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Representation of Mad Woman in *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the character of *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon. In fact I revisit this novel to discuss, the role poverty, whether Lady Audley a Mad Woman, deception as a feminist act, Lady Audley as Other, transgressive behavior as an expression of rebellion, angel in the house turned wild, harsh patriarchy, and at the end I will discuss passivity as a punishment for lady Audely who has been an active woman.

Keywords: Lady Audley, Mad Woman, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, passivity, punishment, patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

1. Biography of Elizabeth Braddon

Elizabeth Braddon was born in 1835 in the city of London. She wrote many novels and short stories among which are *Gerald, or the World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1891), and the ghost stories "The Cold Embrace", "Eveline's Visitant" and "At Chrighton Abbey"(Tromp, et al: xxii). *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) was her most successful and well-known novel (ibid). Braddon was one of the most famous and productive novelists of the period. Her evident importance to the Victorians themselves and to the market economy made *Lady Audley's Secret* the successful novel of the period and kept Braddon famous.(ibid. xv) Her fiction, via

which she changed the Victorian rules of conduct and narrative, along with her nonconformist life, fascinated the attention of both the ordinary people and contemporary researchers. (ibid.)

2. The Madwoman in the Attic (Gubar and Gilbert)

The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (1979) is the name of a book written by Gubar and Gilbert. The writers study Victorian literature from the point of view of feminism (wikipedia). The writers take the name of the book from Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, where in Rochester's wife Bertha Mason is buried alive in the roof space by her spouse (ibid). The writers deal with the limitations of women writers living in the Victorian period. Gubar and Gilbert argue that the female writers did not have much freedom and therefore they made their women character as nothing more than the angel in the house or the monster or mad in the attic.

In this book they argue that the strongly passionate, fervent, and talented woman who is considered as mad and insane and needs to be limited by the world characterizes the nineteenth-century woman. Mary Elizabeth's novel, *Lady Audley's Secret* can be considered as a study of madness in the Victorian period. Victorian's attention to madness also increased by the increasing relationship of women with insanity in the 19th-century. Insanity is often related to those who do not observe societal standards. It is used as a weapon to check and control rebels by encouraging conventionality and by removing the corrupted, the rebels and radicals so that civilization as a whole is protected from their wicked impact. Accordingly, it is not an astonishment that a society so eagerly asked women to be obedient and meek to the patriarchal standards should relate insanity and lunacy chiefly with women.

3. Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf is a woman writer of the Victorian period. She was also a remarkably intelligent feminist theorist (Fernald, 1). In her work as a critic Woolf was 'fighting off the spectre of Victorian respectability she ironically named the Angel in the House' (Showalter, 207). She is truly deemed as the forerunner of modern feminist literary criticism. She revolutionized feminism with her revolutionary feminist manifesto of literary criticism, *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Her work was 'central to the framing of many of the major theoretical developments in literary critical engagements with feminism' (Goldman, 132).

Goldman in her book *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf* refers to Toril Moi's most influential work of literary criticism *Sexual/ Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1985), where in Woolf's writing is the chief concentration of argument (133). Louis Tyson considers Virginia Woolf as a woman writer who resisted the ideology of patriarchy along with Mary Wollstonecraft the writer of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and Simone de Beauvoir who wrote *The Second Sex* (93). Woolf is very critical of the idea and concept of angel in the house. Showalter in her article 'Killing the Angel in the House: The Autonomy of Women Writers' writes:

This exemplary female had always been a male ideal rather than a living woman. This jealous guardian, forbidding wrath or wit or independence sounds very much, in fact, like an agent of Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf's father, who alternately encouraged her to write, and insisted on her adherence to strict standards of womanly conduct. With his death in 1904,

she was freed both from the requirements of keeping his house and from the need to please him (208).

The above lines show the resistance of Woolf against the patriarchy in general and her father in particular. Resistance against the patriarchy brings about the freedom of women from the chain of male power, whether it is their father, or their male society. Woolf's father inserted the ideas of *angel in the house* in her mind. In fact Woolf as a writer and as a feminist kills the *angel in the house* in herself and become an independent woman after the death of her father.

4. Plot of *Lady Audley's Secret*

Lady Audley, having married a rich old Mr. Audley, leads a luxurious life. She is, in fact, Lucy Talboys, who has change her name to Lucy Graham to be a governess to two girls in London. When she is a governess to two daughters of a neighboring house, Sir Michael Audley falls in love with her and proposes to her. She accepts and becomes lady Audley. A surprise visit from her husband's nephew disorders her life, because Robert is a friend her former husband George and brings him to Mr. Audley's house. After sometime George disappears and this arouses the suspicion of Robert Audley. Robert is determined in revenging his friend. Robert finds out that Lady Audley is, actually, Helen Talboys, George's wife. She burns the inn in which Robert is in order to kill him since he is an intruder from the point of view of Lady Audley. Her plan does not work because not only Robert does not die in the fire but he also rescues Luke. Luke's proof on his deathbed gives Robert the clue he needs to lastly challenge Lady Audley and make her disclose her mischievous plan to her crazy spouse. This revelation makes Sir Michael and his daughter go to England while telling Robert to do whatever is essential to the lady he once loved as his spouse. Lady Audley is put into an insane asylum. This gives Robert, Clara, Alicia, George, and Georgie the opportunity to lead serene and delightful lives.

DISCUSSION

1. Is *Lady Audley* a Mad Woman?

One of the themes of the novel is madness. When lady Audley commits some mistakes she herself considers herself as a mad person and to justify it she says her mother has been mad too. For this reason she is regarded as mad. Lady Audley should be "buried alive" in an asylum because according to the doctor she is a dangerous woman. Putting Lady Audley into a madhouse is a way of stopping her shameful behavior from ruining the character of the nobility, specially her spouse Sir Michael Audley. She is put into the asylum because she is discovered to be a ferocious felon who has not only made an endeavor to commit murder but who has also married another man while simultaneously has been the wife of somebody else and left her child.

The reason Lady Audley is considered mad is that she does not act like a humble woman as other women did. In other words, she does not behave according to the norms of the Victorian society and therefore she is considered mad. The house in Victorian time and society was considered to be a protection from the hazards and perils of the external world but in the novel, the good and perfect Lady Audley is a fierce woman who has not only made an

attempt to kill but who has also committed adultery and left her child. This novel shows how Victorian society is disturbed when the ideas, concepts of the perfect lady/mother and domestic happiness are not observed by Lady Audley. Therefore she is not a perfect example of angel in the house and for this reason she is believed to be a mad woman with bad ambitions. The novel shows her she is committing bigamy, the novel shows her as violent and cruel. There is a conversation between Dr. Mosgrave and Robert in the novel whose subject is Lady Audley:

Dr. Mosgrave:

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

Robert:

"But the traits of hereditary insanity—" (236-7)

As the above passage shows clearly Mr. Robert Audley as representative of a patriarch society who possesses cool, calculating, frigid, luminous intellect is going to blame Lady Audley and eliminate her from the respectable society of London. It is significant that Mr. Robert Audley is a barrister who is in favour of men. Dr. Mosgrave who is the mouthpiece of feminism in the novel rejects Mr. Audley's argument and in response to what Mr. Audley says concerning the features of hereditary insanity says:

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

2. The role of Poverty

Poverty is another topic which should be discussed concerning the situation of Lady Audley in the novel. Rikka Ussa argues that Lady Audley appears to be completely well-balanced throughout the novel (55). She further contends that 'there is nothing mad in her actions but rather she acts for purposes of self-interest and survival' (ibid). Lady Audley has suffered from poverty in her initial life and after her first husband, George Talboys, leaves her and their baby, rather than succumbing to her limited conditions, she resists and creates a fresh life for herself. Ussa believes that Lady Audley, pressed by Robert Audley, disobediently protects her freshly attained position and safety that her status as Sir Michael's wife gives her (ibid). It is poverty which makes her do what she did. If she were not poor, she wouldn't do that. This is true when she is financially provided in the second marriage she is normal and natural.

3. Deception as a feminist Act

Many readers believe that Lady Audley is not insane. Showalter believes "Lady Audley's real secret is that she is sane and, moreover, representative." (Showalter, 167). Actually, numerous scholars regard Lady Audley's dishonesty as a feminist deed in which she decides to control the course of her own life. In a world in which she is left alone she finds a way to do away with misery. She is strong enough to get around poverty which is the ruin of everybody. She cleverly works her way out in a male dominated society. In fact she retaliates in such a society and avenges herself but she is not to harm anybody in such a way. She is not harmful at all if we closely scrutinize her behavior. She wants to get rid of poverty, she does have some intention of doing away with obstacles. At the end of the novel we see she has not killed George, her former husband whom we thought she has eliminated. To deceive the patriarch society that has brought her to such a situation is according to Jennifer Woolston 'a bold outward action' (166).

It is important to know that it is at the end of the novel that Lady Audley is presented as a mad woman and not throughout the whole novel. It is likely that Lady Audley is faking madness to get around the patriarchy in order not to be punished severely. Besides that no proof of her mother's madness is presented to the reader but what she says about her mother. It is interesting that the doctor believes her mother had been mad without any evidence. The doctor does not certainly believe she is mad but guesses by what she says about her mother that she might be mad and therefore dangerous.

Besides if she was mad how could she be a nice woman to others when everybody admires her? She teaches as a governess and things were very well progressing. It means she had tried to scrape out a living through being a governess and teaching. After all it is not her fault that she is loved by Sir Miachel Audley. It is Mr. Audley who proposes to tie the knot and everybody who is in her place would have been deceived by such an offer and lady Audley at that time had thought perhaps her husband is dead and she should marry Sir Miachel Audley. She marries Sir Audley perhaps she thinks that her former husband is not coming back anymore as there has been no letter from him for three years. This is evident from George conversation with a woman on the ship she strikes a conversation with George:

"But in all that time did you never write to your wife?"

"Never, till the night before I left Sydney. I could not write when everything looked so black. I could not write and tell her that I was fighting hard with despair and death. I waited for better fortune, and when that came I wrote telling her that I should be in England almost as soon as my letter, and giving her an address at a coffee-house in London where she could write to me, telling me where to find her, though she is hardly likely to have left her father's house." (14)

As the above passage makes clear, for three years and half a man like George had left his spouse and his only child alone without even writing any letter to her and now that he comes back he expects his spouse to be as she was when he left it without money and support. Elizabeth Braddon is intentionally asking us to take the side of her heroine. Though biographical approach is dead, we can see Braddon as a female writer is sending a message through her female character. The reader can justify Lady Audley's marrying money because

she has been deprived of money and now that she has reached money she should have it and that she is left alone with a child who needs to be supported. Madness was used as a way of labeling Lady Audley's deviance from her feminine role and therefore making her as an 'other'.

4. Lady Audley as Other

Simone de Beauvoir in her book entitled *The Second Sex* appropriately avers that the "category of the Other is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the Self and the Other" (16). The concept of the "Other", in the case of man and woman, has been related to the concept of the female, with the male exemplifying the high-quality place of the "Self." This binary opposition of the 'self' and the 'other' is found in the whole of western literature from the time of past to the present. (Selden, 129). The man/woman relation in this binary opposition is always one of dominance and obedience. That is to say men are considered better and women were considered inferior. This is what we find in most of the Victorian novels. With the male being the better, the female then becomes relegated as the secondary minor person in the binary. This way of thinking well functions to remove the woman from sites of power, benefitting men only. That is why in Victorian time women did not have the right to vote. De Beauvoir likewise elucidates that, "what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she, a free and autonomous being like all human creatures, nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other" (29). Women do not decide to be "Others" even though they, in de Beauvoir's opinion, do little to alter this power organization. Considering Victorian texts like *Lady Audley's Secret*, this hypothetical tendency offers room for woman's independent action.

In Braddon's novel, Lady Audley functions as an "Other," that is to say she is the woman of the binary opposition man/woman. She is that inferior other who has no choice. She is chosen and does not choose. First it George who chooses her as her husband and second it is Miachle Audley who chooses her. In both of her marriage she did not have the chance to choose, she is chosen. This is the ideology of the time. It is after her second marriage that she is revealed as an 'other'. Because she did not tell the truth about herself she is considered as a mad person and is considered as other. She marries Mr. Audley and loves him as dearly as she can. She is placed in the madhouse and is removed from the respectable society of men. In fact, they put her in the madhouse to warn other women to stick to their places at home and be docile, otherwise they will have the same fate as that of lady Audley. This is what we see in the world of the novel. Such women are considered dangerous and threatening to the society because they will make the system of patriarchy corrupted. However, Lady Audley turns the system on its head and is about to topple it. She deconstructs the system and bucks the system of patriarchy.

To stop her from further turning the system of patriarchy on its head and questioning it and challenging it the patriarchy guards against her and puts her in the madhouse and labels her mad to circulate the ideas of patriarchy. In fact living in the madhouse is considered as being buried alive and Braddon entitled the chapter thirty seven 'Buried Alive' in which Lady Audley is taken to madhouse. To put lady Audley in the madhouse is equal to making her as an 'other'. In fact, this act shows how the society treats those women who do not observe the rules of men in society and they were separated from people to warn other women that if they do not obey the rules created for them they will have the same fate.

5. Transgressive behavior as an expression of rebellion

Feminist critics have regarded Lady Audley's transgressive behavior as an expression of rebellion against Patriarchy. In fact this is very true since of all the women in the novel Lady Audley is very different. She is very assertive while others are very docile and submissive. She is very clever and very talkative. She is greedy, sweet, ambitious, dissatisfied, intelligent and powerful. She is against Robert who is a barrister. At the end it is she who defeats Robert. That is to say she does not seem to be mad but she fakes madness, knowing wrongly that she has murdered George, to avoid law. She does not want to be manipulated by men. She hates poverty imposed by her male counterparts. She gets the better of poverty.

Ellen Miller Casey says "in her sensation novels, Braddon sees through Victorian propriety to a counterworld of feminine rebellion" (81). The reason for this rebellion is the woman's alienation. Therefore Lady Audley secretly changes her alienation into violent ways of manipulation. Jennifer Watson believes that Lady Audley "does not rant and rave in the manner that traditional insanity implies. Instead, her actions are programmed and surreptitiously implemented with a singularity of purpose" (164).

Casey also says Lady Audley's rationality puts her in the dominion of the criminal "Other," as it transfers her to a place that Victorian women are not thought to violate. Women are thought to quietly consent to their social place, and the repudiation to do so means instantaneous threat to the traditional situation.(ibid) Nicole P Fisk in the article "Lady Audley as Sacrifice: Curing Female Disadvantage in Lady Audley's Secret" argues that "Lady Audley is not guilty of murder, she is guilty of overstepping a woman's boundaries, and is therefore dangerous to patriarchal society"(25). Her madness, consequently, may be equal to not accepting the social scripts that Victorian society imposed upon her.

Fisk writes:

Unlike Alicia, Clara, and Phoebe, Lady Audley shirks these undesirable obligations, thereby challenging patriarchal power. In the end, Lady Audley serves as a sacrifice: even though she is prevented from exercising her female independence by being locked away in an asylum, she has opened the way for the remaining female characters to achieve domestic power and to fashion a new life. (24).

Instead of accepting the norms of marriage model, Lady Audley does not do so by her brave obvious actions. She does not accept the rule of patriarchy, and actually becomes shaper of her own fate. Jennifer M. Woolston in her article "Lady Audley as the Cunning "Other": An Economic, Sexual, and Criminal Attack on the Victorian Patriarchal Mindset" concerning the transgressive behavior of Lady Audley says:

Lady Audley's Secret shook the Victorian patriarchy on its hinges, as it featured a heroine, "even if she must be categorized as 'mad' or 'bad,' is always difficult and dangerous, transgressive and assertive" (Peters 208). Instead of conforming to the standard gender ideals of the time, Braddon presents readers with an exciting, decadent, and intelligent alternative to grim housewifery. Lady Audley herself embodies the "mid-Victorian fear of the wicked woman whose manipulative sexuality allows her to pursue dreams of wealth, social status, and power" (Kalikoff 84). Through giving

voice to such a fear, Braddon serves to speak against the existing models of passive femininity (165).

Transgression is an act of bravery in a society in which women are kept as indoor prisoners who should only do kitchen work and daily chores. In the case of Lady Audley she cannot survive when her husband lets her alone without any money to buy anything for herself and her child.

Virginia B. Morris notices that “the urgency to maintain her reputation and the security that reputation provides drive otherwise conventional woman to crime more often than need or greed” (91). Morris understands that the motive behind Lady Audley’s punishment has basically nothing to do with her crimes but with the fact that she has equaled men (95). For Morris the novel’s conclusion proposes that the Robert Audley as the representative of patriarchy does not punish her because of justice but to avenge her efforts to interrupt on the public domain by demanding for herself the male advantages. (ibid) Jill L. Matus in her article entitled ‘Disclosure as ‘Cover-up’: The Discourse of Madness in *Lady Audley’s Secret*’ writes:

The novel reveals how Victorian notions of morality and constructions of material madness coalesce in defining the ‘right’ woman by representing her ‘other’ in terms of a specifically gendered pathology. What makes *Lady Audley’s Secret* a fascinating text is that it slyly signals its awareness of the work that notion of madness perform, and in so doing apprehends social and medical discourse in the act of enunciating the nature of an aberrant ‘other’ in order to shape a healthy, middle-class self (335).

The patriarch men define what is mad and what is sane on the part of women. If women acted according to the expectation of men they were sane and if they did not they were mad. Alicia is among the first category and Lady Audley belongs to the second category. Simply because she does not capitulate to the standards of male oriented society. She is mad and insane. There are many women in the novel who belong to the first category and hence angels in the house and submissive. The odd one out is lady Audley who sets about to create a change for herself by not being the submissive one.

6. Angel in the House turned Wild

What we see in the novel about the main character is all good things and good qualities. Lady Audley is a good woman who has possessed good qualities that makes everybody admire her: ‘her employer; her visitors; her pupils; the servants; everybody, high and low, united in declaring that Lucy Graham was the sweetest girl that ever lived’ (Braddon, 5). She seems to represent the female characteristics of an angle in the house. Even in the words of her former husband George Tallboys who is coming from Australia she is a good woman when George describes her as: ‘My pretty little wife! My gentle, innocent, loving little wife’ (ibid, 12).

When she is a governess to Mr Dawson’s daughter, she is so good that Mrs. Dawson would be missing her if she marries Sir Michael Audley: ‘you, such a bright, happy creature, that it does every one good to see you. I’m sure I don’t know what we shall do if Sir Michael robs us of you.’” (ibid, 6). She exemplifies the ideal woman from the point of view of Victorian period:

she taught the girls to play sonatas by Beethoven, and to paint from nature after Creswick, and walked through a dull, out-of-the-way village to the humble little church, three times every Sunday, as contentedly as if she had no higher aspiration in the world than to do so all the rest of her life. People who observed this, accounted for it by saying that it was a part of her amiable and gentle nature always to be light-hearted, happy and contented under any circumstances. (ibid, 4).

When she becomes the wife of Sir Michael Audley she remains a good wife to her. She participates in acts of charity and is thankful to Sir Michael Audley:

"I was very happy in the first triumph and grandeur of my new position, very grateful to the hand that had lifted me to it. In the sunshine of my own happiness I felt, for the first time in my life, for the miseries of others. I had been poor myself, and I was now rich, and could afford to pity and relieve the poverty of my neighbors. I took pleasure in acts of kindness and benevolence. I found out my father's address and sent him large sums of money, anonymously, for I did not wish him to discover what had become of me. I availed myself to the full of the privilege your generosity afforded me. I dispensed happiness on every side. I saw myself loved as well as admired, and I think I might have been a good woman for the rest of my life, if fate would have allowed me to be so. (ibid, 222)

And if the secret of her former husband had not been exposed, she would have been still a good wife for him and a generous woman. When her secret is exposed the angel within her dies and the wild person shows itself. She turns against the norm and turns wild. In fact she is a victim to circumstances and to fate too.

What makes an angel in the house turn wild is poverty. She is left alone and with a child to protect. How can she protect herself and her child? She becomes a governess that does not suffice. If she were financially provided and secured, she would not turn wild and protest against the situation in which she was.

7. Harsh Patriarchy

Lady Audley is a woman who has been living a miserable life with her first good-for-nothing husband who is disinherited by his father for marrying his poor wife. Having lived with a disinherited husband, she is disappointed and sad. Her husband decides to go to Australia to make his fortune. He disappears for three years and half leaving his wife and his son behind. She lives up to the harsh expectations of her husband and those of the society. The harsh patriarchy makes life difficult for Lucy to continue. She has to find a way to avoid poverty in this patriarchal society. After she remarries, she is still subject to harsher patriarchy represented by Robert Audley.

Vicki Pallo in the article entitled "From Do-Nothing to Detective: The Transformation of Robert Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*," contends:

Robert's conversion has not only sealed Lady Audley's fate; he is himself permanently transformed. At the novel's end, he has become a pattern member of society: a successful barrister, a landholder, and a husband. All

traces of his previous asocial behavior has disappeared just as surely as Lady Audley herself has and he is now a "model citizen" of his time. (475)

During the whole of the novel there is a quest in which Robert Audley as a man should find the secret of a woman. He is representative of harsh patriarchy who possesses 'cool, calculating, frigid, luminous intellect' (quoted above). This man should conquer Lady Audley and besides that as a man he should cast her out of the respectable society. He is there to teach her to be as submissive as possible and that is why he is a barrister. The whole course of the novel is in actual fact a battle between Robery Audley as a man and Lady Audley as a woman. This is proved by Robert himself when he says: "the battle between us seems terribly unfair" (161). In fact one of them will be a winner. Robert is the man of action and Lady Audley is also an active person. It is clear that Robert is a representative of Victorian man. In the article "'There is sex in mind": Scientific Determinism and the Woman Question in Lady Audley's Secret' Ihsen Hachaichi writes:

Robert Audley, a perfect prototype of the Victorian man, pretends to understand Lucy's motives upon simple observation of her face and character. Like phrenologists, he believes that outward appearance is revelatory of the deeper core of personality. He suspects that she withholds a secret which has criminal implications. He then resolves to act as her moral watchman (90).

Almost there are a lot of sentences attributed to him in the novel that is to say he speaks a lot in the novel as a man and this is as if he is the spokesperson for the male-oriented society of Victorian period. He wants to further impose passivity on Lady Audley and make her kneel down to the ruling man. Anybody who questions that system is considered as an outsider, one who does not belong to them. Women should either obey or perish. Robert as a man is there to conquer lady Audley. Robert was born to be 'the avenger of guilt or the persecutor of the guilty' (Braddon, 161). To conquer women is in fact a theme of the novel which is evident from a conversation between lady Audley and Robert when Robert understands the secret of Lady Audley and lady Audley confesses to his conquering her:

God knows I have struggled hard enough against you, and fought the battle patiently enough; but you have conquered, Mr. Robert Audley. It is a great triumph, is it not—a wonderful victory? You have used your cool, calculating, frigid, luminous intellect to a noble purpose. You have conquered—a MAD WOMAN!" (ibid, 217)

Not only this is a harsh victory for patriarch Robert but Robert wants to be a conqueror of women when he is acquainted with George's sister and is absorbed with her beauty he is careful not be conquered by her:

"What am I in her hands?" he thought. "What am I in the hands of this woman, who has my lost friend's face and the manner of Pallas Athene. She reads my pitiful, vacillating soul, and plucks the thoughts out of my heart with the magic of her solemn brown eyes. How unequal the fight must be between us, and how can I ever hope to conquer against the strength of her beauty and her wisdom?" (ibid, 165)

This defines his relationship with women as loser and a winner because as barrister his mind is trained to be so as he should either win or lose a case in the court. When there is a conversation between him and lady Audley concerning the disappearance of George Talboys, Robert strongly says to Lady Audley:

my lady, that I am determined to unravel the mystery of George Talboy's death. Do you think I am to be put off by feminine prevarication—by womanly trickery? No! Link by link I have put together the chain of evidence, which wants but a link here and there to be complete in its terrible strength. Do you think I will suffer myself to be baffled? Do you think I shall fail to discover those missing links? No, Lady Audley, I shall not fail, for *I know where to look for them!* (ibid, 172)

As the above passage shows Robert is misogynist about lady Audley and is determined not to be deceived by her. He is determined not to be cheated by Lady Audley's womanly trickery. His mission concerns Lady Audley as a caution to other women. When he does so at the end of the novel Braddon says about Robert 'The young barrister had constituted himself the denouncer of this wretched woman. He had been her judge; and he was now her jailer (ibid, 240).

When he takes her to the madhouse, there is a conversation between her and Robert Audley in which she asks him where he has brought her and she knows that it is a mad house, she tells Robert that 'Audley. "You have brought me to my grave, Mr. Audley, you have used your power basely and cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave." (ibid, 244) and the reaction of Robert Audley to Lady Audley's utterance is that: "I have done that which I thought just to others and merciful to you, I should have been a traitor to society had I suffered you to remain at liberty after—the disappearance of George Talboys and the fire at Castle Inn.'" (ibid) He puts her in a madhouse under the new name of Madam Taylor so as his own name 'Audley' is not tainted.

Robert Audley is also the moralizer patriarch who tells Lady Audley that his intention of putting her in the madhouse is to make her repent:

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

In fact he uses the word 'repent' many times to show he is the moral patriarch who should correct the mistakes of women. In fact he generalizes Lady Audley to all women and in fact he is afraid of all women and in one part of the novel the narrator says:

I do not say that Robert Audley was a coward, but I will admit that a shiver of horror, something akin to fear, chilled him to the heart as he remembered

the horrible things that have been done by women since that day upon which Eve was created to be Adam's companion and help-meet in the garden of Eden. "What if this woman's hellish power of dissimulation should be stronger than the truth, and crush him? She had not spared George Talboys when he stood in her way and menaced her with a certain peril; would she spare him who threatened her with a far greater danger? Are women merciful, or loving, or kind in proportion to their beauty and grace? (ibid, 175)

As the passage shows Robert Audley thinks women are wicked and strange and fearful and thence should be checked and controlled, because all the horrible things have been done by women and that women from the very beginning of creation were frightening. Robert is also comparing Lady Audley to Eve and his generous uncle Sir Michial Audley to Adam and is also thinking that as Eve was responsible for the fall of Adam, Lady Audley is also responsible for the destruction of his uncle. It is crystal clear that Robert thinks Lady Audley is very wretched and wicked as he compares her with his cousin Alicia:

"Good Heaven!" he thought, "can these two women be of the same clay? Can this frank, generous-hearted girl, who cannot conceal any impulse of her innocent nature, be of the same flesh and blood as that wretched creature whose shadow falls upon the path beside me!" (ibid, 176)

Lady Audley is in sharp contrast to Alicia. As Lady Audley constantly threatens Victorian gender limitations through her engagement in masculine activities and her violent, passionate behavior, Alicia plays the role of the dutiful daughter and wife. She cares for her father, who has been devastated by Lady Audley's unfaithfulness. While Lady Audley questions the dominant patriarchal ideology and plays the role model for female self-assertion Alicia is the opposite one who sticks to the norms of the patriarchal society.

Grase Wetzel believes that Helen feels pain in insecure situations because of oppressive patriarchal traditions. When irregular relationships destroy Lady Audley's domestic space, she is homeless, defamed and lost. Instead of accepting her homelessness, she behaves confidently and finds her way into new house, hiding the marital ruins she leaves behind. However it is not clear that her new role bring assistance, or that the new place provides satisfactory relief. Her identity is structured on a disguise. (Werzel, 76) Though new house and new name do not make her successful at the end because she is forced to disappear from the respectable society because of the hard and harsh patriarchy, she is made a powerful woman to remember. She defeats the harsh patriarchy through her questioning it and it remains for other women to further destroy the patriarchy. She acts as a pattern for feminists to let their voices be heard through their action.

Although Lady Audley is made to disappear from view her actions remains in the minds of those who saw her and lived with her. Her bold actions are also remembered by the feminist readers who like her bold character. This is why the narrator always uses the pronoun 'my' to the lady to show that Lady Audley is a lovely, active and bold character. The only way to kill such an active person is to bury her alive in a madhouse and to silence her. Was she really silenced and her voice was not heard in twenty century when women were given all the rights similar to men?

8. Passivity as punishment

The novel depicts an active, lovely, energetic, full of spirit woman throughout its whole course. She is full of life. When there is a conversation between Phoebe and Luke, Phoebe describes Lady Audley as an energetic woman:

"You should have seen her while we were abroad, with a crowd of gentlemen hanging about her; Sir Michael not jealous of them, only proud to see her so much admired. You should have heard her laugh and talk with them; throwing all their compliments and fine speeches back at them, as it were, as if they had been pelting her with roses. She set everybody mad about her, wherever she went. Her singing, her playing, her painting, her dancing, her beautiful smile, and sunshiny ringlets! She was always the talk of a place, as long as we stayed in it." (Braddon, 17).

The only way to punish a person like lady Audley is to put her into a mad house where she is passive and inactive. This inactivity will kill her as she is not able to communicate with her friends and relatives. That is the most effective way to destroy a woman like Lady Audley. This is also proved by Robert Audley himself when he says:

"From the moment in which Lady Audley enters that house," he said, "her life, so far as life is made up of action and variety, will be finished. Whatever secrets she may have will be secrets forever! Whatever crimes she may have committed she will be able to commit no more. If you were to dig a grave for her in the nearest churchyard and bury her alive in it, you could not more safely shut her from the world and all worldly associations. But as a physiologist and as an honest man, I believe you could do no better service to society than by doing this; for physiology is a lie if the woman I saw ten minutes ago is a woman to be trusted at large. If she could have sprung at my throat and strangled me with her little hands, as I sat talking to her just now, she would have done it." (ibid, 239)

From the point of view of Lady Audley to be inactive means to be buried alive in a madhouse. She says to Robert Audley that he has brought her to her grave. In fact the system of patriarchy imposes passivity on her as a punishment for her crime. To kill her is to kill her body but the system is about to kill her soul rather her body and this is understood from the above passage. Besides if they kill her she will be punished instantly without much suffering, they put her to slow and gradual death which is very tormenting to the soul. That is why when she dies from this punishment there is a letter telling Robert and the readers that she is dead because of lethargy:

It is more than a year since a black-edged letter, written upon foreign paper, came to Robert Audley, to announce the death of a certain Madame Taylor, who had expired peacefully at Villebrumeuse, dying after a long illness, which Monsieur Val describes as a *maladie de langueur*. (ibid, 269).

The phrase '*maladie de langueur*' in the above text means disease of languor. Lady Audley dies of the disease of passivity and lack of activity. In fact the system of patriarchy kills Lady Audley in a bad way. Lady Audley was not in fact mad, she faked it to get rid of

the situation in which she was but the men were not deceived by her trickery and put her into a madhouse first to make her really mad and second to make her die.

CONCLUSION

Lady Audley undergoes a process of activity to passivity. She was active enough to achieve what she wants. When she is exposed she is condemned and is punished and she should be buried alive. In other words she is to be passive for the rest of her life. This has been the crime of a person who has been active and has transgressed and trespassed where angels fear to tread. What she did because of her poverty and poverty is the root of many problems for many people. It is poverty makes deception beautiful to Lady Audley. From a feminist point of view her transgressive behaviour might be seen as a feminist performance, where she gets around patriarchy and turn patriarchy on its head.

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