

T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE



**REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE MADNESS IN THE WOMAN IN WHITE
AND LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET**

MASTER'S THESIS

Nuran KIR

Department of English Language and Literature
English Language and Literature Program

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(Y1312.020023)

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Thesis Advisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Gamze SABANCI UZUN

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İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ



YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ONAY FORMU

Enstitümüz İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı Y1312.020023 numaralı öğrencisi **Nuran KIR**'ın "REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE MADNESS IN THE WOMAN IN WHITE AND LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET" adlı tez çalışması Enstitümüz Yönetim Kurulunun 13.06.2019 tarih ve 2019/13 sayılı kararıyla oluşturulan jüri tarafından oybirliği/oyçokluğu ile Tezli Yüksek Lisans tezi 04.10.2019 tarihinde kabul edilmiştir.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all information in this thesis document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results, which are not original to this thesis.

Nuran KIR

FOREWORD

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gamze Sabancı Uzun for the continuous support of my study, or her patience, motivation and immense knowledge. Her guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis

Nobody has been more important to me in the pursuit of this study than the members of my family. I would like to thank my parents, whose love and guidance are with me in whatever I pursue. I wish to thank my loving and supportive mother Namiye Kır and affectionate father Ahmet Kır.

October, 2019

Nuran KIR

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THE WOMAN IN WHITE VE LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET ROMANLARINDA KADIN DELİLİĞİNİN YANSIMASI

ÖZET

Bu tez, delilik ve kadınlar arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyecek ve ataerkil toplumda kadınların nasıl baskı altına alınacağını araştıracaktır. Wilkie Collins'in *The Woman in White* (1859) ve Mary Elizabeth Braddon'ın *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) romanlarındaki kadın karakterler incelenerek ataerkilliğe uyumsuzluklarının “kadın hastalıkları” olarak etiketlenme yollarını ele alacaktır. Collins ve Braddon, Victoria döneminin en bilinen sansasyon romanları olan bu iki romandaki kadınların Victoria toplumundaki rolünü yansıtıyor. Ayrıca, bu çalışma, ataerkil bir söylemde kadın hastalığı olarak görülen deliliğin, Victoria toplumundaki kadınların baskılanmasının bir aracı olarak kullanıldığını savunmaktadır.

Giriş, bir delilik öyküsünü ve neden özellikle Viktorya dönemi döneminde kadınlarla ilişkilendirildiğini ve esas olarak Elaine Showalter'ın *Female Malady* (1985) kitabı referans alınarak deliliğin nasıl dışlaştırıldığını ele almaktadır. İlk bölüm, kadınların deliliğinin sosyal olarak nasıl kurgulandığını ve tanımlandığını tartışmaktadır ve Collins'in *The Woman in White* adlı romanında kadın karakterlerin sosyal tehdit olarak görüldüğünde dışlanıp, deli olarak nitelendirildiğini göstermektedir. Başka bir deyişle, bu bölüm, Victoria ataerkil toplumundaki uyumsuz kadınlara baskı yapmak için deliliğin nasıl yeniden yapılandırıldığını gösterecektir. İkinci Bölüm, kadın deliliğinin Mary Elizabeth Braddon'ın *Lady Audley's Secret* romanındaki yansımalarını inceler. Bu bölümde, ilk bölümden farklı olarak, romanın kadın karakterlerinin, kurtuluşlarına açılan bir kapı ve çirkin toplum kurallarının baskıcı ataerkil sözleşmelerine karşı bir ayaklanma olarak deliliğe başvurdukları tartışılacaktır. Sonuç bölümünde ise söz konusu iki romanda deliliğin tasvir edilme yöntemlerini karşılaştırılmaktadır. Tez, deliliğin biyolojik veya fiziksel olarak kadın hastalığı olmadığı, bunun yerine, erkeksi ve ataerkil normların egemen olduğu bir toplumda kadınların baskılanmasını örtbas etmek için bir tür peçe olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *kadın deliliği, Viktorya dönemi kadınları, sansasyon romanları, Beyazlı Kadın, Lady Audley'in Sırrı.*

REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE MADNESS IN THE WOMAN IN WHITE AND LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET

ABSTRACT

This thesis will examine the connection between madness and women and will explore how women are oppressed in patriarchal society. It will address the ways through which their preoccupations and non-conformism to patriarchy are labeled as “female malady” by looking at Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1859) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862). Collins and Braddon reflect the role of women in the Victorian society in these two novels which are the most well-known sensation novels of the Victorian period. Also, this study will argue that women’s madness which is seen as woman disease in a patriarchal discourse is exploited as a means of suppression of women in the Victorian society.

The introduction includes a history of madness and why it is associated with women especially in the Victorian period and why it is feminized by drawing mainly upon Elaine Showalter’s *The Female Malady* (1985). The first chapter will explore how women’s madness is socially constructed and defined and will argue that its treatment is only through considering mad women as social threat and outcast, as best manifest in Collins’ *The Woman in White*. In other words, this chapter will demonstrate how madness is re-engineered to oppress non-conformist women in the Victorian patriarchal society. Chapter Two will examine the ways through which women’s madness is reflected in Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*. In this chapter, unlike the first chapter, it will be argued that female characters of the novel resort to madness as a gateway to their liberation and a revolt against oppressive patriarchal conventions of the time society rules. Conclusion will be devoted to comparing and contrasting the ways through which madness is portrayed in the two novels in question. The thesis will conclude that madness is not biologically or physically female disease, instead it is a kind of veil to cover up suppression of women in a society dominated by masculine and patriarchal norms.

Keywords: female madness, Victorian women, sensation novels, *The Woman in White*, *Lady Audley’s Secret*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Man for the field and woman for the heart;
Man for the sword; and for the needle she.
Man with the head, and woman with heart;
Man to command, and woman to obey (Tennyson, 427).

Madness has always been one of the most controversial subjects in the studies of the nineteenth century England. There have been a lot of definitions of madness available and its meaning has always been debated. In his book, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961), the French philosopher, sociologist and activist Michel Foucault writes that madness is a social construct:

It's not a history of the development of psychiatric science but of the imaginary moral and social context within which it developed. There's no objective knowledge to madness, but merely the formulation of a certain experience (Foucault, 104).

For Foucault, the meaning of madness changes according to its social context. While a certain type of behaviors or symptoms are seen as madness at one time, it can be seen as rational at another time. Foucault supports the idea that madness is not only a physical or biological problem, but also a cultural and social label. For example, in the Middle Ages, witchcraft was regarded as madness and witches were accordingly removed from the society by being kept in cages or burnt. Such women, therefore, would be de-humanized like animals and treated less than humans. As he argued, the definition of madness is determined in its social and moral context. Since the main focus of this thesis is the Victorian period and the nineteenth century, it will explore the ways through which madness is defined and portrayed in this period. The nineteenth-century Victorian society (1837-1901) was that of a dominated patriarchy and madness and rationality were defined based on already set-up Victorian social norms; in other words, madness was gendered based and its implications would differ from gender to gender. To be able to understand this period's perception of madness,

it is appropriate first to examine the social background of that time to see how gender was perceived.

Although Victorian England was in the hands of a female ruler, Queen Victoria, the male-dominated British society, which had been in existence for centuries, did not fully adopt the idea of women to acquire and retain power. Instead, it controlled woman's social standing and power and became a period in which women were controlled over the female body. There was a sharp distinction between male and female in terms of freedom. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Victorian England reduced femininity to some stereotypical concepts such as a good wife and mother and glorified woman as an “angel in the house” a term coined by Coventry Patmore in “*Angel in the House*” (1854) that describes the ideal Victorian femininity as a perfect mother and a loving wife. Subsequent to the publication of the poem, “Angel in the House” is used to represent the ideal Victorian femininity as submissive, passive and obedient. Virginia Woolf defines “angel in the house” as a woman who “was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily” (Norton Anthology, 1218). Women's physiological differences such as their hymen, maternity, menstruation and menopause were taken as basis for identifying what a woman was as secondary to men or as a second sex, to use Simone de Beauvoir’s terminology in *The Second Sex* (1949). This distinction did not only restrict women's areas of activity, but also forced them to unconditionally accept the role and responsibility of motherhood and a loyal wife. There was a certain boundary between private sphere and the public sphere for women and men. Nicola Humble and Kimberley Reynolds define Victorian woman as an “either sexually passive and angelic wife, sister and/or mother, or she is the sexually charged and demonic mad woman in the attic” (2). For Humble and Reynolds, woman was defined as either obedient or mad in that period.

While women were domesticated, men became more socialized by working outside the house. As an angel, woman’s duty was to make a peaceful home for her family and to take care of her children. This role extended to “provide a place of renewal for men, after their rigorous activities in the harsh, competitive public sphere” (Gorham, 4). While the industry focused more on male power-based production, women contributed to production by bringing up more and more children and looking after them. The idea that female body was brought to the forefront and was referred to only for the purpose

of giving birth and that this process removes female body from aesthetics brings about questions of birth and sexuality. As in the Middle Ages England, the morality of Victorian England does not generally give consent to sexual intercourse. For her, her body is like a fortress that needs to be preserved, because she was expected to maintain her virtue by keeping her virginity. She was expected to preserve her virginity only for her husband to satisfy and serve him sexually more than herself. Especially the middle-class women had the dream of finding a suitable partner and setting a home. This could be seen in many Victorian novels. For example, Charlotte Brontë's and Jane Austen's novels have female protagonists who are representatives of a typical 19th-century woman whose sole purpose is to find a suitable partner. For example, Austen ironizes this concept and ideal of womanhood in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) as it reads "[i]t is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (1). Women were seen as possessions that could be bought. Therefore, marriage and wealth were linked in the eyes of women. Since women could not exist as an individual in society, they tried to create an identity through marriage to especially a wealthy husband.

The woman who has been conditioned to be a loyal wife and a good mother, domesticated by the social roles may have a say in her body by trying to look attractive to her husband. The aesthetic beauty of the female body compared to the male body does not only make it attractive in the male eye, it also brings physical control of the female body. There was a prototype of woman's physical beauty; Victorian women were often wearing corset to look thinner and more "feminine," dancing on tiptoe. Their breasts were at the forefront in their dresses so they could get a womanly shape and posture; they would not have a masculine look. Having white skin, curly fair hair and heavy knobs and puffy dresses summarize a typical Victorian woman's physicality. They were like dolls in ballrooms. If a woman wanted to be respected, she should have either a wealthy husband or father; in other words, a woman was identified and respected always in terms of her husband or father. Her individuality was shaped by the social and economic status of either her husband or her father so marriage was supported by the patriarchy since a single woman had lower or even no status in society. Even if she was married, she had no rights of divorce.

Towards the late nineteenth century, industrialization developed and especially the middle-class women set out to get jobs and earn money of their own. As a result of

moving out of the house to the work sector, they gradually started to challenge the Victorian gender roles as they could not fulfill their motherhood role and duties as “perfectly” as possible. They objected the domestic roles given imposed on them and endeavored to gain freedom by taking public roles. This woman, different from the stereotype, is also referred to as “New Woman” as Sarah Grand calls it in 1894. It is used to describe intelligent, radical and educated women who challenged the Victorian stereotypes of femininity. It was manifestation by women who sought for their equal rights. In *The “Improper” Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (1992), Lyn Pykett describes The New Woman as “a mannish amazon, she was anti-maternal, anti-domestic or she sought to make domestic values prevail; she was radical, socialist or revolutionary or she was reactionary and conservative” (324). Although there were many of these new women emerging in the 19th century, they were not welcomed by the patriarchal society. Because this movement was perceived as an attack on the male dominated society, most of the women who sought for their rights and freedom were labeled as mad. It was because instead of being an “angel in the house”, these women preferred to be a “monster”; that is, the women who choose to be free and different from the Victorian stereotypes of femininity.

According to Victorians, “social conformity was an index of sanity; the only measure available to the individual fearful of his or her own normality would be a willing obedience to designated social roles” (Shuttleworth,35). In her book *The Female Malady*, feminist critic Elaine Showalter states that “madness is a female malady because it is experienced by more women than men” (3). However, there are certain questions that should be raised here with regards to the relation between gender and madness as this thesis will endeavor to answer: What were the causes of women’s madness and were women really mad? What was the relationship between femininity and madness? And, was madness used as a means of oppression against those women who were seen as a threat in the society?

In 1851, Charles Dickens who was one of the well-known writers of that period visited St. Luke’s Hospital for the Christmas Ball and observed the madwomen in the ball.

There was the brisk, vain, pippin-faced little old lady, in a fantastic cap-proud of her foot and ankle; there was the old-young woman, with the disheveled long hair, spare figure, and weird gentility; there was vacantly laughing girl, requiring now and then a warning finger to admonish her;

there was the quiet young woman, almost well, and soon going out.” (qtd. in Showalter, *Female Malady* 51).

Although madness was thought to be a female disease in the Victorian era, madness among men was also common in that period. Before discussing female madness which is the key point of this thesis, it is likewise appropriate to look at madness among men. Similar to women, men’s social roles were also gendered in the Victorian society. Men were supposed to be strong both physically and mentally and had to work and earn money because they were the ‘breadwinners’ of their homes. The causes of their madness were mostly sociological and financial unlike those of women. When men could not work, earn money and failed to be ‘breadwinner’ and therefore could not be an ideal Victorian man, they felt weak and under social pressure. Freud emphasizes the importance of financial freedom for men by saying: “My mood also depends very strongly on my earnings. Money is laughing gas for me. I know from my youth that once the wild horses of the pampas have been lassoed, they retain a certain anxiousness for life. Thus I came to know the helplessness of poverty and continually fear it” (374). Men were also expected to be strong emotionally in the Victorian society. Feelings like joy, sorrow, happiness and grief were all considered as effeminate for them. E. M. Forster states that “it is not that the Englishman can’t feel- it is that he is afraid to feel. He has been taught at his public school that feeling is bad form. He must not express great joy or sorrow [...] He must bottle up his emotions, or let them out only on a very special occasions. (5) When they showed any signs of these emotions, they failed to be an ideal Victorian man. He points out this ideal of masculinity when he holds that young men of that period had “well developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearths” (4). It can be argued that their suppressed natural and legitimate emotions could be the cause of madness.

In addition to these factors, excessive alcohol consumption, drug addiction and violence were other causes of male madness. Although there were many cases of madness among men, they were not diagnosed with madness. Madness was still thought to be a female disease. Their unconventional behaviors were not seen as the symptoms of madness. For example, in *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright is a drawing teacher, who looks for a job and does not have enough money so he is “between his mother’s cottage in Hampstead and his own chamber in town” (4). According to Lynn Pykett, Walter “occupies the feminized role of the socially inferior

artist” (35) Ann Gaylin compares Walter to Victorian women and suggests that he is in a “situation very similar to that of a Victorian woman” (313). It is because he needs his mother in order to be able to be supported financially. He is not an independent man or an ideal Victorian type of man. He needs his mother’s support as the Victorian women need their husbands’ and fathers’. The other example is Laura’s uncle, Mr. Fairlie, he is an effeminate man who “is nothing but a bundle of nerves dressed up to look like a man” (370). When he meets Walter Hartright for the first time, he warns Walter not to speak loudly, “Pray excuse me. But could you contrive to speak in a lower key? In the wretched state of my nerves, loud sound of any kind is indescribable torture to me. You will pardon an invalid? I only say to you what the lamentable state of my health obliges me to say to everybody” (32). He is sensitive to slightest noise. It can be seen in this quotation that Mr. Fairlie has some problems with his nerves. When Laura’s headache is called “essentially female malady” at the beginning of the novel, nervousness is gendered, so Mr. Fairlie is not considered as hysteric or mad although he has symptoms of hysteria. It is argued that although male characters of the novels have symptoms of madness or hysteria, they cannot be called as mad or hysteric since madness is feminized.

Phyllis Chesler in *Women and Madness* (1972) states that “[w]hat we consider ‘madness’, whether it appears in women or in men, is either the acting out of the devalued female role or the total or partial rejection of one’s sex role stereotype” (1). For Chesler, madness is to break traditional roles; it is a way of escape from the standards. In other words, if somebody did not meet society’s expectations, they were easily marked as mad. Since the Victorian society was functioning dominantly based on patriarchal norms and conventions, the ones who were labeled as mad were mostly women. Unlike these “mad women”, those who conformed to patriarchal norms were accepted as normal and “sane”. According to Chesler, madness is a kind of rebellion against gender roles which are distributed by patriarchal norms in society. Similarly, in “Monsters and Madwomen: Changing Female Gothic” (1983), Karen S. Stein explains:

The women who have been most acceptable to patriarchal culture are those who have been powerless; passive rather than active, self-sacrificing rather than self-assertive, meek rather than bold... To win social acceptance, many women have sought,

consciously or unconsciously, to be the virgin, the angel, to hide or disown the traits which might be seen to threaten their acceptability. (123)

In other words, being sane and insane depended on the already assigned gender roles and social norms. Consequently, most women preferred to be passive in order to be accepted in the society, otherwise they would be seen as “mad” or “monster.” Similarly, in her article “The Hysterical Woman: Sex Roles and Role Conflict in Nineteenth Century” (1972), Carroll Smith Rosenberg argues that “the parallel between the hysteric’s behavior and stereotype femininity [was] too close to be explained as mere coincidence.” (198) As well as being passive in the society, another cause was biological factors; women were also seen inferior to men both biologically and physically. The causes of female madness could be both biological and hereditary. In her book, *The Female Malady*, Showalter states:

Women were more vulnerable to insanity than men because the instability of their reproductive systems interfered with their sexual, emotional and rational control...female insanity were specifically and confidently linked to the biological crises of the female life cycle—puberty, pregnancy, childbirth, menopause—during which the mind would be weakened and the symptoms of insanity might emerge (55).

The term “hysteria” is used as a common expression to define female madness in the nineteenth century. It derives from the Greek word “hystera” which means womb/uterus. Womb was considered as the controlling part of the female body. According to a Victorian point of view, instead of driven by rationality, women were controlled by their bodies so they could not think rationally and were more vulnerable to mental illnesses such as hysteria. In addition to symbolizing productivity, the womb was considered as the cause of female madness in the Victorian period. Puberty and childbirth were also considered as contributing factors to “female madness.” These were called “reflex insanity in women” (Showalter, 55). Showalter quotes from George Man Burrows, a physician, who about the relationship between madness and reproductive system puts it: “The functions of the brain are so intimately connected with the uterine system, that the interruption of any one process which the latter has to perform in the human economy may implicate the former” (56). In her article, *Freud's Dora, Dora's Hysteria: The Negation of a Woman's Rebellion*, Maria Ramas argues that according to Freud, the cause of hysteria was women’s suppressed sexuality; in

addition to their passivity in social life, women had no control over their own bodies (472). Their bodies were controlled by and served for men. Writing about the Victorian women's body, Shuttleworth explains "male health was believed to be based on self-control, [but] women's health depended on her very inability to control her body" (57). According to Busfield "[r]ather than being the source of energy, women's reproductive changes- puberty, menstruation, childbirth and menopause- were the consumers of energy, both physical and mental, that was assumed to be very limited and had to be conserved at all cost" (152). These hormonal changes were assumed to be the causes of female hysteria. In short, it was believed by the Victorians that women's mental health was under the control of their biological system.

Another factor which was thought to be a cause of female madness is hereditary (Tuke 135). The Victorians believed that madness could be transmitted from mother to daughter. If a mother goes mad after puberty, it is likely that her daughter is under risk of being mad. *Lady Audley's Secret* deals with this type of madness which was believed to bear hereditary origins. The main character, Lady Audley's mother, goes mad after she gives birth and is confined in an asylum. Lady Audley lives with this fear of becoming mad one day and tries to keep it secret. In addition to biological and hereditary bases for madness, patriarchy and environmental factors were deemed to be other causes. In their puberty periods, young girls, "the pets of the family", undergo a transition from childhood to adolescence (Showalter, 56). The period of menstruation was a kind of shame for those girls so that they could not explain what they felt and therefore they suppressed their emotional changes. They began to see the difference between their brothers and themselves. It was because their brothers went to school or work, but they were confined to home. Instead of being adolescence, menstruation made those girls aware that their activities were restricted to the puberty and menstruation. Unlike girls, boys who were in puberty had more power and they became aware that they were stronger than women both physically and biologically. Showalter states that Victorian doctors observed, "[p]uberty, which gives man the knowledge of greater power, gives to woman the conviction of her dependence" (57). Their dependence on patriarchy could be another reason for madness in the later periods of their lives. Showalter emphasizes that "a girl's growing awareness of this social dependence and constraint, the realization of her immobility and disadvantage as compared with her brothers, and other boys, may well have precipitated an

emotional crisis” (57). When she compared herself even with her brother, she felt herself as a secondary sex and especially throughout the puberty period, this made her submissive and repressed.

Since women were confined in houses as “angels” or confined in the asylums as “mad”, their voices were hardly heard. They were the silent creatures of the society. Even when they were confined in asylums falsely, only what their husbands or fathers said was taken into consideration. They had no rights to deny their supposed madness. Fathers and husbands talked for them. It can be argued that they were heard only through the male voice. Even most of literary works were produced by male writers in that period. In addition to their social restriction, women were also limited in literature. Literature was under the male control, too. Since women were not permitted to write, some of the women writers used their husband’s or father’s name in their literary works. For example, when Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* in 1818 she could not use her own name so she published her book under the male pseudonym of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Other examples are Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte sisters who wrote their first poetry collection under male pseudonyms: Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell to prevent prejudices. Literary world of the Victorian period was under such a male domination that literature and female body could not be even thought together. Although women were able to write, Victorians had prejudice that women should not write. As well as being inferior in social life, women were also seen as inferior to men in literary world. They were also seen inferior to men in terms of education.

In *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar criticizes male literary tradition and lack of female authorship in literature. They argue that in literary works written by men, all female characters are portrayed either as angels or monsters. They also provoke that “[a]ll women writers must kill the angel’s necessary opposite and double, the ‘monster’” (812). According to them, women must destroy these two opposite poles in order to exist as autonomous individuals.

Since women’s voice rarely got heard in literature, it was put more frequently in their diaries and memoirs. One of the most important examples is *Cassandra* (1852) which was written by Florence Nightingale. In the book, Nightingale writes about her own experiences as she desired to be a nurse and that her family prevented her because she was a woman. She criticizes the Victorian society and argues that women can do whatever men can if they are given opportunities. Later, she was driven to depression

and illness and even mental breakdown. She also describes madness as “the result of mental atrophy and moral starvation” (62). Rather than inherited or biological factors, environmental, social factors and patriarchy were the actual causes of her breakdowns. Here is an excerpt from *Cassandra* which shows that women were created equal to men. She uses religion to show how the Victorian society ignores even religion by valuing man above woman.

Jesus Christ raised women above the condition of mere slaves, mere ministers to the passions of the man, raised them by his sympathy, to be ministers of God. He gave them moral activity. But the Age, the World, Humanity, must give them the means to exercise this moral activity must give them intellectual cultivation, spheres of action. (265)

In the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the publishers opened their doors to female writers with the development of printing and women began to take some place in literature. Especially sensation novels became popular. Willkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon were among the most famous sensation novelists of the Victorian period. In *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter comments on sensation novelist:

They made crime and violence domestic, modern and suburban; but their secrets were not simply solutions to mysteries and crimes; they were the secrets of women’s dislike of their roles as daughters, wives and mothers. These novelists made a powerful appeal to the female audience by subverting the traditions of feminine fiction... by expressing a wide range of suppressed female emotions and by tapping and satisfying the fantasies of protest and escape (158-159).

Instead of looking at the world from a pinky window, sensation novels deal with crimes, bigamy, madness and secrets. These novels show the suppressed Victorian women and their feelings. Since Victorian women had no voice in public, they could identify with the characters in these novels. Sensation novels portray the ideal Victorian women who are angels in the house. They also show what was considered as “the dark sides” of women. Laurence Talarairach-Vielmas differentiates between sensation novels and others by pointing out that “the conventional lady in distress, threatened by the dark villain of the tales of terror, was frequently replaced by an angel-like, seemingly harmless creature, who was actually the unexpected executor of savage

acts of brutality: moral character and physical appearance were thoroughly dissociated” (154). In sensation novels, the reader was shocked by angel-like character’s unexpected acts such as murder, bigamy and poisoning. In most of the sensation novels such as *The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley’s Secret*, female characters are portrayed in two ways: angel or rebellious/villain. For example, in *The Woman in White*, Collins shows first Laura who is the angel of the novel and later her sister, Marian who is rebellious and is as strong as a man. While one character is described as angel who is submissive, weak and obedient, the other is portrayed as monster. By showing the duality of women characters, sensation novels reflect the difficulties of being a woman in the Victorian period and especially woman readers could see what would happen to each personality. However, these novels differ from each other in terms of the way they perceive the period. While Wilkie Collins portrays female characters as angels and not challenging like Laura Fairlie, Braddon shows women, like Lady Audley, as rebellious against patriarchy and challenging the expected feminine roles. Even the first sentence of *The Woman in White* written by Wilkie Collins tells about the writer’s perception of the woman and man. As it reads, “[t]his is the story of what a woman’s patience can endure, and what a man’s resolution can achieve” (Collins 1). He implies that endurance is one of the ideal female features and she should be patient. He, on the other hand, portrays men as strong and determined. Although she accepts that she is inspired from Wilkie Collins’ style of writing in sensation novels, Mary Elizabeth Braddon looks at the period through a feminine perspective. Unlike Collin’s submissive heroine, Laura, Braddon creates a female character who revolts against the standards of the Victorian society and gender norms. It could be argued that Braddon’s feminist approach to the period is to show that woman can do whatever she wants, can liberate herself, if she challenges the norms and goes out of her “circle”. She also tries to be an inspiration for women who are confined in their houses by fathers or husbands.

Alfred Lord Tennyson portrayed the difference between man and woman in his famous poem called *The Princess*:

Man for the field and woman for the heart;
Man for the sword; and for the needle she.
Man with the head, and woman with heart;
Man to command, and woman to obey (Tennyson, 427)

Sensation novelists, especially female novelists, challenge the Victorian ideology of gender discrimination. Humble and Reynolds see sensation novels as the turning point for women's rights and argue:

Female protagonists figure prominently in [sensation] fiction- as murderess, bigamists, swindlers, prostitutes and detectives. In this, sensation fiction represents one of the major contestations of female roles operative in the nineteenth century- and is responsible for initiating significant changes in the representation of women in later fiction (99).

Another common theme in sensation novels is madness. As it is mentioned before, the common belief of the Victorians was that women were prone to madness because of their reproductive system. It was believed that they are not able to think logically. Sensation novels challenge this wrong assumption. Both *The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley's Secret* portray madness not as a feminine disease or a female malady but as a way of confinement in a patriarchal society. In these novels, Laura and Lady Audley are confined in asylums by men. Laura, the submissive and passive Victorian "angel," and Lady Audley, the disobedient and rebellious one, are both incarcerated because as mad. Sensation novels try to show how madness functions as a means of women's imprisonment.

In this introduction, how Victorians identified madness as a female disease has been explained. Based on a wrong assumption that their reproductive systems or their tendency of inheriting madness from their mothers would lead women to madness, a lot of women were labeled as mad and confined in asylums. It was argued that madness is not a female disease; but it was used a means of suppression of those women who challenged the Victorian gender norms. It was also explored that even in cases where women were correctly diagnosed as mentally ill, their breakdown had nothing to do with their biology but was a result of patriarchal, suppressive sociological factors which would deny them equal freedom and rights. The following two chapters will explore how the term madness was used to silence women in the Victorian patriarchal society as expressed in *The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley's Secret*.

2. CHAPTER I

2.1 The Woman in White

“This is the story of what a Woman’s patience can endure, and what a Man’s resolution can achieve” (Collins 1)

The Woman in White, written by Wilkie Collins was published in 1860 and became one of the best sensation novels of Victorian period. It has epistolary narrative which means that the story is told by different characters in each chapter. The plot is based on the lives of two half-sisters, Laura Fairlie and Marian Halcombe, and their drawing teacher Walter Hartright who becomes Laura’s husband in the end of the story. Laura and Walter love each other but the problem is that Laura marries Sir Percival Glyde not because of love but because she promised her father before he died. In the later part of the novel, Laura is confined in an asylum by her husband, Percival Glyde, under the name of Anne Catherick who escapes from an asylum. It is because Laura Fairlie resembles Anne Catherick too much and Sir Percival turns this resemblance into his advantage and he declares that Laura died although she is not because when she is dead, all her wealth will be transferred to him according to Victorian marriage rules. Marian saves her sister Laura from the asylum with the help of Walter Hartright and for the rest of the story Laura tries to restore her identity by telling that she is the victim of Glyde and Fosco, an Italian Count, who helps Glyde for his demonic plans. It is difficult for Laura to make people believe that she is not dead and she is forced to put in an asylum under somebody’s name; her struggle for identity makes her depressed and her psychology breaks down but she gets better with the help of Marian and Walter. At the end of the novel, Sir Percival Glyde and Fosco die and Laura and Walter marry and live in Limmeridge House where the story begins.

It is argued that madness and asylums are used as means of female confinement by male characters in a patriarchal setting in *The Woman in White*. Before discussing the theme of confinement, it is necessary to analyze the main female characters, Laura and Marian. Although they both suffer from patriarchy and Victorian norms, they symbolize two different types of women. While Laura is exactly the “angel in the

house”, Marian is not the “monster,” rather, she is a disobedient and free spirit, intelligent woman. At the beginning of the novel, Walter’s first encounter with Marian is described as:

The lady is dark... The lady is ugly! The lady’s complexion was almost swarthy, and the dark brown on her upper lip was almost a moustache. She had large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute brown eyes; and thick, coal- black hair, growing unusually low down on her forehead. Her expression- bright, frank, and intelligent- appeared, while she was silent, to be altogether wanting in those feminine attractions of gentleness and pliability, without which the beauty of the handsomest woman alive is beauty incomplete (Collins, 24-25).

Walter describes Marian according to the Victorian criteria of beauty which sees the ideal woman as fair haired, white skinned and beautiful. Unlike this ideal woman type, Marian has a masculine look; she is not a “standard” Victorian woman. Her physical description also gives clues about her personality. Like her physical appearance, her character does not satisfy conventions either. She is strong-minded and determined, shrewd features traditionally attributed to men. As Brooke Cameron points out: “Her head is coded as masculine because of its association with perception, intelligence and agency” (3). When Walter tells her about the mysterious woman in white whom he saw on the way to London a night before, she advises Walter not to tell this to Laura and his uncle Mr. Fairlie:

But I wish you had been a little more resolute about finding out her name. We must really clear up this mystery, in some way. You had better not to speak of it yet to Mr. Fairlie, or to my sister. They are both of them... rather nervous and sensitive; and you would only fidget one and alarm the other to no purpose (29).

While she sees herself strong enough to resolve the mystery about the woman, she regards her sister and uncle as weak and passive. In the opening parts of the novel, Marian is so active that she directs Walter what to do. After she feels that Laura and Walter have fallen in love, she tells him to leave Limmeridge immediately and says: “Crush it!”, “Here, where you first saw her, crush it! Don’t shrink under it like a woman. Tear it out; trample it under foot like a man!” (59). He easily accepts her orders by saying “[t]ell me what apology I can make to Mr. Fairlie for breaking my

engagement, tell me when to go after apology is accepted. I promise implicit obedience to you and to your advice” (61). She is able to make Walter do what she wants although she is a woman. Not only Walter but also other male characters are influenced by her masculine behavior. For example, her uncle, Mr. Fairlie receives a letter which asks him when Laura will be in Limeridge again. He sees Marian’s name and reads it without complaining: “The moment I heard Miss Halcombe’s name I gave up. It is a habit of mine always to give up to Miss Halcombe. I find, by experience, that it saves noise. I gave up on this occasion. Dear Marian!” (305). The other male character is Sir Percival Glyde to whom Marian shows her masculine side. After marrying Laura, Glyde locks her up in the bedroom and Marian, who always protects her sister, goes to Glyde and threatens him: “Take YOU care how you treat your wife, and how threaten ME. There are laws in England to protect women from cruelty and outrage. If you hurt a hair of Laura’s head, if you dare to interfere with my freedom, come what may, to those laws I will appeal” (269). She is so courageous that she can even threaten a man.

Before Laura’s marriage with Sir Percival Glyde, Marian reveals her views of men:

No man under heaven deserves these sacrifices from us women. Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace- they drag us away from our parent’s love and our sister’s friendship- they take us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel. And what does the best of them give us in return?” (159).

While Victorian women secure themselves by marrying, Marian does not conform to marriage. She does not fit into the Victorian ideal of femininity. She chooses to be spinster instead. She sees men as enemies. She views marriage as an economic bargain through which women are commodities to be sold out. We learn that she does not dealt with lots of men. She says “we produced no such convenience in the house as a flirtable, danceable, small-talkable creature of the male sex” (25). Even though she does not know many men except for her uncle, her hatred for men foreshadows what she will experience with male characters later on.

As a woman, she despises her sex and speaks out: “How can you expect four women to dine together alone every day, and not quarrel? We are such fools; we can’t entertain each other at table. You see I don’t think much of my own sex, Mr. Hartright” (26)

and goes on: "I am as inaccurate as women usually are, women can't draw- their minds are too flighty, and their eyes are too inattentive" (27). She sees women as inferior creatures who are passive and obedient, but her character and her words often contradict. Mr. Gilmore who is a solicitor and an old friend of Fairlie family speaks of Marian: "Resolute, clear- minded Miss Halcombe was the very last person in the world whom I should have expected to find shrinking from the expression of an opinion of her own" (117). Walter points out how smart she is by saying "Miss Halcombe, whose quick eye nothing escaped" (38). Even in the eyes of the male characters, she is not a typical Victorian woman. While she is considered as a "resolute, clear minded" women by men, and she dogmatizes about women in general, she fails to define herself while she is comparing Laura to herself.

Except that we are both orphans, we are in every respect as unlike each other as possible. My father was a poor man and Miss Fairlie's father was a rich man. I have got nothing, and she has a fortune. I am dark and ugly, and she is fair and pretty. Everybody thinks me crabbed and odd (with perfect justice); and everybody thinks her sweet-tempered and charming (with more justice still). In short, she is an angel; and I am----- Try some of that marmalade, Mr. Hartright, and finish the sentence, in the name of female propriety, for yourself (26).

She is aware of the fact that Laura meets the Victorian expectation of femininity and defines her as an angel; but considering herself as poor and ugly, she knows that she is inferior to Laura, even so she cannot find a word to define herself and leaves herself open to comment. It could be argued that, she is aware that she is not a conventional Victorian female. She is not an "angel" because of her free spirit; she cannot be confined. On the other hand, she cannot be the "monster" because she never harms anybody throughout the story. Instead of being either an angel or a monster, she chooses to be a "New Woman" who pushes back the Victorian norms and struggles for freedom and individuality. Collins reflects the new type of woman with Marian Halcombe who emerges at the end of the nineteenth century.

Unlike Marian Halcombe, her half-sister Laura Fairlie symbolizes the ideal Victorian woman: "angel in the house." Hartright describes her as "[a] fair, delicate girl, in a pretty light dress, trifling with the leaves of a sketch-book, while she looks up from it with truthful, innocent blue eyes" (40) or "light, youthful figure... with a little straw

hat of the natural colour, plainly and sparingly tripped with ribbon to match the gown, covers her head, and throws its soft pearly shadow over the upper part of her face. Her hair is so faint and a pale brown” (42). The words “light,” “fair,” “dark,” “moustache” and “pretty” are used on purpose to show the standard gender perception of the Victorian Period. Through these words, the difference between masculinity and femininity is implied. Eleanor Salotto points out that although the story is told by many narrators, Laura never tells the story (26). Although she is the protagonist of the novel, she is not one of the narrators. This shows that Laura is already silenced even before she is labelled as mad. She is passive, childish, fragile and in the end a victim. She also embodies the Victorian ideal woman in terms of marriage. Before her father Mr. Fairlie died, he advises her to marry Sir Percival Glyde; even Glyde gives her a choice to be released from the marriage. She does not want to break her promise even though he is dead, therefore “it is an engagement of honor, not of love” (60). She is so passive that “she herself neither welcomed it nor shrank from it- she was content to make it (60). Marriage is an indispensable destiny for a passive, submissive Victorian woman. Lisa Surridge points out that she never becomes an independent woman but “moves from the guardianship of Frederick Fairlie to the coverture of Sir Percival Glyde... without an adequate marriage settlement” (112). Even if she is married, she is still under the control of a man, marriage does not help her to become an independent woman. Although these two sisters, Laura and Marian, have different characters, they both suffer from patriarchy; while Marian tries to resist the norms, Laura as an “angel” meets the Victorian expectations of femininity.

Collins succeeds in creating a sensation even in the first few pages of the novel. While going to London, Walter Hartright comes across a woman at night who “...stood the figure of a solitary Woman, dressed from head to foot in white garments” (14). He is shocked when she touches him suddenly and wonders “what sort of a woman she was, and how she came to be out alone in the high road an hour after midnight” (15). This clearly shows women in the Victorian England were expected to be the angel, and stay, in the house. As Walter describes her, “there was nothing wild, nothing immodest in her manner; it was quiet and self-controlled, a little melancholy and a little touched by suspicion; not exactly the manner of a lady, and at the same time, not the manner of a woman in the humblest rank of life” (15). She asks Walter how she can go to London and whether she can find a carriage or not and says she has a friend in London who

waits for her. She also asks Walter whether he is “a man of rank” (18). When the answer is negative, she is relieved and says “Thank God! I may trust him” (18). The first question which comes to Walter’s mind is of course “I am afraid the baronet, whose name you are unwilling to mention to me, has done you some grievous wrong? Is the cause of your being out here at this strange time of night?” (18). She wants him not to ask anything because she has been “cruelly used and cruelly wronged” (page number?). This dialogue is sufficient to create a sense of suspense even in the beginning of the novel. Who is this woman in white and why does she think that she should not trust any man of rank or a baronet? Although it is revealed that “she has escaped from an asylum” (21) The moment he hears the word “asylum”, he begins to question the validity of the dichotomy of sanity and insanity as he finds her a sane person:

But the idea of absolute insanity which we all associate with the very name of an Asylum, had, I can honestly declare, never occurred to me, in connection with her. I had seen nothing, in her language or her actions, to justify it at the time; and even with the new light thrown on her by the words which the stranger had addressed to the policeman, I could see nothing to justify it now (Collins, 22).

Walter asks some questions in shock: “What had I done? Assisted the victim of the most horrible of all false imprisonments to escape; or cast loose on the wide my duty, and every man’s duty, mercifully to control?” (22). Thus far, these are just the starting points of all the sensation of the novel are questions are raised for the reader as by whom was she confined to the asylum? and was she really insane? Answers to these questions form the basis of this thesis, which argues that asylums and madness/insanity were only a means of imprisonment for non-conformist women in the Victorian society.

At the beginning of the novel, the scene when Walter meets Anne Catherick, the woman in white, represents the gender roles of the Victorian period. Wandering the streets late at night is not strange for men, however if a woman wanders, it becomes strange. Walter describes the woman in white as “the figure of a solitary Woman” (Collins, 18). By using the capital w, Collins emphasizes that she was a woman not a man in order to draw reader’s attention. In this scene, it is clearly seen that gender roles are switched. As a woman, Anne Catherick challenges the ideal feminine role by

escaping from the asylum and wandering the streets alone. This escape represents female protest against the male authority. The fact that Walter was shocked when he saw Anne wandering alone late at night, was normal feeling for a Victorian man but later his feelings changed and wanted to help her without questioning why she was there. Instead of calling a police, he helped her, this is interpreted by some scholars as a feminine attitude. According to Miller, it is “gender slippage,” since his action is not manly (111). Next time, he met Anne in a churchyard and she asks Walter: “You don’t think I ought to be back in the asylum, do you?” and he answers: “Certainly not, I am glad you escaped from it; I am glad I helped you” (Collins, 83). It can be argued that even though Walter reflects the typical Victorian reaction by being shocked when he sees Anne wandering alone at the beginning, later on, he challenges Victorian masculinity by helping the woman who escapes from an asylum. His name is ironic for a man in within patriarchal society, he has a “hart” which in the “right” place so he could help Anne ignoring the strict Victorian norms. Instead of obeying the Victorian norms, he listens his “hart” which sounds like the word ‘heart’ and behaves in such a way what is “right” to him.

Walter Hartright makes reader think about madness. After revealing that Anne is an escapee, he questions how she could be mad. “The idea of absolute insanity which we all associate with the very name of an Asylum, had, I can honestly declare, never occurred to me, in connection with her. I had seen nothing, in her language or her actions” (22). Anne Catherick was all in white dress and calm when he saw her on the road to London, she was not wild or aggressive. It is because Walter was shocked when the police told him that she escaped from the asylum. How could she be a mad woman? While witches were considered as mad in the Middle Ages, wild or animalistic women were depicted as mad until the middle of the nineteenth century. Charlotte Bronte’s Bertha Mason is one of the most famous examples of mad woman in that period. Her madness was clearly seen in her physical and mental abilities, she was wild, uncontrollable and aggressive so she was locked in the attic by her husband. She was described as being “at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its face and head (Bronte, 380). Her inhuman behaviors and wildness

represents the concept of Victorian madness. In short, being a conventional mad woman required to be wild and animalistic at that period. However, this concept of madness changed in the middle of the century and the “mad woman in the attic” was out of the attic. The description of madwoman has changed and instead of being wild and deviant, she became domestic and passive madwoman. Unlike Bertha Mason’s wildness, Walter Hartright describes Anne as “There was nothing wild, nothing immodest in her manner: it was quiet and self-controlled” (Collins, 15). Lyn Pykett argues that Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie are not conventional mad women since “the classic nineteenth century madwoman is the deviant, energetic woman who defies familial and social control. However, in the *Woman in White*, it is the passive, controlled, domestic women, Anne and Laura” (38). This first scene represents how the perception of Victorian madness has been changed towards the middle of the century. Even though Anne Catherick had no signs of madness, she was put in an asylum; it can be argued that male authority began to control the perception of madness and use madness as means of silencing and confining woman when she is threat to patriarchy.

According to the Victorians, woman becomes dangerous and is called mad when she has patriarchal knowledge or a secret. In the later parts of the novel, it is revealed that Anne was put in an asylum since she had the knowledge of Sir Percival’s illegitimacy. When she wanted to reveal his immorality, this was resulted in her confinement and she was silenced. D. A. Miller argues that when the male characters of *The Woman in White* are threatened by females, they spend the entirety of the novel trying to confine the uncontrolled female characters” (112). Percival uses asylum as a means of securing himself. Although Anne’s mother knows the secret, he does not shut her up because he has blackmailed her for keeping his secret. Since Anne’s father is a parish clerk, Mrs. Catherick gives the key of the church to Sir Percival in which his family documents have been kept and Percival forges his family documents and in return she gets a great deal of money and some jewelries. She helps his forgery without her husband’s knowledge. When she shares this secret with Anne, she does not want to keep it secret. That is why she is shut up by Percival. After realizing what she has done, Mrs. Catherick shows her regret by saying: “I came here a wronged woman- I came here robbed of my character and determined to claim it back” (440). Also, Mrs.

Clements, a friend of Cathericks, explains the reason for shutting up Anne in the asylum:

I only know what Anne herself told me Sir. The poor thing used to ramble and wander about it sadly. She said her mother had got some secret of Sir Percival's to keep, and had let it out to her long after I left Hampshire- and when Sir Percival found she knew it, he shut her up (429).

To silence Anne and to keep his reputation clean, Sir Percival shuts her up. Miller points out that “[m]ale security in *The Woman in White* seems always to depend on female claustration” (119). This best indicates a Victorian norm based on which women are labeled as mad and therefore should be silenced when they revolt against men. For Sir Percival, it is easy to confine Anne in an asylum since she is not obedient and instead protests against him.

Mrs. Catherick embodies the Victorian ideal of femininity too. Before meeting Mrs. Catherick, Mrs. Clements describe her as “a heartless woman, with a terrible will of her own- fond of foolish admiration and fine clothes, and not caring to show so much as decent outward respect to Catherick” (Collins 421). She has had an affair with Mr. Philip Fairlie. She gets pregnant and gives birth to Anne. According to Mrs. Clement, she has married to Mr. Catherick to save her name since she has an illegitimate child. “Mrs. Catherick had, on the clearest evidence, compromised her reputation, while a single woman, with some person unknown and had married to save her character” (426). She does not want to have a child, therefore the relationship between her daughter and herself is not like that of a mother and daughter. Her lack of a sense of motherhood is evident in her words: “I do not profess to have been at all over-fond of my late daughter. She was a worry to me from the first to last” (491). Even when she is told that her daughter is dead, she does not care which indicates she has no sense of motherhood:

“I've another motive in coming here, your daughter's death”

“What did she die of?”

“Of disease of the heart”

“Yes. Go on.” (439)

She lacks maternal feelings so much that when she hears the news of her daughter's death, she does not feel any sorrow. She is also so materialistic that she abuses her husband and gives the key to Sir Percival to forge the documents in return for money.

When her husband finds expensive rings and gold necklaces and later sees her wife talking to Sir Percival privately, he suspects her and informs Mrs. Clements' husband. Her husband describes Mrs. Catherick: "there have been wicked women before her time who have used honest men who loved them as a means of saving their characters, and I'm sorely afraid this Mrs. Catherick is as wicked as the worst of them" (423). After seeing her wife talking to Sir Percival secretly in the church late at night, Mr. Catherick deserts his wife to an unknown place. Her only aim is to be respected. In the Victorian period, a woman can receive respect if she is wealthy. Therefore, it can be said that this dominant Victorian mentality forces her to conspire with Sir Percival. In order to maintain her respectability, she victimizes her daughter and accepts the idea of shutting her up in an asylum by Sir Percival. Being selfish and opportunistic, she admits that "I was born with the tastes of a lady, and gratified them- in other words, he admired me, and he made me presents" (480). Although Mrs. Catherick challenges her feminine role by having an illegitimate child or abusing her husband, she is not punished by being silenced or confined. It is because she served for male authority, she conformed to male power. In order to cover her mistakes, she helps Sir Percival to keep his illegitimacy secret. As a woman and mother, she accepts to put her daughter, Anne, in an asylum. It can be argued that even though a woman challenges her gender role, she is not punished or imprisoned as long as she is not a threat to patriarchy. She is so fond of luxury that even when Sir Percival wants Anne to be put in an asylum, she still is thinking about her own respectability by putting her daughter in a private asylum: "I have my character to preserve in the town, and I will submit to nothing but a Private Establishment, of the sort which my genteel neighbors would choose for afflicted relatives of their own." (487). It could be argued that through Mrs. Catherick, Collins is criticizing the Victorian sense of respectability. He seems to provide a critique of the fact that only by conforming to Victorian norms and being submissive, did women get respect in the society. Respectability could be gained with, and is therefore synonymous with, money and title. For example; Mrs. Catherick tells Walter Hartright how the clergyman bows her, how people organize a circus in the name of her and how she has a special place to sit in the church. These are all signs that she interprets as a social respect. She enacts the Victorian feminine role perfectly.

Sir Percival Glyde symbolizes Victorian patriarchy and represents the male control over females. When he sees the woman as a threat, he easily silences her in an asylum.

Here, Collins also tries to show asylums as a corrupt institution. Even Sir Percival himself admits that Anne is sane: “just sane enough to ruin me when she is at large” (332). Therefore, madness in the context of the novel and Victorian age is identified with disobedience and nonconformism. A slightest discord with male power would be enough for a woman to be called mad. Therefore, it could be said that madness is feminized in that period. Mr. Frederick Fairlie too manifests this gender difference in terms of madness. He challenges his gender role both physically and mentally. When Walter first sees him in Limmeridge, he describes Mr. Fairlie as effeminate: he wears “womanish bronze- leather slippers” (41). Besides his “womanish” look, he is also more hysteric than any other women characters. He is oversensitive to noise: “In the wretched state of my nerves, movement of any kind is exquisitely painful to me” (32?). Or “[i]n the wretched state of my nerves, loud sound of any kind is indescribable torture to me” (32). Even at the beginning of the novel, hysteria is identified with women as a “female malady.” Marian tells Hartright that Laura “is in her own room, nursing that essentially feminine malady, a slight headache” (25). Yet, as Mr. Fairlie is a man, he is not still labeled as hysteric as the notion is widely attached to women.

The other female character who is put in an asylum by Sir Percival is Laura Fairlie. After her half- sister, Anne Catherick, escapes from the asylum, she writes a letter to Laura to implicitly warn her not to marry Sir Percival. Before the marriage is established, Sir Percival wants to make a marriage contract between Laura and him. Since Laura is an heir to Mr. Fairlie who has a great deal of wealth, Sir Percival wants to make sure who will possess the inheritance after Laura dies. This is a very unusual insensitive question at a marriage for a husband! Gilmore notices Sir Percival’s real intention: “he [Sir Percival] exposes himself to the base imputation of marrying Miss Fairlie entirely from mercenary motives” (139). According to Mr. Gilmore, Sir Percival has some advantages of marrying Laura:

Sir Percival’s prospects in marrying Miss Fairlie (so far as his wife’s expectations from real property were concerned) promised him these two advantages, on Mr. Fairlie’s death: First; the use of three thousand a year (by his wife’s permission, while she lived, and in his own right, on her death, if he survived her); and secondly, the inheritance of Limmeridge for his son, if he had one (129).

It means that “the whole sum, if she left no children, was to slip into the pockets of her husband” (132). In short, Sir Percival wants to marry Laura for her inheritance but since she has not completed her twenty first, she cannot oppose this settlement. The only male relative who is supposed to defend her rights is her uncle, Mr. Fairlie but he is so irrelevant to the subject that when Gilmore talks about what Sir Percival offers about sharing Laura’s inheritance, he selfishly shows his ignorance by saying:

Was it likely that a young woman of twenty- one would die before a man of forty-five and die without children? On the other hand, in such a miserable world as this, was it possible to over-estimate the value of peace and quietness? If those two heavenly blessings were offered in exchange for such an earthly trifle as a remote chance of twenty thousand pounds, was it not a fair bargain? Surely, yes; then why not make it? (132).

After Mr. Fairlie accepts the terms of the marriage settlement, Laura and Sir Percival marry; she becomes Laura Glyde and begins to live in Blackwater Park. One day, Anne Catherick comes to Blackwater Park and she informs Laura Glyde about her husband’s secret; his forgery about his family documents and Laura learns that he is an illegitimate child. From now on, Laura becomes the second threat as a woman for Sir Percival. He wants to silence Laura too If Anne is not found and Laura reveals his secret, his reputation will be still in danger. Therefore, his only solution is to silence these women. However, they make a plan about changing Laura’s identity with Anne since Laura and Anne are identical. In her article “Sensational Sisters: Willkie Collins’ The Woman in White,” May argues that the resemblance between Anne and Laura “allows for the potential subversion of class difference, as the confounding of their identities leads Anne to be elevated to the level of a noblewoman and Laura to be reduced to that of the working class” (87). This shows that how male authority uses even this resemblance for his own sake and switch the identities of these two women. At this point, Laura’s surname sounds ironic, “fair” “lie”. Although she is fair and innocent, she is victimized by male power and obliged to live with a false identity, which is a “lie”. It can be argued that she is both “fair” and “lie”. His friend, Count Fosco summarizes Sir Percival’s situation by saying:

Large sums of money, due at a certain time, were wanted by Percival... and the one source to look to for supplying them was the fortune of his wife, of which not one farthing was at his disposal until her death... I

knew... Anne Catherick, was hides in the neighborhood, that she was in communication with Lady Glyde and that the disclosure of a secret, which would be the certain ruin of Percival, might be the result. He had told me himself that he was a lost man, unless his wife was silenced, and unless Anne Catherick was found. (601)

We understand from Fosco's statement that Sir Percival marries Laura because he has a great deal debt and he needs the money till a certain time. After Anne tells his secret to Lady Glyde, he immediately wants to silence his wife. Also, before changing Laura's identity with Anne, Sir Percival forces Laura to sign some papers to get her inheritance without her knowledge. It is the first time from the beginning of the novel that Laura, the submissive, obedient, quiet and angelic woman, shows some sign of resistance. When Sir Percival gives the paper to sign to Laura, she refuses to sign and says:

"I ought surely to know what I am signing, Sir Percival, before I write my name?"

"Nonsense! What have women to do with business? I tell you again, you can't understand it."

"At any rate, let me try to understand it. Whenever Mr. Gilmore had any business for me to do, he always explained it first, and I always understood him."

She still had the pen in her hand, but she made no approach to signing her name with it.

"If my signature pledges me to anything," she said, "surely I have some claim to know what that pledge is?" (218).

This passage shows that she challenges her angelic femininity for the first time in the course of the novel as she resists the male power and refuses to follow her husband's demands. Having a pen in her hand is highly symbolic standing for power for Laura. Thus far, Laura's story is passively written by others, for the first time, she has power by holding a pen. Also, pen from Freudian psychoanalysis is a phallic symbol with ink in it equaling semen. It is because authorship has always been associated with men. In other words, pen symbolizes power, traditionally associated with masculinity, which is put on a white paper, symbolizing purity/virginity. But now, this time this conventional phallic symbol is in the hand of a woman, turning the symbol against

itself. When she signs, she can change everything at her will, but she does not. The pen also symbolizes Sir Percival's secret which is now in Laura's hands and can at any time be revealed by her, hence, she is in control as an active agent as opposed to the passive idealized image of the Victorian woman.

Marian spies while Sir Percival makes a plan with Count Fosco in order to silence Laura and Anne; Marian understands their cruel thoughts but cannot prevent them because she gets ill on that night she spies them. Sir Percival learns that Anne is dead because of a serious heart disease caused by "long... distress of mind" (360). He conspires with Count Fosco and informs everybody that Laura is dead not Anne. He buries Anne under the name of Lady Glyde because he wants to put Laura in an asylum under the name of Anne Catherick who is an escapee. While Anne is physically dead, Laura is buried alive in an asylum. Asylum as representing the institution of treating mental illnesses becomes a symbol for grave for nonconformists including especially women. . Although we have learned that Anne has escaped from the asylum, the details of her confinement in an asylum are not revealed to us; we never know where she is confined or how long she has stayed there. However, Laura's confinement is detailed. We know how long she has stayed and what treatment she gets and what the atmosphere of the asylums is. Walter Hartright informs the reader that she has stayed eighty-one days in the asylum or in his words "under restraint" (429). He describes the asylum: "She came to herself suddenly in a strange place, surrounded by women who were all unknown to her. This was the Asylum" (429). Miller argues that Collins does not portray what is going on inside of the asylum and calls it "very black 'black box'" (113). Laura notices that asylum causes loss of memory and silences women: "They have tried to make me forget everything" (415). Laura tries to explain that she is not Anne, although she is registered as Anne. But the nurses show the name written in her clothes by saying:

The nurse, on the first night in the Asylum, had shown her the marks on each article of her underclothing as it was taken off, and had said, not at all irritably or unkindly, "Look at your own name on your own clothes, and don't worry us all any more about being Lady Glyde. She's dead and buried; you're alive and hearty. Do look at your clothes now! There it is, in good marking ink; and there you will find it on all your old things, which we have kept in the house- Anne Catherick, as plain as print." (436).

Pen is also used as a phallic symbol of masculine power to silence Laura. Her social identity has now been changed with “good marking ink.” She struggles for her own identity but she fails to make the nurses believe. Walter notes how Laura’s psychology has been damaged in the asylum, described as “the most horrible of all false imprisonments” (22):

From the twenty-seventh of July until the fifteenth of October (the day of her rescue) she had been under restraint, her identity with Anne Catherick systematically asserted, and her sanity, from first to last, practically denied. Faculties less delicately balanced, constitutions less tenderly organized, must have suffered under such an ordeal as this. No man could have gone through it and come out of it changed. (429)

Walter asserts that it is impossible for anyone who is falsely put in an asylum to come out without changing mentally. He means that even though Laura is enough sane when she is put in the asylum, she has been mentally depressed when she leaves there. Like Walter, Marian sees the changes in her sister and realizes, “her sister’s intellects . . . were shaken already by the horror of the situation to which she had been consigned” (423) and “she abstained from pressing her with any inquiries relating to events in the Asylum- her mind being but too evidently unfit to bear the trial of reverting to them” (429).

Therefore, the novel puts an emphasis on confinement of women who are regarded as a threat to male power in the Victorian society. Also, it shows how asylums are corrupted and function as a means of suppression and marginalization of nonconformists especially women. It is stressed even in the beginning of the novel that if a woman is called mad, she should be under male control. For example, it was argued that when Walter sees the woman in white in the beginning and learns that she has escaped from the asylum, he still cannot identify any sign of madness in her. Although she is put in an asylum as a “madwoman” by Sir Percival, she is so aware of her emotional self-control, a very good indication of thinking rationally, that her obedience to authority and submissive look make the asylum officers believe that she has no intention of escaping there. As she puts it, “it was easy to escape, or I should not have got away. They never suspected me as they suspected the others. I was so quiet, and so obedient, and so easily frightened” (100). She plays her “madwoman” role so well that nobody suspects and she can escape easily. Sir Percival describes Anne as “the

best behaved patient they had- and, like fools, they trusted her” (331). Her self-control and ability to deceive the asylum officers are all signs of her sanity, rationality, and logical thinking. Therefore, the novel raises serious questions into the concept of madness in the 19th century. She never accepts other’s (such as Walter’s) control over herself. Walter declares that “it was wrong to send such a letter, it was wrong to frighten Miss Fairlie” (103) and warns her not to do so but her response to this warning shows her resolute, independent thinking agency. Although in the beginning, Walter describes her “poor creature” that is falsely confined by a man, or tells her “I am glad you escaped from it; I am glad I helped you” (83), for the first time he thinks that it is a necessity to confine her because she cannot be controlled. He begins to justify her confinement:

Seeing the urgent necessity of quieting her at any hazard and by any means, I appealed to the only anxiety that she appeared to feel, in connection with me and my opinion of her- the anxiety to convince me of her fitness to me mistress of her own actions. “Try to compose yourself, or you will make me alter my opinion of you. Don’t let me think that the person who put you in the Asylum might have had some excuse.” (105).

Although in the beginning Walter thinks that he “assisted the victim of the most horrible of all imprisonments to escape”, his thoughts about her change when he sees that she is out of control and justifies her confinement by Sir Percival.

Consequently, throughout this chapter it was discussed that madness is a means of women’s confinement in the Victorian period as they go against the already set-up feminine roles and stereotypes, as best manifest and criticized in the novel. Since madness was seen as a “female disease,” the patriarchal society took it into its advantage to silence women such as Laura Fairlie as deny them to their freedom. It was also argued that the novel portrays how female identity is shaped by men and how women’s fates are under male control in such society. Lastly, it can be said that madness is not a female disease; rather it has been mainly misused to marginalize women who would pose a threat to the foundations of patriarchal norms.

3. CHAPTER II

3.1 Lady Audley's Secret

“As every woman reader must have sensed, Lady Audley's real secret is that she is sane and moreover, representative” (Showalter, 167).

Lady Audley's Secret written by Mary Elizabeth Braddon was published in 1862. It was one of the best sensation novels of the Victorian period. The story is told by a third person omniscient narrator. The novel tells the story of the crimes of a woman who tries to gain respect and social as well as economic freedom as a woman by climbing the social ladder through marriage. Abandoned by her husband, George Talboys, Helen Talboys leaves her son with her old father and creates a new identity under the name of Lucy Graham. She sends an obituary which shows that Helen Talboys is dead. With her new identity, she begins to work as a governess. Sir Michael Audley, a wealthy man, falls in love with and proposes her. she accepts and becomes lady Audley. Meanwhile, George Talboys comes back to England and learns that her wife is dead. He is also a friend of Robert Audley, nephew of Sir Michael. Robert invites his friend to Audley Court where Sir Michael and Lady Audley live. They accept the invitation and arrive at Audley Court. After a while, George Talboys disappears. Lady Audley attempts to kill him to keep her past as secret. Robert has suspicions about disappearance of his friend and thinks that her aunt, Lady Audley, is responsible for it. He decides to reveal the secret but this time Lady Audley tries to kill Robert by setting fire to his inn. Towards the end of the novel, Robert is able to reveal Lady Audley's real identity as a bigamist, murderer and a mother who abandons her child. In the end she claims that she is mad and her crimes are all results of her madness. She is confined to an asylum because of her crimes where she dies at the end but also because of not fitting into the Victorian ideal of femininity.

This chapter will basically focus on madness and female confinement in the novel. It will argue that Lady Audley is not mad, but uses madness as a means of female empowerment as well as a veil to cover her crimes to escape punishment. Yet, however

madness is turned against her at the end of the novel. At first, Lady Audley represents the Victorian ideal of femininity, the “angel in the house.” The narrator describes her angelic beauty: “The innocence and candour of an infant beamed in Lady Audley’s fair face, and shone out of her large and liquid blue eyes. The rosy lips, the delicate nose, the profusion of fair ringlets, all contributed to preserve to her beauty the character of extreme youth and freshness” (Braddon 61). Lady Audley uses her beauty as a tool for getting what she wants. Since she is told how her feminine look is amazing, she learns to change this into her advantage and tells “I was told I was pretty- beautiful- lovely- bewitching... by and by I listened to them greedily, and began to think that in spite of the secret of my life I might be more successful in the world’s great lottery than my companions...I concluded that if I was indeed prettier than my schoolfellows, I ought to marry better than any of them” (231). Even in her early ages, she is aware of her beauty and she thinks that she can use it to marry someone wealthy and get power. Braddon uses such a beautiful woman character like Lady Audley to challenge the concept of “angel” and “monster”. Braddon rejects the idea that a woman can be either an angel or a monster by creating Lady Audley who looks like an angel but acts like a monster. She argues that a woman can be both angel and monster at the same time. Braddon also makes reader surprised by showing a fair haired villain since fair hair and being blonde are associated with angel. Oliphant states: “[Braddon] is the inventor of the fair haired demon of modern fiction. Wicked women used to be brunettes long ago, now they are the daintiest, softest and prettiest of blonde creatures; and this change has been wrought by Lady Audley” (155). Lady Audley represents the type of woman who can be monstrous even though she is blonde which challenges the idea of Victorian ideal femininity. Ellen Tremper expresses how Lady Audley’s look and actions challenge the conventional villains by stating as follows:

Lady Audley is the epitome of blond beauty, but being blond...does not mean being submissive; it certainly doesn’t prevent Lady Audley from conceiving an outrageous plan to achieve economic security. Braddon, following Bronte, continued the image- demolition of pliant and placid fair girl revered in folk and fairy tale and cherished in this period of nationalism. The blonde could be just as rapacious, aggressive and sinister as the dark anti-heroine (84).

Braddon also objects to stereotypical Victorian feminine ideal by creating a fair haired villain. In short, she criticizes the Victorian gender roles through Lady Audley.

According to Showalter, “The brilliance of *Lady Audley’s Secret* is that Braddon makes her would-be murderess the fragile blond angel of domestic realism... the ‘pretty little girl’ whose indoctrination in the female role has taught her secrecy and deceitfulness, almost as secondary sex characteristics. She is particularly dangerous because she looks so innocent” (165). Since beauty is associated with innocence, Sir Michael “had fallen ill of the terrible fever called love” (Braddon 5) and never questions whether she is good or evil because her charm deceives him. However, her past is not as pure as her angelic appearances. Although we first see her as Lucy Graham who works as a governess to make money, we also learn that her first name is Helen Talboys who is married to George Talboys. She is a daughter of a poor family and marries to George since he is a wealthy man. After they get married, George’s family cuts his salary since he has married to a poor woman. George describes his situation as:

No sooner however did my father hear that I had married a penniless little girl, the daughter of a tipsy old half-pay lieutenant, then he wrote me a furious letter, telling me he would never again hold any communication with me, and that my yearly allowance would stop from my wedding day (26).

He abandons his wife and son because he cannot financially support his family. He goes Australia to work on gold fields. Helen’s lower social class makes her a deserted woman by her husband. The quotation also shows that a person’s social class decides her position in society. George leaves nothing behind him except for a letter which reads: “I flew into a rage... then ran out of the house, declaring that I would never enter it again” (28). After being abandoned by her husband, Helen gets tired of her life which is full of “poverty, trials, vexations, humiliations and deprivations” (15). She leaves her son and wants to begin a new life in order to get rid of the poverty. In doing so, she is challenging an important Victorian ideal of womanhood: maternity. Her financial independence surpasses her motherhood and maternal duties. This is evident when she says: “His father was rich; his sister was living in luxury and respectability; and I, his wife, and mother of his son, was a slave allied for ever to beggary and obscurity... I did not love the child; for he had been left a burden upon my hand” (353).

She does not have any sense of motherhood because the main reason she married to George was to gain wealth. She sees marriage as a way of surviving both socially and economically in the society. This depicts the conditions of women in the 19th century as they were financially dependent on their fathers or husbands. As she puts it, “I had learnt that which in some indefinite manner or other every school-girl learns sooner or later- I learned that my ultimate fate in life depended upon my marriage, and I concluded that if I was indeed prettier than my schoolfellows, I ought to marry better than any one of them” (232). However, her own inherited poverty becomes a burden as she climbs the social ladder because George’s family does not want their son to marry a poor woman and therefore they cut his yearly allowance. Although she tries to escape poverty through marriage, she becomes her own victim and is deserted by her husband. Although she seems to be a fallen woman after being abandoned by her husband, she does not give up. She is so determined to take a place in the society that she changes her identity to Lucy Graham. Although her appearance is sweet and pure, her heart is full of ambition for money and wealth. Braddon tries to show us that while a woman might look angelic, her inner side can be monstrous. Her dual nature is represented in her portrait hung on the wall. It emphasizes that she has double sides which means that her beauty and her ambitious spirit contradict. As the narrator is describing the portrait:

No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to her blonde complexion, and a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes. No one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait. It was so like, and yet so unlike. It was as if you had burned the strange- colored fires before my lady’s face, and by their influence brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before... had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend. Her crimson dress, exaggerated like all the rest in this strange picture, hung about her in folds that looked like flames, her fair head peeping out of the lurid mass of color, as if out of a raging furnace. Indeed, the crimson dress, sunshine on the face, the red gold gleaming in the yellow hair, the ripe scarlet of the pouting lips, the glowing colors of each accessory of the minutely painted

background, all combined to render the first effect of the painting by no means an agreeable one (98).

Her portrait gives clues about her character. In fact, the description of this portrait is a foreshadowing because although she seems to be an ideal Victorian image that is beautiful, blonde and angelic, there is an ambitious and monstrous woman inside her. The terms, “sinister”, “wicked”, “fiend”, “raging” foreshadows her later actions. Braddon reflects this abandonment in a way that we, as a reader, can sympathize with her and think that she does so because she needs money. While she is defending herself and her actions, she explains why money is so important for her: “I felt the bitterness of poverty, and ran the risk of growing up an ignorant creature among coarse rustic children, because my father was poor” (230). Even though her maternity might be questioned, we can understand her as an abandoned woman. However, when Sir Michael Audley proposes her, her double nature reveals. This is the second time that she tries to get rid of poverty through marriage. She tells her husband, Sir Michael Audley that “when you married me you elevated me to a position that George Talboys could never have given me” (351). Jennifer Hedgecock argues that “the femme fatale’s ambition is not to become equal to men, or to campaign in favor of radical views, but simply to mobilize her status imperceptibly within the higher ranks of the social classes” (113). For Hedgecock, Lady Audley does not commit crimes to be independent woman by getting rid of the Victorian strict norms; she does so because she wants to hold power in her hands by getting a social status. Unlike Hedgecock, Pamela Gilbert does not agree with the idea that Lady Audley commits crimes to get a well position in the society. She says: “The woman who really does evil in *Lady Audley’s Secret*- Lady Audley- does not do so out of a desire for leadership, but out of a desire to avoid the pain inflicted by an active masculine element and to seek passive comfort in the social and financially secure role of wife” (96). Although she is just a governess, she uses her beauty as a mask to fascinate men like Sir Michael Audley. Marriage allows her to become a lady. She begins to climb the social ladder through marriage until she meets her husband’s nephew, Robert Audley. As soon as Lady Audley learns that her first husband is George’s nephew, she sees George as a threat as her bigamy could be revealed and she would lose everything and become a fallen woman again. She cannot prevent George’s arrival but as soon as he comes to Audley Court, he disappears. From that moment, Robert’s struggle for revealing the truth behind his friend’s mysterious disappearance begins which is one of the key points

making the novel sensation. Throughout the novel, the conflict between Robert and Lady Audley causes the sensation. Robert's desire for revealing all the truths about Lady Audley's past and her desire to keep them as secret make the reader wonder whether everything will be revealed or not by Robert which creates the sensation in the novel. In the later parts of the novel, it is understood that Lady Audley throws George Talboys down a well. She commits a crime otherwise she will be punished and silenced under the Victorian strict social rules. Pushing him down a well represents her struggle against patriarchy. It is like pushing the Victorian norms and she rebels against the standards. The second man who is a threat for her is Robert Audley. He tells Lady Audley that "I believe rather that we may walk unconsciously in an atmosphere of crime, breath none the less freely, I believe that we may look into the smiling face of a murderer, and admire its tranquil beauty" (142). Robert Audley refers to Lady Audley's angelic appearance and monstrous acts and implies that although she is beautiful and charming, she has a face of a murderer. He means that her beauty is like a veil for her crimes.

Robert Audley symbolizes the Victorian patriarchy. Although his friend, George abandons her wife, Robert never finds anything wrong with it, never talks about it, never criticizes George for what he has done to his wife. But he devotes himself to revealing Lady Audley's secret and punishing her. As a man, he opposes the wrongdoings of the woman but not George's. Although Lady Audley looks like a perfect Victorian woman – submissive, obedient and passive – she acts differently from an ideal Victorian woman. As she sees Robert as a threat, she does not give up, and instead goes on her struggle for her own destiny instead of being a passive woman. While her look fits into the Victorian standards, her character rejects the norms. She shows her rebellion to the society through her actions. Her third crime comes out when she wants to remove Robert as a threat by setting fire to the place where Robert stays. Next morning, she sees that he has survived because he did not stay there because it was cold. When she understands that she cannot cope with Robert, this time she accuses him of being mad and tells this to Sir Michael Audley: "My dear, have you ever thought Mr. Audley- a little out of his mind?" (285). Once more, she tries to silence Robert but this time she uses madness. By asserting that Robert is mad, she shifts the suspicion from herself to Robert. However, it does not work; nobody believes that he is mad.

Robert wants her to confess everything if she does not want her identity to be revealed. She uses madness this time for her own sake and asks Robert to “[b]ring Sir Michael! I will confess everything! You have conquered a MADWOMAN!” (345). She uses madness as a veil in order to cover her crimes. Robert asks Sir Michael to come and Lady Audley begins to tell her story from the beginning to the end. For example, she says that she learns her mother is put in an asylum since she is mad. When she is ten years old, she visits her mother in the asylum and finds out that her mother has a hereditary insanity which means that Helen is under the risk of being mad. She also confesses that she changes her name. She asserts that she has done everything because she is mad. After Lady Audley’s confession to her husband, Sir Michael tells nothing and leaves the room and goes abroad immediately.

Robert Audley does not stop, and asks Dr. Mosgrave who is a specialist in psychology to come to Audley Court and diagnose Lady Audley. He listens to her story but he does not think that she is mad. Dr. Mosgrave says:

Because there is no evidence of madness in anything she has done. She ran away from her home, because her home was not a pleasant one, and she left in the hope of finding a better. There is no madness in that. She committed the crime of bigamy, because by that crime she obtained fortune and position. There is no madness there. When she found herself in a desperate position, she did not grow desperate. She employed intelligent means, and she carried out a conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation in its execution. There is no madness in that (236).

Ihsen Hachaichi writes that “Dr. Mosgrave’s comment suggests that Robert Audley has ascribed the label of madness to Lucy because she has deviated from the average norms of institutionalized female behavior. He reveals that Robert’s judgment of Lucy endorses confusion between madness and mental illness” (92). In response to Dr. Mosgrave’s diagnosis, Robert points to “the traits of hereditary insanity” (237). He labels her mad not because he believes that she is really mad but because he wants to eliminate her from the society. By labeling her mad, he wants her to be confined in an asylum as a punishment for being an active woman. Dr. Mosgrave thinks that she has tried to change everything in favor of herself. He implies that she is intelligent by saying she uses “intelligent means.” As a patriarchal man, Robert tries to challenge

even medicine in order to confine the lady. Dr. Mosgrave responds to Robert by saying:

Madness is not necessarily transmitted from mother to daughter. I should be glad to help you, if I could, Mr. Audley, but I do not think there is any proof of insanity in the story you have told me, I do not think any jury in England would accept the plea of insanity in such a case as this. The best thing you can do with this lady is send her back to her husband; if he will have her (237).

Traditionally, hereditary madness was commonly used as means of confining women. Even though Dr. Mosgrave does not diagnose her as mad in the beginning, he points to “latent insanity” (379) which means that she can succumb to madness later in her life if she is exposed to any kind of depression, stress etc. Although she is not mad, she has the stains of madness so she is a potential danger. Unlike his first objective explanation about Lady Audley, he changes his mind and supports the idea that she should be away from the society since she is a threat. This change of attitude towards Lady Audley also shows the corruption of science and medicine in the Victorian period. Lynn Voskuil criticizes Dr. Mosgrave’s diagnose because he changes his idea later and decides that Lady Audley should be put in an asylum. For Vosckuil, this diagnosis is not convincing and “almost failed attempt to restore and reassert male scientific, middle class authority” (634). Even though the doctor does not find any sign of madness in her, he finds her confinement necessary. Robert wants her to put in an asylum “to save our stainless name from degradation and shame” (378). Lady Audley is sent to an asylum in Belgium. Her confinement is not because of her madness but because she is a threat to male power as represented in the novel by Robert. For the sake of Robert’s family name, she is eliminated from the society. This shows that family names, social status and titles are more important than women.

When Robert takes her to Belgium asylum, she realizes that she will be put into there. Lady Audley tells Robert: “You have brought me to my grave, Mr. Audley, you have used your power basely and cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave” (244). She compares the asylum with a grave because she will be silenced there. She is also aware of the fact that she is defeated by the power of patriarchy because she tells Robert that “you have used your power.” In response to Lady Audley, Robert acts as if he has not

done anything wrong, instead he thinks that asylum will help her and she will repent for her crimes:

I have brought you to a place in which you will be kindly treated by people who have no knowledge of your story- no power to taint or to reproach you. You will lead a quiet and peaceful life, my lady; such a life as many a good and holly woman in this Catholic country freely takes upon herself, and happily endures until the end. The solitude of your existence in this place will be no greater than that of a king's daughter, who, flying from the evil of the time, was glad to take shelter in a house as tranquil as this. Surely, it is a small atonement which I ask you to render for your sins, a light penance which I call upon you to perform. Live here and repent; nobody will assail you, nobody will torment you. I only say to you, repent!
(244).

Robert tries to make Lady Audley believe that his intention of confining her in the asylum is not to eliminate her from society but to make her repent. He thinks that it is his responsibility to teach woman how to correct their mistakes. The worst thing is that he uses asylum as a way of repenting for women. By emphasizing the word "repent" he implies that men exist to moralize women. Controlling women and teaching them what is good and bad are all under men's control. He corroborates his idea that women should be under men's control by giving an example from Adam and Eve. He talks about how Eve challenges Adam and how they are expelled from Paradise: "The horrible things have been done by women Eve was created to be Adam's companion and help meet in the Garden of Eden. 'What if this woman's hellish power of dissimulation should be stronger than the truth and crush him?'" (175). He thinks that women are wicked and the cause of the horrible things even from the beginning of the creation. He compares Lady Audley to Eve while comparing Sir Michael Audley to Adam. As Eve was responsible for expelling from Paradise and caused Adam's fall, Lady Audley would have caused Sir Michael's fall unless she is expelled from life and be put in an asylum. According to Robert, women are dangerous and evil when they reject their gender roles and act like a man. However, Pamela K. Gilbert argues that women are dangerous when they are forced to conform to societal norms and states as follows:

For Robert, women are evil when they have masculine ambitions and take on masculine roles; paradoxically, it is precisely because he does not have these characteristics that he finds them hateful. Yet the woman who really does evil in *Lady Audley's Secret* – Lady Audley- do not do so out of a desire for leadership, but out of a desire to avoid the pain inflicted by and active masculine element... Thus, contrary to Robert's perception, Lady Audley's story shows that women are most evil when they conform to social expectations (224).

According to Gilbert social expectations force Lady Audley to commit crimes; she is labeled as mad when she rejects the norms to get her own power by getting rid of male domination. The reason why Lady Audley is labelled mad is not because she has masculine roles but because she opposes her gender role.

Equally significant is that Lady Audley is confined under a different name. She is introduced as Madame Taylor. Before this she has always changed her name at her own will as a matter of survival, to obtain a new life, wealth and status and to escape from poverty but now her identity is changed to bring about her damnation. It shows that even though she tries to create a new identity, her identity is finally shaped and imposed by male power as her ultimate fate is under Robert's hands who represents the male domination. In the end of the novel, Lady Audley dies in the asylum under a false identity and away from her own country.

Even though she confesses that she is confined in an asylum and she herself due to purported madness – as she describes her madness, “the only inheritance I had to expect from my mother” (345) – it could be argued that madness for her functions as self-defense for survival in a corrupted world full of wrongdoings especially against women. In her book, *A Literature of Their Own*, Elaine Showalter states that “[a]s every woman reader must have sensed, Lady Audley's real secret is that she is sane and, moreover representative” (167). She challenges the Victorian norms of femininity and motherhood, fabricated by men, in order to survive. While a typical Victorian woman would obey the social norms and accept and enacts her socially assigned duties, Lady Audley does not accept patriarchal norms. Instead of being passive, obedient and submissive, she chooses to be active and is viewed as a radical woman who seeks for a better future. She is intelligent enough to be aware of the fact that she

lives under the Victorian norms, therefore her first challenge begins with abandoning her own son and changing her identity.

While Lady Audley manipulates madness as a defense to veil her crimes, madness is also used as a means of her confinement. When she is abandoned by her husband, George Talboys, she decides to seek for her future. George escapes from his responsibility of supporting his wife and son by abandoning them. Like George, Sir Michael Audley abandons Lady Audley without saying any word when he learns that her wife is a bigamist and a murderer. Although according to Victorian ideal of masculinity, men are required to be strong and active, George's and Sir Michael's escapes challenge their expected masculine roles. In the novel, although male characters show signs of weakness, according to Victorian ideal of masculinity, they are powerful enough to marginalize women. This indicates that men and women, if not conforming to the norms, are not perceived and treated equally, and their punishment for their non-conformism is totally different. By confronting and rebelling against patriarchy, as opposed to George Talboys who chooses to escape, Laura is stronger than her husband. As long as she realizes that she can resist no more, she resorts to madness. In her article, "Lady Audley's Secret: Sullied Angel in the House" (2015), Parama Basu argues that Lady Audley's madness: "in a sense, is also the strife of a woman of low birth to avoid a life of hardship, neglect and poverty" (7). Moreover, as it could be argued, in addition to poverty, hardship and neglect, Laura uses madness as a defense mechanism when she challenges her gender roles. It is actually the oppressive patriarchy which forces her to leave her son, change her identity and marry for status and wealth. As she tries to free herself from such constraints which are the consequences of patriarchy, she is marginalized and silenced.

The descriptions of the asylum where Laura is put and Audley Court are similar. The novel begins with a description of Audley Court: "a glorious old place...a spot to which Peace seemed to have taken up, setting her soothing hand on every tree and flower" (Braddon 13). The narrator tells how peaceful place it is to live. This turns out to be ironic given what Laura has to go through. In the end of the novel, the asylum is described when Laura is advised, "you will lead a quiet and peaceful life as many a good and holy woman in this Catholic country freely takes upon herself" (396). A significant parallel and association is made between the asylum and Audley Court, emphasized by the word "peaceful." This sadly suggests that no matter sane or insane

a woman be, in a house or in an asylum, in the 19th century England, she is as if confined in a prison, denied to equal rights and freedom. Women are confined first in the house and if they attempt to challenge their socially imposed roles and responsibilities, their second place of confinement is an asylum. Through the use of this free indirect speech technique which creates irony, the novelist implies that based on those traditional norms of femininity, leaving outside a house and asylum (such as for education or work) would disturb the nature of women and bring about their nervous breakdown. In other words, if houses are the only peaceful places for women, the social world outside would be un-peaceful. This should be mended by sending un-peaceful, unruly, disturbed women to asylum in order to regain and restore their lost peace. It is also significant to note that all the professionals who diagnose as mad her are men. This also suggests how science, medicine in this instance, were subjectively dominated by men, and therefore women had almost no voice in it. It also suggests women's fate was all in the hands of men economically, socially even medically.

The moment of Lady Audley's arrival at the asylum is striking. She realizes that she is brought to an asylum and is intelligent enough to understand that it is her end. She compares asylum with a grave. Dr. Mosgrave also agrees by telling Robert:

From the moment in which Lady Audley enters that house" he said, her life, so far as life made up of action and variety, will be finished. Whatever secrets she may have will be secrets forever. Whatever crimes she may have committed she will be able to commit no more. If you were to dig a grave for her in the nearest churchyard and bury her alive in it, you could not more safely shut her from the world and all worldly associations (386).

Her death is announced by Robert Audley as "the death of a certain Madame Taylor, who had expired peacefully at Villebrumeuse, dying after a long illness, which Monsieur Val describes as a *maladie de langueur*" (346). Her "long illness" which is caused by inactivity results in her death. She does not die because of madness but for being kept passive, for being silenced, for being denied to her agency and freedom. Her isolation from "all worldly actions" causes her death.

Although Lady Audley is confined, she still does not lose her determination and tries to keep her agency at least to some degree. She knows that Robert is in charge of her imprisonment. The owner of the asylum, Monsieur Val, describes her rebellion against Robert by saying: "Robert and his charge, when madam rises suddenly, erect and

furious, and dropping her jeweled fingers from before her face, tells him to hold his tongue. 'Leave me alone with the man who has brought me here' she cried, between her set teeth" (383). She thinks that she can still do something and cries to talk to Robert. Her activity even in the asylum shows her determination.

The asylum is described in details when Lady Audley first arrives there. It is described as:

One of the windows was shrouded by a scanty curtain of faded red; and upon this curtain there went and came a dark shadow, the shadow of a woman with fantastic head dress, the shadow of a restless creature, who paced perpetually backward and forward before the window Sir Michael Audley's wicked wife laid her hand suddenly upon Robert's arm, and pointed with the other hand to this curtained window. "I know where you have brought me", she said, "This is a MAD-HOUSE" (379).

In this quote, the asylum is associated with darkness which foreshadows Lady Audley's death. "The shadow of woman" represents Lady Audley's identity as she is put in there under a false name, Madame Taylor. Her physical existence and her real identity have shadows on each other. It also means that her presence is like a shadow, an invisible phantom, a ghost, an already silenced dead person. Also, "restless creature" indicates her non-conformist personality against patriarchy. The mad woman in the window is Lady Audley's mirror in the asylum. Moreover, the term "shrouded" signifies and foreshadows her dead body in a shroud. Also, the term house in "mad-house" carries a significant connotation. It once again associates the idea of the asylum with the house together: both are a grave for women, places where they are confined to die invisibly, very similar to what Virginia Woolf later said of Shakespeare's imaginary sister called Judith in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) that she would go mad, kill herself or spend her last days in confinement in a lonely place.

Marlene Tromp, Pamela Hilbert and Aeron Haynie in their critical essay on Braddon's literary works argue that "[a]lthough Braddon was neither glamorous nor criminal, reviewers assumed that the attractive and unconventional heroines/villains of Braddon's sensation novels were based on the author's own experiences and character" (235). Mary Elizabeth Braddon seems to have been preoccupied with the concept of madness and asylum because of her own experience at the time of writing the novel when she had a love affair with John Maxwell, a publisher in 1861. Maxwell

was married to Mary Ann Crowley and had seven children. After Crowley gave her last child birth, she suffered from puerperal, similar to Lady Audley's mother, for which she was diagnosed as insane and was sent to an asylum. Meanwhile Maxwell announced that he married to Braddon. Crowley's brother who was also a publisher wrote in the newspapers that Maxwell had bigamy by marrying Braddon, because he was already married to his sister, Crowley. After this scandal, Maxwell and Braddon had two children and they could get married legally when Crowley died in an asylum. Therefore, it could be argued that the novel truly expresses the author's life, which could represent the life of many women of her time.

In "Disclosure as 'Cover Up': The Discourse of Madness in *Lady Audley's Secret*," (1993), Jill Matus explains why Lady Audley is seen as a dangerous woman: "what seems primarily to be the matter with Lady Audley is that she threatens to violate class boundaries and exclusions, and to get away with appropriating social power beyond her entitlement" (335). She has pushed the limits of the society too far. Lady Audley is not put into asylum not because she is really mad but because she is a threat for patriarchy. Robert Audley knows very well that she is not mad and describes her "as the demoniac incarnation of some evil principle" (Braddon 61). The crimes of her aunt would tarnish the reputation of his family. Therefore, the easiest solution is to incarcerate her. Matus argues that "Braddon suggests to the reader that Lady Audley is not deranged but desperate; not mad (insane) but mad (angry)" (344). Patriarchy forces her to rebel against the norms. According to Jean Baker Miller, "'The belief that women could or should accept and adjust to the stereotyped role has been a cause, not the cure, of their problems'" (qtd. in Rigney 5). Lady Audley is not a victim of madness but she is the victim of the Victorian social system which marginalizes any woman who would pose a threat to its norms and conventions, especially those of femininity. In *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture and Victorian Sensationalism* (1992), Ann Cvetkovich argues that Lady Audley "acts out of rational self-interests to protect her livelihood" (48). Lady Audley challenges her expected Victorian feminine role in order to have a better future. She does everything consciously to claim the social ladder in order to escape her confinement although in the end of the novel she ends up in an asylum. Yet, she never quits in the way of challenging the conventions and gaining some freedom.

4. CONCLUSION

In the Victorian period, differences between two genders showed themselves clearly in all aspects of the society: economically, socially and politically. Sensation literary works reflect and challenge the traditional gender roles in the 19th century. In the two sensation novels, *The Woman in White* by Willkie Collins and *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, the binary oppositions between male and female are portrayed through characters. These two novels focus on the position of women in the Victorian society and how they are silenced by the Victorian patriarchy.

It was argued that both novels start to portray their main female characters as “angel in the house” which was the ideal woman type of the Victorian era. Although they resemble each other physically, they differ in terms of their attitudes towards patriarchy. Laura Fairlie is weak, fragile, submissive and obedient while Lady Audley is active, strong, disobedient and determined. In these novels, marriage is used to break the boundaries of economic and social class by obtaining money and social status. In *The Woman in White*, Sir Percival Glyde marries Laura Fairlie who is the heiress of Limmeridge Estate; while marriage is a kind of shelter for women in the Victorian period, Laura Fairlie is abused by Sir Percival through it. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lucy Graham marries first George Talboys to get rid of poverty, later George abandons her and when her first marriage fails, she marries Sir Michael Audley and becomes a “lady.” When she is abandoned, the reader can easily sympathize with her. However, when it is revealed that her marriages are for money and status, she is not considered as a victim but an abuser. Unlike Lucy Graham, Lady Audley is not abused or passive; rather she actively abuses Sir Michael Audley through marriage. It was debated that in the Victorian period, not only did women see marriage as a way of climbing the social ladder but also men turned it into their own advantages to obtain wealth and name by marrying women from higher social positions as in the case of Laura Fairlie and Sir Percival Glyde. The difference is that while in *The Woman in White*, women are portrayed as passive and men as active agents, in *Lady Audley's Secret* the main female character is an active agent who tries to keep control of her life story. It can be

concluded that while the first one represents a male writer's views, the latter focuses on female actions and women's preoccupations as well as their attempts to gain agency.

Another important question that both novels raise is that of false identity. In both novels, identities of the characters are volatile and shift several times. In *The Woman in White*, Sir Percival, as an illegitimate child, changes his family records in the church illegally. Being an illegitimate child is his "secret" therefore he adopts the identity as a baronet who comes from a noble family. Through deceiving people, he succeeds to get respect. Through the theme of false identity, Collins criticizes some of the Victorian norms of social conducts that emphasized the importance of title, name, reputation, etc. in shaping the social status of people. Sir Percival changes Laura's identity and puts her in an asylum under the name of Anne Catherick who in turn escapes from the asylum by faking her own death and takes another name to get inheritance. Similar to Sir Percival Glyde, Helen Talboys changes her identity too in *Lady Audley's Secret*. She wants to keep the record of her mother's madness as a secret because she would be suspected as mad too, especially given that madness is believed to be inherited from the mother to the child. After being abandoned by her first husband, George, she changes her identity to create a new life and introduces herself as Lucy Graham and begins to work as a governess. Then, she marries Sir Michael and becomes a "lady." Although she changes her identity in favor of herself, Robert Audley changes her name and identity too at the end of the novel. When he reveals that she is a bigamist, murderer and she confesses that she is mad, he puts her in an asylum under the name of Madame Taylor to preserve the reputation of his family. In both novels, by changing identities, things are turned into the advantages.

Madness is the most important common theme in these novels. Both portrayals explore the 19th century concept of madness through their female characters. However, each novel's take on the theme is different. In *The Woman in White*, madness is used as a means of marginalizing and confining women when they are seen as a threat to social patriarchal norms and values. As Anne knows a secret of Sir Percival, she is viewed as a threat therefore she needs to be eliminated by being put in an asylum. He has confined his wife, Laura, too. After Anne Catherick who resembles Laura Fairlie escapes from the asylum, Sir Percival puts Laura Fairlie into an asylum. Meanwhile Anne dies but he announces that Laura is dead to get her inheritance as her husband

based on Victorian marriage rules. It was argued that the novel shows madness is a means of female confinement and can be turned into male advantage. On the other hand, in *Lady Audley's Secret*, madness is first used to veil the crimes committed by the main female character, Lady Audley. However, she does everything consciously to challenge the patriarchal norms and values of the society to gain some power as a woman. However, after she cannot quite succeed, she resorts to madness to escape punishment. Like Sir Percival Glyde, Robert Audley turns her supposed madness into his advantage and confines her in an asylum under a false name.

In both novels, madness is used for silencing women. It can be argued that patriarchal norms in the Victorian period are so powerful and established that those women labeled as mad can be easily put in an asylum, which itself represents the patriarchal institution that which silences women both physically and mentally. In short, the ideal place of women in the Victorian society is either an angel in the house or a mad person in an asylum.

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RESUME

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