

Wax head c.1930

Photo by Jennie Hills of the Science Museum, London

This life-sized wax head, now in storage at London's Science Museum, was made in the 1920s or 1930s for an exhibit on 19th-century asylums at a London medical museum. Philip Loring, British Psychological Society Curator of Psychology at the Science Museum, says, 'To an audience of the 1930s, this face, with its glass eyes and real hair, must have evoked the deranged, disheveled, often violent madwoman who haunted the edges of many Victorian novels.'

Compare this excerpt from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), where the heroine gets her first good look at the 'maniac' in the attic:

What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell... but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face... The maniac bellowed: she parted her shaggy locks from her visage, and gazed wildly at her visitors.

This and many other artefacts from the history of psychology can be seen on Brought to Life (www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife.aspx), the Science Museum's history of medicine website, in the section on Mental Health and Illness.

