

# elaine showalter the female malady

Elaine Showalter and The Female Malady: Exploring Women's Mental Health Through Literature

**elaine showalter the female malady** is a phrase that resonates deeply within the fields of feminist literary criticism and the history of women's mental health. Elaine Showalter, a distinguished scholar and critic, has profoundly influenced how we understand the intersection of gender, literature, and psychological illness. Her work, especially in "The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980," offers a compelling exploration of how women's mental health has been both pathologized and narrated through cultural and literary lenses over the years.

Understanding Showalter's insights not only enriches literary studies but also sheds light on the broader social and medical perceptions of women's mental health. Let's delve into what makes Elaine Showalter's analysis so vital, how she frames "the female malady," and what her work means for contemporary discussions on gender and mental illness.

## Elaine Showalter and the Origins of The Female Malady

Elaine Showalter emerged as a pioneering figure during the feminist literary movement of the late 20th century. Her approach combined feminist theory with cultural history, allowing her to dissect the ways in which women's experiences, especially those related to mental health, were represented—or misrepresented—in literature and medicine.

## The Historical Context of Women's Mental Health

In "The Female Malady," Showalter traces the evolution of how women's mental illness was perceived from the Victorian era through to the late 20th century. During the 19th century, diagnoses such as hysteria and neurasthenia were common labels for women who deviated from societal norms of behavior. Showalter's research highlights that these medical conditions were often less about actual mental health issues and more about controlling women who challenged patriarchal structures.

Her work reveals that mental illness in women was frequently linked to their gender roles—whether as wives, mothers, or daughters. This gendered lens influenced not only clinical diagnoses but also the literary portrayals of women's madness, which often oscillated between victimhood and villainy.

## The Literary Dimension: Madness as a Female Theme

Showalter's unique contribution lies in connecting literature to the history of mental health.

She demonstrates how female characters depicted with mental illness in novels, plays, and poetry reflect broader societal anxieties about women's roles. From Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" to the works of Virginia Woolf, women's psychological struggles are often metaphors for their social confinement and oppression.

By analyzing these narratives, Showalter brings to light how literature both mirrored and influenced the medical and cultural understanding of "the female malady." This interplay between fiction and psychiatry offers a richer perspective on how women's mental health was constructed in public consciousness.

## **The Concept of the Female Malady in Showalter's Analysis**

So, what exactly does Elaine Showalter mean by "the female malady"? It's not merely a medical condition but a cultural construct that encompasses the ways society has historically framed women's mental health challenges.

### **Gender, Power, and Pathology**

Showalter argues that the female malady is deeply embedded in power dynamics. The pathologization of women's emotions and behaviors has often served to reinforce existing gender hierarchies. For example, women who expressed anger, sexual desire, or intellectual ambition were sometimes labeled as mentally ill, which justified their marginalization.

This notion encourages readers to question the authority of medical and psychological institutions that have traditionally defined normalcy from a male-centered perspective. Showalter's work invites a critical examination of how cultural norms influence diagnoses and treatments.

### **Stages of the Female Malady**

In her book, Showalter outlines three phases in the representation and treatment of women's mental illness:

1. **The Victorian Era (1830–1900):** Characterized by diagnoses like hysteria, where women's mental illness was linked to reproductive functions and moral weakness.
2. **The Early 20th Century (1900–1950):** Marked by psychoanalytic interpretations, focusing on unconscious conflicts and family dynamics.
3. **The Post-War Period (1950–1980):** Dominated by psychopharmacology and institutionalization, reflecting changing medical paradigms but still influenced by gender biases.

These stages help contextualize how the female malady has shifted yet remained tethered

to societal expectations of femininity.

## Elaine Showalter's Influence on Feminist Literary Criticism and Mental Health Studies

Elaine Showalter's work bridges literary criticism and mental health studies, creating a multidisciplinary dialogue that continues to inspire scholars and clinicians alike.

### Reclaiming Women's Voices in Literature

By focusing on women writers and their depictions of mental illness, Showalter empowers female narratives that were once dismissed or pathologized. Her analysis encourages readers to recognize the political and personal dimensions of these texts, elevating women's experiences of suffering and resilience.

### Implications for Modern Mental Health Discourse

Showalter's critique remains relevant today as conversations about gender, mental health, and diagnosis evolve. Her work highlights the importance of acknowledging the social context of mental illness, urging professionals to move beyond reductive labels and to consider how gender shapes psychological experiences.

## Lessons from Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* for Today's Readers

Engaging with Showalter's analysis offers valuable insights not only for academics but also for anyone interested in the complex relationship between gender and mental health.

- **Critical Awareness:** Recognize how societal norms can influence perceptions of mental illness, especially concerning gender.
- **Historical Sensitivity:** Understand the historical roots of stigmatizing diagnoses like hysteria and how these legacies affect current mental health care.
- **Empathy through Literature:** Use literary narratives to foster empathy and a deeper appreciation for women's psychological struggles.
- **Challenging Stereotypes:** Question stereotypes that still persist about women's emotional responses and mental health.

Elaine Showalter's exploration of the female malady serves as a reminder that mental health is not just a medical issue but a cultural one, shaped by history, literature, and gender politics. Her work encourages ongoing dialogue and reflection, inviting us to rethink how we understand and support women's mental well-being in all its complexity.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Who is Elaine Showalter and what is her contribution to feminist literary criticism?**

Elaine Showalter is a prominent feminist literary critic and scholar known for her work on women's literature and feminist theory. She has contributed significantly to understanding the representation of women in literature and culture.

### **What is 'The Female Malady' by Elaine Showalter about?**

'The Female Malady' is a critical work by Elaine Showalter that examines the history of women's mental illness, exploring how cultural and societal factors have shaped the diagnosis and treatment of women with psychological disorders.

### **How does Elaine Showalter define 'The Female Malady'?**

In 'The Female Malady,' Showalter defines the female malady as the culturally constructed notion of women's mental illness, emphasizing how gender roles, social expectations, and medical practices have historically pathologized women's emotional and psychological experiences.

### **What historical period does Elaine Showalter focus on in 'The Female Malady'?**

Showalter primarily focuses on the 19th and early 20th centuries in 'The Female Malady,' analyzing psychiatric texts, literature, and cultural attitudes towards women and mental illness during the Victorian era and beyond.

### **How does 'The Female Malady' intersect with feminist theory?**

'The Female Malady' intersects with feminist theory by critiquing the patriarchal medical and cultural systems that have marginalized women's mental health experiences, highlighting the gender biases embedded in psychiatric diagnoses and treatments.

### **What impact has 'The Female Malady' had on contemporary discussions of mental health and gender?**

'The Female Malady' has influenced contemporary discussions by encouraging a more nuanced understanding of how gender influences mental health diagnosis and treatment,

advocating for more gender-sensitive approaches in psychiatry and psychology.

## **Can 'The Female Malady' be related to modern mental health issues faced by women?**

Yes, Showalter's analysis remains relevant as it sheds light on ongoing challenges women face in mental health care, including the stigmatization of emotional expression and the risk of misdiagnosis due to gender stereotypes.

## **Where can one find and read Elaine Showalter's 'The Female Malady'?**

'The Female Malady' is available in scholarly libraries, academic databases, and bookstores. It is often included in collections of feminist critical essays and journals focusing on gender studies and psychoanalysis.

## **Additional Resources**

Elaine Showalter and The Female Malady: Exploring the Intersection of Gender and Mental Health

**elaine showalter the female malady** stands as a pivotal reference in feminist literary criticism and cultural studies, particularly regarding the historical treatment of women's mental health. Elaine Showalter, a renowned scholar and critic, delves deeply into the socio-cultural dynamics that have shaped the perception and diagnosis of mental illness in women. Her influential work, notably encapsulated in her book *\*The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980\**, interrogates the intersections of gender, medicine, and literature, offering a comprehensive exploration of how female psychological distress has been pathologized and misunderstood across centuries.

## **Tracing the Historical Context of Female Madness**

Elaine Showalter's analysis in *\*The Female Malady\** foregrounds the historical context in which women's mental health was framed by predominantly male medical practitioners and societal norms. From the Victorian era to the late 20th century, women diagnosed with mental illnesses were often subject to treatments and institutionalization that reflected broader cultural anxieties about femininity, sexuality, and social roles.

Showalter traces how medical literature and psychiatric theories categorized various conditions such as hysteria, melancholia, and neurasthenia almost exclusively as female disorders. This gendered conceptualization not only reinforced stereotypes but also legitimized the marginalization of women within both medical and social spheres. The term "female malady" itself captures this systemic pathologization, highlighting the way women's psychological experiences were frequently dismissed as irrational or symptomatic of inherent female weakness.

# Gendered Diagnoses and Medical Practices

A key insight from Elaine Showalter's scholarship lies in the examination of how gender influenced psychiatric diagnoses. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, diagnoses such as hysteria were predominantly applied to women, often linked to reproductive biology and presumed emotional instability. Treatments ranged from rest cures to more invasive procedures like electrotherapy and lobotomies, which today are widely criticized for their ineffectiveness and cruelty.

Showalter's critique extends to the gender biases embedded in these medical practices. The prevailing medical discourse often conflated female mental illness with nonconformity to patriarchal norms, punishing women who challenged social expectations. This intersection of medicine and gender politics underscores the importance of understanding mental health not only through clinical symptoms but also within cultural narratives.

## Elaine Showalter's Contribution to Feminist Literary Criticism

Beyond her historical and medical analysis, Elaine Showalter's work is also seminal in the field of feminist literary criticism. She argues that literature itself has served as a mirror and a mediator of society's views on women's mental health. By studying the portrayal of madness in women's writing and broader English literature, Showalter reveals how narratives of female psychological distress have evolved.

Her concept of "female malady" is crucial for understanding how female authors have depicted madness, either as a metaphor for societal oppression or as a genuine exploration of psychological states. Writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Sylvia Plath, and Virginia Woolf are often discussed through this lens, illustrating the complex relationship between creativity, mental illness, and gendered experience.

## The Role of Literature in Shaping Perceptions

Literary works provide valuable insight into the cultural imagination surrounding female madness. Showalter's analysis highlights that while some texts reinforce stereotypes, others challenge and subvert them, offering alternative perspectives on women's mental health. This duality reflects broader tensions in society between control and autonomy, illness and expression.

For instance, Gilman's *\*The Yellow Wallpaper\** is frequently cited as a feminist critique of the medical establishment's treatment of women's mental health. Showalter positions such works as acts of resistance, revealing the lived realities behind clinical diagnoses and advocating for a more nuanced understanding of female psychological experiences.

# Relevance and Implications in Contemporary Mental Health Discourse

The insights from Elaine Showalter's *\*The Female Malady\** continue to resonate in contemporary discussions about gender and mental health. Although psychiatry has evolved significantly, lingering biases and disparities in diagnosis and treatment remain. Women are still disproportionately diagnosed with certain mood and anxiety disorders, and gendered stereotypes can influence clinical judgment.

Showalter's work underscores the need for a critical, intersectional approach to mental health that recognizes historical injustices and challenges ongoing inequities. By integrating feminist theory with medical history, she provides a framework for understanding how cultural factors shape mental health outcomes and treatment paradigms.

## Modern Challenges in Addressing Gender and Mental Health

Despite advances in mental health care, women often face unique challenges, including stigma, underdiagnosis of certain conditions (like autism or ADHD), and overdiagnosis of others (such as borderline personality disorder). Elaine Showalter's analysis helps illuminate these patterns by tracing their roots to longstanding cultural narratives.

Furthermore, current mental health advocacy increasingly acknowledges the importance of personalized care that considers gender, race, socioeconomic status, and other factors. Showalter's work remains a critical reference point for scholars, clinicians, and policymakers seeking to dismantle systemic biases and promote equitable mental health services.

## Exploring the Legacy of Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady*

Elaine Showalter's *\*The Female Malady\** has established itself as a cornerstone text for anyone examining the cultural construction of mental illness in women. Its interdisciplinary approach—merging literary criticism, history, and feminist theory—offers a comprehensive perspective that challenges reductive medical models.

The book invites readers to reconsider how societal norms and gender roles influence the diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions. By revealing the historical entanglement between gender and madness, Showalter's work encourages ongoing dialogue about how best to support women's mental well-being today.

- **Historical Analysis:** Provides a detailed account of the evolution of female mental health diagnoses.

- **Gender Bias in Medicine:** Highlights the influence of patriarchal norms on psychiatric practices.
- **Literary Perspectives:** Examines how literature reflects and critiques societal views on female madness.
- **Contemporary Relevance:** Informs current debates about gender disparities in mental health care.

Elaine Showalter's scholarship on the female malady remains a vital resource that challenges entrenched perceptions and advocates for a more equitable and empathetic understanding of women's mental health. Her work continues to inspire new research and clinical approaches that honor the complexity of female psychological experiences.

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**elaine showalter the female malady: Evidence, History and the Great War** Gail Braybon, 2004-12-01 In the English-speaking world the Great War maintains a tenacious grip on the public imagination, and also continues to draw historians to an event which has been interpreted variously as a symbol of modernity, the midwife to the twentieth century and an agent of social change. Although much 'common knowledge' about the war and its aftermath has included myth, simplification and generalisation, this has often been accepted uncritically by popular and academic writers alike. While Britain may have suffered a surfeit of war books, many telling much the same story, there is far less written about the impact of the Great War in other combatant nations. Its history was long suppressed in both fascist Italy and the communist Soviet Union: only recently have historians of Russia begun to examine a conflict which killed, maimed and displaced so many millions. Even in France and Germany the experience of 1914-18 has often been overshadowed by the Second World War. The war's social history is now ripe for reassessment and revision. The essays in this volume incorporate a European perspective, engage with the historiography of the war, and consider how the primary textual, oral and pictorial evidence has been used - or abused. Subjects include the politics of shellshock, the impact of war on women, the plight of refugees, food distribution in Berlin and portrait photography, all of which illuminate key debates in war history.

**elaine showalter the female malady:** *The Female Malady* Elaine Showalter, 1986

**elaine showalter the female malady:** *Women, Madness and Sin in Early Modern England* Katharine Hodgkin, 2010 The narrative presented here is a rare, detailed autobiographical account of one woman's experience of mental disorder in seventeenth-century England. Katharine Hodgkin presents in modern typography an annotated edition of the author's manuscript of this unusual and



compelling text. Also included are prefaces to the narrative written by Fitzherbert and others, and letters written shortly after her mental crisis, which develop her account of the episode.

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**elaine showalter the female malady: *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*** Sue Roe, Susan Sellers, 2000-05-08 Comprehensive study by leading scholars of Virginia Woolf and her novels, letters, diaries and essays.

**elaine showalter the female malady: *Freeing the Female Body*** Fan Hong, 2013-01-11 This collection records the bravery of these forgotten inspirational figures whose determination challenged and overcame convention, custom and prejudice to free women from the ranks of the sexualized, controlled and oppressed.

**elaine showalter the female malady: *Trauma Culture*** E. Ann Kaplan, 2005-07-11 E. Ann Kaplan explores the relationship between the impact of trauma on individuals and on entire cultures and nations. Arguing that humans possess a need to draw meaning from personal experience and to communicate what happens to others, she examines the forms that are used to bridge the experience.

**elaine showalter the female malady: *Narratives of Women's Health and Hysteria in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*** Melissa Rampelli, 2023-09-29 *Narratives of Women's Health and Hysteria in the Nineteenth-Century Novel* looks extensively at hysteria discourse through medical and sociological texts and examines how this body of work intersects with important cultural debates to define women's social, physical, and mental health. The book sketches out prominent shifts in cultural reactions to the idea of diffused agency and the prized model of the interiorized, individual person capable of self will and governance. Melissa Rampelli takes up the work of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy, showing how the authors play with and manipulate stock literary figures to contribute to this dialogue about the causes and cures of women's hysterical distress.

**elaine showalter the female malady: *The Visual Culture of Women's Activism in London, Paris and Beyond*** Colleen Denney, 2018-07-06 Women's bodies and their portrayals in the media remain at the center of every debate on women's rights worldwide. This study examines the domains of public and private space--and the interstices between them--with a focus on how women advance in the public arena, drawing on the domestic politics of the private realm in their drive for social justice and equality. The author examines the visual culture of first-wave feminists in Edwardian England and feminist developments in France. Late 20th century and 21st century women's movements are discussed in the context of how they continue to honor first-wave suffrage history.

**elaine showalter the female malady: *Approaching Hysteria*** Mark S. Micale, 2019-01-15 Few diseases have exercised the Western imagination as chronically as hysteria--from the wandering womb of ancient Greek medicine, to the demonically possessed witch of the Renaissance; from the vaporous salong women of Enlightenment Paris, through to the celebrated patients of Sigmund Freud, with their extravagant, erotically charged symptoms. In this fascinating and authoritative book, Mark Micale surveys the range of past and present readings of hysteria by intellectual historians; historians of science and medicine; scholars in gender studies, art history, and literature;

and psychoanalysts, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and neurologists. In so doing, he explores numerous questions raised by this evergrowing body of literature: Why, in recent years, has the history of hysterical disorders carried such resonance for commentators in the sciences and humanities? What can we learn from the textual traditions of hysteria about writing the history of disease in general? What is the broader cultural meaning of the new hysteria studies? In the second half of the book, Micale discusses the many historical cultures of hysteria. He reconstructs in detail the past usages of the hysteria concept as a powerful, descriptive trope in various nonmedical domains, including poetry, fiction, theater, social thought, political criticism, and the arts. His book is a pioneering attempt to write the historical phenomenology of disease in an age preoccupied with health, and a prescriptive remedy for writing histories of disease in the future. Mark S. Micale is Assistant Professor of History at Yale. He is the editor of *Beyond the Unconscious: Essays of Henri F. Ellenberger* (Princeton). Originally published in 1994. The Princeton Legacy Library uses the latest print-on-demand technology to again make available previously out-of-print books from the distinguished backlist of Princeton University Press. These editions preserve the original texts of these important books while presenting them in durable paperback and hardcover editions. The goal of the Princeton Legacy Library is to vastly increase access to the rich scholarly heritage found in the thousands of books published by Princeton University Press since its founding in 1905.

**elaine showalter the female malady: The Suffering of Women Who Didn't Fit** David J. Vaughan, 2018-11-30 For over 500 years, women have suffered claims of mental decay solely on account of their gender. Frigid, insane, not quite there, a witch in sheep's clothing, labels that have cast her as the fragile species and destroyer of Man. This book reveals attitudes, ideas and responses on what was to be done with 'mad women' in Britain. Journey back into the unenlightened Middle Ages to find demonic possession, turbulent humours and the wandering womb. In the Puritan Age, when the mad were called witches and scolds ducked for their nagging. The age of Austen and a sense and sensibility created from her fragile nerves. Then descend into Victorian horrors of wrongful confinement and merciless surgeons, before arriving, just half a century past, to the Viennese couch and an obligation to talk. At the heart of her suffering lay her gynaecological make-up, driving her mad every month and at every stage of her life. Terms such as menstrual madness, puerperal insanity and 'Old Maid's Insanity' poison history's pages. An inescapable truth is now shared: that so much, if not all, was a male creation. Though not every medic was male, nor every male a fiend, misogynist thought shaped our understanding of women, set down expectations and 'corrected' the flawed. The book exposes the agonies of life for the 'second class' gender; from misdiagnosis to brutal oppression, seen as in league with the Devil or the volatile wretch. Touching no less than six centuries, it recalls how, for a woman, being labelled as mad was much less a risk, more her inevitable burden.

**elaine showalter the female malady: Portrait of the Psychiatrist as a Young Man** Allan Beveridge, 2011-08-25 RD Laing remains one of the most famous psychiatrists of the last 50 years. In the 1960s he enjoyed enormous popularity and received much publicity for his controversial views challenging the psychiatric orthodoxy. He championed the rights of the patient, and challenged the often inhumane methods of treating the mentally ill. Based on a wealth of previously unexamined archives relating to his private papers and clinical notes, *Portrait of the Psychiatrist as a Young Man* sheds new light on RD Laing, and in particular his early formative years - a crucial but largely overlooked period in his life. The first half of the book considers Laing's intellectual journey through the world of ideas and his development as a psychiatric theorist. An analysis of his notebooks and personal library reveals Laing's engagement not only with psychiatric theory, but also with a wide range of other disciplines, such as philosophy, literature, and religion. This part of the book considers how this shaped Laing's writing about madness and his evolution as a clinician. The second half draws on a rich and completely unexplored collection of Laing's clinical notes, which detail his encounters with patients in his early years as a psychiatrist, firstly in the British Army, subsequently in the psychiatric hospitals of Glasgow, and finally in the Tavistock Clinic in London. These notes reveal what Laing was actually doing in clinical practice, and how theory interacted

with therapy. The majority of patients who were to appear in Laing's first two books, *The Divided Self* and *The Self and Others* have been identified from these records, and this volume provides a fascinating account of how the published case histories compare to the original notes. There is a considerable mythology surrounding Laing, partly created by himself and partly by subsequent commentators. By a careful examination of primary sources, Allan Beveridge, both a psychiatrist and an historian, examines the many mythological narratives about Laing and provide a critical but not unsympathetic account of this colourful and contradictory thinker, who addressed questions about the nature of madness which are still being asked today. This book will be of interest to mental health workers and social historians alike as well as anybody interested in the philosophy of psychiatry.

**elaine showalter the female malady:** *From the Erotic to the Demonic : On Critical Musicology* Derek B. Scott Chair of Music University of Salford, 2003-03-11 *From the Erotic to the Demonic: On Critical Musicology* demonstrates how different musical styles construct ideas of class, sexuality, and ethnic identity. This book will serve as a model for musicologists who want to take a postmodern approach to their inquiries. The clear and lively arguments are supported by ninety musical examples taken from such diverse sources as opera, symphonic music, jazz, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century popular songs. Derek Scott offers new insights on a range of high and low musical styles, and the cultures that produced them.

**elaine showalter the female malady:** *Feminist Challenges or Feminist Rhetorics? Locations, Scholarship, Discourse* Kirsti Cole, 2014-03-17 The chapters collected in this book generate discussion about the intersections of feminisms and rhetorics, as well as the ways in which those intersections are productive. This collection focuses on the locations of feminist rhetorics, the various discourses that invoke "feminism" or "feminist," and the scholarship that provokes, challenges, and deliberates issues of key concern. In focusing on challenge and location, this collection acknowledges the academic and socio-discursive spaces that feminisms, and rhetorics on or about feminisms, inhabit. Feminism, but also women and what it means to be a woman, is a signifier under siege in public discourse. The chapters included here speak to the challenges and diversities of feminist rhetoric and discourse in public and private life, in the academy, and in the media. The authors represented in this collection present potential consequences for communities in the academy and beyond, spanning international, geopolitical, racial, and religious contexts.

**elaine showalter the female malady:** *Gendered Bodies and New Technologies* Amanda du Preez, 2009-10-02 In this era of ubiquitous information flow, heightened mobility and limitless consumer convenience, human interaction with new technologies has become increasingly seamless. In the process, the human body is effectively and steadily reduced to just another interface, or a "second life", so to speak. What is easily forgotten during this translucent transaction is that being human also necessarily implies being embodied. In other words, to constitute a body in its non-negotiable physicality is still what it entails to be human (amongst other things). To live daily in and through the complicated and dynamic intersection between "mind" and "body", psychology and physiology—also known as embodiment—is what makes us human.

**elaine showalter the female malady:** *The Sense and Sensibility of Madness* Doreen Bauschke, Anna Klambauer, 2018-11-05 This volume explores the intriguing ontological ambiguities of madness in literature and the arts. Despite its association with a diseased/abnormal mind, there can be much sense and sensibility in madness. Daring to break free from the dictates of normalcy, madwomen and madmen disrupt the status quo. Yet, as they venture into uncharted or prohibited terrain, they may also unleash the liberatory and transformative potential of unrestrained madness. Contributors are Doreen Bauschke, Teresa Bell, Isil Ezgi Celik, Terri Jane Dow, Peter Gunn, Anna Klambauer, Rachel A. Sims and Ruxanda Topor.

**elaine showalter the female malady:** *Artist and Attic* Hsin Ying Chi, 1999 Artists and Attic sees the relationship between architecture and literature as a concrete reflection of nineteenth century ideology creating an iconic picture of women's position in society and literature during that period. In the Victorian house, the attic is hidden and neglected, yet to a woman artist, it is a space

of her own to produce a text of her own. The author presents the neglected attic as related to the neglected woman and the limited space symbolizes the confinement of woman and the woman writer, yet obtaining this space of her own becomes the central concern to women and women writers. This book explores the function of the attic in nineteenth century British and American women's writing, as it is given meaning and life by the writers. To many of the women, the attic created a paradoxical image of their seclusion, but also of their own poetic space for freedom in creation. Many of the writers see the attic as a retreat to escape from patriarchal oppression and a place to seek social identity.

**elaine showalter the female malady: The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory** Gregory Castle, 2009-02-04 This student-friendly text introduces students to the history and scope of literary theory, as well as showing them how to perform literary analysis. Designed to be used alongside primary theoretical texts as an introduction to theory or alongside literary texts as a model for performing literary analysis. Presents a series of exemplary readings of particular literary texts such as Jane Eyre, Heart of Darkness, Ulysses, To the Lighthouse and Midnight's Children. Provides a brief history of the rise of literary theory in the twentieth century, in order that students understand the historical contexts for different theories. Presents an alphabetically organized series of entries on key figures and publications, from Adorno to Žižek. Features descriptions of the major movements in literary theory, from critical theory through to postcolonial theory.

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