic texts, the insane descriptor is used to describe actions and physical expressions of Mary Lawson rather than feelings and emotions as seen in *Jane Eyre*.

One specific section that I believe presents the most isolation to Bertha's character and her mental illness comes in the section where Jane first describes her when they meet for the first time, "In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face," (Brontë 288). Brontë is using animalistic and emotional language here to describe Bertha and her actions in the attic. Whereas in other parts of the novel where terms such as "insane" are used to focus on feelings for the characters, Bertha and her behaviors are used alongside animalistic terms. I conclude that Brontë's focus of these specific words within the text, especially their concentration within the section of the text on Bertha, are meant to focus on the isolation of Bertha, her mental illness, and the people around her within the novel in comparison to the other ways that other behaviors and terms associated with mental illness are used with other characters.

The results from *The Physiology and Psychology of the Mind* by Henry Maudsley are listed as shown by ranking, number of times mentioned, and the word itself that will be compared to *Jane Eyre* (see table 2):

Table 2

Word List and Word Type Results for *The Physiology and Psychology of the Mind*

# of Word Types: 14295	# of Word Tokens: 188775	Word
0	0	madwoman
30	684	insanity
42	524	mental
46	463	nature
76	286	brain
133	163	insane
531	43	woman
614	36	madness
622	36	women
683	32	mad
871	25	weak
1160	17	female

1480	13	madman
3666	4	madmen
4230	3	doctor
4416	3	illness
6898	2	weaker

After conducting the same word list conversion for the Maudsley text, I discovered a few different patterns in comparison to Brontë's text. Overall, the medical descriptors were much more common in this text, especially in using the terms "mental" and "insane" when describing patients, which one would expect given the purpose of the work as a scientific text. The term "madwoman" (which appears 0 times) was also never used in the Maudsley text, but "madmen" (4 times) and "madman" (13 times) were listed more often than the term "madwoman" in the Brontë text. With the terms "woman" and "women," the most common pattern came in describing the women by age with the term "set" and a mention of a physician after the reference to the patient. However, with the term "female" the most common pattern is in reference to the "female sex" or referring to "female education." Along the term "sex" when describing women, the term "weak" can also be found eight separate times in the same context as the term "woman" and the term "sex" in context of mentioning women and the term "female" as the "weak" or "weaker" sex. What this collection of terms associated closely with one another tells me is that Maudsley is using his analysis and argument when discussing women's mental health as a way to direct readers to viewing women as the weaker sex based on his supposed understanding of

science and mental illness. Creating consistent use of descriptive terms alongside the mentioned sex creates an association that readers look into as fact and apply that association with their worldview.

While much of Maudsley’s information on female patients is now seen as completely outdated and inaccurate, his focus on creating factual and easy to read language for the general public reading this text makes readability the primary focus. As seen with the majority of words listed in the word list, technical terms such as “mental illness” and “insanity” are much more common than more colloquial language such as “madwoman” as seen in Brontë’s text.

Following the same pattern as Maudsley’s text, below are the results from John Connolly’s *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane* (see table 3):

Table 3

Word List and Word Type Results for *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane*

# of Word Types: 7052	# of Word Tokens: 68704	Word
0	0	madwoman/madwomen
0	0	madman/madmen
67	125	insane
86	99	mad
121	61	female

253	41	mental
282	28	insanity
441	19	women
592	14	nature
1048	8	weak
1201	7	woman
1422	5	brain
1461	5	domestic
2315	3	madness
4604	1	doctor
5170	1	illness

Unlike Maudsley's text that is more focused on creating an analysis based on patients and their studies, Connolly's text is more the administration and management side of asylums rather than the scientific side. However, when examining the language used when female patients are mentioned in Connolly's text, we can see the focus these asylums had on societal expectations of women and their domestic spheres. This includes a section on allowing women to focus on fashion to keep up morale, "Many of the women should indeed be indulged in wearing neat articles of dress brought to them by their friends; there are even some whom it is impossible to

soothe without this indulgence,” (Connolly 61-62) and when discussing employment in the asylum “More women get well who are employed in the kitchens, laundries, and wards than in the workrooms,” (Connolly 79). Other mentions of women are more focused on factual information such as the amount of food they receive, how many hours they may work, the average number of patients, and other quantitative information such as this.

What I can conclude from this information is that there is not necessarily anything different that Connolly’s text adds to or would influence the general public’s views on asylum and how women are treated there. As Connolly points out, the expected roles of women in public are not very different from their expected roles in the asylums as they continue these same domestic sphere duties and must follow the same physical expectations. Connolly’s language within his text continues to encourage what Victorian society already expects from women, yet this is in a different setting with a focus on mental health and reestablishing these women into these domestic behaviors. Beyond using Maudsley’s text as a focus on individual research cases, Connolly’s texts provides a focus on asylum life and how patients in these asylums are treated on a day to day basis.

The results from Mary Lawson newspaper articles are listed as shown by ranking, number of times mentioned, and the word itself (see table 4):

Table 4

Word List and Word Type Results for Mary Lawson Articles

# of Word Types: 356	# of Word Tokens: 823	Word
0	0	mental
0	0	women

0	0	mad
0	0	female
0	0	madmen
0	0	madman
0	0	doctor
0	0	illness
9	13	prisoner
22	7	lawson
23	7	mary
26	6	court
36	4	charged
52	3	charge
53	3	committed
67	2	asylum
74	2	escaped
212	1	insane

230	1	madwoman
349	1	woman

Based on the word list from the collection of newspaper articles on Mary Lawson, we can see a significant difference in language describing Mary Lawson and her experiences versus the novel or the scientific texts. Rather than a focus on descriptive or emotional terms as in Brontë's novels, or scientific jargon as in Maudsley's scientific journals, we see a much more consistent use of words associated with criminality and violence. Thirteen times over the course of six articles we see Mary Lawson described as a "prisoner" rather than as a patient and use of the words "mad" and "insane" to describe her and her actions over the course of her story where she was sent to prison and committed to an asylum multiple times. Unlike Brontë's novel or Maudsley's case files, the newspaper article about Mary offers only the bare minimum of biographical information on Mary Lawson, which dehumanizes her. The words used are focused on framing the situations in a criminal context. The article's language focuses on the Mary Lawson in that moment that the situation occurs, and how the law reacts to these situations, often with sensationalized language.

I conclude that these findings based on the language used in the articles to describe Mary Lawson and her actions are used to create a feeling of safety and security to readers about persons who act violently or commit crimes, and this includes women with mental illnesses that may be violent. By writing newspaper articles creating a positive perspective on how police officers and other law enforcement are arresting and getting the so-called crazy madwomen off the street, readers are presented with a perspective that creates a sense of safety for them by law enforcement, but also instills fear into them about women who behave insane or not normal

actions. Since the language focuses on how the law enforcement reacts to these situations, Mary Lawson is framed as a criminal rather than a mentally ill person who may have had other problems outside her control that contributed to her crimes. Thus, the focus is on how the police and court systems are handling women like Mary and keeping cities safe. There is a distinct lack of focus on Mary Lawson's treatment or her time as a patient in the local asylum, and the articles overlook why she is constantly escaping or not receiving the appropriate treatment. The articles focus on how effective law enforcement is rather than focusing on why Mary Lawson and other women with mental illness are not being given appropriate treatment or why the asylum is not fulfilling its necessary duties. Not only did such criminalization of mental illness have long lasting consequences experienced even today, but certainly criminalization didn't help Mary Lawson either. Alice Bonzom's analysis of female criminality in the Victorian period explains that from the past's understanding, "The penal sphere and medical sphere overlapped, offering an answer to the question: how can gentle creatures such as women commit crimes? Classical, moralistic, religious explanations of crime were combined with this scientific, secular understanding of female criminality" (18), and with that overlap there continues to be this connection between crime and mental illness with women which blurs the line between appropriate treatment and treating women as criminals regardless of their mental well-being.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Over the course of analyzing these four texts from the Victorian period, there have been many conflicting and similar ideas that have overlapped in the ways they present ideas to their audiences. Each is a collection of different discourses of language built upon the author's own perspectives of society, and how the general public knows and reacts to mental illness. From what I have gathered about women, mental illness, and how they are presented by these separate texts, there are specific themes between them that present how these topics were viewed and understood in the early Victorian period. What I have been able to conclude from these texts is that there is a certain way that each author, whether consciously or subconsciously, presents women and mental health to their readers through consistent and inconsistent terms. For Charlotte Brontë, her language focuses on creating a sense of isolation and solidarity between her characters based on their presentation of mental illness. With Henry Maudsley, his text leans towards presenting women in a specific role by calling them a weaker sex in comparison to men. Connolly's text describes women still being within their domestic spheres regardless of their mental illness. Finally, the articles on Mary Lawson, are focused on creating a positive light on law enforcement and asylums while placing women exhibiting abnormal behaviors in a negative and criminal light. While all of these conclusions from my textual analysis may seem very different, there is one theme I find overlapping with all of them: isolation and separation. What each of these texts do with their language around women and mental health further creates a sense of separating these women from both normal societal spaces and even mental health spaces in general. We see how mental health and psychology for men during the Victorian period is discussed very differently from the ways that mental health for women is discussed as we have

seen with Maudsley's arguments that focuses on menstruation and pregnancy being components while Connolly's text also focuses on keeping women in their domestic spheres regardless of their mental health. Brontë's text works in a similar way of creating a physical separation with the character of Bertha through her home life and life in the attic in the language that describes her isolation both physically and mentally in comparison to Rochester's own description of insanity and isolation through his thought process of suicide and removal from Thornfield. Finally, the articles on Mary Lawson, have worked in creating an us-versus-them perspective of the law enforcement being on one side and then separating Mary Lawson (and others described madwomen) as the other, violent and criminal side that must be stopped. Isolation and separation seem to be the more common themes regarding word use and association. These texts create different tones that are meant for specific audiences, but the general idea, as a whole, moves to create a perspective for audiences of the time to see mental illnesses as a completely different group of people who are left being viewed in a negative standpoint. While we can see how the discussion and awareness of psychology and mental health is becoming a much more public topic during this early time of the Victorian period, it is still left with many problematic issues about how one views women and mental illness that still create issues within discussion and within the stigma of mental health even today.

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Vita

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