

## A Psychoanalytical Reading of Female Madness in Selected Victorian Literature

Kawther Zahir Hilal Al Azri  
Oman Tourism College, P.O. Box 2008, C.P.O, Postal Code 111, Seeb, Sultanate of Oman  
E-mail: [alazrikawther@gmail.com](mailto:alazrikawther@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This dissertation, *A Psychoanalytical Reading of Female Madness in Selected Victorian Literature*, argues that the patriarchal Victorian society, gave meaning to female madness using medical and psychological discourses. It examines how literary madwomen of the mid to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century operated to reflect the ideological stereotype of the feminine and the female imaginary of the early to the late Victorian Era. A solid comparative study of *Jane Eyre*, *The Woman in White*, and *Lady Audley's Secret* expose several inclinations in thinking about female madness during the 19th century. Chapter 1 of the dissertation concentrate on Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, it examines the cultural and social context of the Victorian era in connection to Jane's identity, dependency, and autonomy. It also builds a cultural context for Jane's development. Chapter 2 explores the Victorian discussions about the etiology of madness through a corresponding study of Willkie Collins's *The Woman in White*. The chapter recognizes that the Victorian era is marked by inquiries into the origins of mental illness in women, characterized by both heredity and environmental exposures. Chapter 3 devotes its analysis to the investigation of the asylum narrative. The chapter brings to life the histories of some of the women buried alive in madhouses and forgotten. A thoughtful critique of these accounts shows that a majority of these women were imprisoned in asylums for bravely asserting their religious and domestic rights.

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### Introduction

"Women must convert their love for and reliance on the strength and skill in others to a love for all manner of strength and skill in themselves"

- Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness*

"Crazy people are considered mad by the rest of society only because their intelligence isn't understood"

- Wei Hui, *Goodreads*

"In a society that not only perceived women as childlike, irrational, and sexually unstable, but also rendered them legally powerless and economically marginal. The medical belief that the instability of the female nervous and reproductive systems made women more vulnerable to derangement than men had extensive consequences for social policy. It was used as a reason to keep women out of the professions, to deny them political rights, and to keep them under male control in the family and the state"

-Elaine Showalter

If the above statement by Elaine Showalter (75) is to be believed, it is no surprise that the 19<sup>th</sup> century woman was raging at men: women were acting out their suppressed impediments over their political status. The statement also demonstrates how the society deemed women more vulnerable to madness than men as shown by Rochester's confession on Bertha "Bertha Mason is mad, and she came from a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations. Her mother: The Creole, was both a madwoman and a drunkard" (Brontë, 2008, p. 211). The idea of the madwoman in literature is in the most improbable of ideas, complete catnip to the normal literary critic. In her book, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (1996), Shuttleworth explains that during the Victorian Era, "social fears of an unstoppable rise in nervous disease were at their height in the mid-century (of the Victorian Era) and the question of how to draw the subtle dividing line between sanity and insanity received frequent press attention" (Shuttleworth, 1996, p. 222). Logan (1998) pinpoints how men in the patriarchal environment of Victorian England with its patriarchal presentiments "could intentionally invoke the masculine powers of the Victorian medicine and law to disable, undermine, and limit women who declined to submit and be still" (Logan, 1998, p. 149). The relationship between the patriarchal Victorian culture and the widespread mental illness among Victorian women is best explained by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. In his book, *Madness and Civilization, A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (2001) Foucault performs a thorough study of the history of madness in the western world. The philosopher demonstrates that people in Victorian societies regarded various classes of behaviours as madness during different times (Foucault, 2001, p. 45). Foucault views madness as a social construction. In the patriarchal Victorian society where men were in power, they could describe madness in women to authenticate their sovereignty.

The issue of female madness has been of interest to various Western-European critics as one of the medians

to blend and understand the oppression of women under patriarchy. In literature, we can see the connection linking sexual abuse and the issue of psychological anxiety clearly expressed. In numerous cases, sexual control is often perceived as the epitome of the Victorian Era. The 19<sup>th</sup> century literature can assist us to understand the multiple women's encounters during this time and the restriction that most of them faced attempting to document these issues. For a fact, women were given just one goal, and that is marriage. A majority of women were not able to sustain themselves economically, those who were, and who wished to remain celibate, were in most utmost cases made fun of and identified as old maids or spinsters. Being a loyal wife, a mother, and gentlewoman was considered as the hallmark of accomplishment for the women. Countless men esteemed moral goodness, plus virginity in a potential wife. Esteeming moral goodness, plus virginity in a potential wife was often utilized as the terminal currency for establishing partnerships, particularly for those in the middle class. The upper class could manage to be morally irresponsible at times, on the other hand, those in the working class did not adhere to the poignant moral expectations. Women in the middle class had tremendous pressure put on them. A thriving marriage could improve their family's social position, while failure could damage the family's character and economic comedown.

The animalistic representation of madness for many 19<sup>th</sup> century authorises a reflection of insanity as a departure from the human rationality. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, countless people viewed women as people experiencing psychological quandaries simply by the character of their womanhood. This provocative discernment of the inherent female madness solely meant that “women outnumbered men in the Victorian asylums almost two to one” (Parry, 2010). This did nothing to improve the rights of women and the popular accord at the time was that women were more inclined to the condition of the subconscious, made more unsafe by their procreative systems plus their sensitive responsiveness. In this regard, it looks more probable that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many women were victims of circumstances and it is particularly important to take into the record what women's lives were like during that time and the tasks that they were expected to play.

Many women in the Victorian Era were assigned inferior social positions in the family, and they did not take part in the public sphere. Women were subject to the indisputable control and domination of the male authority figures in almost every aspect of their lives. After all, male domination was considered to be a meaningful event for maintaining the exemplary family structure and restricting the interruption of the normal order of things. In the wake of these circumstances, the Victorian social structure stifled women who endeavoured to go against gender roles. Women were unapologetically named mad to halt their burgeoning needs for rational ambitions as well as individual liberty. Perceiving women as mad was a sentence for the “female assertion, ambition, their self-interest and outrage” (Showalter, 1987, p. 72). Also, the field of psychiatry plus its favoured treatment for neurotic ailments was primarily motivated by the misogynistic beliefs towards women and female sexuality. One disgraceful way by which the Victorian patriarchy attempted to besmirch women's pursuit of self-development was by naming them as hysterical. In her book, *The Female Malady*, Elaine Showalter states:

“during an era when patriarchal culture felt like it was under attack by its rebellious daughters, one obvious defense was to label women campaigning for access to universities, esteemed professions, and suffrage as mentally disturbed, and of all the nervous disorders of the fin de siècle, hysteria was the most strongly identified with the feminist movement” (Showalter, 1987, p. 145).

Gender imbalance rooted in the Victorian social structure was further enhanced by psychiatry and its one-dimension view on femininity and mental illness. Inside the field of psychiatry, hysteria, as well as generally accepted treatments for it have often come to “represent, some terrifying overruns of the Victorian medicinal traditions and the ways into which female sexuality has been suppressed and manipulated in the subjugation of women” (Herndl, 1988, p. 53). In this respect, the cultural oppression of women is obvious when one brings into the record the common Victorian notions of womanhood, female sexuality, and mental illness. Victorian women were poor victims of the medical field, a male-dominated profession that circumscribed to the ideas of normality and punished women who strayed from the normal or the exacted. In this respect, the growth of the idea of the Victorian maniac was a straightforward outcome of the growth of the psychiatric profession fundamentally aimed towards the women but principally restrained and overshadowed by the men. The purpose of many Victorian physicians in the societal subjugation of women is farther evident as they conceived androcentric assumptions and clarifications, which denigrated the female reproductive system, thereby, creating common misconceptions about women living in that era. As Showalter explains, “the prevailing view among Victorian psychiatrists was that women were more vulnerable to madness than men. The instability of the women's reproductive systems conflicted with the women's sexual: emotional and rational control” (Showalter, 1987, p. 55).

Embellishing on the conventional beliefs that women are more emotionally unstable than men are, and are inept of rational thinking led the medical views of many Victorian psychiatrists who termed the female reproductive system as the ultimate source of mental illness among women. For this reason, many psychiatrists constructed theories of madness, which were linked specifically and confidently to the women's biological crisis. The distorted attitudes of the female reproductive system overlooked the underlying principles of many neurotic ailments among women; also, these perceptions rejected the social circumstances in which these subconscious

crises took place. The regularized misunderstandings about the female body gave way to body shaming and the social denigration of female sexuality as something that needs to be hidden and repressed. Consequently, as evident, mental illness in women was in most cases because of their extremely vulnerable position in a patriarchal culture and the predominant medical theories used as effective tools of social control.

This dissertation is an examination of how literary madwomen of the mid to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century operate to reflect the ideological stereotype of the feminine and the female imaginary of the early to the late Victorian Era. This comprehensive subject will be dissected and discussed using important and interlinked subtopics. A solid comparative study of *Jane Eyre*, *The Woman in White*, and *Lady Audley's Secret* will expose several inclinations in thinking about female madness during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Characters in these Victorian novels confront the source of mental illness, rooting the critical debate in questions of gender, heredity, and environmental influences. At the same time, there is an implicit uncertainty in regards to the things that are fundamental and those that are social or implied. This uncertainty expressly asserts itself when it comes to the portrayal of the female gender. Most of the characters experiencing mental illness in these books are women; this fact will give a progressive view of the impact of gender on the Victorian perceptions of mental disorders. The dissertation will examine the various fictional inscriptions of female insanity proposed in the three novels, putting a profound weight on the narrative structures and trajectories used. We will give attention to the depiction of the more comprehensive psychological and social context in which madness manifests itself and the extent to which these texts offer a reading of female madness as a form of resistance. Furthermore, the dissertation offers a significant comparative reading of the texts concerning the construction of mental health using influential examples of contemporary psychological discourse.

Chapter 1 of the dissertation will concentrate on Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. To understand the representation of female madness in this novel, I will examine the cultural and social context of the Victorian era in connection to Jane's identity, dependency, and autonomy. In hindsight, I build a cultural context for Jane's development. A shared feature in Freud's development and psychoanalytic theory is his embodiment of the social context in the person's growth. This social setting that surrounds Jane is what I will examine. First, I will examine the lives of women and their position in Victorian England, the perception of an ideal woman, the questionable notions of womanhood that were widespread during the Victorian era. Also, I will investigate the conceptions of female sexuality as well as the psychology of that time. Secondly, I will examine the character of Bertha closely and treat her as a representative of Jane's identity and the wretchedness of Victorian women under patriarchal control.

Chapter 2 will explore the Victorian discussions about the etiology of madness through a corresponding study of Willkie Collins's *The Woman in White*. Chapter 2 pays tribute to the fact that the Victorian era is marked by inquiries into the origins of mental illness in women, characterized by both heredity and environmental exposures. *The Woman in White* is an intricately plotted story that is arranged as a set of witness statements from a wide heterogeneity of characters that are designed to uncover an ingenious conspiracy against innocent women. In chapter 2, I will show that *The Woman in White* depicts an emphasis on the acquired vulnerability towards mental illness, in this respect; a special focus will be given to Freud's psychodynamic theory, which disputes that childhood encounters are essential in shaping the adult personality.

Chapter 3 will devote to the investigation of the asylum narrative. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many women were named mad and locked in the asylum. One such woman described her bitter and painful experience: "when for any reason a person is to be put out of the way, insane hospitals stand with outstretched arms ready to embrace them" (Takayoshi, 2020, p. 174). In this chapter, I seek to bring to life the histories of some of the women who were buried alive in the madhouses and forgotten. A thoughtful critique of these accounts shows that a majority of these women were imprisoned in asylums for bravely asserting their religious and domestic rights. I will devote chapter 3 to *Lady Audley's Secret*, analyzing how the book's message about the wrongful institutionalization of women is undermined by the characterization of these women as being mentally unstable.

As will be proved by the literature analysis, women with a powerful personality and a clear imagination could never fit in the roles prescribed by society without sacrificing the essence of their being and sanity. However, this became the model for which many women were held in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in a culture that put far more restraints on women as contrasted with men. As is particularly obvious with oppression, the oppressed took an active part in implementing the rules on their kind and with only a few exceptions. Women did not have the solidarity to stand up for themselves and each other. Women were not only limited from acting on their dream as well as ambitions, their sexuality was suppressed, feared, and demonized in numerous ways. Psychiatrists would police the women's bodies; recommend treatments that would focus on their sexuality and normal physical functions. People like Dr Tilt advocated for the delaying of menstruation in girls for as long as feasible employing various techniques including making girls take cold showers, avoid feather beds, and exclude meat from their diets (Showalter, 1987, p. 75). According to Dr Tilt, menstruation was disruptive to the female brain and affected a woman's character, morals, and judgment.

## Chapter One: Jane Eyre

“I wanted to do a deep-dive into the idea that women are always called 'crazy,' and we are painted with such broad strokes because it's so easy to stereotype women and write them off. I got tired of that, and I wanted to explain: We are not crazy. There is a method to our madness”

-Iliza Schlesinger (Brainy Quotes)

As *Jane Eyre* proves, the ultimate purpose of what it means to be a woman in a principally patriarchal society has for a very long time grouped many women inside the realm of a mental breakdown as well as pathology (Ussher, 1991, p. 43). Several experimental, as well as cultural traditions, have served as signifiers to put women inside distinct social orders and as a means of social control. Instead of struggling against one antagonist, Jane struggles against many societal forces, Rochester and St John both present the patriarchal powers that try to control Jane. The examination of madness from a Foucauldian proposition exhibits madness as a conversation, a regulated structure of accounts that have a definite history (Ussher, 1991, p. 12). In this view, the exact quality of madness is mainly subordinate on the most authoritative discourse that subsists during that specific moment and place. In a male-dominated culture, madness is a signifier, which regards women as the other inside a phallogocentric discourse, purloining away their authority, privilege as well as the freedom (Ussher, 1991, p. 7). Showalter affirmed that to include gender examination in the history of madness, it is vital to acknowledge several cultural sources, for example, anecdotes diaries and novels. In this respect, female experiences when investigated from the prospect of the female text become drenched with expressions of madness, as female insanity which is conservatively referred to as hysteria develops from an inter-textual women's deviance which is highlighted in various texts.

In reality, the novel *Jane Eyre*, with its meaningful highlight on the hysterical Bertha Mason, recently dominates the significant writings on the 19<sup>th</sup> century women madness. For numerous readers of *Jane Eyre*, Bertha Mason is a definite depiction of a gothic figure, within the realm of sensible domestic fiction. The reader's perception changes when Bertha converts to a rebel and is full of rage highlighting the woman's writer enchantment with the unconscious in succeeding readings. For the longest time, numerous people Joyce Zunana have deciphered Bertha as a Victorian representation of the madwoman (Zunana, 1991, p. 600). This is triggered by the ubiquity of unrequited love. Feminist writers and critics, such as, Kimberley Reynolds and Nicola Humble have oftentimes described Bertha as an incarnation of the demented due to patriarchy (Reynolds & Humble, 1993, p. 43). For those like Jenny Sharpe who examine the subject of the madwoman from a Marxist viewpoint, Bertha matches a description of the working class who are tormented by the capitalist boss (Sharpe, 1993, p. 56).

A more recent analysis of Bertha; from a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective by Sally Shuttleworth, has generated one of the most popular interpretations of Bertha Mason as a hero double in a dual sense (Shuttleworth, Charlotte Bronte and Victorian Psychology, 1996, p. 67). Jane's suppressed desires (therefore admitting Jane's ability to feel sexual arousal); or Jane's dark side, (thus showing Jane's conscious efforts to negate her sexuality). As an affirmation or these multiples, the current definitions have reintroduced the locus of inquiry to the primary text itself. This is done through the examination of the various layers of meaning. The implications can be excavated through the intertextual interpretation of the novel applying multiple maneuverings like investigating the cultural metamorphosis of Bertha as a character. Moreover, readers can consider the examination of Bertha's classification in the text that is arbitrated through Rochester and Jane, and subsequently, the importance of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century conversation of the madwoman as the context to locate the three separate analyses.

When Jane and Mr. Rochester fall in love with each other, confess their love to each other and are about to get married, the mystery of Mr. Rochester's existing marriage to Bertha Mason who is deemed mad come to light. Bertha lives alone immured in the attic of Thornfield Hall and is liable for all the strange noises and events that take place at Thornfield, for example, the ominous bursts or murmur and laughter, the creeping sounds in the corridors during nighttime, the fire in Mr. Rochester's room and the secretive behaviour of one of the servants of the household. Bertha's character is highly significant in Jane's development. In *Jane Eyre*, the Victorian psyche is broken into two radical elements, the mind plus the body. The characters of both Helen Burns and Bertha Mason are agents of the binary polarities.

Bertha can be regarded as Jane's double and as a way for Jane to highlight her repressed features and feelings. Bertha is the Freudian double in which distinctive physical realities can be examined. For one to grow entirely and to mature, it is crucial for one to encounter various aspects of oneself and to acknowledge both the negative and the positive emotions within oneself. Bertha is the representation of the invalidating emotions at their extremity; she shows them openly through destructive behaviour. Having shown some fierce and negative feelings when growing as a child in Gateshead, Jane seems to recognise the inevitability of their existence and can sympathize with Bertha. When speaking with Mr. Rochester she says “Sir,” I interrupted him, “you are inexorable for that unfortunate lady: you speak of her with hate – with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel – she cannot help being mad” (Brontë, 2008, p. 265).

Very few novelists have produced anything comparable to Charlotte Brontë's reference of female madness (Brontë, 2008, p. 142). Brontë's *Jane Eyre* asks significant questions related to madness due to its inability to present the moral standards that were expected in this kind of genre. The novel is chiefly cited because of its movement away from the romantic genre to seize a solid and mature realism by employing critical 19<sup>th</sup> century

medical writing, with the intention of promoting ideas about women madness. It is through critical tension of opposites that readers are introduced to the controversial Bertha Mason as a vital figure in *Jane Eyre*. Bertha is regularly recognized as the Freudian return of a suppressed person. Freud demonstrates that in addition to the will to live, there is always a desire to die in each individual. This desire to die results from the resentment towards the outside world, particularly civilization since as early as the infantile period when the child is steered away from the mother's breast. Since they have to suppress the impulse and desire, which in Freud's word 'pleasure principle' and follow the reality principle. When their dissatisfaction increases to an unacceptable level, the hate grows to a lethal force towards the things that are created in that distinct civilization.

According to Freud, the conflict within the superego and the id, particularly the capacity of a person to bear the dictates of particular civilization and the will to follow the one's primary abilities and humanity always create anxiety among numerous people from well-defined cultures who uphold diverse beliefs and values. This is invariably the origin point of people's resentment towards civilization. Freud proceeds to recognize three features of human affliction, all which add immensely to this aversion, specifically, the unalterable decrees of nature, unstoppable deterioration of the human body, plus the disparity in individual relationships. Freud psychoanalytic theory put notable emphasis on the unconscious mind. According to Freud, the id, ego and the superego executed a vital function in the growth of hysteria and are adequately defined over their connection to the psychosexual steps of development. The proposal made by Freud is that hysteria was associated with repudiated sexuality (Yarom, 2005, p. 65).

Connecting to the feminist significant readings, which conferred Bertha as the manifestation of sexual disappointment or feminist defiance, Peter Grudin represents *Jane Eyre* as a pedantic novel, which subordinates the interests of passion to those of reserve (Grudin, 2018, p. 145). In this respect, Grudin most notable achievement is that he succeeds in establishing the moral burden of the novel in Bertha Mason as she becomes the moral basis of the entire story. According to Grudin, Bertha is the representation of something frightening and prognostication of Jane's dark potentials (Grudin, 2018, p. 145). Bertha is Jane's repressed desire, becoming an amalgamation of the enthusiasm that Jane wants to suppress to submit to the social as well as the ethical norms. Grudin also favours the connection between madness and immorality, revealing for instance that in Victorian society, many sensual women were regularly regarded as mad. According to Grudin, the true mad figure is Jane, while Bertha helps to remind us of the consequences that Jane's licentious actions may generate. For the very first time, Bertha is depicted as an analyst rather than a madwoman as she has perpetually been termed. On the other hand, Jane's feelings of social isolation within her observation of and about the mirror, and her moving back to unconsciousness when she was a baby is proof of her mental disorder.

In the above respect, we need to recognize Mr. Lloyd prescription after he reviews Jane at Gateshead when she loses her consciousness proposing a shift in the air and scene because Jane's nerves were not in a particularly healthy state. Jane's resistance of the older and often male figures supports the doctor's portrayal of Jane as psychologically troubled. Jane's resistance proscribes her from a medicinal, spiritual and ethical perspective often regarding her as insane, a heathen and sinful. Even though some translations have regarded Jane as the actual madwoman, a preponderance of significant studies have taken for granted that Bertha, notwithstanding being a minor figure whose demeanor is only explicitly discussed in some chapters, appears as the madwoman in explicit opposition with the modest protagonist Jane. This is particularly evident when we do not focus on her juvenile outbursts.

Heilbrun sees Bertha as an exemplar of repression; however, she turns her center of attention from the sexual passion to insignificant anger plus insurrection. As she reveals, "Bertha now represents not the sexual desires but anger, not the repressed element in the respectable woman but the suppressed element in the emancipated woman" (Lerner, 1989, p. 275). According to Heilbrun, Bertha's anger is solely attributable to her parallel relation with Jane and connected with her restrained status as a Victorian woman, so that Rochester is left-back. In this reality, we can blend Heilbrun's innovative account of Bertha as the model of female rage and resistance with Freud's psychoanalytic theory, thus rendering Bertha as Jane's alter ego personifying her repressed sexual passion as a Victorian protagonist and her underlying intractable anger as an unemancipated woman.

Many decisive critical readings of *Jane Eyre* have often recovered and refreshed the preceding definitions of Bertha as a character, aiming at various features of both textual and conversation analysis. In this interest, the various accounts associated with Bertha Mason and by addition female madness state that she describes have placed more pressure on the explicit specifications of Bertha's high-minded declarations when Rochester announces her presence in the novel:

In the deep shade, 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 a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (Brontë, 2008, p. 307).

A majority of critical readings often cite the above subject to highlight the heartless representation of female

madness throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bertha is assumed to display several zoological characteristics to highlight the madwoman's conversion to bestiality. In this respect, there is a correspondence between Bertha's account and that of an animal, Small contrasts Bertha to a hyena that is assumed to be bisexual and only becomes male or female in intermittent years (Small, 1996, p. 159). Bertha's animalistic properties have been traditionally utilized to highlight the ruthless reality of the madwoman at the time. Other chapters have been thoroughly picked to show political and ideological interpretations of the novel. Brontë proffers a portrait of Bertha as being contaminated with characteristics of the beast, the barbarian, and the revenant. All of these factors tangled into the indefinable and incomprehensible personage of the madwoman. Bertha's repugnant character created through Brontë's text and especially Rochester's anecdote is in line with the repugnance that various medical records of that time displayed towards a particular type of madness. As per the Victorian principles of the mind, the rationality locus was believed to emerge from the will; an equivalent for the mind during the Victorian times. In most utmost cases, women were regarded to be more exposed to this kind of madness. Bertha is responsible for setting fire to Mr. Rochester's bed, attacking Mr. Mason and destroying Jane's veil.

A wholesome state of the mind throughout the Victorian times signified a deliberate exercise of the will, and this consequently was regarded as analogous to ethical issues. Sane people were considered to be virtuously honest, otherwise, they were admonished to be identified as mad, insane or unethical (Small, 1996, p. 170). When Rochester reveals the account of his nuptials to Bertha, he tries to define each symptom included in the description of moral insanity. Rochester refers to a woman who carries both mental and moral corruption in her blood, a kind of madness that meaningfully echoes through the female gender and becomes more destructive in them. It is important to see that the classification of Bertha's viciousness and licentious life is observed through Rochester, that is, through her distressed spouse who proffers himself as a victim of both his father and Bertha's brother. Additionally, we recognize that Rochester's tale is blended into the story through Jane's reminiscence as a mature narrator. By using transient distance, Jane brings back her recollections of her husband to be narrative, in this respect, we get to learn of Bertha's story within a double mediation, Jane's memory as a mature narrator and Rochester's description of a personal story. Rochester reveals that he never loved Bertha because she is mad, he even criticizes her for her insanity declaring her mother was "a madwoman and a drunkard" and she "mimicked her parents in both points" (Brontë, 2008, p. 289). In turn, Jane even though she absconds once the truth is uncovered, never challenge's Rochester's narrative and yet she points to Bertha as an "unpropitious lady" on one occasion. In this respect, feminist critics indicate Jane's sympathy with her alter ego recovered Jane's observation.

Jane's response to the discovery of Rochester's wife does not in any way concern the failure of her proposed marriage but the perception of power imbalance with Rochester, it is necessary to see that her will is suppressed to that of Rochester, for this reason, she feels morally languished for the very first time. Jane regularly had outbursts of fury as a child, she experienced hysterical trance in the reed's red room. She additionally tells her criticism of Brocklehurst's intentions in Lowood, nevertheless, in all these situations, her confrontation with madness is a consequence of her will. Her mania works as an exposition of her physiological discomfort. When Jane becomes aware of Bertha's being and her husband's mysteries, she realizes that not everything can be restrained to her will. Jane is not able to have authority over everything and this is where her madness begins to predominate. It is important to see that it is at this period, where Rochester suggests that his love for Jane would not break even if Jane were to go insane. This hypothesis is significant as it presents a potentiality for us to investigate the feasibility of recognizing some flashes of madness in Jane for the first time when numerous important examinations have focused on Bertha as the manifestation of insanity. Also, it reaffirms the diversity that endures between Bertha and Jane as separate, rather than parallel personalities because Bertha's insanity is caused through the disordered sexual desire that is moral insanity, while Jane's subjective health issue is as a consequence of loss and the loosening of her will.



**Fig 1:** This is an image of mad Margery. A youthful woman who was driven mad and was living in the fields. The Image was possibly taken from the popular song. Poor mad Margery c. 1790-1800 By James John Hill c1830-70 (Hill, 2020)

In displaying Bertha to the readers, Brontë draws on the animal imagery that pervaded the modern representations of the savage, the working classes and the insane. With the growth of moral management theories, the insane people were not automatically conformed to the level of the animal, however, this discourse was often held only in a more detailed register, especially in respect to the reference of the female forms. Our initial exposure of Bertha is not significantly as an animal using four limbs but as a woman staring into Jane's mirror. Bertha's savage face together with its red eyes and the apprehensive blackened expansion of the lineaments', her black hair, sanguine colouring and enormous strength all correspond to the synchronous images of the most violent form of a maniac. Her laughter, plus an inclination to destruction and attacks on her closest relatives constitutes part of the contemporary collection of images. On our second sighting of Bertha, we see she has crossed the border from becoming human to an animal; "it groveled, seemingly on all fours, it snatched and growled like some strange, wild animal, but it was covered with clothing and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its face and head". (Brontë, 2008, p. 370). When the clothed hyena stands on its rear feet, it becomes a masculinized figure, which represents virile strength in its competition with Rochester. Accompanying this spectacle, Bertha seems irrecoverable for femininity and humanity, yet Rochester's succeeding reflections on what Jane would be like if she were mad, and Jane's echoing of Bertha's animal posture "crawling forwards on my hands and knees" (Brontë, 2008, p. 410). As she attempts to run away from Thornfield; diminished to a social status that is deeper than that of a stray dog, all signify more inquisitive attitudes that isolate the animal from the human, and the insane from the sane, underlining the parallels between Jane and Bertha.

According to Showalter, the reasons that have been provided for Bertha's madness are all represented, from the dialogue of Victorian psychiatry (Showalter, 1987, p. 42). Rochester's account incorporates two kinds of explanations which bind together the idea of an acquired taint with the aspect of personal responsibility. Bertha acquires her madness from her mother, the 'creole' who was both a madwoman and a drunkard, but it was her overloads which prematurely developed the germs of insanity (Brontë, 2008, p. 391). In addition to her distinct legacy from her Mother, Bertha is plagued by the nonexclusive functions of her female body, the sexual desire linked with the menstrual flow. Her attacks take place significantly on seasons where there is a blood-red moon, in line with the medical dogma that in some women, insanity ruptured forth at every menstrual period (Brontë, 2008, p. 44). Court reports, as well as newspapers and medical manuscripts, popularized the ideas of the insane cunning of women when under the control of their reproductive organs. The cunning assumed in the hysterical female cover all the ground detailed by Rochester in her complaints of his wife who is prompted by her familiar to burn people in their beds at night, to stab them, to bite their flesh from their bones, and so on (Brontë, 2008, p. 384). The outburst of Bertha Rochester within the text does not imply the imposition of a superannuated gothic form into a naturalist novel. Bertha survives as a crystallization of the cynical perceptions of womanhood free in the modern social and scientific discourse. With Rochester's enthusiasm to reveal to Jane all the aspects of his entanglements with his former mistress, he is curiously inexplicit in his accounts of Bertha's early transgressions. Bertha's first shortcomings are those of family management, she is not capable of maintaining her servants, additionally, she misses to implement the right angelic rejoinders to his long conversation. To this image of family incompetence, which already motivates Rochester, 'disgust' is added that of the sexually depraved female. Bertha is at once immoderate and unchaste. The forms of Bertha's unchastity are not clear she revealed too avid a sexual appetite towards Rochester himself, but it is also possible, as no other partners are specified, that he is here referring

to the vice of masturbation which was widely treated as a major cause of insanity in women.

The fate that is meted out to Bertha, locked away in an attic as soon as she stopped to please her husband sexually is a specific impersonation of Jane's fears. When defending her sexually elusive behaviour through courtship, Jane pays reference to the books composed by men which designate six months as the furthest to which a husband's ardour prolongs. Jane believes that she will maintain Rochester's liking, but not his love, a characteristic which cutting across the Victorian literary niceties, adjusts the latter term with sexual interest. Brontë's novel provides a calamitous dissection of the Victorian dissection of Victorian conceptions of the male sexual desire exposing the ideological double that underpins cultural dominance. For Rochester, marriage produces a sense of self-loathing and pollution: "nature the grossest, impure, depraved I ever saw was associated with mine and called by law and by society a part of me" (Brontë, 2008, p. 391).



**Fig 2:** Alexander Morison, the *Physiognomy of Mental Diseases* (London: G. Odell, 1838), Plate VIII. The image was one of a group representing puerperal madness or madness of childbirth; note the handcuffs and mittens, which may have been fixed on the patient to avoid self-harm or to inhibit masturbation.

It is worth noting that in the case of Bertha's insanity or female madness is often linked with female personages, however, Rochester is the male master who locked his first wife in the attic, to commit bigamy. Rochester challenges social customs by marrying her governess, engaged in flirting in Paris during his youth, and maintains a distant relationship with his protégée. In a way, Rochester can be deemed a Byronic hero, and for this reason, madness should be one of his most striking features. However, many people often correlate madness with criminality, while female madness was often recognised and associated with a moral abnormality.

## Chapter 2: The Woman in White

"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. What had I done? Assisted the victim of the most horrible of all false imprisonments to escape; or cast loose on the wide world of London an unfortunate creature, whose actions it was my duty, and every man's duty, mercifully to control?"

- Collins, 1999

A solid comparative study of *The Woman in White* shows distinct bearings in thinking about mental illness, rooting the discussion on issues of gender, fantasy, and environmental influences. At the same time, there is a significant amount of confusion in regards to the things that are natural and those that are social or even circumstantial. This confusion is significantly manifest when it comes to women. A majority of the personalities suffering from mental ailment are women. This builds a well-defined prospect concerning the influence that gender has on the Victorian judgments of mental illness. Women are regarded to be more exposed to mental illness than men during the Victorian era, coincidentally; these provocative perceptions go past the theories of the mind as well as the corresponding illnesses. The debate over the rightful place of the woman in society has continued to grow for what looks like forever. A majority of women who are not comfortable with the wife and the mother functions look for contentment past the dogmatic boundaries only to sustain all kinds of criticisms administered on them by their fellow men and women. This abuse is present in the political and the public policy, and in some instances in the social sciences and the art that reflects the society's perceptions that motherhood is the only acceptable role for the women. Of all the functions that women engage in, none produces more contention than that of the mother. Motherhood is still shrouded in conundrum and myth; a majority of psychologists have not succeeded in explaining the organisation of motherhood.

In his 1914 essay titled *On Narcissism*, Sigmund Freud demonstrates that because a daughter is incapable of differentiating herself from her mother, there is no well-defined sense of self that develops in the women (Freud, 2014, p. 56). According to Freud, Women do not get to form a distinct sense of self and for this reason, they do not manage to advance into mature or moral beings. The essay posits that women prevail as baby bearers or the carriers of the society's precepts; they never become selves on their right. The apparent scarcity of self among the women emerges from the detachment of the child from her mother. The provocative expression for the women's development does very little to dissipate the long-standing misunderstandings concerning motherhood and women's capacity to love and act in a normal fashion. In a distinct inclination from Freud, Nancy Chodorow affirms that "women as mothers are pivotal actors in the sphere of social reproduction" (Chodorow, 1999, p. 11). This indicates that mothers not only incorporate the human race, but they also proceed to reproduce and also strengthen the socially agreeable practices and expectations for the people that they connect with especially their children.

Chodorow demonstrates that "the child stance towards itself and the world all derive in the first instance from this earliest relationship" (Chodorow, 1999, p. 78). In this view, mothers are seen to represent a profoundly meaningful position in the advancement of their daughters. The relationship between a mother and her daughter perpetuates the role that the daughters assume in their interpersonal relationships and the roles that they play in society. Chodorow affirms that the importance of the girl the relationship with her mother, their interdependence and continuity, their lack of separation and differentiation and permeable ego boundaries (Hirsch, 1989, p. 26). This idea identifies the mother and daughter relationships from the relationships that the women have with their husbands and sons, and the relationships between men. The mother and daughter relationships are in most circumstances' significant subjects of the literary dialogue and the psychoanalytical discussions. According to Nina Auerbach, "motherhood was not an insignificant biological reality but a spiritual reality that cannot be separated from genuine womanhood" (Auerbach, 1986, p. 45). Auerbach moreover states that Maternity alone was the authorisation of respectable female maturity. Irrespective of this generally accepted approach during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Auerbach says that "mothers and daughters are at best indifferent and at worst antagonistic".

The psychoanalytic development of women as inspired by the enigmatic mother and daughter relationship is evident in Willkie Collins *The Woman in White*, in fact, the frustration of that psychoanalytic development and the challenging mother and daughter relationship in the novel approximately slays the hope of the daughters, (Laura's, Anne's and Marian's) capabilities to generate thriving interpersonal relationships apart from their mothers. Part of the healthy development is the separation that takes place between children with their parents. Separate relations are important to psychological health. It is necessary to however note that separation is separate from disconnection. While separation is normal disconnection results from dysfunction. Carol Gilligan affirms that "adolescence is considered as a significant time for separation, female development is considered to be most divergent and the thus most problematic at this time" (Gilligan, 2016, p. 11). Even though psychologists recognize this method as problematic, it is also important, however, the sense of disconnection is sometimes evidence of the "failure of family relationships" (Gilligan, 2016, p. 57), which frequently leads to desperation and mental dysfunction.

Veering from a gender aspect, we can additionally analyse female madness through the lens of the male construct of a fantasy madwoman. This aspect probes deep and unearths the extreme corruption of the medical men and the allowance for unconstitutional confinement throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Willkie Collins places Laura Fairlie, the young and orphaned heiress to the estate of Limmeridge as a terminal victim of the male connivance between her husband, Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco, who forcefully restrain her in a private asylum because of her heritage (Collins, 1999, p. 148). The novel begins "This is the story of what a woman's patience can endure and what man's resolution can achieve" (Collins, 1999, p. 9). The primary narrator of the story is Walter Hartright, who also doubles as a young teacher and Laura Fairlie's lover, who is determined in revealing Sir Percival and Count Fosco for their crimes on Laura. Walter also puts together the novel's storyline as it goes from one specific character to the other to reveal their crimes. Walter opening statement asserts that women are resigned and subordinate and men are active as well as authoritative. By associating 'patience', 'resolution' and 'endure', Walter feminizes affliction and places bravery as a masculine characteristic. The women who are confined in *The Woman in White* are confined because they intimidate the eminence of Sir Percival Glyde. Acknowledged as disturbing and as unruly people, the "madwomen are silenced, and thrown into the asylum".

Just like Laura Fairlie, Anne Catherick is also taken into an asylum by Sir Percival Glyde. Glyde describes Anne as "just mad enough to be shut up and just sane enough to ruin me when she's at large" (Collins, 1999, p. 330). Anne Catherick escape from the asylum and unexpected death allows Sir Percival and Count Fosco to confine Laura as Anne. Unlike Laura, various characters perceive Anne as a deranged person, however, like Laura; Anne is confined for purposes that are beyond her madness. Anne Catherick learns from her mother that Sir Percival is an illegitimate child, in this view, Anne has Percival entire secret (Collins, 1999, p. 537). Sir Percival is convinced that he must quiet Anne before she exhibits that he is an illegitimate child. Sir Percival pays for Anne Catherick committal to the asylum to guard his safety. When Anne Catherick departs from the Asylum and informs Sir

Percival wife Laura Fairlie that she has a long-kept secret, Percival is convinced that Laura is informed of his marriage fraud. Sir Percival schemes with Count Fosco to have both Anne and Laura imprisoned. A deep examination of the circumstances shows that Sir Percival fear makes him restrain two women. In the same way that Anne Catherick needed to be 'shut up' within the asylum, Laura must also be silenced. Both the silencing and the shutting up of the women are well placed within the insane asylum. Women are shut up to protect the reputation of men.

The sanity of Laura Fairlie is well denied within the asylum. Walter Hartright illustrates that no man could have passed through the asylum and come out of it unchanged. The concise account of Laura Fairlie confinement reveals that the same person's intellects, as well as their mental well-being, are considerably influenced by the asylum. When Marian rescues her sister, she sees that "her sister's intellects were thrilled already by the terror of the situation to which she had been consigned" and so she "abstained from pressing her with supplementary questions concerning the asylum—her mind being out to unfit to bear the trial of reverting to them" (Collins, 1999, p. 422). Within the story, Sir Percival and Count Fosco are perceived as people who are keen on silencing Laura Fairlie, even though Laura does not hold Percival secrets.

Both Anne and Laura are confined by men and for this reason; the novel places the issue of confinement as a masculine behaviour. In a comparable manner to the *Jane Eyre* and *The Women in White* are regarded as the patients and are dominated and directed by men. At the start of the novel, Walter Hartright realises that Anne Catherick, the woman that he helped into a carriage in London has disappeared from an insane asylum. Walter asks, "What had I done? Assisted the victim of the most terrible of all false imprisonments to escape, or cast loose on the wide world of London an unfortunate creature, whose actions it was my duty and every man's duty, mercifully to control?" (Collins, 1999, p. 31). Walter understands that it is the 'divine' duty of every man to control the 'madwoman', and the implication that women cannot control themselves. As a 'madwoman', Anne acknowledges the self-control that she needed to escape the asylum successfully, she says "it was easy to escape, or I should not have got away, they never disbelieved me as they suspected the others, I was so quiet and so obedient and so easily frightened" (Collins, 1999, p. 99). Anne's silence, obedience, and fright are representative of her yielding nature to authority, enabling her to escape without being doubted. Sir Percival also admits that Anne "was the best-behaved patient that they had-and like fools, they trusted her" (Collins, 1999, p. 330).

When both Anne and Laura are confined wrongfully, they are regarded as mad people, particularly when they declined to be controlled. Laura Fairlie is first portrayed as a 'hysterical' person by Marian when her self-restraint permits for the ungovernable passion and sexual desire. Laura is in love with Walter Hartright but engaged to Sir Percival. Hysteria supports the notion that women are more receptive to unreasonableness as well as hysterical conditions. Freud study of Dora prompted him to hypothesise that the hysterical symptoms originate from the psychological trauma or sexual problems. When Dora was taken through psychotherapy, she confessed that she was the victim of unwanted sexual advances from a family friend. Freud rejected the assertions and proposed that Dora was envisioning the advances. Freud was however concerned that the envisioned scenarios were making Dora have hysteria. Freud case study made him develop the psychosexual stages of development. This provocative theory proposes that personality development takes place in stages and if a person skips one of the stages then it would result in a psychological condition, for instance, hysteria occurring in later life. Laura, while considered to be sane, is often expressed in the conversation of madness. Laura instantly expresses her passionate love for Walter which she is obliged to throw after her marriage. Marian explains Laura outbreaks as 'hysterical vehemence' this insinuates that female sexuality is madness. In this connection, hysteria principally regarded as a female endemic connected the female reproductive system as providing a particular type of madness. It is obvious that Laura is overtaken by her hysteria, Marian explains, "I tried vainly to soothe her and reason with her—she was past being soothed and past being reasoned with—when the fit had worn itself out she was too exhausted to speak" (Collins, 1999, p. 173).

Anne Catherick also manifests the same outbreaks of passion, particularly when she is met by Walter Hartright at the grave of Laura's mother. Mrs Fairlie had once 'taken a violent fancy' to eleven-year-old Anne Catherick, who hastily frequented Mrs Fairlie school after being brought to Limeridge House by her mother (Collins, 1999, p. 60). Ten years pass before Ann returns as she gives out a letter to 'save' Laura Fairlie from her fiancée (Collins, 1999, p. 104). Walter approaches Anne in the graveyard to scold her, telling her that it was not appropriate for her to send the letter since it was intended to intimidate Miss Fairlie (Collins, 1999, p. 103) when Anne acknowledges she says:

Oh, if I could die, and be hidden and at rest with *you!* Her lips murmured the words close on the gravestone, murmured them in tones of passionate endearment, to the dead remains beneath—I heard her lips kissing the stone—I saw her hands beating on it passionately. The sound and sight deeply affected me. I stooped down, took the poor helpless hands tenderly in mine, and tried to soothe her. It was useless. She snatched her hands from me, and never moved her face from the stone. (Collins, 1999, p. 103)

Anne intense love for Mrs Fairlie cannot be 'soothed' by Walter. Anne declines to restrain herself and also refuses Walter's attempts to control her. When Anne declines to restrain herself, Walter asserts that her activities,

as well as behaviour, were notable justifications for her confinement.

Seeing the critical need of quieting her at any chance and by any means, I appealed to the only anxiety that she appeared to feel, in connection with me and with my opinion of her—the anxiety to convince me of her fitness to be mistress of her 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——' (Collins, 1999, p. 104)

As Walter proclaimed earlier, "it was my duty and every man's duty to control" women's actions and behaviors: Walter understands the pressing necessity of silencing Anne, in this connection, the nature of female madness is embellished significantly by the need of men to silence women. Anne's Madness is provoked by Sir Percival Glyde: Walter manages to see the significant change in Anne, as she is reminded of "the person that was responsible for her stay in the asylum." Walter further explains that Anne's face was full of "nervous sensitiveness, weakness, and uncertainty" this is suggestive of the fact that these characteristics are natural to her. Walter finds Anne's natural deficiencies as touching qualities; this implies that characters that are inherently feminine in Anne need sympathy because it links the female qualities with pity and misfortune. Despite this evidence, Anne madness is linked with the supernatural, Anne's face darkens, and all her features become 'wild, unnatural'. Anne's power emanates from her strong hate towards Sir Percival, which is described as 'maniacally intense', expressing a very "high degree of madness particularly one features uncontrolled, excited, or aggressive behaviours".

Interestingly, the only mention of Anne as 'mad' is the direct reaction to Sir Percival. At his mention, Anne "sprang up on her knees," once again evoking the behaviours of a wild animal. The ability that Ann has is expressed in both the physical as well as the mental. Anne has the power to 'catch', 'crush', and 'kill' the cloth in her hand. This expresses her creature like behaviour, as "the few drops of moisture," are a symbol for blood. The significant changes in Anne, most importantly described as maniac are produced by Sir Percival. Anne Catherick is also perceived to be 'mad' in close relation to her incarcerator. Her 'mad' behaviour, while shown as violent and also dangerous is revengeful and also irrepressible due to the behaviour of Sir Percival.

The act of doubling the madwoman and the sane in *The Woman in White* works to give a significant definition to the dualities of sanity as well as insanity. Regardless, the only defining aspect of madness that The Woman in White establishes is the instability of the female madness. In retrospect, the act of doubling Anne Catherick together with Laura Fairlie provides a revelation that in each of the doubles, the madwoman is not quite mad, and the sane woman is not quite sane. In this context, for the madwoman to be considered as a double of the sane woman, madness is lowered, impermanent as well as conditional. However, neither the uncertainty of madness nor the doubling of the sanity and the insanity allows the "madwoman" to not suffer punishment. From the look of things, it is evident that the doubling of the two women, which defines both difference and madness, reveals the Victorian anxieties that covered the female transgressiveness. In essence, the idea of the 'madwoman' goes beyond the conventional femininity through her assertiveness as well as agency, turning to a 'masculine' character in contrast to the sane woman. For this reason, the 'madwoman' receives punishment (she is first confined, and then killed. Killing her serves as a permanent solution to her transgressions). The doubling of both the sane and madwoman presents an opening for men to describe femininity.

Women in *The Woman in White* depend on one another; moreover, the women are in opposition to each other. Even though Anne Catherick is a victim of false incarceration, never needing any confinement, she is unidentified, buried under a tombstone displaying the name of the wrong woman, eventually to only receive "one line only" (Collins, 1999, p. 619). Also, if Anne did not die when she did, Count Fosco says that "he would have opened the door of the prison of life and would have extended to the captive a happy release" (Collins 612). The madwoman who challenges the notion of gender, who has a strong nature and is beautiful, young or assertive, is punished by confining her, subjecting her to passivity, anonymity as well as silence. Anne Catherick, Laura Fairlie is shut up, physically confined and silenced, in the private madhouses in windowless cells and locked inside after they are blamed of being irrepressible, uncontrollable, and for humiliating and threatening men.

The asylum manager senses a difference in Anne Catherick after she reverts to the compound:

"On receiving his inmate again, the proprietor of the Asylum acknowledged that he had observed some curious personal changes in her. Such changes, no doubt, were not without precedent in his experience of persons mentally afflicted. Insane people were often, at one time, outwardly as well as inwardly, unlike what they were at another; the change from better to worse, or from worse to better, in the madness, having a necessary tendency to produce alterations of appearance externally. He allowed for these; and he allowed for the modification in the form of Anne Catherick delusion, which was reflected, no doubt, in her manner and expression. Nevertheless, he was still perplexed, at times, by certain differences between his patient before she escaped, and his patient since she had been brought back. [...] The change was something that he felt, more than something that he saw (Collins, 1999, p. 428).

The identity switch is a patriarchal attempt to prevent the power of feminine knowledge. Up to this point in the novel, Madness, as well as the doppelganger, agrees to restrain as well as suppress the women in the story. Anne is restricted solely because people regarded her as insane; her double Laura is confined simply because she

looks like Anna. And in reality, it is through the lunacy that there is a well-defined distinction between the double pair.

### Chapter 3: Lady Audley's Secret

“Madhouse is large and only too numerous; yet surely it is strange they are not larger. When we think of how many helpless wretches must beat their brains against this hopeless persistency of the orderly outward world, as compared with the storm and the tempest, the riot and confusion within-when we remember how many minds must tremble upon the narrow boundary between reason and unreason, mad today and sane tomorrow, mad yesterday and sane today”

-Lady Audley's Secret, p. 227

Psychology regarded women and different types of insanity as indistinguishably intertwined. Insanity especially hysteria was regarded as a typical hallmark of the female mental composition. In principle, many psychologists regarded hysteria as a changeful malady that plagues the female character and puzzles the medical practitioner. Articles examining mentally sick people referred to them as 'she', even in the hypothetical situations that would require the use of a pronoun 'he' (Parry, 2010, p. 56). According to Showalter, women ached from a predisposition to madness due to their violent bodies and their brutal hormones (Showalter, 1987, p. 322). Matus exerts that within the dangers of menarche, menses, reproduction and menopause; there was very limited time in a woman's life where she was not believed to be at difficult risk of mental distress due to her hormonal situation (Matus, 1993). Particular, pregnancy and childbirth were deemed to bestow grand fulminations to the woman's mind.

*Lady Audley's Secret* chronicles the short marriage of Lucy Graham now Lady Audley to Sir Michael Audley. In their two-year marriage, Robert Audley, Sir Michael's nephew, uncorks Lady Audley's relation to his missing friend, George Talboys. Finding that Lady Audley is Helen Talboys, George's wife who feigned her death after her husband “ran away to Australia, and left the lady, a week or two after her baby was born”, Robert Audley confronts Lady Audley about her past (Braddon, 1998, p. 242). Lady Audley displays 'defiance' and overlooks his onslaughts (Braddon, 1998, p. 294). Discovering that Robert Audley requires someone who will 'identify her' as Helen Talboys, Lady Audley realizes that “he will do it, unless some strange calamity befalls him, and silences him forever” (Braddon, 1998, p. 306). She then prepares to set fire to the hotel in which he is staying. However, Robert Audley endures the fire and faces Lady Audley again. The eponymous persona of *Lady Audley's Secret* then admits her secret, “you have conquered-a MAD WOMAN!” and Robert Audley is assigned “the awful responsibility of a wicked woman's fate on his shoulders” (Braddon, 1998, p. 340).

Sir Michael supplicates his nephew to “take upon yourself the duty of providing for the safety and comfort of this lady whom I have thought my wife” (Braddon, 1998, p. 352). The presentation of Lady Audley's hypocrisy, as she reveals her past as Helen Maldon, her first marriage to George Talboys, and her genetic insanity is enough to persuade Sir Michael, who has no understanding of her crimes correlating to the disappearance of George Talboys, that Lady Audley was never his wife. Robert Audley views his uncle as the “generous old man whose fatal confidence in a wicked woman, had brought much misery upon his declining years” (Braddon, 1998, p. 371). Because his uncle's distress is a consequence of his 'discovery', Robert Audley demands that Dr. Alwyn Mosgrave, “a physician experienced in the case of mania,” “save our stainless name from degradation and shame” (Braddon, 1998, p. 371). He, later on, admits to the doctor “my greatest fear is the necessity of any exposure-any disgrace” (Braddon, 1998, p. 372). Robert aspires to 'quietly put away' Lady Audley in a madhouse to evade any dishonour, humiliation, exposure and degradation of the Audley name” (Braddon, 1998, p. 378). Dr. Mosgrave cautions him against 'any esclandre', explaining that “no jury in the United Kingdom would condemn her upon such evidence” (Braddon, 1998, p. 372). Without the proof that links Lady Audley to the demise of her first husband, Robert Audley can only be worried about the degradation, shame, exposure and disgrace that relates to her admission of madness and her resultant bigamy and entrapment of his uncle. According to Robert Audley, the susceptibility of Sir Michael's mad wife would dishonour the 'stainless' Audley name, implying that madness, as well as publicity, influences the prominence of those that are linked with the madwoman.

Robert views himself to be Lady Audley's judge and jailer. “Not until he had.....given up his charge into the safekeeping of the foreign madhouse doctor, not until then would the dreadful burden be removed from him and his duty done” (Braddon, 1998, p. 375). The control of Lady Audley is regarded to be Robert Audley's 'charge', 'burden, and 'duty' this scene suggests that men can restrict women. The same feelings are well seen in *The Woman in White*, where Walter Hartright says it is “my duty, and every man's duty to control” the actions of the 'madwoman'. As the 'judge' and 'jailer' Robert Audley highlights the authority to choose and determine Lady Audley's freedom and movement.

Robert Audley is not the only person in the novel who can patrol and imprison women. When George Tallboy's father discovers about his daughter-in-law's detention, he is defined as possessing “an earnest wish that my lady had been his wife, and that he might thus have had the pleasure of making a signal example of her” (Braddon, 1998, p. 425). Lady Audley as a signal example implies that her behaviour would be used as a 'warning'

to control and manipulate the aspirations of other women. Mr. Talbot desires to punish Lady Audley for her behaviour as he argues, "I can only remark that, had the lady fallen into my hands, she would have been differently treated" (Braddon, 1998, p. 425). As Robert Audley and Mr. Talbot address the treatment of the madwoman, they establish men as better to and accountable for the women.

Even though Lady Audley declares that madness is liable for her deviance, there is very limited support for this kind of determination. Even though many psychologists during the Victorian times likened madness with hysteria and others deviance, the doctor accountable for monitoring Lady Audley does not allude to any of these factors. On the contrary, Dr. Mosgrave tells Robert, "I do not believe that she is mad" (Braddon, 1998, p. 248). He explains "there is no evidence of madness in anything she has done" (Braddon, 1998, p. 248). According to Dr. Mosgrave, Lady Audley is sane mainly because there are very many legitimate grounds for her actions: she ran away from home because it was not a friendly one, and she left in the hope of finding a better one. There is no madness in that. Lady Audley perpetrated the crime of bigamy because through that crime she succeeded in getting fortune and position. Even though Lady Audley acted unethically in several instances, for example, leaving her child and perpetrating bigamy, she had obvious reasons. As Roger Smith states "motives are evidence of sanity" (Braddon, 1998, p. 122). Lady Audley's sanity is also evidenced by her rational mastery of calculation: when she found herself in a dire situation, she did not become hopeless. She uses creative means, and she conducted out a conspiracy that needed coolness and deliberation in execution. According to Dr. Mosgrave, Lady Audley's capacity to think under pressure is expressly symbolic of a powerful mind and not a limited one. Dr. Mosgrave resolves, "I do not think there is any proof of insanity in the story that you have told me, I do not think that any jury in England would accept the plea of insanity in such a case like this" (Braddon, 1998, p. 248). Dr. Mosgrave's decision is obvious; Lady Audley is also sane though she is aberrant. "According to Jill madness is the most melodramatic of a series of scandalous disclosures" (Matus, 1993)

To convince Dr. Mosgrave to declare Lady Audley as insane, Robert continuously draws on Dr. Mosgrave's sense of commitment to the community. When Robert demands Dr. Mosgrave to reconsider his analysis of Lady Audley Robert assures him: "I do not ask you to do any harm to society, but I ask you to save our stainless name from degradation and shame" (Braddon, 1998, p. 249). Robert then reveals that he suspects Lady Audley of killing her first husband and "conclude with an earnest appeal to the physician best feelings" (Braddon, 1998, p. 249). Dr. Mosgrave agrees to conduct a brief meeting with Lady Audley after which he states: the lady is not mad, but she has the hereditary taint in her blood. She has the cunning of madness, with the prudence of intelligence. "I will tell you what she is, Mr. Audley. She is dangerous!" (Braddon, 1998, p. 249). Even though Dr. Mosgrave maintains, "the lady is not mad", he finally agrees to approve that she is mad because 'she is dangerous'. It is crucial to note that Dr. Mosgrave does not deceive Lady Audley's commitment papers out of any ignoble motives. He does so because he deems her a peril to society. Additionally, the decision is one that he fights with. He traverses the room as he demonstrates his reasoning: This Mr. George has disappeared, but you have no evidence of his death. If you could give proof of his death you could produce no evidence of this lady, beyond the one fact that she had a powerful motive for getting rid of him. No tribunal in the United Kingdom would condemn her upon such evidence as that (Braddon, 1998, p. 249).

Because Lady Audley cannot be detained through a court of law, she must be confined by other means. Dr. Mosgrave says to Robert:

"You cannot expect me to condone one of the worst offences against society. If I saw an adequate reason for believing that a murder has been committed by this woman, I should refuse to assist you in smuggling her away out of reach" (Braddon, 1998, p. 250).

Even though Robert's principal intention is protecting the family reputation, Dr. Mosgrave frequently emphasizes that he does not share that interest. If Lady Audley could have been sentenced in court, Dr. Mosgrave would not have held her insane. However, the doctor is ready to declare her because he thinks she would not be condemned in a court of law and is a threat to society if left free. The decision by Dr. Mosgrave to approve Lady Audley notwithstanding her sanity is symbolic of the powers of doctors in exercising for good or evil during the Victorian period. Though conceivable to rate Dr. Mosgrave as a cynical reflection of how mental doctors and psychologists considered a role of moral authority, falsely incarcerated the sane people, and imposed patriarchy, it is more natural to view him as a resolute defence of mind doctors and a rationale for how and why the institutionalization of sane people might take place.

Arguably, Lady Audley dies when Robert Audley disposes her within the asylum and ensures that Madame Taylor cannot be linked with Audley court. He resolves that "the dark story of ...[George Talbot's] wicked wife had been finished in the Belgian mad-house" (Braddon, 1998, p. 407). Dr. Mosgrave gives a forewarning about the madwoman's living in the asylum as 'finished'. Presenting Robert Audley with the address to the Belgian asylum, he abstracts: "from the moment in which Lady Audley enters that house....her life, so far as life is made up of action and variety will be finished .....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" (Braddon, 1998, p. 373). To protect Audley from degradation, Lady Audley must be "shut from the world and all the worldly

associations”, preventing her from exposing her name to madness, to dispose of a ‘madwoman’ in the asylum metaphorically finishes her life, this is because she is separated from “the world and all the worldly associations”. Robert Audley directs Alicia Audley “to naturally avoid all the mention of Lady Audley’s name” once he removes her from Audley court, treating his aunt as if she had died (Braddon, 1998, p. 356).

The asylum results in the completion of Lady Audley's life, as well. After one year of incarceration, Robert Audley receives a note proclaiming “the death of a certain Madame Taylor, who had died quietly at Villebrumeuse, departing after a short illness, which Monsieur Val describes as a *Maladie de Langueur*” (Braddon, 1998, p. 436). Lady Audley ‘long illness’ elucidates to uneasiness and inactivity, implying that her treatment in the asylum resulted in her death. Lady Audley's confinement to the asylum is arguably defensible, however, Charlotte Brontë's definition of madness, as it includes sin, appeals to Lady Audley's wicked and illegal behaviour, which she connects to her madness.

The madhouse in *Lady Audley's Secret* hushes and disposes of mad women completely. As Robert advances to the madhouse together with Lady Audley, the narrator describes the time, “my lady” realizes where she has been brought.

A thin curtain of pale red; and upon this curtain shrouded one of the windows, there went and came to a dark shadow, the shadow of a woman with a fantastic headdress, the shadow of a restless creature, who paced perpetually backwards 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’ (Braddon, 1998, p. 379)

The woman that Lady Audley ‘pointed’ to is imperceptible behind ‘the curtained window’. She is said to be a ‘dark shadow’ of a woman and ‘a transient creature’. This representation associates darkness with aberration, the darkness in this setting implies an “absence of the moral or spiritual light” (Braddon, 1998). Also, she is simply a ‘shadow’ of a woman, which intimates that she does not have any identification and is consequently imaginary. The woman's movement is determined by the infinite excitement and inactivity, as she “paced perpetually backwards and forward before the window”. The madwoman behind the veil is typical of Lady Audley's survival in the asylum, as is represented by Dr. Mosgrave and manifested in the classification of her death.

Lady Audley is conscious of the reality that men were in command of restraining and quieting women, this is because she distinguishes Robert Audley as her incarcerator. Monsieur Val, the titleholder of the asylum in Villebrumeuse, Belgium entertains, Robert and his charge, when madam springs 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” (Braddon, 1998, p. 383). Lady Audley's ‘fury’, which indicates burning madness, toward Robert Audley is a definite hint of her disappointment and vulnerability in views to the patriarchal policing. Lady Audley asks to be left “alone with the man who has brought me here” and declines to quietly endure her confinement. She blames Robert Audley of bringing ‘me to my grave’, arguing “you have used your power basely and cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave” (Braddon, 1998, p. 384). Lady Audley recognizes Robert's ‘power’ and her powerlessness, as she has been restrained ‘to a living grave’, allusively detailing her death.

Lady Audley then announces to Robert Audley that:

George Talboy treated me as you treated me....He swore that if there was but one witness of my identity and that witness was removed from Audley Court by the width of the whole earth, he would bring him there to swear to my identity, and to denounce me, it was then that I was mad (Braddon, 1998, p. 386).

According to Lady Audley, her madness is produced by men; Just as George Talboy insists that he will “denounce; his wife, Robert Audley terms himself “the denouncer of this wretched woman” (Braddon, 1998, p. 375). Both men want ‘to declare’ lady Audley “to be wicked or evil” (Braddon, 1998, p. 375). Denouncing Lady Audley is an indication of the fact that men decide Lady Audley's punishment and control. Lady Audley resists punishment and restriction at each moment, as she becomes deeply mad.

*Lady Audley's Secret* connects crime and madness, Audley explains how madness is afflicted by temptation and the craving of violence and horror.

People are mad for years and years before their madness is found out... Sometimes a frenzy seizes them, and in an evil ampere-hour, they delude themselves. They perform a crime, perhaps. The horrible lure of opportunity plagues them; the knife is in their hand and the unconscious victim by their side. They may overcome the rebellious demon, go away, and die youthful of any violent deed; but they may agree to the horrible temptation— the frightful, passionate, hungry craving for violence and horror. They sometimes yield and are lost (Braddon, 1998, p. 283).

As Lady Audley documents her struggles with madness, she connects immorality with madness and claims that crime is madness. Lady Audley's evil hour takes place in the lime walk at the Audley Court, when Gorge Talboys threatens that that ‘he would bring’ someone who could swear to Lady Audley's identity as Helen Talboys and denounce her. “The awful temptation of opportunity attacks” her, as she confesses to Robert Audley; “it was then that I was mad, it was then that I drew the loose iron spindle from the shrunken wood, and saw my first

husband sink with one horrible cry into the black mouth of the well” (Braddon, 1998, p. 386). When Robert Audley comes to know about the accusatory evidence of the connecting Lady Audley with “last night’s deed of horror”, or the strived murder and the arson at Mount Stanning, he denounces her:

If I have wondered sometimes... that a young and lovely woman should be able of so filthy and difficult a murder, all wonder is passed. After last night’s deed of fear, there is no crime you could commit, however large and manufactured, which could make me wonder? Henceforth you must seem to me no longer a woman, a guilty woman with a heart, which in its worst wickedness has yet some latent power to suffer and feel; I look upon you henceforth as the demoniac incarnation of some evil principle. (Braddon, 1998, p. 386)

Lady Audley crime actions make Robert Audley criticize her. The attempted murder is a testimony to Robert that Lady Audley is capable of the conjectured ‘foul and treacherous’ murder of George Talboys. Lady Audley’s degeneracy changes her from ‘a youthful and attractive woman’ into ‘the demoniac incarnation of some evil principle’. The ‘vast and unnatural’ crime she is charged with limits her to be equally unnatural. Robert Audley disposes of Lady Audley of her femininity and subjectivity, she becomes the epitome of decadence and the contraposition of a woman. Henceforth, Lady Audley is termed as both ‘wicked’ and ‘wretched’ highlighting her ethical depravity. The use of the supernatural (‘unnatural, demoniac incarnation’ and ‘evil principle’) in the description of Lady Audley functions as a connotation of her madness.

Lady Audley criminality additionally distinguishes her from her duplicate within the narrative, Phoebe Marks, Lady Audley’s maid. Phoebe is portrayed as being alike ‘inwardly as well as outwardly’, the narrator explains:

There were commiserations between her and [Phoebe Marks], who was like herself, inwardly as well as outwardly—like herself, selfish, and cold, and cruel, eager for her progress, and exploitative of opulence and elegance; angry with the lot that had been cast her, and weary of dull dependence. My lady... clung to this pale-faced, pale-haired girl, whom she thought neither better nor worse than herself (Braddon, 1998, p. 296)

However, it is necessary to record that Lady Audley’s criminality contrasts her from the Phoebe Marks, who is also recognized to be as ‘selfish, and cold and cruel’ as herself. The sympathies between the two women emphasize Lady Audley’s madness and depravity as unpardonable, as the woman who looks like Lady Audley ostracizes her from her crimes. When Phoebe learns that it was Lady Audley who began the fire at Mount Stanning, she fell upon her knees, gripping her uplifted hands and begging heatedly to Lady Audley. “Oh, my God!” she cried. “say it’s not true my lady, say it’s not true! It’s too horrible, it’s too horrible, it’s too horrible!” (Braddon, 1998, p. 321). For the first time in the account, Lady Audley greed is deemed to be ‘too horrible’ for Phoebe Marks, highlighting her excitement and repulsion. Lady Audley, who has endeavoured to rid herself of the men who intimidate her advancement, is ‘too wicked’, even for Phoebe Marks (Braddon, 1998, p. 321). Significantly, it is Phoebe Marks who present Robert Audley with the knowledge that unites Lady Audley to the fire at Mount Stanning. She confesses to helping in the imprisonment of Lady Audley, as she discusses Robert: You know what I told you when I found you safe and well upon the night of the fire.... I told you what I speculated; what I think still (Braddon, 1998, p. 403). Phoebe Marks who is equally duplicitous, self-seeking, and eager for her progression, allows for Lady Audley’s madness and criminality to be restrained and confined.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century gave leeway for the advancement of the sensation novel. Despite its tremendous popularity, sensationalism generated meaningful debate among the traditionalists and as well as critics of that time because it challenged the underpinnings of the Victorian Era, particularly the moral values and the perception of domesticity. Through the introduction of disreputable aspects, for example, bigamy, scandals, secrets and the unusual heroines to modest households. Women writers tried to challenge the presumed gender roles and to strive for equal rights through their literature. In this context, *Jane Eyre*, *The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley’s Secret* all become role models of the sensation school, since they defy the cultural conventions.

Chapter 1 of the above dissertation concentrated on Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre*. The chapter examined the cultural and social context of the Victorian era in connection to Jane’s identity, dependency, and autonomy. In hindsight, it has built a cultural context for Jane’s development. From the findings of this chapter, it is evident that a shared feature in Freud’s development and psychoanalytic theory is his embodiment of the social context in the person’s growth. Bertha’s insanity or female madness is linked with female personages, however, Rochester is the male master who locked his first wife in the attic, to commit bigamy. Rochester challenges social customs by marrying her governess, engaged in flirting in Paris during his youth, and maintains a distant relationship with his protégée. In a way, Rochester can be deemed a Byronic hero, and for this reason, madness should be one of his most striking features. Many people correlate madness with criminality. In chapter 1 female madness was often recognized and associated with a moral abnormality.

Chapter 2 has explored the Victorian discussions about the etiology of madness through a corresponding study of Willkie Collins’s *The Woman in White*. The chapter pays recognition to the fact that the Victorian era is

marked by inquiries into the origins of mental illness in women, characterized by both heredity and environmental exposures. In chapter 2, I have shown that *The Woman in White* depicts an emphasis on the acquired vulnerability towards mental illness. In this respect; a special focus is given to Freud's psychodynamic theory, which disputes that childhood encounters are essential in shaping the adult personality. It is fascinating to see that the women in *The Woman in White* depend on one another; moreover, the women are in opposition to each other.

In chapter 2, we see that even though Anne Catherick is a victim of false incarceration, never needing any confinement, she is unidentified, buried under a tombstone displaying the name of the wrong woman. The madwoman who challenges the notion of gender, has a strong nature and is beautiful, young or assertive, is punished through confinement. Subjecting her to passivity, anonymity as well as silence. Anne Catherick, Laura Fairlie is shut up, physically confined and silenced, in the private madhouses in windowless cells and locked inside after they are blamed of being irrepressible, uncontrollable, and for humiliating and threatening men. The identity switch is a patriarchal attempt to prevent the power of feminine knowledge. Madness, as well as the doppelganger, agrees to restrain as well as suppress the women in the story. Anne is restricted solely because people regarded her as insane; her double Laura is confined simply because she looks like Anna. And in reality, it is through the lunacy that there is a well-defined distinction between the double pair. The asylum manager senses a difference in Anne Catherick after she reverts to the compound.

Chapter 3 devotes to the investigation of the asylum narrative. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many women were named mad and locked in the asylum. One such woman described her bitter and painful experience: when for any reason a person is to be put out of the way, insane hospitals stand with outstretched arms ready to embrace them. Chapter 3 brings to life the histories of some of the women who were buried alive in the madhouses and forgotten. A thoughtful critique of these accounts shows that a majority of these women were imprisoned in asylums for bravely asserting their religious and domestic rights. The chapter devotes itself to the analysis of *Lady Audley's Secret*, analyzing how the book's message about the wrongful institutionalization of women is undermined by the characterization of these women as being mentally unstable.

In chapter 3, *Lady Audley* says that her madness is produced by men; Just as George Talbot insists that he will denounce; his wife, Robert Audley terms himself 'the denouncer of this wretched woman'. Both men want 'to declare' lady Audley 'to be wicked or evil'. Denouncing *Lady Audley* is an indication of the fact that men decide *Lady Audley's* punishment and control. *Lady Audley* resists punishment and restriction at each moment, as she becomes deeply mad. *Lady Audley's Secret* connects crime and madness, Audley explains how madness is afflicted by 'temptation' and the craving of 'violence and horror'. As *Lady Audley* documents her struggles with madness, she connects immorality with madness and claims that crime is madness. *Lady Audley* 'evil hour' takes place in the lime walk at the Audley Court, when Gorge Talbot threatens that that 'he would bring' someone who could 'swear' *Lady Audley's* identity as Helen Talbot's and "denounce" her.

*Jane Eyre*, *The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley's Secret* are all radical because they skillfully make use of the corrective and surprising ending to question the women characters guilt, and to a greater degree to scrutinize the gender roles. Even though the novels are old and moralistic in their nature, their conclusion is unsettling and conflicting as it does not align with the storyline. While personas who do their social duty, for example, Robert Audley are compensated with Mirthful lives, the reason for punishing women characters, for example, *Lady Audley* remains a conundrum. In this setting, it is within the disruptive conclusion that readers are compelled to rethink the destiny of the women characters and their terminal fate.

The women attempt to succeed in life are unequivocally hindered by the ruling male hegemonic leadership that takes advantage of the uncertainty that encompasses the idea of madness. As Dr Mosgrave pronounces in *Lady Audley's Secret*, there is no explicit proof of *Lady Audley's* fanaticism and yet she is transferred to the asylum on the grounds of her 'latent insanity'. What this demonstrates is that as opposed to being dangerous mad women, women were thought to be perils to the society for not meeting their passive roles, that which was demanded of them, for this purpose, they had to be subjugated to reestablish social order. Contrasting women characters with their male friends, we see that men were able to perform some obscure and even destructive acts. Nevertheless, it is because of the firm and established patriarchal order that the male characters are displayed as good-hearted models, where else women are portrayed as evil, cunning, manipulative people who deserve nothing but cruel punishment.

The doubling of the madwoman and the sane woman in *Jane Eyre*, *Lady Audley's Secret* and *The Woman in White* represents the dualities of clear-mindedness and insanity. Nonetheless, the only defining features of madness that these three Victorian novels institute by doubling women is the vulnerability of female madness, the doubling of *Lady Audley* and Phoebe Marks, Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie and Bertha Marson with *Jane Eyre* is a sign that within every double, the madwoman is not actually mad and the sane woman is not really sane. For the madwoman to be regarded as the double of a sane woman, then madness is diminished, impermanent and conditioned.

Nevertheless, neither the vulnerability of madness or the doubling of sanity and insanity concedes for the madwoman to live unpunished. The doubling of the two women, which marks difference and madness reveals

some of the actual Victorian concerns that encompassed female transgressiveness. For a fact, the madwoman challenges the traditional womanhood using the assertiveness as well as agency, becoming 'masculine' in contrast to the sane woman. Therefore, in these three novels, the madwoman is punished (first she is restrained, and then exterminated, killing becomes permanent detention for her infractions) to restabilize and bring down anxiety concerning the Victorian gender philosophy. The doubling of the mad women and the sane woman supports femininity to be determined and dominated by the men.

The women in these three novels are designed in a way that they are reliant on one another and consequently are created in contradiction to one another. Only one woman is permitted to remain sane and only one woman can be alive. Even if Bertha Mason's madness lives as a narrative device, she at the end commits suicide and remains violent, criminal madwoman, eradicated throughout the story by her husband and considered inhumanely 'the Creole' and 'a wild beast'. Even if Anne Catherick is the victim of false imprisonment, never really needing confinement, she remains to be anonymous, concealed below a memorial that displays the wrong's woman name, ultimately to give, 'one line only'. In addition, if Anne did not die when she did, Count Fosco claims that he would have opened the door of the prison of life and have extended to the captive a happy release. Even if Lucy Graham is not mad and only 'has the hereditary taint in her blood', her 'dismal story' is 'finished in the Belgian mad-house', where, under a fraudulent name, she "expired peacefully...dying after a long illness..... described as a *maladie de langueur*" (Braddon, p.436). The madwoman who defies gender, who is both fierce and elegant, or silly and confident, is killed with custody, constrained to passivity, anonymity and muteness. Lucy Graham, Anne Catherick, Laura Fairlie, Bertha Mason, and even Jane Eyre are 'shut up' both materially confined and hushed within the individual madhouses, windowless cells, and locked rooms for being unrestrained, unruly and for mortifying and intimidating men.

In reality, all the women displayed in these books are sacrifices of the culture of their time; they are stripped of the liberty to determine whom they want to be as well as powerfully judged for exploring gender equality. One of the central reasons why the women of the Victorian times fail to thrive in their pursuit of a more satisfying life is their female status and the fulmination that they bestow to the social order due to their independence and resourcefulness. Nonetheless, the account of these duplicitous but appealing gentlewomen will remain to entertain readers for a long time.

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