Worry, Want, and Wickedness

Insanity and the Doppelgänger in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* and Mary

Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*

by

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ABSTRACT

John Herdman provides a brief explanation for neglecting the Victorian

sensational double in his work *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, "Nor

have I ventured into the vast hinterland of Victorian popular fiction in which

doubles roam in abundance, as these are invariably derivative in origin and break

no distinctive new territory of their own" (xi). To be sure the popular fiction of

the Victorian Era would not produce such penetrating and resonate doubles found

in the continental, and even American, literature of the same period until the

works of Scottish writers James Hogg and later Robert Louis Stevenson; and

while popular English writers have been rightly accused of "exploit[ing] it [the

double] for sensational effects," (Herdman 19) the indictment of possessing "no

distinctive new territory of their own" is hardly adequate. In particular, two

immensely popular works of fiction in the 1860's, Wilkie Collins' The Woman in

White (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1862), employ

the convention of the double for a simultaneous sensational and sociological

effect. However, the sociological influence of the double in these two texts is not

achieved alone: the "guise of lunacy" deployed as a cover-up for criminality acts

symbiotically with the sensational double. The double motif provides female

characters within these works the opportunity to manipulate the "guise of lunacy"

to transgress patriarchal boundaries cemented within the socio-economic

hierarchy as well as within other patriarchal institutions: marriage and the

sanatorium. Overall this presentation formulates "new distinctive territory" in the

land of the Victorian sensational double through the works of Collins and

Braddon.

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Introduction

By the mid-Nineteenth Century the literary phenomenon of the double had

evolved from a psychologically penetrating literary device to a seemingly

superficial contrivance to complicate plot structure and bewilder readers. Recent

scholarship has accused the Victorian sensation double of being a barren,

derivative exploitation of a hauntingly psycho-spiritual original. John Herdman in

his work, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* excuses his lack of attention

to mid-century popular fiction precisely for this reason. Herdman claims he has

not "ventured into the vast hinterland of Victorian popular fiction in which

doubles roam in abundance"(xi) due to his stance that they "are invariably

derivative in origin and break no new distinctive territory of their own" (xi). The

territory, however, of the doppelgänger encompasses a vast multi-cultural literary

history: writers from as early as St. Augustine in his *Confessions* up to

contemporary American author Chuck Palahniuk in his indie thriller *Fight Club*

both contemplate and utilize the phenomenon of the double to resounding effect.

However, the doppelgänger would find its preeminence in the early nineteenth-

century fiction of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Mary Shelley, James Hogg, E.T.A.

Hoffman, Edgar Allen Poe, and towards the fin de siècle with the works of Robert

Louis Stevenson. Yet with such a transnational corpus of usage, the exact

denotation of what constitutes a doppelgänger seems to occupy a liminal space

defying unambiguity. The term itself was christened at the end of the eighteenth

century by Jean Paul Richter, "they [doppelgängers] are 'double-goers,' mirror-

twisted twins without whom the other has neither past nor future, yet in whose present and presence tragedy must ensue. Every agitation of the one psyche is felt by the other" (Schwartz 64). The representation of the doppelgänger can be manifested through numerous variations: metaphysical or apparitional duplication of an individual (as in Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov and his Devil), uncanny physical resemblances between two individuals (utilized in the works of Collins and Braddon), split personality through supernatural or phantasmal means (most infamously known through Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*), or through the disparity or complementarity between individual characters who can be viewed as dissimilar aspects of a divided whole (arguably Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov in *Crime and Punishment*). Yet overall, "in all its variations, the double arises out of and gives form to the tension between division and unity. It stands for contradiction within unity, and for unity in spite of division, the likeness expressing the unity of the individual, the doubleness or complementarity expressing division within the personality" (Herdman 2).

The dichotomous nature of the doppelgänger can be seen as developing from the inherent presence of duality among the majority of corporeal and spiritual aspects of life: man and woman, body and soul, good and evil, and heaven and hell, conscious and unconscious. And it is through the intertwining aspects of spiritually and corporeality that the theological underpinnings of the doppelgänger begin to take root. In book X of the *Confessions* St. Augustine contemplates how is it that carnal urges engrained in his memory from prior

experiences manifest themselves during sleep in such an ardent fashion as to almost result in submission to these desires (Herdman 12): Augustine inquires as to why "...there yet live in my memory (whereof I have much spoken) the images of such things as my ill custom there fixed, which haunt me, strengthless when I am awake: but in sleep, not only so as to give pleasure, but even to obtain assent, and what is very like reality. Yea, so far prevails the illusion of the image, in my soul and in my flesh, that, when asleep, false visions persuade to that which when waking, the true cannot. Am I not then myself, O Lord my God?" (Saint Augustine 190). Augustine muses on the possibility of a split self: one half being consciously wakeful, abstinent, and rational, the other an unconscious, somnambulistic sensualist. Herdman also credits Augustine with the origination of the doppelgänger theme in its most reductive construction through the colloquial phrase, "to be beside oneself." He sates that, "here we have the image of the double in its simplest and most vivid form: Augustine envisages himself as two people, both of them himself, standing beside each other: 'I was beside myself.'" (2).

The theological foundations of the double are rampant in Christian ideology. From Christ's orison on the Mount of Olives posing the ecclesiastical issue of whether Christ possessed two wills,[1] to the belief of the final resurrection of the spiritual body upon death of the corporeal body: a vast portion of Christian dogma is wrapped up in the dichotomy of the sacred and the carnal, the holy and unholy. The moral turmoil resulting from such duality is expanded upon further

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1 "And kneeling down, he prayed. Saying: Father, if you will, remove this chalice from me: but yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22.41-42).

by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans:

> For we know that the law is spiritual. But I am carnal, sold under
> sin. For that which I work, I understand not. For I do not that good
> which I will: but the evil which I hate, that I do. If then I do that
> which I will not, I consent to the law, that it is good. Now then it is
> no more I that do it: but sin that dwells in me. For to will is present
> with: but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good
> which I will, I do not: but the evil which I will not, that I do.
> (Romans 7.14-19)

Paul's meditations on moral conflict as a result of opposing wills would be further
advanced upon later in the 19th century through evolutionary discourse and
theory; the nascent religious foundations of the doppelgänger would now be
combined with the burgeoning scientific and social theory of evolution and
degeneration.

The Victorian notion of degeneracy can be treated, somewhat reductively,
as a conflation of Christian theological duality (spirit versus flesh, good versus
evil) and Darwinian evolutionary dichotomy (dominant versus recessive, survival
versus death). The spiritual and the scientific would be combined in the
nineteenth-century to designate behavioral and physical stigmata in attempts to
"work out the beast" through the critique of everyday life: unkempt attire,
improper behavior (often an indicator of mental illness in women, which will be
discussed further on in the paper), a pale countenance, or the appearance of
"something troglodytic"[2] about an individual, were all factors that contributed to

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2 In Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* Utterson is unable to
pinpoint an exact demarcation of what exactly is wrong with Mr. Hyde and describes his
appearance as being, "Something troglodytic, shall we say?" (Stevenson 16).

deeming whether or not one was a degenerate or a properly evolved gentlemen or woman.

Daniel Pick writes in his study on degeneration in the nineteenth-century that there was a "fascination with the ancestry and atavism of the crowd," he later goes on to speculate that the, "dominant scene of degeneration,[...], was displaced from the individual (specific cretins, criminals, the insane and so on) and even the family[...] to society itself—crowds, masses, cities, modernity" (Pick 4). Yet within the mob a distinction between the savage and the noble was based primarily upon socio-economic status; the lower classes were viewed as a cesspool of atavists reproducing at a rapid pace[3], and thus reverting society as a hole back to a primordial, savage state. Andrew Scull comments on the frequency of pauper lunatics and observes that, "a wide range of contemporary observers commented on how much laxer were the standards for judging a poor person to be insane, and on how much readier both local poor law authorities and lower class families were to commit decrepit and troublesome people to the asylum; individuals who had come from the middle and upper classes, would never have been diagnosed as insane" (Scull 602). In true Malthusian fashion, the pauper class would again be ground zero for Victorian anxieties about reproduction and

3 Thomas Malthus wrote extensively on the issue of prolific reproduction among the lower classes in the beginning of the century. He maintained that, "population, when unchecked, increased in a geometric ratio, and subsistence for man in an arithmetical ratio" (Malthus 21). Thus at the current rate of "unchecked" propagation, the means to support and feed the species would eventually run out. He recommended marrying later on in life and employing the practice of "self-restraint" to curb population growth. Collins utilizes Fredrick Fairlie as a mouthpiece for Malthusian anxiety, "When you have shown yourself too considerate and self-denying to add a family of your own to an already overcrowded population, you are vindictively marked out by your friends, who have no similar consideration and no similar self-denial, as the recipient of half their conjugal troubles, and the born friend of all their children" (Collins 352).

heredity. Charles Darwin's contemplations on the laws of heredity in *On the Origin of Species* provided degeneration theorists, namely Morel, Lombroso, and Maudsley, a further scientific legitimization of their atavistic postulations. Darwin writes, "Having alluded to the subject of reversion, I may here refer to a statement often made by naturalists—namely, that our domestic varieties, when run wild, gradually but certainly revert in character to their aboriginal stocks" (Darwin 14). Although Darwin lacked the aid of Mendelian genetics in his attempts to illuminate the enigma of heredity, he was cognizant of the ability and frequency for some traits to be passed on, while others remained dormant, but would then resurface after a period of absence.[4] The reversion of physical and behavioral characteristics back to a "remote ancestor" hindered the sacrosanct visions of "progress" so prolific amidst the Victorian zeitgeist. An 1875 article in the Larousse dictionary provides an adequate summary, "Humanity is perfectible and it moves incessantly from less good to better, from ignorance to science, from barbarism to civilisation...The idea that humanity becomes day by day better and happier is particularly dear to our century. Faith in the law of progress is the true faith of our century" (Pick 12).

The eugenicist principle of progress through perfectibility would play heavily into issues of legislation for the mentally ill and feeble-minded within the 19th century[5]. The age of the "Great Confinement" functions symbiotically with

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4 "The laws governing inheritance are quite unknown; no one can say why a peculiarity in different individuals of the same species, or in individuals of different species, is sometimes inherited and sometimes not so; why the child often reverts in certain characters to its grandfather or grandmother or other more remote ancestor" (Darwin 13).
[5] Although Francis Galton would not coin the term "eugenics" until his 1883 book, *Inquiries into*

the Victorian imperialist agenda; "the notion of 'civilisation' was by now powerfully invested with the sense of imperial mission; what was 'strained' was exactly the viability of the ideology of a cohesive and unified ruling race" (Pick 184). And the "strains" to the feasibility of a master race were now being rapidly confined within asylum walls. The treatment of idiots, imbeciles, and lunatics of varying degrees had evolved from the limitlessness of the "ship of fools" to the limitations now imposed by asylum walls:

> The classical experience of madness is born. The great threat that dawned on the horizon of the fifteenth century subsides, the disturbing powers that inhabit Bosch's painting have lost their violence. Forms remain, now transparent and docile, forming a cortège, the inevitable procession of reason. Madness has ceased to be—at the limits of the world, of man and death—an eschatological figure; the darkness has dispersed on which the eyes of madness were fixed and out of which the forms of the impossible were born. Oblivion falls upon the world navigated by the free slaves of the Ship of Fools. Madness will no longer proceed from a point within the world to a point beyond, on its strange voyage; it will never again be that fugitive and absolute limit. Behold it moored now, made fast among things and men. Retained and maintained. No longer a ship but a hospital. (Foucault 35)

The encumbrance posed upon "progress" by lunatic degenerates was an imperial, as well as domestic issue, and by the end of the century apprehensions about the reversion of the English people and the stymieing of evolutionary advancement is reflected in the astonishing increase in recorded lunacy rates, "from 2,248 or 2.26/10,000 of the population in 1807, to 86,067 or 29.26/10,000 in 1890" (Scull 337). Mathew Thomson, in his book *The Problem of Mental Deficiency*, attributes

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Human Faculty and Development, notions of perfectibility through heredity did exist within the Victorian zeitgeist.

this rise in lunacy to the role the mind played in evolutionary and degenerate discourse, "it was mankind's intelligence and willful control over his more primitive instincts which made him the most highly evolved creature in the natural world, it was assumed that the mind was also the most recently evolved part of his nature and the most liable to succumb to the onset of degeneration" (Thomson 19-20). Thus the segregation and confinement of the feeble minded and mentally ill can ultimately be viewed as a eugenic attempt to salvage notions of advancement and the future promise of a pure ruling English race. Yet the achievement of a "master race" undoubtedly goes hand in hand with reproductive legislation and restriction (partly achieved through segregation of the mad) and the role women would play (or be forced to play) in asylum life and treatment to curb reproductive potential and correct mental maladies would be violent and brutal. Treatments ranged from inserting ice cubes into the rectum and female circumcision to the practice of leaching the labia. Physician W. Tyler Smith praises the result of such routines in his work, "Climacteric Disease." He writes, "the suddenness with which leeches applied to this part fill themselves considerably increases the good effects of their application, and for some hours after their removal there is an oozing of blood from the leech-bites" (Showalter 172). Psychiatric practices and treatments, and asylum life and management in general, was rife with patriarchal dominance; the infantilization of female patients was a daily occurrence reflected in their medical care (they had less opportunity for physical recreation than male patients and were confined to feminine domestic occupations such as needlework and other sedentary activities). According to one

official, proper asylum management should entail treating patients "as children under a perpetual personal guardianship" (169). The infantilization of the madwoman, in both literature and life, would serve to further legitimize patriarchal control within psychiatric and asylum culture. In *Madness and Civilization*, "Michel Foucault sees in this Victorian equation of insanity and childhood a revival of patriarchal power which would later be codified by the mythologies of psychoanalysis. For the crude external force of the eighteenth-century madhouse, the nineteenth-century asylum substituted the moral force of paternal authority; the keeper becomes the omniscient father, a patriarchal figure women were accustomed to believing" (169).

Lunatic management and psychiatric practice would receive one of its most significant pieces of legislation with the Asylums Act of 1845. It stipulated an expansion in "institutional provision by obliging all counties and boroughs to erect asylums for their pauper insane within three years, establishing a system of public mental hospitals one hundred years before the National Health Service" ("Certification of Insanity" 267). And with the 1845 Act, which stipulated that "any county asylum or voluntary hospital receiving the 'insane' must be directed by a qualified medical practitioner" (267) paved the way for a new patriarchal coterie of professional psychiatrists.[6] Wright later goes on to argue that upon further analysis of historical legislations regarding the mad in the Victorian period, that in fact, "contrary to general historical interpretation, the nineteenth

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6 The most famous rise to power within the alienist elite was arguably John Conolly through his implementation of methods of non-restraint in the Middlesex County Asylum at Hanwell, then one of the largest asylums in the world (*Mental Disability in Victorian England* 24).

century did not witness the slow capture of the mad by a medical elite. Rather, the

evolution of legislative provision, at first investing medical men with virtually

unmediated authority, gradually curtailed the power of doctors, and especially the

power of medical superintendents, over the process of certification and

confinement" ("Certification of Insanity" 288). Certifications of insanity were a

cause for great concern during the period; the fear of false imprisonment was very

much at home within the Victorian psyche and this notion was frequently

reflected in sensational newspaper headlines and popular fiction. Yet false

imprisonment was not as habitual as popular culture made it seem: asylums were

the most expensive alternative available to poor law authorities, thus the decisions

to remove an individual from the pauper workhouses and into a county asylum

was a financial process not taken lightly. However some critics maintain that

despite the expense, the confinement of women for transgressive behavior,

primarily blatant sexuality, did not stymie a large influx of female patients inside

asylum walls, "since overt sexuality was a symptom of many supposed categories

of female insanity, its manifestation at any stage of the female life cycle could

lead to incarceration even when no other symptoms were present" (Showalter

173) and in fact "many case histories of female patients cite sexual immorality as

the reason for psychiatric intervention" (173). The hyper-sexual lunatic female

would be given its most notorious depiction in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre.* The

novel characterizes overtly passionate and sensual women who transgress the

Foucauldian concept of the "deployment of alliance" as severely mentally

disturbed.[7] Once the elements of female madness in the Victorian period are analyzed, it becomes apparent that the symbolic behavior of the patients, their fantasies and theoretical delusions, as well as the way in which novelists employ the concept of insanity itself, shows that the mental breakdown of women was usually an expression of resolution of conflicts in the constrictive, claustrophobic middle-class feminine role and that the Victorian psychiatric certifications, delineations, and incarcerations were an extremely efficient mechanism of female socio-sexual control. The sensation novels of the 1860's and 1870's commonly characterized lunacy as hereditary in the female line, and madness was utilized as the "go-to" conventional explanation for any feminine act of violence, passion, or self-assertion (175). Both Collins and Braddon adhered to the practice of characterizing feminine agency as madness within their writing, yet contrary to the traditional role of madness as a confining agent it is utilized, along with the doppelgänger, in a manner which liberates those it is originally used to confine.

The elements of Victorian asylum and psychiatric culture were undoubtedly utilized by writers within the era to further "sensationalize" narrative structures. The sensation novel of the mid-century would be a precursor for later crime and detective fiction, and eventually films, well into the twentieth century. Patrick Brantlinger poses the question "what is so sensational about sensation fiction?" and attributes it to, primarily content, "the sensation novel was and is

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[7] In *The History of Sexuality, Volume One* Foucault writes that, "the deployment of alliance is built around a system of rules defining the permitted and forbidden, the licit and the illicit" and that it was "a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions" (106). Thus women whose reluctance to conform to the "mechanisms of constraint" (106) by maintaining asexuality and desiring nothing but an improvement in social status through marriage could earn a "lunatic" labeling.

sensational partly because of content: it deals with crime, often murder as an outcome of adultery and sometimes bigamy, in apparently proper, bourgeois, domestic settings" (Brantlinger 1). And by introducing sensational content into the novel while simultaneously deploying a reworking of the doppelgänger tradition, the sensation novel illustrates what appears to be "insanity" in women and utilizes it thematically to attack patriarchal conventions. Overall the madwoman and the doppelgänger are utilized symbiotically within Wilkie Collins' *A Woman in White* (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) to dismantle the master's house while using the tools of the master.

The Woman in White

In Kensal Green Cemetery, West London the remains of Wilkie Collins lay buried beneath a headstone inscribed: "In memory of Wilkie Collins, author of 'The Woman in White' and other works of fiction" (Hyder 297).[8] Although Collins had published prolifically throughout his career, this epigraph is appropriately reflective of the wild popularity and frenetic success *The Woman in White* would receive throughout 1859 to 1860: a popularity that rivaled, and surpassed, the works of Collins' contemporary and friend, Charles Dickens. The frenzy with which the public responded to *The Woman in White* is comparable to the hysteria surrounding the contemporary Harry Potter books and films, it "inspired what would nowadays be called a sales mania and a franchise boom" (Sutherland vii). Kenneth Robinson in his biography on Collins writes that, "while the novel was still selling in its thousands, manufacturers were producing

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8   This inscription was written by Wilkie himself, as is apparent in his will (Hyder 297).

Woman in White perfume, *Woman in White* cloaks and bonnets, and the music-shops displayed *Woman in White* waltzes and quadrilles...Dickens was not alone in his enthusiasm" (Robinson 137). And this heated, widespread obsession with Collins' tale was the result of sensation fiction at its finest; the common practice of purloining newspaper headlines and reworking them into plot structures was an exercise in which Collins was undoubtedly familiar. Collins' famous mantra, "Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait" (Sutherland xiii) is demonstrative of the "electric stimulus" readers were supposed to experience when in relation with a sensation novel; it was aimed to be "fiction that jolted the readers nerves" (xiii)[9]. And with this new attitude toward fiction, a new genre had been birthed through the conflation of "electro-psychological" implications (xiii) and headlines torn from sensational journalistic publications. One reviewer of Collins' work, a Mrs. Oliphant of *Blackwood Magazine*, credited the author on his "new school of fiction" in a May 1862 review, "It cannot be denied", she wrote, "that a most striking and original effort, sufficiently individual to be capable of originating a new school in fiction, has been made" (Sutherland x-xi).

Collins himself possessed a hobby for reading "electrically stimulating" writing and drew his inspiration for *The Woman in White* off of one such venture. As an avid reader of criminal cases, particularly those written in French, Clyde K. Hyder in his article, "Wilkie Collins and The Woman in White" identifies the

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9 One of Collins' most "stimulating" qualities in the novel are undoubtedly the pet mice of Count Fosco. Marian Halcombe's comments on the mice mimics, in a sense, the desired response from readers of sensation fiction: "He [Count Fosco] put the pagoda-cage on his lap, and let out the mice to crawl over him as usual. They are pretty, innocent-looking little creatures; but the sight of them creeping around a man's body is, for some reason, not pleasant to me. It excites a strange, responsive creeping in my own nerves" (Collins 233).

legal case of Madame de Douhault as the likely muse Collins would utilize for his work.[10] Hyder points out Maurice Méjan's *Recueil des Causes Celebre* (1808) as the source for the case of Madame de Douhault and reveals that Collins possessed this work in his library. Reductively, the case involved the misappropriation of inherited funds by a greedy aristocrat, leaving the female members of the family, particularly the mother, in altered circumstances. One sister, the said Madame de Douhault, then journeyed to re-appropriate the rightful funds due to her mother. After a bit of snuff one afternoon in a carriage ride, Madame de Douhault developed a headache and returned home for a rest. She then reportedly woke up several days later to find herself in the Salpêtrière Hospital under the name of Blainville. Her avaricious brother, the Monsieur de Champignelles, then claimed his sister as dead and proceeded to liquidate her estate. Madame de Douhault, whose identity no one questioned at Versailles, would then enter into a lengthy legal battle attempting to regain her rightful identity and property. The similarity between this court case and Collins' novel is obvious: Collins purloins the story line of Madame de Douhault and, in true "sensational fashion", works it into the novel through Count Fosco's attempt to usurp Laura Fairlie's wealth by robbing her of her identity. Collins capitalized on the Victorian anxiety of false imprisonment, and a series of three highly publicized cases of false incarceration during the summer of 1858 would certainly resonate with Collins' readers and ultimately work towards his advantage.[11] The reality of truth being stranger than

10 For more details on the case than what is provided here, consult Hyder's article.
11 Richard Altick in his book, *The Presence of the Present* (1991), writes briefly on these cases, "In the summer of 1858 three well-publicized cases of alleged improper confinement came to

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fiction functions well within the sensation genre: the sensation novel barely

enhances the sensational nature of everyday life in Britain during mid-century,

particularly when dealing with issues of mental illness and insanity.

Asylum control and regulation was a gradual process in which the poor,

middle, and upper classes would experience a further solidification of class

separation. Private asylums were not subject to the same restrictions and

limitations as that of their public counterpart, thus providing a level of enigmatic

intrigue surrounding their inner workings and permitting authors room for

creative license within fiction writing. Yet the inhabitants of the asylums

themselves would provide an amount of sensational material equal to that of

asylum management and control. The issue of what demarcated a lunatic or

someone of unsound mind was a perpetual problem for degeneration theorists

throughout the century; Foucault writes that, "madness belonged to social failure,

which appeared without distinction as its cause, model, and limit" and that

"mental disease would become degeneracy" (Foucault 259-260). Thus notions of

progress combined with the Victorian proclivity to categorize, dichotomize, and

sanitize would naturally lead to a great deal of emphasis placed on hygiene, dress,

and overall bodily upkeep when it came to the demarcation of lunatics and

degenerates alike. Representations of madness in literature possess an extensive

history whose scope is beyond the coverage of this essay, yet the association of

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public attention. One was that of a Mrs. Turner, a patient in an asylum near York, who was
subsequently found to be of sound mind. A second concerned a Mr. Ruck, confined in another
institution, who was also judged to be sane. The third, which proved to be most closely
connected with fiction, was that of a young man named Fletcher, a hard-drinking wastrel who
claimed £35,000 from his late father's firm. The surviving partners had him pronounced insane
and committed to a madhouse" (545).

madmen with animality is an attribute that appears, arguably, unchanged within

literature until the sensation fiction of the mid nineteenth-century. Michel

Foucault addresses the development of the animalistic madmen as such:

> In the thought of the Middle Ages, the legions of animals, named
> once and for all by Adam, symbolically bear the values of
> humanity. But at the beginning of the Renaissance, the relations
> with animality are reversed; the beast is set free; it escapes the
> world of legend and moral illustration to acquire a fantastic nature
> of its own. And by an astonishing reversal, it is now the animal that
> will stalk man, capture him, and reveal him to his own truth.
> Impossible animals, issuing from a demented imagination, become
> the secret nature of man […] Animality has escaped domestication
> by human symbols and values; and it is animality that reveals the
> dark rage, the sterile madness that lie in men's hearts. (Foucault 21)

And around mid-century Charlotte Bronte would provide one of the most

infamous depictions of the animalistic madman through Edward Fairfax

Rochester's Creole bride, Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* (1847). The "madwoman in

the attic" is described as being, "at the further end of the room, a figure ran

backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could

not, at first sight tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled

like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of

dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its face and head" (Bronte 380). Her

graphic dehumanization and stark animality serve as a visual signifier aligning her

with some of the Victorian stigmata of degeneration. Anxiety about the

inheritability of degenerative diseases, of which lunacy was included, certainly

plagued the Victorian conscience and the inheritability of such atavistic

characteristics is given attention to in Bronte's novel when Rochester exclaims

that, "Bertha Mason is mad; and she came from a mad family:—idiots and maniacs through three generations! Her mother, the Creole, was both a mad woman and a drunkard!" (379). For women within the nineteenth century, and even well into the twentieth, immorality and insanity appear to have functioned as a packaged deal: diagnoses of lunacy had become the typical standard for the psychiatric elite when dealing with immoral feminine behavior. As Elaine Showalter has demonstrated in her article, "Victorian Women and Insanity", the strict confines of feminine life in the Victorian period made almost any behavior asserting an individual will transgressive (an issue for the Victorian working-class as well). In her *Book of Household Management* (1859) Isabella Beeton had created an establishing text for Victorian middle-class identity in which she prefaces her work with a quote from *The Vicar of Wakefield* on proper feminine behavior. When speaking to the importance of "a knowledge of household duties" Mrs. Beeton writes that:

> On these are perpetually dependent the happiness, comfort, and well-being of a family. In this opinion we are borne out by the author of 'The Vicar of Wakefield', who says: 'The modest virgin, the prudent wife, and the careful matron, are much more serviceable in life than petticoated philosophers, blustering heroines, or virago queens. She who makes her husband happy and her children happy, who reclaims the one from vice and trains up the other to virtue, is a much greater character than ladies described in romances, whose whole occupation is to murder mankind with shafts from their quiver, or their eyes.' (Beeton 7)

Domestic service and acquiescence were the rightful, and only, duties with which "the angel in the house"[12] should concern herself; any hope, desire, or wish

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[12] Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem to his wife, "The Angel in the House" would become largely

transgressing the confines of the domestic sphere could lead to a lunatic labeling

or potentially a relocation to the sanatorium. And the fact that passionate, sensual

women were regarded as lunatics would resonate from the time of *Jane Eyre*

(1847) up through the sensation fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie

Collins in the 1860's, and even into the twentieth century. However the inhuman,

animalistic portrayal of the madwoman would not survive her release from the

attic, "even in the novel, the madwoman, who starts out confined to the Gothic

subplot—to the narrative and domestic space which Charlotte Bronte calls the

"the third story"—by the fin-de-siècle has taken up residence in the front room"

(Showalter 161).[13] And it is this placement within the front room that transforms

the image of the madwoman: she is no longer beastly Bertha Mason, but an

infantilized, seraphic lunatic whose degeneracy is not readily perceived upon first

glance. For both Collins and Braddon the ability of the madwoman to insert

herself among rational society and infiltrate social circles undetected rested on the

madwoman's appearance subscribing to the ideal of Victorian feminine beauty.

When describing the woman in white herself, Anne Catherick, Walter Hartright,

although hypnotized by her looks and the fantastic circumstances of their

acquaintance, had not perceived any inherent lunacy in her character, "...the idea

of absolute insanity which we all associate with the very name of an Asylum, had,

I can honestly declare, never occurred to me in connexion with her. I had seen

nothing in her language or her actions, to justify it at the time; and, even with the

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influential in Britain during the later half of the nineteenth century.

13 Bertha Mason would eventually be liberated from the Gothic subplot of *Jane Eyre* with the
   publication of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966.

new light thrown on her by the words which the stranger had addressed to the policeman, I could see nothing to justify it now" (Collins 28). The delineations of a lunatic had become ulterior, and thus accusations of madness more scandalous (Laura's brief confinement to an asylum, although she is "sane," is demonstrative of how hidden madness had become within the individual). And to heighten the intrigue around lunacy, both Collins and Braddon adopted the doppelgänger phenomenon into their texts.

Unlike the doubles in Dostoevsky, Hogg, and other nineteenth century writers who have been lauded for their usage of the double, the critical consensus surrounding the sensation fiction doppelgänger is overall superficial; Ralph Tymms maintains that "the double attracted little serious attention in English and American literature of the mid-Victorian age" (Tymms 86) and that "in the face of mistaken identity, exact resemblances often results in comic confusion, and is not treated as a noteworthy phenomenon in itself" (24). But this "un-noteworthy phenomenon" is central to *The Woman in White.* The likeness between Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie is what permits, simultaneously, their confinement to patriarchal dominance and their eventual dismantling of patriarchal authority. The morally righteous Walter Hartright, whose name seems a play on words for having one's "heart" in the "right" place (an ironic attribute for a masculine character within an anti-patriarchal novel), provides the first instance in which the contemplation of the likeness between Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie occurs:

> I looked at her, with my mind full of that other lovely face which had so ominously recalled her to my memory on the terrace by moonlight. I had seen Anne Catherick's likeness in Miss Fairlie. I

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now saw Miss Fairlie's likeness in Anne Catherick—saw it all the more clearly because the points of dissimilarity between the two were presented to me as well as the points of resemblance. In the general outline of the countenance and general proportion of the features; in the colour of the hair and in the little nervous uncertainty about the lips; in the height and size of the figure, and the carriage of the head and body, the likeness appeared even more startling than I had ever felt it to be yet. (Collins 96)

Yet the doppelgänger dynamic between Laura Fairlie and Anne Catherick is not without its lunatic element. Anne is noticeably deficient in mental ability:

A most extraordinary and startling change passed over her. Her face, at all ordinary times so touching to look at, in its nervous sensitiveness, weakness, and uncertainty, became suddenly darkened by an expression of maniacally intense hatred and fear, which communicated a wild, unnatural force to every feature. Her eyes dilated in the dim evening light, like the eyes of a wild animal. She caught up the cloth that had fallen at her side, as if it had been a living creature that she could kill, and crushed it in both her hands with such convulsive strength that the few drops of moisture left in it trickled down on the stone beneath her. (Collins104)

Anne Catherick's lunacy is not without its inhuman, Bertha Mason-like strength; a necessary attribute to emphasize the damage and harm she is reputed to be capable of committing. And it is the threat of danger that Anne, and eventually Laura, pose to the patriarchal regime, represented by Sir Percival Glyde and the "Napoleon of Crime" Count Fosco, that results in the exploitation and confinement of the doppelgänger duo.

Although Anne is characterized as being a dangerous lunatic at certain points throughout the text, in reality she is more in-line with "feeble-mindedness". Naturally, the liminal territory between the insane, idiots, and the weak-minded, was open to interpretation by psychiatric practitioners and the lay public alike, yet

the primary point to be emphasized is that during the Victorian period the legal,

and medical, definition of "insanity" was extremely broad and included all who

had at one time been *non compos mentis* (Certification of Insanity 281). Anne is

earlier described as possessing an intellect that, "is not developed as it ought to be

at her age" (Collins 58) and as having a mind prone to monomania, "her unusual

slowness in acquiring ideas implies an unusual tenacity in keeping them, when

they are once received into her mind" (59). This weakness of intellect will

eventually be given a level of power through knowledge, or the appearance of

knowledge, through Sir Percival's "Secret".[14] Anne's mother, Mrs. Catherick,

recalls the scene in which her daughter had crossed the boundary from "feeble-

minded" to "lunatic":

> Seeing my daughter in the room with me (I had been afraid to let
> her out of my sight, after what had happened the day before), he
> ordered her away. […] "Leave us," he said, looking at her over his
> shoulder. She looked back over *her* shoulder, and waited, as if she
> didn't care to go. "Do you hear?" he roared out; "leave the room."
> "Speak to me civilly," says she, getting red in the face. "Turn the
> idiot out," says he, looking my way. She had always had crazy
> notions of her own about her dignity; and that word, "idiot," upset
> her in a moment. Before I could interfere, she stepped up to him, in
> a fine passion. "Beg my pardon, directly," says she, "or I'll make it
> the worse for you. I'll let out your Secret. I can ruin your life, if I
> choose to open my lips." (Collins 549)

The feminine mind becomes dangerous and "insane" when in possession of

patriarchal knowledge. And a blind allegiance to patriarchal authority is portrayed

in a dubious light throughout the novel; the highly rational Miss Halcombe does

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[14] Sir Percival's "Secret" is the truth behind his parentage: his parents had never married and to
legitimize himself and obtain his father's estate he forged their marriage register entry in their
parish records.

not hesitate to express her contempt for her position in society as a woman, and thus in order to secure the safety of her sister, and herself, she is forced to plan maneuvers and manipulations of varying degrees, tactics that are forced on her by her restricted role in Victorian society. Accusations of lunacy and eventual asylum confinement are the result of discovering acts of immoral male behavior for both Anne and Laura. The likeness between the two women is eventually used as a device to keep "the Secret" of Sir Percival Glyde's parentage by switching the identities of the two young women:

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

The switch of identity is a patriarchal attempt to curtail the power of feminine knowledge, and up until this point in the novel lunacy and the doppelgänger cohere to restrict and subjugate the women in the text: Anne is confined because she is deemed insane, and her double Laura is confined, reductively, because she looks like Anne. Yet it is through lunacy that an eventual distinction between the doppelgänger pair is able to be discerned. The asylum proprietor senses an inexplicable alteration in "Anne Catherick" after her return 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 also for the modification in the form of Anne Catherick's delusion, which was reflected, no doubt, in her manner and expression. But 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 428)

The proprietor's perception is essential to the eventual dismantling and downfall of Sir Percival and Count Fosco. Although Collins places a great deal of emphasis on the "proof of dates" to reveal the plot of swapped identity, without this distinction of lunacy between Anne and Laura, Miss Halcombe's plot of escape would not have materialized, "this conversation […] produced, nevertheless, a very serious effect upon her" (428). And after this discussion with the asylum proprietor, Miss Halcombe recognizes Laura Fairlie as the incarcerated Anne Catherick, "In that moment Miss Halcombe recognised her sister—recognised the dead alive" (429). Claims of lunacy are used to subjugate feminine power, but the lunatic distinction between the doppelgänger pair permits this exploitation to be discovered, reversed, and later used against immoral patriarchal authority to restore proper order. And throughout the novel the most immoral characters are male: from the sweet-toothed Count Fosco, to the easily provoked Sir Percival Glyde, and even allusions to the joint father of Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie, masculinity is portrayed in an exploitative, nefarious light. Immorality was commonly viewed as a means to a lunatic end, and, overall, feminine madness is often the result of masculine turpitude within the text. This theory is further

supported by the dubiousness of Anne Catherick's true parentage on the paternal

line. Her mother, Mrs. Catherick, is already characterized as a depraved,

malicious woman, and after her interview and subsequent testimony, Walter

Hartright jumps to a provocative conclusion:

> Knowing, now, that Mr. Phillip Fairlie had been at Varneck Hall in the autumn of eighteen hundred and twenty-six, and that Mrs. Catherick had been living there in service at the same time, we knew also:—first, that Anne had been born in June, eighteen hundred and twenty-seven; secondly, that she had always presented an extraordinary personable resemblance to Laura; and, thirdly that Laura herself was strikingly like her father. Mr. Phillip Fairlie had been one of the notoriously handsome men of his time. In disposition entirely unlike his brother Frederick, he was the spoilt darling of society, especially of the women—an easy, light-hearted, impulsive, affectionate man, and notoriously thoughtless of moral obligations where women were concerned. Such were the facts we knew; such was the character of the man. Surely, the plain inference that follows needs no pointing out? (Collins 567)

While the inference may not require "pointing out," the immorality alluded to,

unmarried sex and a child out of wedlock, have very real, physical consequences

in the person of Anne Catherick. The Victorian theory of immorality resulting in

lunacy and subsequent degeneracy is given due notice here: Anne's father was

"notoriously thoughtless of moral obligation" and Anne's mother is painted as a

spiteful, service woman. The result of their sinful fraternization is simultaneously

a comment on the danger of class miscegenation and godless behavior. Mr. Phillip

Fairlie's begetting of Laura in a properly sanctimonious marriage results in her,

usual, soundness of mind, while the un-sanctified relationship between Mrs.

Catherick and Mr. Phillip Fairlie results in the degenerated, feeble-minded Anne

Catherick. The double violations of the disregard for notions of class distinction

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and to the sanctity of wedlock serve as mnemonics for the degenerate possibilities resulting from masculine depravity. Although the doppelgänger is employed within the text in a fashion deemed "un-noteworthy" due to its lack of psychological exploration, when combined with notions of lunacy and madness the two concepts conflate to comment on the sociological aspects of patriarchal dominance in Victorian life and the threats and challenges unbridled, upper class masculine power maintains over society.

<p style="text-align:center">*Lady Audley's Secret*</p>

Roughly two years following Collins' *The Woman in White,* the Victorian public would become fascinated, revolted, and obsessed with Mary Elizabeth Braddon's anti-heroine, Lucy Audley. Victorian readers "devoured" *Lady Audley's Secret* and "were thrilled and frightened by its inversion of the ideal Victorian heroine" (Balée ix). A contemporary reviewer of Braddon's work criticized the limitations of Lucy Audley's character as being, "at once the heroine and the monstrosity of the novel," and that Braddon "in drawing her, […] may have intended to portray a female Mephistopheles; but, if so, she should have known that a woman cannot fill such a part" (xi). A growing unrest within the female population of Victorian society found an escape through Lucy Audley's nefarious exploits and "*Lady Audley's Secret* appealed to readers who felt both titillated and disturbed by its subversion of Victorian ideals about marriage, motherhood, and family life" (x). The possibility of the angel in the house intrinsically being a degenerate demon jolted Victorian notions of femininity and ultimately contributed to the sensational element of the work. And like Collins, Braddon

utilized newspaper headlines in her fiction; Braddon herself believed that the

papers, "give the best picture of the events of the day. They really are, as they

profess to be, mirrors reflecting the life and views of the period" (xiii)[15]. Braddon

also drew from life experience when writing: Braddon and Audley both share an

impoverished past due to patriarchal restrictions on feminine life and both partook

in bigamous relationships.[16] Along with Braddon's bigamy, her scandalous past as

an actress piqued public interest and ultimately worked in her favor when it came

to selling her publications. Braddon began her acting career at 16 in order to

support her mother and herself and realized the prejudice working girls were

subject to in an age when respectable women did not work and depended upon the

income of male family members for financial support. Braddon opens *Lady

Audley's Secret* with a stab at one patriarchal regime for which there is no escape:

time. When describing Audley Court Braddon writes, "At the end of this avenue

there was an old arch and a clock tower, with a stupid, bewildering clock, which

had only one hand—and which jumped straight from one hour to the next—and

was therefore always in extremes" (Braddon 1). Father time rules with "only one

hand" leaving no room for feminine influence and volatile Chronos knows no

stasis and is perpetually "in extremes".[17] This volatility is reflected in the manner

in which mental capacity is treated within the novel; the alienist elite were

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[15] This quote is taken from an interview Braddon did with the *Daily Telegraph* published on October 4, 1913 (Balée xiii).

[16] Braddon "lived in sin" with publisher John Maxwell. Maxwell's legal wife was confined to an asylum outside Dublin and passed away in 1874. A month after her death Braddon and Maxwell legally married (Balée xvi).

[17] Braddon comments on the inanity of "father time" again when Lucy Audley is awaiting the reveal of her madness to Sir Michael, "Lady Audley did not answer. She was looking at the stupid one-handed clock, and waiting for the news which must come sooner or later, which could not surely fail to come very speedily" (Braddon 344).

undoubtedly a patriarchal regime in which a labeling of insanity for transgressive

women was not hesitated to be diagnosed. Neo-detective Robert Audley echoes

the common notion of the volatility of the mind, "when we remember how many

minds must tremble upon the narrow boundary between reason and unreason, mad

to-day and sane to-morrow, mad yesterday and sane to-day" (Braddon 210). But

what is characterized as mental volatility was in actuality psychiatric ignorance:

psychiatry was a burgeoning field in the Victorian period that employed a lengthy

list of signs and symptoms to distinguish between mental diseases. And in

addition to these symptoms, outward appearance was used simultaneously to

demarcate lunatics. Yet like Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie, Lucy Audley

coheres with the "angel in the house" stigmata in her infant-like innocence and

beauty:

> The innocence and candor of an infant beamed in Lady Audley's fair
> face, and shone out of her large and liquid blue eyes. The rosy lips,
> the delicate nose, the profusion of fair ringlets, all contributed to
> preserve to her beauty the character of extreme freshness. […] Her
> fragile figure, which she loved to dress in heavy velvets, and stiff,
> rustling silks, till she looked like a child tricked out for a
> masquerade, was as girlish as if she had just left the nursery.
> (Braddon 55)

Her cherubic facade complicates claims of insanity, and yet Lucy Audley is not

alone in her good looks, she too, possesses a doppelgänger in her maidservant,

Phoebe Marks:

> You *are* like me, and your features are very nice; it is only color that
> you want. My hair is pale yellow shot with gold, and yours is drab;
> my eyebrows and eyelashes are dark brown, and yours are almost—I
> scarcely like to say it, but they're almost white, my dear Phoebe.
> Your complexion is sallow, and mine is pink and rosy. Why, with a

> bottle of hair-dye, such as we see advertised in the papers, and a pot
> of rouge, you'd be as good-looking as I, any day, Phoebe. (60)

Lynn Voskuil in her article, "Acts of Madness: Lady Audley and the Meanings of

Victorian Femininity" attributes this superficial likeness as an assertion that

Victorian critic W. Fraser Rae was in fact wrong when he claimed Lady Audley

as a failed Mephistopheles, "the likeness suggests that in fact a woman *can*

convincingly 'act the part' of a 'female Mephistopheles' […] or a servant the part

of a lady. Just as Helen Maldon had become Helen Talboys, then Lucy Graham,

and finally Lucy Audley, the maid could be transformed into the mistress"

(Voskuil 624).

But unlike the dualistic relationship between Anne Catherick and Laura

Fairlie, the doppelgänger functions in a fashion similar to that of Dr. Jekyll and

Mr. Hyde in *Lady Audley's Secret.* While Lady Audley does possess a double

through Phoebe Marks, the doppelgänger dynamic that transgresses patriarchal

confines is the multiple personalities of Lady Audley herself. Her disappointing

marriage to the adventurous George Talboys results in a change of financial

circumstances and thus an eventual alteration in identity: Helen Talboys becomes

Lucy Audley out of necessity. When relating the circumstances of her first

husband's desertion, Lady Audley, "resented it bitterly—I resented it by hating the

man who had left me with no protector but a weak, tipsy father, and with a child

to support. I had to work hard for my living, and in every hour of labor—and what

labor is more wearisome than the dull slavery of a governess?" (358). And in fact,

Braddon incorporates comments that would characterize Lucy Audley as mad to

not accept Sir Michael's marriage proposal, "the simple Dawsons would have thought it something more than madness in a penniless girl to reject such an offer" (9). Economic notions of madness will come in to play again when Dr. Mosgrove provides his diagnosis of Lady Audley toward the end of the work:

> There is no evidence of madness in anything she has done. She ran away from her home, because her home was not a pleasant one, and she left in the hope of finding a better. There is no madness in that. She committed the crime of bigamy, because by that crime she obtained fortune and position. There is no madness there. She employed intelligent means, and she carried out a conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation in its execution. There is no madness in that. (381)

Lucy Audley's dualistic exploits in altering her identity to improve her status in society appears anything but insane, yet like Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie, a woman in possession of knowledge, and thus ability to threaten patriarchy, is a dangerous woman who must be categorized as a "lunatic" in order to reduce her threat . This notion, along with the volatility of the psychiatric elite, is further emphasized within the text after Dr. Mosgrove has finished examining the madwoman-in-question:

> There is latent insanity! Insanity which might never appear; or which might appear only once or twice in a lifetime. It would be a *dementia* in its worst phase, perhaps; acute mania; but its duration would be very brief, and it would only arise under extreme mental pressure. 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! (383)

Degenerationist jargon aside, Lady Audley goes from being perfectly rational one minute to a raging lunatic the next. Jill Matus stipulates in her article, "Disclosure as 'Cover-up': The Discourse of Madness in Lady Audley's Secret, that "what

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seems primarily to be the matter with Lady Audley is that she threatens to violate class boundaries and exclusions, and to get away with appropriating social power beyond her entitlement" (Matus 335). And her appropriation of social power is due to her multiple identities; Lady Audley even goes to the extent of feigning her death and substituting the body with that of Matilda Plowson (who also shares a physical likeness) in a grave marked for Helen Talboys. Overall the doppelgänger (through Lady Audley's multiple personalities) permits patriarchal transgression through class mobility. Lady Audley is able to cross boundaries of class distinction through re-inventing herself (much like Dr. Jekyll did with Mr. Hyde, but without the personality-altering potion). And notions of lunacy come to work symbiotically with the many "doubles" of Lucy Audley through her attempt, although failed, to accuse Robert Audley of madness before he is able to accuse her, "'Robert Audley is mad,' she said, decisively. […] Robert Audley is a monomaniac'" (Braddon 293). She utilizes claims of lunacy as an effort to secure the position of power her "double(s)" (manifested through her multiple identities) has enabled her to grasp. The game of cat-and-mouse between Robert and Lady Audley ultimately ends with Lucy's confinement to a private asylum. Unlike Collins, Braddon safely concludes an extremely controversial and transgressive novel with a reinstatement of patriarchal control; yet even though Lucy Audley is ultimately forced to submit to masculine regulation, Braddon still manages to portray the possibility and potential of feminine agency which is reflective of the larger issue of womanly unrest within the Victorian zeitgeist. Overall the class mobility the multiple doppelgängers of Lucy Audley permits and the role lunacy

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plays in (attempting to) preserve her newly acquired social status function

together to infringe the patriarchal confinement of marriage and the societal

confinement of class distinction.

<center>Conclusion</center>

When writing on the role of poverty and economic circumstances in

influencing madness, Victorian alienist J. Mortimer Granville in his work *The*

Care and Cure of the Insane (1877) attributes lunacy to what he christens the

three w's, "Speaking generally, the causation of insanity everywhere, special

organic disease apart, is an affair of three w's—worry, want, and wickedness"

(Granville 48).[18] And in a culture where the three w's seem an inevitable for

women, the employment of doubles in sensational works of fiction provide the

reader, and the author, a contrivance in which to illustrate feminine infringement

on the patriarchal regime. Overall it provided an opportunity to contemplate the

possibilities and pleasures of feminine agency while simultaneously realizing the

transgressive nature of such notions, a guilty pleasure of sorts. But to

categorically dismiss the sensational doppelgänger as "derivative in origin" and

possessing "no new distinctive territory" (Herdman xi) does an immense

disservice to the sociological, as opposed to purely psychological, potential of the

doppelgänger. When writing on the sociological impact of the doppelgänger, Karl

Miller in his work, *Doubles in Literary History*, maintains that, "duality can

envisage for the individual a symbiosis which unites the injuring of a community

with injuries which that community inflicts, and to dream of a heaven in which

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18 Granville later claims in the work that the cure for the three w's can be found in the three m's:
   method, meat, and morality (48).

<center>31</center>

some part of the human totality survives these injuries" (Miller viii). And the "injuries" with which Victorian society inflicted upon women were certainly numerous; from restrictive clothing to labia leechings as a cure for mental disease, the typical Victorian woman was all too familiar with patriarchal bodily subjugation and restriction. And this restriction would be given further aid through the developing field of psychiatry and the emergence of asylum life. In addition to the escape sensation fiction provided readers, the Victorian cultural practice of staging a tableaux permitted Victorian women a rare opportunity to "express at once the freedoms they had on their minds, the passions they felt within, and the outward stillness society expected: two bodies and on mind, one soul" (Schwartz 67). Thus duality was a part of everyday life for the Victorian woman: a public, permissible self and a private, transgressive (yet liberated) self.

Victorian anxieties about degeneration permitted and fueled the use of inane treatments while simultaneously increasing the amount of women, and men, diagnosed with some type of mental disease. For writers of sensation fiction, this new culture of insanity provided material in which to "electrically stimulate" readers while spinning tales of corruption and moral turpitude. Foucault writes in *Madness and Civilization* that during the Victorian period, "We see why the scandal of madness could be exalted, while that of the other forms of unreason was concealed with so much care. The scandal of unreason produced only the contagious example of transgression and immorality; the scandal of madness showed men how close to animality their Fall could bring them; and at the same time how far divine mercy could extend when it consented to save man"

(Foucault 81). Yet divine mercy would now show itself through scientific intervention from the alienist elite and the immorality lunacy, usually as a form of degeneration, was descriptive of was not that of the female lunatic, but that of the patriarchal figures she depended upon. Both Lucy Audley's and Anne Catherick's lunacy can be read as the result of immoral masculine behavior: Lucy Audley was deserted by George Talboys and left in poverty to develop an "overheated brain" while Anne Catherick's feeble-mind appears as the result of unchaste relations out of wedlock between her mother and Philip Fairlie. Overall patriarchal immorality resulted in degeneracy through feminine lunacy.

But the relationship between the guise of lunacy and the literary double in the sensation fiction of Braddon and Collins provides an illustration of how insanity and the doppelgänger combine to permeate patriarchal boundaries. The many dualities of Lucy Audley permit her to breach established societal class boundaries and the doppelgänger dynamic between Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie aids, as well as restricts, their eventual liberation from Sir Percival and Count Fosco. The lunatic element comes in to play in different ways in each of the texts, however: while it is used to confine in both texts, it is the vague, distinctive characteristic of "lunacy" in *The Woman in White* that enables the eventual downfall of Sir Percival and Fosco and the liberation of Laura, and in *Lady Audley's Secret* Lucy Audley employs claims of insanity, much like the patriarchal regime itself, to secure her newfound social position and power.

Although the doppelgängers present in Victorian popular fiction may not be deemed of the same psychologically penetrating quality as that of Dostoevsky's

Ivan Karamazov and his devil, or Stevenson's Jeykll and Hyde, the doubles within the texts of Collins and Braddon provide valuable sociological commentary on the inequality and harsh reality of Victorian feminine life. Yet the sociological and the psychological need not be so categorically dichotomized: the societal commentary the sensation doppelgänger enables is also reflective of the burgeoning unrest with Victorian social structure and life in the female psyche.

On July 3, 1890 a 16 year-old clerk by the name of Edwin Earnest Howard was admitted to the Bethlem Royal Hospital for the second time that year. Admitted by his father, Urban Howard, due to an incident in which, "on the first of July the patient got into his sister's bed because he said he had changed himself into a woman" and "that he cannot talk rationally and is inclined to be violent" (Bethlem Heritage Organization). The patient is recorded to be in good bodily health and of sober habits. Under the heading of "Previous Shocks" he is listed as having " [an] injury to the head when 18 months old, and [has had] discharge from [the] ear for years, [however it had] stopped lately." But his current attack is characterized as "restless and excitable, [does] not sleep, gradually got worse and in three days was quite unmanageable. […] Thought he could hypnotize people and mistook identities" (BHO). This legitimate anxiety of mistaken identity manifested itself in literature through similar likenesses between fictional heroines and it had evolved fairly quickly from "clothed hyenas" to an "angel in the house," but both appear to have been treated as frighteningly dangerous. Bertha Mason's demonic bestiality that threatened physical harm had now been transformed into Lucy Audley and Anne Catherick: women whose "lunacy" (in

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addition to their literary doubles) provided them a role in which they possessed

power and control over the patriarchal regime and the mechanisms of restraint

used by that regime to control (marriage, proper feminine behavior, limited means

to a earning a respectable income). And while Victorians viewed female power as

transgressive and ultimately as instances of degeneracy by "lunacizing" them, the

real disease of constricting female agency would inevitably decline (to an extent)

and usher the Victorians into the Modern age. However, like Edwin Earnest

Howard in Bethlem Hospital, society might just make a "fully expected recovery"

(BHO).

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