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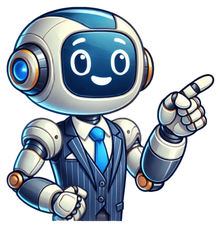

Jump to ratings and reviewsAn analysis of Victorian women writers, this pathbreaking book of feminist literary criticism is now reissued with a substantial new introduction by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar that reveals the origins of their revolutionary realization in the 1970s that "the personal was the political, the sexual was the textual."Contents:The Queen's looking glass: female creativity, male images of women, and the metaphor of literary paternity --Infection in the sentence: the women writer and the anxiety of authorship --The parables of the cave --Shut up in prose: gender and genre in Austen's Juvenilia --Jane Austen's cover story (and its secret agents) --Milton's bogey: patriarchal poetry and women readers --Horror's twin: Mary Shelley's monstrous Eve --Looking oppositely: Emily Bront's bible of hell --A secret, inward wound: The professor's pupil --A dialogue of self and soul: plain Jane's progress --The genesis of hunger, according to Shirley --The buried life of Lucy Snowe --Made keen by loss: George Eliot's veiled vision --George Eliot as the angel of destruction --The aesthetics of renunciation --A woman, white: Emily Dickinson's yarn of pearl. 432 people are currently reading18365 people want to readSandra M. Gilbert was an American literary critic and poet who published in the fields of feminist literary criticism, feminist theory, and psychoanalytic criticism. She was best known for her collaborative critical work with Susan Gubar, with whom she co-authored, among other works, The Madwoman in the Attic (1979). Madwoman in the Attic is widely recognized as a text central to second-wave feminism. She was Professor Emerita of English at the University of California, Davis.Gilbert lived in Berkeley, California, and lived, until 2008, in Paris, France. Her husband, Elliot L. Gilbert, was chair of the Department of English at University of California, Davis, until his death in 1991. She also had a long-term relationship with David Gale, mathematician at University of California, Berkeley, until his death in 2008.Displaying 1 - 30 of 197 reviewsSeptember 11, 2012Have you ever been bothered by that host of angelically drippy Dickensian heroines? Been more satisfied by the sassy alternatives offered by Jane Eyre or Elizabeth Bennet, but couldnt pin down exactly why? Wondered what the hell is up with Wuthering Heights? Thought Eve was shafted?Well, act now to order your official Madwoman-in-the-Attic Goggles. Put them on, and literature will never look the same.Stop me if youve heard this one, but there has been this confining social dichotomy that women are either angels or monsters. Madonnas or whores. Yeah, you know the drill. So, through deep readings of the texts and experiences of nineteenth-century female authors writing in English, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar identify a pervasive set of images and structures employed by women writers coping with this dichotomy. Im talking really, eerily pervasive. Over and over again, the authors trace the complexities of how these women enact fragmented selves on the page. Their various coping mechanisms, though, give their literature its complex architecture, built from affirmations of dominant social roles, the aching renunciation of Christina Rossetti, the dignified rebellion of Jane Eyre and the raving rebellion of her mad double(?) in the attic, marriages of equals, accommodations, all culminating in that nuanced explosion of an Emily Dickinson tackling everything-all-at-once. Though a lot of this wasnt a surprise, watching the sad, dark, self-denying compromises and mental hell some of these nineteenth-century women writers twisted through was more painful than I expected. Thank you, being alive in 2012.Speaking of 2012, you should know that this is some early feminist literary criticism, here. It can be crude, but analyzing these texts as not merely by authors, but by women authors, is not an irrelevant exercise. Gilbert and Gubars taxonomy is so clear and the patterns so convincingly pervasive, that they provide a handy lens through which to read books by men and women; books steeped in the dominant paradigms or reacting against them. True story: I had read, liked, and gone home satisfied from The Painted Veil just a couple of weeks before reading this. After I slipped on my Madwoman Goggles, the themes, imagery, even the title of that whole book went right into focus with an audible click.Yes, the book is flawed. The authors often charge off on elaborate interpretative tangents beyond what the texts can solidly support. There is a strong streak of under-nuanced 1970s feminism. Plus, their exclusive focus on upper-class women in Britain and the US leaves us wondering about contemporaneous writers confined in Other-ness by virtue of class, sexuality, national origin, or anything else outside of the white, bearded Protestant patriarchy. But you know what? Damn -- their taxonomy is enlightening. Damn -- those tangents are lyrical. Damn -- this book must have burst on the lit-crit scene like a veil-rending, mansion-torching mad double of its own. And you know what else?? Damn -- those Madwoman Goggles are scarily relevant to so very, very many modern books.Guaranteed. Or your money back. This book pairs well with: every book ever, but especially tasty with Milton (hissssss), Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, the sisters Brnte, Jane Austen, Ma Mary Wollstencroft and daughter Mary Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Simone de Beauvoir and George Eliot.jane-austen-and-adjacent nonfiction the-victorians October 4, 2019The imagination of the title is the boundary of Gilbert and Gubar's reflections, and some qualifications might be added to define the limits and orientation of that imagination, such as whiteness and the English language. All of the women writers they discuss as foremothers and proponents of a specifically female literary culture are white and either English or USian (correct me if I err). Of course it is necessary to have a focus, to delineate a subject for enquiry, but it is important to note that we are not only examining white material but examining it through whiteness, thus Gilbert and Gubar's feminist readings make seemingly uncritical use of the 'dark' Other against whom white women are defined:Bertha is Jane's truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress... 'The novelist who exploits psychological Doubles juxtaposes two characters, the one representing the socially acceptable or conventional personality, the other externalising the free, uninhibited, often criminal self'Apart from a parenthetical remark about Betha's origin/colour, discussion of the issue of race does not enter this section at all. The very title of the book thus finally serves to erase race as a feminist concern, since the figure of the madwoman in the attic, a direct reference to the character (in Jane Eyre) of Bertha Mason, who is black, is made to stand for a group of white British and USian writers, who in turn represent women in general as maddened by the circumstances of the period.Another trope discussed at length is the aesthetic, often fetishised illness and feebleness of the nineteenth century young woman both in life and literature, but the authors miss the fact that this effectively disabled body is a white body specifically defined against the able, fertile, working body of the black woman, a distinction that enables the denial of femininity/womanhood/humanity to black women. In their excited introduction to this edition, the authors acknowledge rather than answer the critique of their work from this kind of angle by Gayatri Spivak. My intention is not to castigate them or to warn folks off this impressive and enjoyable book! But I do want to suggest that there is a lot of decolonisation left undone for the reader to be aware of...Because really, you wouldn't want to miss out on reading this, if you've ever read Austen, Eliot, Emily Dickinson or the Brontes. Especially if you've ever watched an adaptation of Pride and Prejudice and thought oh no, no, no! It really isn't all about the desirability of a rich and handsome young man! There's so much more to it. Because Gilbert and Gubar have carefully excavated and investigated the so-much-more of the great women writers of the so-called golden age, revealing explicit and latent themes that speak to feminist consciousness.Their approach is to 'trust the tale not the teller' in reading feminist meanings into characters and interactions, but their discoveries never feel arbitrary and in general I found them convincing, even where they evidently disagreed with other critics. Their method is close reading, generally working text by text, but also interlinking to flesh out an image of each author's (often changing and evolving) sensibilities and concerns. The personal is hugely important to them, and the preliminary discussion of women's anxiety merely about merely assuming the heavily male-defined mantle of author is crucial for all of the writers they discuss. There is much biographical content, and an air of empathy that only strengthens the overall impression of rigour. Comparative comments seem rare to me, and I appreciated them as treats:Every negative stereotype protested by Charlotte Bronte is transformed into a virtue by George Eliot. While Bronte curses the fact than women are denied intellectual development, Eliot admits the terrible effects of this malnourishment but also implies that emotional life is thereby enriched for women. While Bronte shows how difficult it is for women to be assertive, Eliot dramatises the virtues of a uniquely female culture based on supportive camaraderie instead of masculine competition. While Bronte dramatises the suffocating sense of imprisonment born of female confinement, Eliot celebrates the ingenuity of women whose love can make "one little room, an everywhere." And while Bronte envies men the freedom of their authority, Eliot argues that such authority actually keeps men from experiencing their own physical and psychic authenticity.I also enjoyed the highly imaginative and poetic discussion of weaving, sewing and embroidery, presented in the concluding chapters on Emily Dickinson, but relevant to other authors too. I came back to this exploration when reading The Heart is a Lonely Hunter: Carson McCullers describes men knitting and sewing in different contexts, and I saw this as part of her disruptive re/unwriting of gender. The men in question have characteristics that might be seen as wifely or feminine (cooking daily for another man, design skill, attention to detail, pleasure in homemaking and beauty, desire to care for children) and their weaving-work draws attention to these attributes.References to classical mythology abound, but the authors constantly look beyond simplistic parallels and look for half-submerged layers of meaning that often seem to have been deliberately veiled (veiling is another theme afforded scrutiny) by the authors under discussion. The tradition Gilbert and Gubar claim to have defined and traced seems to have this rather coy mode of concealment as a key tenet. Perhaps the most affecting passage, for me, is their comparison of Emily Dickinson with her contemporary, Walt Whitman, foregrounding again female anxiety of authorship, about taking up spaceAs most readers know, the cornerstone of Whitman's epic meditation is a powerful assertion of identity now entitled 'Song of Myself' and in that first edition [of Leaves of Grass, published 1855] called 'Walt Whitman'. Because the 1st edition appeared without its author's name on the title page, some critics have spoken of the work's near 'anonymity', and perhaps, by comparison with those later editions... which were decorated not only with the poet's name and photograph but with facsimilies of his signature, this early version was unusually reticent. But of course what was modesty for Whitman would have been mad self-assertion for Dickinson [...] He didn't need to put his name on the title page because he and his poem were coextensive...Whitman's expansive lines, moreover, continually and swaggeringly declared the enormity of his cosmic/prophetic powers. 'I celebrate myself and sing myself' his poem begins magisterially, 'and what I assume, you shall assume' promising in bardic self-confidence that if you 'stop this day and night with me... you shall possess the origin of all poems.' While Dickinson, the 'slightest in the House,' reconciles herself to being Nobody, Whitman genially enquires 'Do I contradict myself?/Very well then, I contradict myself,/(I am large, I contain multitudes).' While Dickinson trembles in her room, with the door just ajar, Whitman cries 'Unscrew the locks from the doors!/ Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!'Next time I find myself folded up on the tube between men seated legs so far akimbo they block my path I shall remember Emily and Walt, and push back.October 13, 2020I keep thinking that feminism (or every other political or social movement by the way) is a narrow path to follow in a literary analysis. As part of a thorough study, literature is an interesting enough source of feminist examples, and Simone de Beauvoir used it brilliantly in The Second Sex, but the reverse is not equally advisable. For, in my opinion, The Madwoman in the Attic forces, like Procust once upon a time, an entire literature written by 19th century women to sleep in the bed of the feminist theory and, any time it cannot, it is eagerly coerced by cuttings (hence the omissions and the out of context) or crushings (hence the misinterpretations).The study is organized around three subsequent ideas: the existence of an authorship anxiety (provoked by the women writers' need to be heard, understood and taken seriously) that led to the creation of palimpsest works (that is, with hidden meanings), mainly creating a Poetics close to the Snow White allegory (the princess locked by men in the crystal coffin fighting to reveal herself as the Queen). The most important myth to be smashed in order to bring out this woman writer is a men writers' stereotype: the idealization of the submissive woman (the angel) and the satire of the revolted one (the devil): ...repeatedly, throughout most male literature, a sweet heroine inside the house (...) is opposed to a vicious bitch outside. Every innocent bride is haunted by a madwoman in the attic, say the authors, correctly observing that Bertha Mason Rochester is an avatar of Jane Eyre. Indeed, Charlotte Bront's heroine is truly a feminist, a rebellious woman who refuses to blindly accept society rules and standards, capable of sacrifice (angel) but also of revolt (demon), hence the author's use of the opposed properties of fire and ice to describe Jane's experiences. Of course, the feminism theory works well with Charlotte Bront's novels, but does it equally so with her sister's Wuthering Heights? Undoubtedly, our critics have a very good point when they stress that Catherine is the key of the novel and the other characters are created mainly to emphasize her, since the novel "studies the evolution of Catherine Earnshaw into Catherine Heathcliff and Catherine Linton, and then her return through Catherine Linton II and Catherine Heathcliff II to her 'proper' role as Catherine Earnshaw II." But is Catherine an angel/ demon or only a damned? A most interesting and valuable observation in the study concerns the heroine's choice: Catherine's fall is both fated and unconventional, a fall "upward" from hell to heaven. So, I cannot help asking, is her fall into heaven (excellent metaphor) a result of her specific feminine nature, or of her general human nature? And the same question arises for Rosamund and Dorothea, the heroines of George Eliot's Middlemarch, in spite of what Gilbert & Gubar seem to think: Dorothea and Rosamund can only express their dissatisfaction with provincial life by choosing suitors who seem to be possible means of escaping confinement and ennui.However neither is truly confined but by their own misrepresentations. Dorothea is a dedicated young woman who mistakes intellectual admiration for love. Rosamund, on the other hand, is a conceited, egotistical fool, narcissistic and sometimes utterly stupid. Their unhappiness is not really generated by their female condition, but by their own insecurities, ambitions and stubbornness. Finally, an author who definitely shouldn't have appeared as a feminist at all is Jane Austen, whose prose emphasizes women's qualities and flaws, although never considering them men's fault. So I find it hard to discover, as the study does, an absconded message in her novels: Neither fainting into silence nor self-destructing into verbosity, Elizabeth Bennett, Emma Woodhouse and Ann Elliot echo their creator in their duplicitous ability to speak with the tact that saves them from suicidal somnambulism on the one hand and contaminating vulgarity on the other, as they exploit the evasions and reservations of feminine gentility.Overall, an interesting essay which could have been brilliant, hadn't it tried to subordinate an entire feminine literature to a thesis. Some observations are memorable, like the one that sees in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein a mock of Milton's Paradise Lost, with Frankenstein enacting the roles of Adam and Satan like a child playing a role, to be transformed by his own acting into Eve - a female in disguise.A long reading, but worthwhile nevertheless.critic-and-linguistic-studiesJanuary 12, 2023This is the book that helped mefinally!enjoy Jane Eyre, because Ive never had an affinity for the brooding Byronic hero. Frankly, I think Rochester is a real dickbag. This deep dislike has kept me at arms length from a number of Victorian novels, but THE MADWOMAN IN THE ATTIC is the feminist, literary criticism that opened up my brain to enjoying these stories. Im late to the party here, as this bookpublished in 1979has been a staple of college syllabi, but better late than never! I only wish Id have picked this up decades ago. June 12, 2017The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination forges a ground-breaking contribution to feminist literary criticism. In this study, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue for the existence of a distinctly female literary imagination in women writers of nineteenth-century. Their landmark study has influenced how we read women writers ever since. Gilbert and Gubar systematically deconstruct the obstacles women authors faced and how their struggles are manifested in their works, beginning with the fundamental perception that literary authorship was perceived as an exclusively male activity, a patriarchal endeavor, bestowing ownership and authority on the work. As such, it not only excluded women from authorship, it asserted that women who were authors defied their essential nature, i.e. they were being unfeminine. Unlike their male counterparts who suffered from an anxiety of influence, women authors suffered from an anxiety of authorship.Among the many patriarchal constructs inhibiting womens writing were the stereotypical depictions of her as either angel or monster; the circumscribed space she was forced to inhabit in society; her limited sphere of permissible activities; the plethora of literary texts saturated with male hegemony and female subordination; the misogyny of Miltons Paradise Lost; the trap of feminine roles in patriarchal homes; the deliberate malnourishment for her writing; the assumption of a vapid intellectual life; and the interiorization of her as Other.Through their brilliant analysis of the writings of such authors as Jane Austen, Christina Rossetti, the Bront sisters, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot, Emily Dickinson, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and through references to numerous others, Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate the strategies for artistic survival women developed to counteract these crippling constructs. Comprehensive in scope, the study weaves the authors biography with detailed textual analysis and discussion of her work to show how her thoughts evolved and in what ways and to what degree she was able to counteract patriarchal constructs. By interpreting the literature through the mad woman lens, Gilbert and Gubar open the literary work to subtleties and nuances, revealing sub-merged layers of meaning that may otherwise have been overlooked. This is a fascinating study, a consummate tome of feminist literary criticism, and so well deserving of the high praise it has received. It is highly recommended as a valuable resource for students of Victorian women writers and for the readers who love to immerse themselves in the literary masterpieces they crafted.2017-reading-challenge 2017-women books-i-ve-reviewed August 7, 2011This is what my thesis adviser has called the quintessential text about Victorian women writers, and I find that statement to be absolutely true. Gilbert and Gubar begin with a generalized argument that women writers have a counterpart to the masculine "anxiety of influence" discussed by Harold Bloom. Instead, women undergo an "anxiety of authorship" because unlike male writers, women have no predecessors to emulate. Instead, women, particularly nineteenth century female writers, tended to modify or rewrite masculine discourse in order to make it their own, particularly Milton.Much of the book, however, is focused on the identity of the female writer. Women writers were "monsters" and "madwomen" in that they were not entirely traditional; they were attempting to enter a sphere that had been dominated mainly by males. Gilbert and Gubar argue that women writers were forced to create double, duplicitous, or even multifarious identities to sustain the traditional female roles of mother, wife, and daughter while at the same time what was traditionally a masculine role. This identity crisis was reflected in their writing. Although the first few chapters of the book lay a general foundation, more author/work-specific chapters focus on Milton's masculine mythology and how it was modified by women writers like Mary Shelley, Jane Austen's novels, Charlotte Bront's novels, Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, George Eliot's novels, and the verse of Emily Dickinson, among others.Despite the fact that I was forced to reduce this masterpiece to about 9 pages of potentially useful information, most of which will probably wind up as footnotes in my thesis, I found the text both well-written and enjoyable. I am only sorry I was unable to extract more useful information from it, as the authors I am using (Gaskell, Anne Bront, and Braddon) were mentioned in passing (if at all). Nonetheless, I found this to be a very valuable resource, one that is not only over-brimming with essential information about canonical Victorian women but also accessible and engaging. If working with Victorian women, particularly the identity of Victorian women, whether that be the authors, their narrators/protagonists, or their verse, this is a must-read.October 8, 2008The Madwoman in the Attic The Madwoman in the Attic struck one of the first blows for feminist literary criticism and a uniquely female literary tradition. It's near and dear to my heart because it's the first extended lit-crit I've ever read, and also because it's about my favorite bunch of novels: Victorian (well, 19th century) women's fiction. There's also an awesome section on Victorian poetry. Hellooo, Goblin Market!The basic theory of the book is that women writers twisted the Madonna/whore stereotype back in on itself, using doubles and alter egos to show different paths women take in a patriarchy, and alternate modes of handling female confinement: submission, madness, deception, searching for an equal (male) partner.This book is where the theory of Bertha Mason, Rochester's mad first wife, as Jane's alter ego, an expression of her inner rage, first became popularized. Gilbert and Gubar--aka the "Gs" as a friend calls them--also discuss about some of my other favorite literary interpretations: Heathcliff, yes THAT Heathcliff, Wuthering Heights as the essential feminine, the unfettered wild womanly spirit that Cathy must subsume to enter society. Catherine deBourgh Pride and Prejudice as a possible projection of Elizabeth's future. The sea, in Persuasion Persuasion, as representing an egalitarian, romantic space far from the gender roles of society where equality is possible. Or how about Will Ladislaw in Middlemarch Middlemarch as the ideal partner for a woman because of his matriarchal lineage, his cast-out status, and his lack of threatening qualities. (He's a real ladies' man).Obviously, I eschew the idea of literary theory as being some sort of be-all and en-dall. Certainly feminist, marxist, Freudian, historicist or whatever theories all need to be balanced with each other and an appreciation of the texts we read themselves. But sometimes lit-crit can be fun, and this book is one of those times!April 28, 2017Brilliant. Although I did not always agree the authors or saw where they were going and why it was certainly...enlightening. A great piece of feminist criticism that is very useful when you study Literature and constantly have to write term papers. Many secondary sources refer to Gilbert & Gubar's "Madwoman" and it was interesting to see and understand why exactly it is perceived as such an important piece. feminism for-university non-fictionDecember 8, 2024This is getting abandoned without rating. Oh my giddy aunt in the attic, is this book dry?!! It's drier than a month old cracker with no butter! It's drier than my skin after washing my hands hundreds of times on a night shift! I tried to trawl through the first few sections and it felt like torture, pure drudgery! It took me back to my uni days when I was forced to read insufferable shite in the name of education! Well, this girl aint in uni now and no-one's forcing me to read this, so off it goes to the community book exchange in the name of my sanity! December 20, 2022Three years later, but she is DONE.Some interesting stuff here, some stuff that went over my head, and some stuff that is incredibly dated (I mean it was the '70s/'00s.) I think the section about Heathcliff and Catherine is the one that annoyed me the most, because two pages or so before they explained that Heathcliff was given his name by the Earnshaw patriarch, because of the fact that he spoke a different language (which the book calls "gibberish.") But then pages later they go on about how Catherine didn't have a name and Heathcliff did and blah blah blah, and it's like it wasn't his name! His name was stolen from him! Not to mention how they continually called him Catherine's "whip" and stuff as if that was a compliment. I think the race stuff was the most egregious and I'm still looking up critiques of it from both the '70s to the present. And speaking of race, I think it's interesting (by which I mean ANNOYING) that my whole life I've heard about Uncle Toms &c, and only from this book did I learn about Cassy and Emmeline. Which you would think go hand in hand considering. Everyday the erasure of Black women hits new heights. While, I also do think that the Emily Dickinson chapter is my second favorite following Mary Shelley's, I will say that I spent most of the chapter wondering when they would mention her relationship with Sue. I'm not sure if that relationship was discovered in more recent times or if I just had Apple TV's Dickinson running on a loop in my head (I did) but it's interesting that they talked so much about "virginity" and how we "don't know the name of this mysterious master" and I was sitting there like "so we AREN'T going to mention Sue?" They mentioned Lesbianism sometimes in this book, which is shocking for the '70s, but they also could have said more. All that to say that both the Shelley and Dickinson chapters were my favorites and here are some of my favorite quotes:"The relationship between women writers and Milton's curly-haired Byronic hero is, however, even more complicated than we have so far suggested...For...Milton's Satan...is.. (as we saw in connection with Austen's glamorously Satanic anti-heroes) enormously attractive to women. Indeed, both Eliot's phrase and Byron's biography imply that he [Milton's Satan] is in most ways the incarnation of worldly male sexuality, fierce, powerful, experienced, simultaneously brutal and seductive, devilish enough to overwhelm the body and yet enough a fallen angel to charm the soul."-pg. 206, Milton's Bogey: Patriarchal Poetry and Women Readers"Perhaps most of all, though, Mary's sense of the fearful significance of legitimate and illegitimate names must have been formed by her awareness that her own name, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, was absolutely identical with the name of the mother who had died in giving birth to her. Since this was so, she may have speculated, perhaps her own monstrosity, her murderous illegitimacy, consisted in her being-like Victor Frankenstein's creation-a reanimation of the dead, a sort of galvanized corpse ironically arisen from what should have been 'the cradle of life.'" -pg. 242, Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve"But all these powerful symbols would be bound to take on personal weight and darkness for Shelley, whose only real 'mother' was a tombstone-or a shelf of books..."-pg. 244, Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve"Considering the interior schisms Dickinson dramatizes in poems like these, it is no wonder that she felt herself the victim to be haunted by herself the villain, herself the empress haunted by herself the ghost, herself the child haunted by herself the madwoman. Confronting a murderous or, at least, inexplicably grim interior Other, she wrote a poem about her supposed self which seems almost to paraphrase Stowe's description of Simon Legree during that villain's 'haunting' by Cassy and Emmeline. Here is Stowe: 'What a fool is he, who locks his door to keep out spirits, who has in his own bosom a spirit he dare not meet alone.' And here is Dickinson, on an equally terrible haunting:'One need not be a Chamber-to be Haunted-One need not be a House-The Brain has Corridors-surpassingMaterial Place-[...]Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,The Stones a'chase-Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounterIn lonesome place-Ourself behind ourself, concealed-Should startle most-"-pg. 624, A Woman-White: Emily Dickinson's Yarn of PearlSeptember 23, 2014Is a pen a metaphorical penis?Thus begins, rather perfectly, this seminal (oblique phallic pun alert!) work in feminist literary theory. I wish Id read this during my senior year in college, when I was writing my thesis on Woolf and her portrayal of women artists; Id have been utterly riveted. (In fact, Im somewhat surprised my thesis adviser didnt encourage me to read this book for general context, as important as it is.) So, yes, this tome marks a very important moment in feminist lit theory. It deserves five stars for what it ignited and illuminated, but Im giving it three because I didnt enjoy it half as much as I expected I would (perceiving the star system as deeply subjective and personal and not a commentary on the importance of a work in the context of the entire canon). I love feminist theory and literature, so this should have been a slam dunk, but academic writing bogs me down with its pompousness, the excessively allusive and proud prose, the dismissive generalizations. But I loved this kind of thing in college; excessively academic-style writing really revved my engine; alas, no more. The essays are also so topic-specific (e.g., Gender and Genre in Austens Juvenilia) that they are mystical and meaningless unless youre currently immersed in that particular text. I did, however, particularly enjoy the long piece on Emily Dickinson, which is obviously easier to get into, as the poems are often quoted in full. An important book but not a terribly enjoyable one.feminism lit-theory nonfiction April 16, 2008A book about the books I love. Nearly all the reviews of this are glowing or life changing. It would be a shame to miss out on it.January 18, 2021Disclaimer: I've read parts of this already before. Partially the parts on Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, and Villette. December 24, 2019Yawn . . . look, I'll save you the 700 pages: various men interpreted female writers in sexist ways in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There you go. Plus sprinkle in some random quotations from Bachelard or whoever. At least she avoids jargon, mostly, but this is just the least interesting sort of literary criticism possible; all nuance is lost, as all descriptions of female authors or their novels or fictional characters exist only as nails for the sole hammer at hand (i.e. trite feminist hermeneutics).lit-crit lit-nonfiction literature March 28, 2011I know this is considered passe by most of the lit crit set, particularly post-colonial theorists. That said, it changed my life. And I really think that it's one of the best places a girl can start reading about feminist theory, even if she leaves behind this school of thinking later. If nothing else, the first essay in the book is worth a read.February 11, 2017This book has been on my TBR for a while after it has been recommended in so many lectures. And no wonder because this book was incredibly detailed account on the most important women writes in 19th century UK and America. I felt a bit underwhelmed at some points but I think it was more because I am not very well known with the theories the book discussed than that this was a badly written book. Having read most of the novels that were discussed in the book, this opened the whole new view of many of my favourite books and made me want to reread such classics as Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights. This book also increased my wish to learn more about literary analysis and deepen my knowledge about 19th century literature in other ways than reading the actual works.November 24, 2018Once cutting edge, now a classic, a monument of feminist literary criticism that still holds up despite the many things that have happened since in the world and in academia. Took me months to read this, skipping around and between different other things, but it was fantastic! The Wuthering Heights chapter is especially fascinating. And I am always up for a new excuse to think about Middlemarch, and of course, Jane Austen.I am also now inspired to continue with Paradise Lost and to look anew at Emily Dickinson, who I've always had a certain impatience with. I borrowed this from the library, but I may have to buy it.April 11, 2023Geniale, davvero genialeUn'analisi delle autrici del 19esimo secolo magistrale, e sotto un'ottica diversa dal solito, con spunti vari e collegamenti ai quali non avevo mai pensato prima.Ottima per collegamenti ipertestuali/bibliografie, ma anche per semplice piacere e interesse personale (anche se un bel mattone)June 11, 2023ive been reading this for years and I'm making the executive decision to mark it as read even though I still have 3 chapters left because i know I'm not going to read those chapters until I'm 40April 11, 2022dnf @ pg. 196eu j tinha esse livro h muito tempo na minha tbr e tinha curiosidade de l-lo pelo tema. consegui encaixar ele no meu projeto do mestrado, mas ele no tem taanto a ver com o que eu estou escrevendo, a escrita superdensa e eu estava me arrastando, ento decidi abandonar. mas o que li at a pgina 200 foi muito interessante e consegui algumas referncias.dnf non-fiction read-in-englishAnn-Cathrine (Literamour)June 3, 2015Wow! No wonder this is a crucial text in literary feminism. It covers a massive amount of works by 19th century English and American female writers with traces up to Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath.I have discovered gems through this book which I had previously avoided or not found interesting (Little Women) as well as developing a deeper appreciation for the Bront's, whose works I did not enjoy reading but I acknowledge their deep impact upon the literary world - and even more so now. in fact, I have added their collective works to my TBR pile along with any Emily Dickinson I can get my hands on.Somehow, I really wonder how I did not see these things when encountering them in my English lit-studies at university, but perhaps there was simply not the time to dig that deep down into their works for me to become invested.In short, this is a must-read, if only for the last chapter on Emily Dickinson and her embodiment and enactment of what the other female writers wrote about. I literally had to check myself a couple of times for tears filling up my eyes. Such ruthless devotion to her art to the point of self-annihilation.. I can only express my feelings and opinion on this book with the same phrase as I started this review, WOW!April 24, 2009I've been reading this for some time, and decided to go back to it after reading Showalter's new book. I don't always agree with the authors, but generally find their analysis thought-provoking.Update: well, I've finished, and as mentioned before, I read this over a long period of time and in some cases came back to it because I read the work in question (I reread Wuthering Heights and The Goblin Market both last year). In other cases, I wish I'd read the work more recently (as with Shirley and Villette) or that the author had done more with the specific works (George Eliot, though I quite appreciated the analysis there, especially of Daniel Deronda). All that aside, while in some cases I wanted to argue with the authors (and in some cases thought they were right on or, better, incredibly insightful), I found this a worthwhile and interesting read about a bunch of books that are interesting and worthwhile in their own right. Less inherently enjoyable as a read for me than the Showalter, but it's a different book.I also know it's has been considered ground-breaking, but I don't have a sufficient grasp of literary criticism and its history to react to that.June 20, 2016 I just re-read this important book on nineteenth-century women writers. It's so beautifully written and full of interesting analysis that I can hardly do justice to it. Nineteenth-century women wrote in a world steeped in even more male bias than women face today. They "told all the truth but told it slant," as Emily Dickenson said. Even, no especially, Jane Austen's work was full of complaints about men's belittling women and control of what was deemed "literature." There are illuminating chapters on Austen, the Bronte sisters, and George Eliot. Emily Bronte raged most obviously. This book provides an excellent guide to Wuthering Heights. I remember being startled when I first read this book and saw Heathcliff described as in ways a female character, but now I see the point. The book discusses poets as well as novelists: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Emily Dickenson. I'll never see Dickenson the same way again. This book shows her as intentionally subversive, though eventually imprisoned in her own myth. If you have any love for these writers, do read this book. It will enrich your understanding of them. July 23, 2011This was a fascinating read and gave me a deeper insight into some of my favourite pieces of nineteenth century literature. Gilbert and Gubar explore in detail the work of a wide variety of authors such as Austen, the Bronte's, Eliot, Dickinson, Rossetti, and Shelley. It's a huge tome of a book so does require a bit of a commitment to reading it, but I believe it is thoroughly worth it. It was a ground breaking book for feminist criticism at the time and will inform and influence the way in which you read the texts discussed as well as other works by female authors. Many of the works by women in the nineteenth century had an undercurrent of expression against the oppression, criticism and expectation placed upon them. Through writing many of them found the freedom that was otherwise unavailable to them. At the end of the year there will be a new publication looking at this text and its influence. Thirty years on it will interesting to see how the ideas are reassessed, challenged and reviewed. journalism-essays-criticismJune 29, 2010I thought I liked seminal 1970s feminist literary criticism, but it was too much. I mean, if you haven't just read the books they're covering it's hard to follow. I've read "frankenstein" - 20 years ago. I've read all the Austen novels, but at least a decade ago. I can't recall every character, every nuance. So this just made me feel it was time to do some re-reading. I was looking forward to the "wuthering heights" chapter, and it was good, but it helps that I've read WH 4 times. I gave up before Charlotte Bronte and George Eliot. Charlotte annoys me (to be nice I'll call it a love/hate relationship) and I've only read one thing by Eliot. It's interesting that Mary W-S and Emily B were influenced by Milton, but I don't care much about him, not being a poetry person. There were a few good things I took from this book though. Displaying 1 - 30 of 197 reviewsGet help and learn more about the design. Ask the publishers to restore access to 500,000+ books. DOI link for An Analysis of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The Madwoman in the AtticAn Analysis of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic Pulitzer Prize is a U.S. award for achievements in newspaper and online journalism, literature and musical composition. It Pulitzer Prize is a U.S. award for achievements in newspaper and online journalism, literature and musical composition. It was established by Hungarian-American publisher Joseph Pulitzer and is administered by Columbia University in New York City. According to the administrators of the Pulitzer Prize the correct pronunciation of the name should sound like the verb pull, as in "Pull it, sir".Prizes are awarded yearly in twenty-one categories. In twenty of these, each winner receives a certificate and a US$10,000 cash award. The winner in the public service category of the journalism competition is awarded a gold medal, which always goes to a newspaper, although an individual may be named in the citation.100%(1)100% found this document useful (1 vote)560 views5 pagesGilbert and Gubar's 1979 book "The Madwoman in the Attic" was one of the first to analyze how women were portrayed in literature both as characters and as authors. They argue that male authoAI-enhanced title and descriptionSaveSave Sandra+Gilbert+and+Susan+Gubar+-+from+The+Madwoman... For Later100%100% found this document useful, undefined100%(1)100% found this document useful (1 vote)560 views5 pagesGilbert and Gubar's 1979 book "The Madwoman in the Attic" was one of the first to analyze how women were portrayed in literature both as characters and as authors. They argue that male authors often depicted women in limiting and negative ways as "angels" or "monsters", making it difficult for women to develop their own identities as writers. The book examines how these tropes influenced and constrained women authors throughout history. It seeks to "dissect" and understand the origins and nature of these limiting portrayals in order to help women writers transcend them.100%(1)100% found this document useful (1 vote)560 views5 pagesGilbert and Gubar's 1979 book "The Madwoman in the Attic" was one of the first to analyze how women were portrayed in literature both as characters and as authors. They argue that male authoAI-enhanced title and description Table of Contents What is The Madwoman in the Attic about? This book explores Victorian women writers and their struggles. It critiques how society shapes their narratives. Through deep analysis, it presents womens authorship as a complex journey.Book DetailsTitle: The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary ImaginationAuthors: Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan GubarPublished: January 1, 1979Pages: 768Genres: Nonfiction, Feminism, Literary CriticismSynopsis of The Madwoman in the AtticIntroduction to Feminist Literary CriticismThe Madwoman in the Attic by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar is a pivotal work in feminist literary criticism. This book, first published in 1979, dissects the literary contributions of 19th-century women writers. It reveals how these authors faced and resisted patriarchal constraints. The newly reissued edition includes an introduction that contextualizes the authors groundbreaking ideas from the 1970s. Their influential assertion argues that the personal was political, and the sexual was textual. This work changes how we read and interpret literature, especially womens writing. Key Themes and StructuresGilbert and Gubar highlight several recurring motifs in female writing. One major theme is the dichotomy of women as either angels or monsters. This binary severely limits the representation of womens identities in literary works. They analyze various authors, including Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, and Emily Dickinson, among others. Through close readings, they illustrate how these authors navigate societal roles. They craft complex characters who often embody multiple identities. The authors identify a pattern that showcases the dual existence these women writers experienced. Gilbert and Gubar present a compelling analysis of male images of women in literature. They explore the concept of literary paternity, revealing how womens creativity is often overshadowed by male perspectives. They address Austens juvenilia and elaborate on how her works contain secret agents of rebellion against patriarchal norms. Through careful dissection, they uncover the nuanced ways these authors comment on their circumstances. Case Studies of Nineteenth-Century WritersSeveral pivotal chapters focus on renowned writers like Charlotte Bront and George Eliot. The book draws parallels between characters and their authors struggles. The infamous Bertha Mason from Jane Eyre is presented as a double for Jane herself, reflecting the internal conflict between societal expectations and personal desires. Meanwhile, Mary Shelleys depiction of female monstrosity serves as a critique of male-driven narratives. The authors discuss how Emily Bronts Wuthering Heights offers a representation of unfettered feminine spirit. Gilbert and Gubar also illustrate how George Eliot transforms negative stereotypes into complex, layered characters. The presentation of women as multifaceted individuals becomes an essential point of their critique. They argue that the literary contributions by these authors create a unique space for feminist discourse and evolving identities. Scholars and readers alike find profound insights within Emily Dickinsons poetry. They reveal how her verses tackle themes of isolation and personal struggle. Dickinsons work showcases a nuanced exploration of womens emotional lives that challenges conventional literary practices. The authors propose that Dickinsons mastery lies in her ability to articulate her existential quest while resisting overt male influences. The Legacy of Gilbert and Gubars AnalysisGilbert and Gubars work laid the groundwork for future feminist literary criticism. The meticulous scrutiny they applied to female authors uncovers latent meanings that influence feminist readings. Their phrase anxiety of authorship captures the internal conflict experienced by women writers in a male-dominated landscape. This terminology helps articulate the struggles of women striving for recognition in literature. Interestingly, while their lens is critical, the authors also invite scrutiny regarding race and class. The focus on white British and American writers creates an incomplete narrative. It necessitates a more comprehensive understanding of female authorship that includes diverse voices. Despite these limitations, The Madwoman in the Attic remains an essential text. Its insights continue to inform contemporary discussions about gender

child upon discovering that her mother is castrated turns away from the mother and towards the father as the source of power and authority. This was easier for the nineteenth century woman authors. The twentieth century is more complex. If the female author tries a normative, that is rule-bound, resolution of the Oedipus complex, it may lead to anxiety of having usurped paternal primacy and therefore fear of male retribution and vengeance. A non-normative resolution may help a masculinist complex which grants autonomy, maternal relation with female/mother predecessor authors and the creative option of male mimicry. However, Gilbert and Gubar suggest that such identification with the mother/precursor author is not free from anxietythis time it is fear of castration at the hands of the mother. They write: we suspect that the love women writers send forward into the past is, in patriarchal culture, inexorably contaminated by mingled feelings of rivalry and anxiety. (2) Fantasies figure prominently in the theories of Gilbert and Gubar. These may be linguistic fantasies or fantasy identifications. Feminist and linguistic fantasies grant a primary role to the mother rather than the father in the process of language acquisition. Women fantasize not about a revision of womens language but a revision of the womans relation to language. They argue that the use of the sentence as definitive, the acquisition of a priestly language which resists the vernacular and the mother tongue as modes of retaining male authority over language. Woman authors now seek fantasies in identifications with alternative figures, myths and metaphors: Sappho, Aphrodite, and transvestism. Categories: UncategorizedTags: anxiety of authorship, Bertha Rochester, fantasies, fantasy identifications, Feminism, Jane Eyre, Literary Criticism, Literary Theory, masculinist complex, No Man's Land, Sandra Gilbert, schizophrenia of authorship, Sexchanges, Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic, The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women Every year since 1974, the National Book Critics Circle (NBCC) presents awards for the finest books published in English. Awards are presented annuall Every year since 1974, the National Book Critics Circle (NBCC) presents awards for the finest books published in English. Awards are presented annually, in March. Awards are in six categories: Autobiography; Biography; Criticism; Fiction; Nonfiction; Poetry. NNBC Website ...more Feeding Ghosts: A Graphic Memoir by 4.45 avg rating 1,551 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for John Leonard Prize (2024) A Last Supper of Queer Apostles: Selected Essays by 4.53 avg rating 228 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Gregg Barrios Book in Translation (2024) Wrong Norma by 4.19 avg rating 949 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry (2024) Challenger: A True Story of Heroism and Disaster on the Edge of Space by 4.52 avg rating 14,440 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction (2024) My Friends by 4.30 avg rating 11,270 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction (2024) There's Always This Year: On Basketball and Ascension by 4.29 avg rating 11,356 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism (2024) Candy Darling: Dreamer, Icon, Superstar by 4.16 avg rating 698 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography (2024) Patriot: A Memoir by 4.55 avg rating 11,080 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography (2024) Waiting to Be Arrested at Night: A Uyghur Poet's Memoir of China's Genocide by 4.29 avg rating 2,264 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for John Leonard Prize (2023) ocukluun Souk Geceleri by 3.86 avg rating 7,758 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Gregg Barrios Book in Translation (2023) Phantom Pain Wings by 3.97 avg rating 155 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry and Nominee for Gregg Barrios Book in Translation (2023) We Were Once a Family: A Story of Love, Death, and Child Removal in America by 4.30 avg rating 8,573 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction (2023) I Am Homeless If This Is Not My Home by 3.29 avg rating 6,458 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction (2023) Deadpan: The Aesthetics of Black Inexpression by 4.60 avg rating 10 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism (2023) Winnie and Nelson: Portrait of a Marriage by 4.50 avg rating 396 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography (2023) How to Say Babylon by 4.44 avg rating 28,312 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography (2023) Grey Bees by 4.06 avg rating 7,818 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Gregg Barrios Book in Translation (2022) Night of the Living Rez by 3.89 avg rating 12,345 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for John Leonard Prize (2022) Free Indirect: The Novel in a Postfictional Age (Literature Now) by 3.91 avg rating 23 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism (2022) Hotel Oblivion by 4.07 avg rating 70 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry (2022) Stay True by really liked it 4.00 avg rating 43,485 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography (2022) G-Man: J. Edgar Hoover and the Making of the American Century by 4.36 avg rating 4,492 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography (2022) The Method: How the Twentieth Century Learned to Act by 4.26 avg rating 914 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction (2022) Bliss Montage by 3.89 avg rating 24,189 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction (2022) Afterparties by 3.93 avg rating 14,478 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for John Leonard Prize (2021) frank: sonnets by 4.50 avg rating 2,304 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry (2021) How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America by 4.70 avg rating 38,067 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction (2021) Girlhood by 4.21 avg rating 12,492 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism (2021) All the Frequent Troubles of Our Days: The True Story of the American Woman at the Heart of the German Resistance to Hitler by 4.32 avg rating 5,196 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Biography (2021) Gay Bar: Why We Went Out by 3.78 avg rating 4,964 ratings National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography (2021) previous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 44 45 next Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar.The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.Second Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1979, 2000.Chapter 1: The Queens Looking Glass: Female Creativity, Male Images of Women, and the Metaphor of Literary PaternityIs the pen a metaphorical penis? Gerard Manley Hopkins seems to have thought so (3).Hopkins asserted that the male quality is the creative gift. (3). Male sexuality, in other words, is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poets pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis (4).(Edward) Said himself later observes that a convention of most literary texts is that the unity or integrity of the text is maintained by a series of genealogical connections: authortext, beginning-middle-end, textmeaning, readerinterpretation, and so on.Underneath all these is the imagery of succession, of paternity, or hierarchy (5).Defining poetry as a mirror held up to nature, the mimetic aesthetic that begins with Aristotle and descends through Sidney, Shakespeare, and Johnson implies that the poet, like a lesser God, has made or engendered an alternative, mirror-universe in which he actually seems to enclose or trap shadows of reality (5).In all these aesthetics the poet, like God the Father, is a paternalistic ruler of the fictive world he has created. Shelley called him a legislator' (5).God the Father both engenders the cosmos and, as Ernst Robert Curtius notes, writes the Book of Nature: both tropes describe a single act of creation (6). He also writes the book of Judgment (6). (AD:fathering universe::fathering written words)The fierce struggle at the heart of literary history, says [Harold] Bloom, is a battle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the crossroads. Though many of these writers use the metaphor of literary paternity in different ways and for different purposes, all seem overwhelmingly to agree that a literary text is not only speech quite literally embodied, but also power mysteriously made manifest, made flesh [the] pens power, like his peniss power, is not just the ability to generate life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays claim (6).If the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts? what if the male generative power is not just the only legitimate power but the only power there is? (7).Because they are by definition male activities, this passage [from Anne Finchs poetry] implies, writing, reading, and thinking are not only alien but also inimical to female characteristics. One hundred years later, in a famous letter to Charlotte Bront, Robert Southey rephrased the same notion: Literature is not the business of a womans life, and it cannot be. It cannot be, the metaphor of literary paternity implies, because it is physiologically as well as sociologically impossible. If male sexuality is integrally associated with the assertive presence of literary power, female sexuality is associated with the absence of such power, with the ideaexpressed by the nineteenth-century thinker Otto Weiningerthat woman has no share in ontological reality' (8). (AD: pen > generative capacity > ontological reality. All steps are male.)Devoid of what Richard Chase once called the masculinelan, and implicitly rejecting even the slavish consolations of her femininity, a literary woman is doubly a Cypher, for she is really a eunuch, to use the striking figure Germaine Greer applied to all women in patriarchal society (9).In his introduction to the anthologyThe Female Poets of America, Rufus Griswold outlined a theory of literary sex roles which builds upon, and clarifies, these grim implications of the metaphor of literary paternity (9). He says: The most exquisite susceptibility of the spirit, and the capacity to mirror in dazzling variety the effects which circumstances or surrounding minds work upon it, may be accompanied byno power to originate, nor even, in any proper sense, to reproduce (9). (AD: Think through this in conjunction with Irigarays theories of the mirrors tain.)our cultures historical confusion of literary authorship with patriarchal authority (11).what Bersani, Austen, and Chaucer all imply is that, precisely because a writer fathers his text, his literary creations (as we pointed out earlier) are his possession, his property. Having defined them in language and thus generated them, he owns them, controls them, and encloses them on the printed page (12).Like the metaphor of literary paternity itself, this corollary notion that the chief creature man has generated is woman has a long and complex history. From Eve, Minerva, Sophia, and Galatea onward, after all, patriarchal mythology defines women as created by, from, and for men, the children of male brains, ribs, and ingenuity. For Blake the eternal female was at her best an Emanation of the male creative principle. For Shelley she was an epi-psyche, a soul out of the poets soul, whose inception paralleled on a spiritual plane the solider births of Eve and Minerva. Throughout the history of Western culture, moreover, male-engendered female figures as superficially disparate as Miltons Sin, Swifts Chloe, and Yeatss Crazy Jane have incarnated mens ambivalence not only toward female sexuality but toward their own (male) physicality. At the same time, male texts, continually elaborating the metaphor of literary paternity, have continually proclaimed that, in Honor de Balzacs ambiguous words, womans virtue is mans greatest invention' (12-13).Superiorityor literary authorityhas been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills' (14, quotingThe Second Sex). In D. H. Lawrences words, the Lord of Life are the Masters of Deathand, therefore, patriarchal poetics implies, they are the masters of art (14).Women are often charged with inconstancyher refusal, that is, to be fixed or killed by an author/owner, her stubborn insistence on her own wayFrom a female perspective, however, such inconstancy can only be encouraging, forimplying duplicityit suggests that women themselves have the power to create themselves as characters, even perhaps the power to reach toward the woman trapped on the other side of the mirror / text and help her to climb out (16).Before the woman writer can journey through the looking glass toward literary autonomy, however, she must come to terms with the images on the surface of the glass, with, that is, those mythic masks male artists have fastened over her human face both to lessen their dread of her inconstancy andby identifying her with the eternal types they have themselves inventedto possess her more thoroughly. Specifically, as we will try to show her, a woman writer must examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of angel and monster which male authors have generated for her. Before we women can write, declared Virginia Woolf, we must kill the angel in the house. In other words, women must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been killed into art. And, similarly, all women writers must kill the angels necessary opposite and double, the monster in the house, whose Medusa-face also kills female creativity. For us as feminist critics, however, the Woolfian act of killing both angels and monsters must here begin with an understanding of the nature and origin of these images. At this point in our construction of a feminist poetics, then, we really must dissect in order to murder. And we must particularly do this in order to understand literature by women because, as we shall show, the images of angel and monster have been so ubiquitous throughout literature by men that they have also pervaded womens writing to such an extent that few women have definitively killed either figure. Rather, the female imagination has perceived itself, as it were, through a glass darkly: until quite recently the woman writer has had (if only unconsciously) to define herself as a mysterious creature who resides behind the angel or monster or angel/monster image that lives on what Mary Elizabeth Coleridge called the crystal surface' (17).the woman writer acknowledges with pain, confusion, and anger that what she sees in the mirror is usually a male construct, the pure gold baby of male brains, a glittering and wholly artificial child (17-18).[of Elizabeth Barrett Brownings Aurora Leigh] The female forms Aurora sees in her dead mothers picture are extreme, melodramatic, gothicGhost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and spritesignificantly, as she tells us, because her reading merges with her seeing. What htis implies, however, is not only that she herself is fated to inhabit male-defined masks and costumes, as her mother did, but that male-defined masks and costumes inevitably inhabither,altering her visionif she is to be a poet she must deconstruct the dead self that is a male opus and discover a living, inconstant self. She must, in other words, replace the copy with the individuality, as Barrett Browning once said she thought she herself had done in her mature art. Significantly, however, the copy selves depicted in Auroras mothers portrait ultimately represent, once again, the moral extremes of angel (angel, fairy, and perhaps sprite) and monster (ghost, witch, fiend)(19).precisely because a woman is denied the autonomythe subjectivitythat the pen represents, she is not only excluded from culture (whose emblem might well be the pen) but she also becomes herself an embodiment of just those extremes of mysterious and intransigent Otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing (19).The famous vision of the Eternal Feminine (das Ewig-Weigliche) with which GoethesFaustconcludes presents women from penitent prostitutes to angelic cirgins in just this role of interpreters or intermediaries between the divine Father and his human sonsThe eternal feminine (i. e. the eternal principle symbolized by woman) draws us to higher spheres (21).Once again, therefore, it is just because women are defined as wholly passive, completely void of generative power (like Cyphers) that they become numinous to male artists. For in the metaphysical emptiness their purity signifies they are, of course,self-less, with all the moral and psychological implications that word suggests (21).[of Coventry Patmores influential TheAngel in the House] Honorias essential virtue, in other words, is that her virtue makes hermangreat' (22).Patmore opines that if Woman owes her Being to the Comfort and Profit of man, tis highly reasonable that she should be careful and diligent to content and please him (23).John Ruskin affirmed in 1865 that the womans power is not for rule, not for battle, and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet orderings of domesticity. Plainly, both writers mean that, enshrined within her home, a Victorian angel-woman should become her husbands holy refuge from the blood and sweat that inevitably accompanies a life of significant action, as well as, in her contemplative purity, a livingmementoof the otherness of the divine (24).But if the angel-woman in some curious way simultaneously inhabits both this world and the next, then there is a sense in which, besides ministering to the dying, she is herself already dead (24).the aesthetic cult of ladylike fragility and delicate beautyno doubt associated with the moral cult of the angel-womanobliged genteel women to kill themselves into art objects: slim, pale, passive beings whose charms eerily recalled the snowy, porcelain immobility of the dead (25).the emblematic beautiful woman whosedeath, thought Edgar Allen Poe, is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world. Whether she becomes anobjet dartor a saint, however, it is the surrender of her selfof her personal comfort, her personal desires, or boththat is the beautiful angel-womans key act, while it is precisely this sacrifice which dooms her both to death and to heaven. For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. A life that has no storyis really a life of death, a death-in-life (25).if, as nurse and comforter, spirit-guide and mystical messenger, a woman ruled the dying and the dead, might not even her admirers sometimes fear that, besides dying or easing death, she couldbringdeath? (26).Woman necessarily has some degree of stubborn autonomy and unknowable subjectivity, meaning the ineradicable selfishness that underlies even her angelic renunciation of self (27).the monster0woman, threatening to replace her angelic sister, embodies intransigent female autonomy and thus represents both the authors power to allay his anxieties by calling their source bad names (witch, bitch, fiend, monster) and, simultaneously, the mysterious power of the character who refuses to stay in her textually ordained place and thus generates a story that gets away from its author (28). (AD: bad progeny.)the monster may not only be concealedbehindthe angel, she may actually turn out to residewithin(or in the lower half of) the angel. Thus, Thackeray implies, every angel in the houseproper, agreeable, and decorous, coaxing and cajoling hapless menis really, perhaps, a monster, diabolically hideous and slimy (29).As Adrienne Rich notes in Planetarium, the skies are full of them.to the extent that they incarnate male dread of women and, specifically, male scorn of female creativity, such characters have drastically affected the self-images of women writers, negatively reinforcing those messages of submissiveness conveyed by their angelic sisters (30).But because these other women can create false appearances to hide their vile natures, they are even more dangerous (30).Like Spensers Errour and Miltons Sin, [Swifts Goddess of] Criticism is linked by her processes of eternal breeding, eating, spewing, feeding, and redevouring to biological cycles all three poets view as destructive to transcendent, intellectual life (33).check out Karen Horney, The Dread of Woman inFeminine PsychologyThe sexual nausea associated with all these monster women helps explain why so many real women have for so long expressed loathing of (or at least anxiety about) their own, inexorably female bodies. The killing of oneself into an art objectthe pruning and preening, the mirror madness, and concern with odors and aging, with hair which is invariably too curly or too lank, with bodies too thin or too thickall this testifies to the efforts women have expended not just trying to be angels but tryingnotto become female monsters. the female freak is and has been a powerfully coercive and monitory image that helped enforce the injunctions to silence implicit in the concept of the [eternal feminine] (34).Look up Laura Ridings Eves Side of It in conjunction with George MacDonaldsLiliththe message Lilith incarnates: a life of feminine submission, of contemplative purity, is a life of silence, a life that has no pen and no story, while a life of female rebellion, of significant action, is a life that must be silenced, a life whose monstrous pen tells a terrible story (36).Chapter 2: Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship[Harold] Bloom explains that a strong poet must engage in heroic warfare with his precursor, for, involved as he is in a literary Oedipal struggle, a man can only become a poet by somehow invalidating his poetic father (47).the female poet does not experience the anxiety of influence in the same way that her male counterpart would, for the simple reason that she must confront precursors who are almost exclusively male, and therefore significantly different from her (48).not only can she not fight a male precursor on his terms and win, she cannot beget art upon the (female) body of the muse (49).Frequently, moreover, she can begin such a struggle only by actively seeking afemaleprecursor who, far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible (49).it would be foolish to lock the woman artist into an Electra pattern matching the Oedipal structure Bloom proposes for male writers (30).Seeking motherly precursors, says [poet Annie] Gottlieb, as if echoing Dickinson, the woman writer may find only infection, debilitation. Yet still she must seek, not seek to subvert, her female power, which is important to her because of her lost literary matrilineage (53).Although Dickinson claimed that she ran home to Awe rather than a Mother as a child, her own anxiety of authorship was a Despair inhaled not only from the infections suffered by her own ailing physical mother, and her many tormented literary mothers, but from the literary fathers who spoke to hereven lied to hersometimes near at hand, sometimes at distances of Centuries, from the censorious looking glasses of literary texts (53).nineteenth-century culture seems to have actually admonished women tobeill. In other words, the female diseases form which Victorian women suffered were not always byproducts of their training in femininity; they were the goals of such training. As Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English have shown, throughout much of the nineteenth century upper and upper-middle-class women were [defined as] sick [frail, ill]; working-class women were [defined as] sickening [infectious, diseased] (54).Implying ruthless self-suppression, does the eternal feminine necessarily imply illness? (55).Dickinson says Infection in the Sentence breeds. Certainly infection breeds in these sentences, and despair: female art, Sexton suggests, has a hidden but crucial tradition of uncontrollable madness (56).Rejecting the poisoned apples her culture offers her, the woman writer often becomes in some sense anorexic, resolutely closing her mouth on silence (sincein the words of Jane Austens Henry Tileya womans only power is the power of refusal), even while she complains of starvation (58).Clearly there is a conscious or semiconscious irony in all these choices of the apparently miniature over the assuredly major, of the domestic over the dramatic, of the private over the public, of obscurity over glory. But just as clearly the very need to make such choices emphasizes the sickening anxiety of authorship inherent in the situation of almost ever woman writer in England and America until quite recently (64).For all these women, the cloak of maleness was obviously a practical-seeming refuge from those claustrophobic double binds of femininity which had given so much pain to writers like Bradstreet, Finch, and Cavendish (65).Barrett Browning declares, only in death will [George] Sand be able to transcend the constrictions of her gender. ThenGodwill unsex her on the heavenly shore. But until then, she must acquiesce in her inescapable femaleness, manifested by her womans hearts terrible beating in a poetic fire' (67).while they achieved essential authority by telling their own tales, these writers allayed their distinctively female anxieties of authorship by following Emily Dickinsons famous (and characteristically female) advice to tell the truth but tell it slant.) (73).women from Jane Austen and Mary Shelley to Emily Bront and Emily Dickinson produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning. Thus these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards (73).nineteenth-century literary women felt they had things to hide (75).The story no man may guess, therefore, is the story of her attempt to make herself whole by healing her own infections and diseases. To heal herself, however, the woman writer must exorcise the sentences which bred her infection in the first place; she must overtly or covertly free herself of the despair she inhaled from some Wrinkled Maker, and she can only do this by revising the Makers texts (76).even when they do not overtly criticize patriarchal institutions or conventions (and most of the nineteenth-century women we shall be studying donotovertly do so), these writers almost obsessively create characters who enact their own, covert authorial anger but over and over again they project what seems to be the energy of their own despair into passionate, even melodramatic characters who act out the subversive impulses every woman inevitably feels when she contemplates the deep-rooted evils of patriarchy (77).Because her audience potentially includes the man from whom she is trying to escape, she must balance her need to paint her own condition against her need to circumvent detection. Her strained relationship to her art is thus determined almost entirely by her gender, so that from both her anxieties and her strategies for overcoming them we can extrapolate a number of the crucial ways in which womens art has been radically qualified by their femaleness (82).indeed, almost all nineteenth-century women were in some sense imprisoned in mens houses. Figuratively, such women were, as we have seen, locked into male texts, texts from which they could escape only through ingenuity and indirection. It is not surprising, then, that spatial imagery of enclosure and escape, elaborated with what frequently becomes obsessive intensity, characterizes much of their writing (83).While some male authors also use such imagery for implicitly or explicitly confessional projects, women seem forced to live more intimately with the metaphors they have created to solve the problem of their fallhouses nests, shells, and wardrobes are in us as much as we are in them (87).conditioned to believe that as a house she is herself owned (and ought to be inhabited) by a man, she may once again but for yet another reason see herself as inescapably an object. In other words, even if she does not experience her womb as a kind of tomb or perceive her childs occupation of her house/body as depersonalizing, she may recognize that in an essential way she has been defined simply by her purely biological usefulness to her species. To become literally a house, after all, is to be denied the hope of that spiritual transcendence of the body which, as Simone de Beauvoir has argued, is what makes humanity distinctively human (88).Chapter 6: Miltons Bogey: Patriarchal Poetry and Women ReadersThe enmity God sets between the woman and the serpent is thus the discord necessary to divide those who are not opposites or enemies but too much alike, too much attracted to each other. In addition, just as Satan feeds Eve with the forbidden fruit, so Evewho is consistently associated with fruit, not only as Edenic chef but also as herself the womb or bearer of fruitfeeds the fruit to Adam. And finally, just as Satans was a fall from generation, its first consequence being the appearance of the material world of Sin and Death, so Eves (and not Adams) fall completes the human entry into generation, since its consequence is the pain of birth, deaths necessary opposite and mirror image (197).In a patriarchal Christian context the pagan goddess Wisdom may, Milton suggests, become the loathesome demoness Sin, for the intelligence of heaven is made up exclusively of Spirits Masculine, and the woman, like her dark double, Sin, is a fair defect / Of Nature' (198).not only is Miltons Satan in certain crucial ways very muchlikewomen, he is also (as we saw in connection with Austens glamorously Satanic anti-heroes) enormously attractive to women. Indeedhe is in most ways the incarnation of worldly male sexuality, fierce, powerful, experienced, simultaneously brutal and seductive, devilish enough to overwhelm the body and yet enough a fallen angel to charm the soulgiving orders and expecting homage to his naturalthat is, masculinesuperiority, as if he were Gods shadow self, the id of heaven, Satanically reduplicating the politics of paradise wherever he goes. And yet, wherever he goes, women follow him, even when they refuse to follow the God whose domination he parodies. As Sylvia Plath so famously noted, Every woman adores a Fascist' (206).For if Eve is Sins as well as Satans double, then Satan is to Eve what he is to Sinboth a lover and a daddy (207).the woman writer may have secretly fantasized that shewasSatanor Cain, or Manfred, or Prometheus. But at the same time her feelings of female powerlessness manifested themselves in her conviction that the closest she could really get to being Satan was to be his creature, his tool, the witchlike daughter/mistress who sits at his right hand (207).It is not insignificant, then, that the fruit of Satans solipsistic union with Sin is Death, just as death is the fruit of Manfreds love for Astarte and ultimatelyas we shall seeof all the incestuous neo-Satanic couplings envisioned by women writers from Mary Shelley to Sylvia Plath. To the extent that the desire to violate the incest taboo is a desire to be self-sufficientself-begettingit is a divinely interdicted wish to be as Gods, like the desire for the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, whose taste also meant death (209).The poetry that the female writer conceived might well appear to be a monster birth, like Satans horrible child Death (210).Indeed, as a figure of the true artist, Gods emissary and defender on earth, Milton himself, as he appears inParadise Lost, might well have seemed to female readers to be as much akin to God as they themselves were to Satan, Eve, or Sin (210).Indeed, as a male poet justifying the ways of a male deity to male readers he rigorously excludes all females from the heaven of his poem, except insofar as he can beget new ideas upon their chaotic fecundity, like the Holy Spirit brooding on the vast Abyss, and making it pregnant (211).Virginia Woolf, living in a world where the dead female poet who was Judith Shakespeare had laid aside her body so many times, made the same point in different words: This [Paradise Lost] is the essence of which almost all other poetry is the dilution. Such an assertion might seem jubilant if made by a man. But the protean shadow of Miltons bogey seems to darken the page as Woolf writes (212).Chapter 7: Horrors Twin: Mary Shelleys Monstrous EveSince the appearance ofParadise Lost, in a sense, beforeall women writers have been to some extent Miltons daughters, continually wondering what their relationship to his patriarchal poetry ought to be and continually brooding upon alternative modes of daughterhood very much like those Dorothea describes [in Middlemarch] (219).Many critics have noted thatFrankenstein(1818) is one of the key Romantic readings ofParadise Lost. Significantly, however, as a womans reading it is most especially a story of hell (221).Chapter 15: The Aesthetics of Renunciation[John Crowe] Ransom, for instance, asserts that Dickinsons meters, learned from her fathers hymnbook, are all based upon Folk Line, the popular form of verse and the oldest in our language, adding that the great classics of this meter are the English ballads and Mother Goose. Our instinctive sense that this is a backhanded compliment is confirmed when the critic remarks that Folk Line is disadvantageous.if it denies to the poet the use of English Pentameter when that would be more suitable, for Pentameter is the staple of what we may call the studied or university poetry, and it is capable of containing and formalizing many kinds of substantive content which would be too complex for Folk Line. Emily Dickinson appears never to have tried it. If we read pentameter here as a substitute for classical studies, then we can see that once again woman and poet are being defined as mutually contradictory terms (547).in the pages of a novel a woman may exorcise or evade precisely the anxieties and hostilities that the direct, often confessional I of poetry would bring her close to enacting in real life. If, as Joyce Carol Oates once suggested, fiction is a kind of structured daydreaming, lyric poetry is potentially, as Keats said, like Adams dreamhe awoke and found it truth. Even if the poets I, then, is a supposed person, the intensity of her dangerous impersonation of this creature may cause her to take her own metaphors literally, enact her themes herself: just as Donne really slept in his coffin, Emily Dickinson really wore white dresses for twenty years, and Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton really gassed themselves. Because of such metaphoric intensity, Woolf postulates, Judith Shakespearewho shall measure the heat and violence of a poets heart when caught and tangled in a womans body?lies dead at a literary crossroads in the center ofA Room of Ones Own.Yet she is not inalterably dead. For, as we shall see, many women poets have resurrected her unquiet spirit (549).Such determined modesty [as Dickinsons] must inevitably pose serious problems for a poets art, even when it is vulgarly public to be Somebody. In Dickinsons case, as we shall see later in greater detail, the literary consequenes of being Nobody were far-reaching indeed, ranging from a sometimes grotesquely childlike self-image to a painfully distorted sense of size, a perpetual gnawing hunger, and even, finally, a deep confusion about identity. Moreover, being Nobody had worldly consequences, and these may ultimately have been even more serious. Certainly Dickinsons inability to persist in seeking publication, with her attendant rationalization that Publication is the auction of the Mind of man, must have come from a conviction that Nobody probably shouldnotpublish poetry. The double negatives are significant, for multiple negatives seem to have built a formidable wall of societal grammar around this poet, a wall she herself almost completely sealed up when she decided, around 1866, to spend the rest of her life in her smallest room with just the door ajar between her and the forbidding world outside (556).the aggressive masculinity which [Whitman] asserted so blatantly in the poems was only assumedwas, in fact, as much a ask or persona as Dickinsons inoffensive, little woman in white was a supposed person' (557). An analysis of Victorian women writers, this pathbreaking book of feminist literary criticism is now reissued with a substantial new introduction by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar that reveals the origins of their revolutionary realization in the 1970s that "the personal was the political, the sexual was the textual." "The classic argument for a womens literary tradition."Scott Heller, Chronicle of Higher Education "The authors force us to take a new look at the grandes dames of English literature, and the result is that they will never seem quite the same again."Le Anne Schreiber, New York Times Book Review "Imperative reading."Carolyn G. Heilbrun, Washington Post Book World "A masterpiece."Carolyn See, Los Angeles Times Book ReviewThe Madwoman in the Attic, The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century, originally published in 1979, has long since become a classic, one of the most important works of literary criticism of the 20th century. This new edition contains an introduction titled 'The Madwoman in the Academy' that is, quite simply, a delight to read, warmly witty, provocative, informative and illuminating."Joyce Carol Oates, Princeton University "A groundbreaking study of women writers. . . . The book brought the concerns of feminism to the study of female writers and presented the case for the existence of a distinctly feminine imagination."Martin Arnold, The New York Times "The authors are brilliant academics but they wear their erudition lightly. It remains imperative reading for those who want to understand better the grandes dames of English literature, and is still one of the most powerful pieces of writing from a feminist point of view. Argumentative, polemical, witty and thought-provoking, this is a book which will make the reader return to the original texts." Yorkshire Post (Leeds) "A feminist classic and still one of the best books on the female Victorian writers."Judith Shulevitz, New York Times Book Review Work of feminist literary criticism on Victorian literatureFor the Sarah Jane Adventures episode, see The Mad Woman in the Attic. For the Cracker episode, see The Mad Woman in the Attic (Cracker).The Madwoman in the Attic AuthorSandra GilbertSusan GubarLanguageEnglishSubjectVictorian literaturePublication date1979Publication placeUnited StatesMediatypePrintThe Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination is a 1979 book by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in which they examine Victorian literature from a feminist perspective. Gilbert and Gubar draw their title from Charlotte Bront's Jane Eyre, in which Rochester's wife (ne Bertha Mason) is kept secretly locked in an attic apartment by her husband.The text specifically examines Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Charlotte and Emily Bront, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti and Emily Dickinson.In the work, Gilbert and Gubar examine the notion that women writers of the nineteenth century were confined in their writing to make their female characters either embody the "angel" or the "monster", a struggle which they argue stemmed from male writers' tendencies to categorize female characters as either pure, angelic women or rebellious, unkempt madwomen. In their argument Gilbert and Gubar point to Virginia Woolf, who says women writers must "kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been 'killed' into art".[1][2] While it may be easy to construe that feminist writers embody the "madwoman" or "monster", Gilbert and Gubar stress the importance of killing off both figures because neither accurately represents women or women writers. Instead, Gilbert and Gubar urge female writers to strive for autonomous self-definition beyond this dichotomy, which they see as imposed by a reductionist patriarchal view of women's roles.They also explore the way women were inhibited in their writing by what they called the Anxiety of Authorship the lack of legitimating role-models for the nineteenth-century woman writer.[3] One result was what they identified as the literary palimpsest or double-voiced text one with a feminist subtext hidden within a more conventional narrative, so that "surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less socially acceptable levels of meaning".[4]Over 700 pages long, the work is an early landmark in feminist literary criticism.[5] While some have stated that it has become outdated, and that the metaphoric framework outlined by Gilbert and Gubar is limiting, essentialist, self-referential, and insufficiently aware of the varying individual circumstances,[6] it remains a cornerstone work in the field.[7]Originally published in 1979 by Yale University Press, a second edition was released in 2000 by Yale Nota Bene. In 2022, it was reissued by Yale University Press.[8]Gilbert and Gubar have continued to write criticism together, examining Shakespeare and Modernist writing, among other topics.^ The Madwoman in the Attic by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar^ Woolf, Virginia. "Professions for Women," The Death of the Moth and Other Essays. Harcourt, 1942, pp. 236-8.^ J. Childers ed. The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism (1995) p. 14^ Quoted in J. Childers ed. The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism (1995) p. 218^ K. Hall, Feminist Disability Studies (2011) p. 91^ F. O'Gorman ed., The Victorian Novel (2008) p.85 ^ H. Bertens, Literary Theory (2012) p. 115^ "The Madwoman in the Attic". Yale University Press. Retrieved October 19, 2022. Literature After Feminism, by Rita Felski ISBN0-226-24115-7Retrieved from " gilbert and susan gubar the madwoman in the attic summary. Sandra gilbert and susan gubar the madwoman in the attic pdf. 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