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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Helen Small. *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865.* Oxford, England, and New York: Clarendon Press, 1996. x + 260 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-812273-9.

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Published on H-PCAACA (January, 1997)

Insane Women as a Literary Convention, 1800-1865

In this excellent study, Helen Small traces the literary convention of women who go mad after the loss of their lovers. She concentrates on the British novel rather than poetry, which traditionally has defined the expression of female despair, as Lawrence Lipking illustrates in *Abandoned Women and the Poetic Tradition.* Small argues that after the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility lost literary and social favor in the nineteenth century, the image of the "love-mad woman" acquired different meanings in novelistic discourse; authors manipulate the convention to express a variety of different social, cultural, domestic, and political stories.

In setting the literary and historical parameters of her study, Small focuses on novels after the decline of sentimentalism and before the vogue of sensationalism; she studies scientific treatises and medical casebooks published between the reforms for the insane in the early nineteenth century and the establishment of the Medico-Psychological Association in 1865. In addition to her study of the nineteenth century, Small offers a number of penetrating analyses of earlier representations of love-mad women. In tracing the literary heritage of the love-mad convention, she examines such models as Shakespeare's Ophelia and Lawrence Sterne's Maria, and she discusses the medical heritage that connects women and hysteria. While most critical studies view the representation of madness in literature and science as symmetrical, Small examines the scientific and medical treatises of Joseph Cox, John Conolly, Henry Maudsley, and Alexander Morison and argues that their use of literature for examples of female hysteria was highly idiosyncratic.

Nineteenth-century authors sought to retain, innovate, and revise the sentimental cliche of the love-mad woman. The "sign of hyperbole," expressions of overwhelming, immoderate despair, characterized the hysterical woman. Small examines Charlotte Dacre's *The Passions* (1811) and Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), as two contrasting yet related examples, which illustrate both the elusiveness and the utility of the overwrought woman for "other voices and other narratives finding expression, hyperbolically, through her" (p. 104). This love-mad figure also functions in a political context. Small discusses novels in the 1810s, written by Charles Maturin, Lady Caroline Lamb, and Sir Walter Scott, set in Ireland and Scotland to demonstrate how the madwoman "expresses both a fascination with rebellion and a more sober recognition of its cost, within narratives that are sometimes in agreement with conservatism and sometimes (more complexly) in sympathy with radical politics" (p. 112).

In other fictions, the love-mad woman was frequently associated with criminal behavior. Small discusses Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Lucretia* (1846), a Newgate novel which combines political and domestic tensions, and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), which "uses the insights of mid-nineteenth-century medical writing to support its recasting of Romantic ideas about insurrection and insanity" (p. 156). Sensationalized fiction, such as Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859-60) and Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860-61), in the later part of the century interrogated the claims of medical knowledge, its powers and its limits in understanding madness, responding specifically to questions about incarceration and other medical options for lunacy.

Small negotiates skillfully amidst an array of material. In addition to providing a clear and lucid argument about feminized madness–a category which, as she admits, frequently defies description–and its manifesta-

tions in literature, Small discusses a variety of different cultural material: the appeals to sensibility and the erasure of madness in the epitaph on Sarah Fletcher's 1799 gravestone; the social background and aspirations of John Conolly and their effect on his writing; the madness of George III and his use of music to exhibit his madness artistically; and details about the lives of authors, such as Bulwer-Lytton and William Thackeray, and their personal relationships with love-mad women. Some of the biographical details are somewhat tangential, yet most illustrate Small's point about the narratives of madness. Small illuminates and complicates the intersection between literary and scientific studies, and her book will appeal to literary theorists and social historians.

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Citation: Sarah R. Marino. Review of Small, Helen, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865*. H-PCAACA, H-Net Reviews. January, 1997.

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