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"There is sex in mind": Scientific Determinism and the Woman Question in *Lady Audley's Secret*

Abstract
My contention in this paper is that in *Lady Audley's Secret* Elizabeth Braddon is critical of the nineteenth-century theories of cerebral and biological determinism in relation to the question of female madness. I argue in the first part that Braddon pinpoints phrenology – the study of the faculties of the mind from the conformation of the skull – as one of the institutionalized sciences that provided a materialistic underpinning and a further incentive to masculine hegemony. After I outline the basic tenets of the theory I shall argue that as a subject of phrenological analysis, the madwoman is treated in ways that reproduce Victorian gender-normative stereotypes. In the second part I shall demonstrate that marriage is denounced as an institution that bolsters the hegemonic machine.

Key words
Phenology; female madness; science of the mind; Braddon; Lady Audley's Secret; *marriage*

My contention in this paper is that in *Lady Audley's Secret* Elizabeth Braddon is critical of the nineteenth-century theories of cerebral and biological determinism in relation to the question of female madness. I argue in the first part that Braddon pinpoints phrenology – the study of the faculties of the mind from the conformation of the skull – as one of the institutionalized sciences that provided a materialistic underpinning and a further incentive to masculine hegemony. After I outline the basic tenets of the theory I shall argue that as a subject of phrenological analysis, the madwoman is treated in ways that reproduce Victorian gender-normative stereotypes. In the second part I shall demonstrate that marriage is denounced as an institution that bolsters the hegemonic machine.

Since the publication of *Jane Eyre* the representation of the madwoman as a victim of patriarchy has been hackneyed. Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert,

Susan Gubar, Phyllis Chesler, and a few other feminist critics have built and disseminated this representation. They have made powerful arguments for the entrenchment of gender equality.[1] Elaine Showalter notes that "to contemporary feminist critics, Bertha Mason has become a paradigmatic figure" (1987: 68). Brontë's madwoman, Bertha Mason, came to be seen not only as a legacy bequeathed to Victorian gothic writers, but as a form of haunting. *Lady Audley's Secret* provides at least two compelling reasons to accept David Punter's argument that "the form of haunting itself, which is the form of all textuality, is brought to a certain pitch in Gothic writing" (1998: 1). The first is that the representation of the madwoman, Lucy Audley, is perilously close to the "genotextual model" Bertha Mason, and the second is that the husband is defrauded into marrying a madwoman in ignorance of her hereditary affliction.

In terms of generic choice Braddon does not depart from Brontë. She uses the same patterns of representation to ensure an enthusiastic reception of her work. She also capitalizes on the readers' exposure to phrenology in *Jane Eyre* to create an easier readerly engagement with her subject matter. Braddon's ironic statements about perceptual literacy and the skill of face-reading suggest the tenacity of her commitment to debunk physiognomy and phrenology, mostly because of their perilous entanglement with the coeval theory of evolution. The cerebral determinism underlying phrenology and the biological determinism upholding the theory of evolution have consolidated the idea that women are biologically and intellectually inferior to men, and have promoted the hegemonic culture. Braddon puts a new face on the well-established representation of female madness by showing that the perilous entanglement of pseudoscience and science with nineteenth-century ideology has regulated women's relation to their body and stigmatized defiant women as mad.

Phrenology and complicit hegemonic practices

The interest in reading minds and discerning character in *Lady Audley's Secret* partakes of a larger concern with physiognomy and phrenology. In what follows, I shall provide a brief outline of these theories in order to gauge their influence of the woman condition in the 1860's. Physiognomy steadily and doggedly gathered force in Britain through Johann Caspar Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* (1789) which introduced to many readers the basic tenets of the theory, and Alexander Morison's *The Physiognomy of Mental Diseases* (1840), which described the connection between facial expression and insanity. Physiognomy's standing as a valid method of investigating character diminished considerably as Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828) and Johann Caspar Spurzheim (1776-1832) started to investigate phrenology – a theory also known as "crainoscopy," "crainology," and "zoonomy."

Lukasik explains that by 1852 "physiognomy, of course, remained a residual component of phrenology, […] yet its scientific purchase had clearly diminished

in light of phrenology's allegedly more quantitative and less synthetic methods" (2011: 189). The basic principles of phrenology are that the brain is the organ of the mind; that the powers of man could be categorized into independent faculties such as "combativeness," "amativeness," "adhesiveness," "benevolence," etc. These faculties are innate, each having its seat in a definite region of the surface of the brain. The size of each region is a measure of the degree to which the faculty seated in it formed a constituent element in the character of the individual. Most important of all is the correspondence between the outer surface of the skull and the contour of the brain, and the recognition of the relative importance of the faculties by an examination of the "bumps" of the head. Gall's elaborate research in comparative anatomy – finalized and systematized at the beginning of the nineteenth-century – was considered an uncontroversial science. It gave phrenology scientific validity and reliability.[2] The advance in understanding that Gall's theory provided is that a physiological explanation of mental organization and function could be readily applied to understand insanity. It marked the relevance of phrenology to psychology, and later to psychiatry. Cooter notes that phrenology "had something to say at each of the required levels: its doctrine could claim to be scientific and somatic; it led to treatments which were moral and were conveyed as such" (1976: 1). Gall's phrenology gained readership in France, Germany and Britain, yet he opposed its popularization and trivialization. His reserve was shared by John Abernethy who foresaw "nothing but mischief" if the theory were left to the masses to mess with (Cooter 1976: 8). A contrasting perspective was brought about by George Combe, the most prominent British phrenologist who claimed that "phrenology advances with the progress of public opinion as to its truth" (1819: 72–73), and that "this system of philosophy is fitted to throw light upon every subject in which human nature is concerned" (1819: 305–306). Combe's democratizing strategy increased the middle-class exposure to the theory. De Giustino remarks that "Harriet Martineau (quite undaunted by the 'intellectual aristocrats' of her day) once called [phrenology] 'a boon to the multitudes, high and low'" (1975: 33). Phrenologists thought of themselves as part of the vanguard of a new scientific generation who could lay the foundation of a truly free society in the nineteenth century.

Combe's strategy increased women's exposure to phrenology, if only as lectures attendees. Women sought to "know that there was an underlying order to social relations, to be assured that these relations were natural and unrestraining, and that they were as individuals in their own right, integral to and not just appendages to the natural scheme of things" (Cooter 1984: 190). Although phrenology lost its epistemological standing by the 1860's, its basic tenets and teachings seeped into the literary productions of that decade. The item of interest to my purpose is that even when phrenology sat astride the line separating the categories of science and pseudoscience (at the hands of Gall), it was not divorced from ideology. Phrenologists felt that many nuances of their new science would be missed if people omitted to think of it as a collective representation. And since in such a collective representation, men have more presence and influence, diverse patriar-

chal assumptions were integrated under the phrenological umbrella. Phrenology was liberal in its promotion of social reforms, yet rather patriarchal in outlook. It streamlined diverse approaches to liberate women, yet its close alliance with the patriarchal system produced a uniform set of ideals that enforced the control of women. It bolstered and was itself bolstered by an already available set of assumptions about women's biological inferiority.

When *Lady Audley's Secret* was published the intellectual fascination with phrenology as a science of the mind, and the phrenological treatment of insanity greatly declined. Mental illness, however, remained imprecise in its meaning and was often confused with madness; a phenomenon interpreted as the infringement of the natural and the moral laws. Not before the 1870's- a decade that marked the emergence of the Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction and the Advancement of Science (1872-75), the beginning of the public endowment for scientific research, and a chain of technical and scientific institutes – did scientists find a more elaborate theory to understand and manage insanity. In *Lady Audley's Secret* phrenology is used to buttress an already deep-seated system of gender inequality. 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. "The young barrister," the narrator says, "had constituted himself the denouncer of this wretched woman" (382). Yet Lucy withstands the pressure of his surveillance by remaining absolutely unreadable. While "never relax[ing] his scrutiny of that pale face," Robert thinks, "she shall look at me [...] I will make her meet my eyes, and I will read her as I have read her before. She shall know how useless her artifices are with me" (217). Lucy does not capitulate to the challenges of visual confrontation. Contrary to physiognomy's fundamental assumption that the face necessarily and indisputably reflects the individual's psychological state, Lucy's face turns out to be the very cloak of secrecy. She is also hermetic to phrenological scrutiny. As a perfectly calibrated amalgam of reason and mental derangement, her interiority remains a mystery to the narrator who "can never describe a tithe of her thoughts or her sufferings" (314). When she loses all hope of devising her rescue, and without expectation of empathy, she tells her story with calm reason and no sense of contrition: "you and your nephew, Sir Michael, have been rich all your lives, and can very well afford to despise me; but I knew how far poverty can affect a life, and I looked forward with a sick terror to a life so affected" (351). The confessional speech, "told in a cold, hard tone" and in a voice "never broken by a tear" (351) consists in a personal inventory of her moral shortcomings. Stocked with moments of keen insight and containing ideas that connect up in a meaningful way, the speech completely defamiliarizes readers of the verbal pandemonium and the behavioural hysterics of the mentally deranged. The narrator declares: "all mental distress is, with some show of reason, associated in our minds with loose, disordered garments, and dishevelled hair, and an appearance

in every way the reverse of my lady's" (338). Lucy obscures the telltale signs of her madness, and withstands Robert's manifold investigating methods.

One little strand of the plot – Lucy's literary taste – suggests that she challenges the ideology that implements masculine hegemony. In reading risqué French novels – considered morally jeopardizing to women – Lucy displays a modern understanding of texts and ideology as inextricably intertwined, and specifically of literature as a heuristic device used to promote the values of a phallocentric culture. Her literary taste suggests that she does not suffer herself to be influenced by ideology-driven texts, and that she has taught her mind to work out rather than consume literature passively. Her perspective in relation to the forces sustaining ideology and animating the social body suffers no logical fallibility, and is further evidenced by her initiative to teach her maid Phoebe - standing for the working-class undeserving other – the sense of self-worth "*you* are like me, and your features are very nice; it is only colour that you want. My hair is pale yellow shot with gold, and yours is drab […] 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" (58). Phoebe is and acts in conformity with a set of characteristics that fits her status as a working-class woman. By encouraging her to wear makeup, which is an important social marker, Lucy aims to remove the apathy of dullness from Phoebe's life and, more importantly, to blur the ideals of class segregation.

Ironically, the deep comprehension that the system of class hegemony is supported by the system of masculine hegemony, and the challenge of the *status quo* are important phrenological values. Combe recommended that people carry out the role they were naturally suited to rather than born into. In *The Constitution of Man* he urged people to find a situation of poise between their natural character and their place in society. In its most general outline his theory brokers a compromise between noble birth and individual merit. These central tenets of phrenological philosophy – self-help and the legitimacy of social ascension – were interpreted as a way of contaminating the patriarchal space when appropriated by women. Defining the sentiment of "love of approbation" Spurzheim claims that "ambition is the title its activity receives […] it renders man the slave of fashion, in opposition to morality and reason" and, most importantly to our purpose, that it is "more active in women than in men; its difference is frequently very apparent in cases of insanity" (1829: 42–43). Before he demands a confession Robert tells Lucy: "[you] pollute this place by your presence" (345). This commentary is helpful in isolating the Victorian patriarch's view on the issue of female presence and identity in general. Lucy's presence contaminates Audley Court because it significantly overrides the normative female contribution to the maintenance of prevailing ideology. In contradistinction to her feminine representation; that is, all the saliently hegemonic features of femininity such as physical vulnerability, beauty, and childishness, Lucy's "presence" does not enact femininity *per se*. The way she is and the way she acts contravene the ethos of domesticity. Her increasing juggling with manifest presence has piqued Robert's curiosity as to how she

has manoeuvred her way successfully in the social landscape. "[T]he object of Robert Audley's search," Jonathan Loesberg contends "[…] is [Lucy's] double identity. Unlike other crimes and incidents, identity shifts are not localizable: they occur in the past, but they define the present in a way that ties them to the suspense arising from suggestions of inevitable sequence" (1986: 130). Robert's feeling that Lucy challenges the most important dictates of feminine social being leads back ineluctably into the vicious circle of masculine self-interest which assimilates and appropriates female identity into a framework in which women are categorized as "angel[s] in the house" that is, beings with absolute moral identities. Lucy's four identities (Helen Maldon, Helen Talboys, Lucy Graham, Lady Audley) and their concomitant behavioural patterns suggest that various motivations and many contingent factors have modified Lucy's morality. In itself the number of identities speaks to the unlikelihood of navigating across different situations with the same moral outlook, or with the same disposition to act morally. Internal dynamics of moral identity and social structural regulations exert their own independent effect on moral conduct. To speak of just one instance, prosperity makes Lucy pleasant and obliging. She declares "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" (354). She became scheming and dangerous when her husband left her, and when her father shirked his responsibility toward her. The uncompromising Victorian ideology which impels women to hold on to an invisible presence, and to one moral typology is at the origin of Robert's attitude, and also surely of Lucy's destabilized identity. When he discovers her secret, Robert calls on a medical expert, Dr. Mosgrave to confirm that she is mad. Dr. Mosgrave initially rejects Robert's own diagnosis:

> there is no evidence of madness in anything that she has done. She ran away from her home because her home was not a pleasant one, and she left it 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. (377)

Dr Mosgrave's comment suggests that Robert Audley has ascribed the label of madness to Lucy because she has deviated from the average norms of institutionalized female behaviour. He reveals that Robert's judgment of Lucy endorses a confusion between madness and mental illness. By rejecting Robert's diagnosis Dr. Mosgrave suggests that the particularity of mental illness is inaccessible to the probe of the layperson, and that only a physician has jurisdiction over where the boundaries of reason and insanity should fall. However his demarcation of the field of proper science is soon undermined when the doctor validates Robert's views: "as a physiologist and as an honest man," he declares that "[Lucy] is

dangerous […] she has the cunning of madness and the prudence of intelligence" (379). He thinks that Robert "could do no better service to society than by [shutting her away]; for physiology is a lie if the woman [he] saw ten minutes again is a woman to be trusted at large" (381). The mental health professional is unable to detect more recondite pockets of psychosis and, like the layperson, uses moral principles to buttress hostile attitudes toward Lucy. He stigmatizes her as "dangerous" because through her mental dexterity – what he calls "the prudence of intelligence" – she has failed to complement hegemonic masculinity in a relationship of subordination. He sends her to an asylum because she has overridden morality and has violated moral prohibitions for non-moral reasons. What Victorian morality is taken to refer to is crucial to understand the physician's reaction. At its core Victorian morality expects women to display obedience and to accept men's authority, even if the latter is coercive and interferes with their freedom. George Talboys and Lucy's father who have shirked their responsibility toward Lucy are not asked to account for their actions whereas Lucy's abandonment of her child is counted on the list of her psychopathic actions. Robert's comments on George's actions are shrouded in obscure rhetoric. He just mentions that George went to Australia to seek fortune in order to provide for his family upon his return. Because Victorian morality involves discrimination on the basis of gender, the doctor does not care to find a further reason than Lucy's immorality to justify her social ostracism. By showing that little separates lay from expert testimony and that professional medical assertion can still be uttered with no demonstrable scientific evidence, Braddon shakes up the triumphalist view that phrenology is a significant progress in the science of the mind.

De Giustino concedes that phrenologists did not want to police the boundaries separating specialist expertise from popular wisdom because they run the risk of losing the support of "the ordinary people" and that for this particular clientele "the most alluring feature of phrenology was its apparent synthesis of scientific information and general wisdom" (1975: 59). Dr. Mosgrave represents the hybrid profile and the vexing role of the alienist in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. Lynn M. Voskuil cogently remarks that Dr. Mosgrave is "a Maudsleyesque figure" insofar as he believes in somatic fidelity, that is, the utter conformity between states of feeling and appearance (2001: 629). A case in point is when Dr Mosgrave learns about Robert's state of mind by simply examining his facial features "your face has told me what you would have withheld from me; it has told me that you suspect!" (378). I wish to point out that the more significant similarity between Dr. Mosgrave and Henry Maudsley is their misogyny. Henry Maudsley is one of the mental physiologists whom Showalter calls "Darwinian psychiatrists." Following Darwin, they "sternly maintained that that hereditary organic taint compounded by vicious habits caused madness" (1987: 104) and that women are more likely to have this taint in their blood. They are not interested in the teleological nature of female behavior nor in the effect of the environment on behavior. According to the law of evolution – by which they are deeply influenced - that very effect works through the gene regardless the organ's preference, desire, or

moral precepts. Darwin's frequent assertions about women's intellectual inferiority led Richards to conclude that "Darwin assessed the qualities of women as would most Victorian gentlemen, save Wallace. Women abounded in the tender virtues, but lacked the distinctively male intellect" (1987: 188). Maudsley's misogyny transpires from his cognizance and support of biological determinism which provided in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, an ideological blueprint and a legitimating rationale for generating and sustaining hegemonic gender relations.

Like Spurzheim, who claims that "insanity is more frequent in women than in men. The cause certainly cannot be ascribed to their minds" (1829: 95), Maudsley urges his readers to "look for the root of the ill in some natural [i.e.,, physiological] infirmity or instability of nerve element" (1873: 77). In the *Fortnightly Review* of 1874 the latter declared that [Women] cannot choose but to be women; cannot rebel successfully against the tyranny of their organization, the complete development and function whereof must take place after its kind," and that "there is sex in mind as distinctly as there is sex in body; and if the mind is to receive the best culture of which its nature is capable, regard must be had to the mental qualities which correlate differences of sex."[3] Maudsley uses biological determinism to maintain and naturalize gender inequality. Likewise, Mosgrave brings biological insights to bear on the causes of Lucy's madness when he affirms that "the hereditary taint in her blood" (379) provides the drive, energy and direction to all her actions. He explains that Lucy's madness surfaces only "under extreme mental pressure" (379), yet she is unable to break free from her genetic grips. Dr Mosgrave accounts for Lucy's illness in genetic terms – an immutable genetic affliction – whereas she accounts for it mostly in terms of experience. She declares that the trespassing of "that narrow boundary-line between sanity and insanity" (346) occurred "when George Talboys goaded me, as you have goaded me; and reproached me, and threatened me; my mind, never properly balanced, utterly lost its balance, and *I was mad*!" (346) This is a very catchy moment in which Lucy rejects the genetic bias of her madness and acknowledges that what she is fighting against is not her genetic grips or inborn tendencies, but male conspiracy.

The alienist in the Belgian *maison de santé* is another man who denies Lucy the right for self-governance, personalized philanthropy, and self-help by casting himself in the role of a custodian rather than a clinician. This form of paternalistic management is destructive to the female patient. "[M]ental asylums," Phyllis Chesler holds, "are families bureaucratized: the degradation and disenfranchisement of self, experienced by the biologically owned child (patient, woman), takes place in the anonymous and therefore guiltless embrace of strange fathers and mothers" (2005: 95). Like Dr Mosgarve and Robert, the alienist engages in a practice that legitimates hegemonic masculinity and ensures that Lucy's old sinful self never resurges. The three men's attitude toward Lucy suggests that women's behavior is scrutinized and measured against a sort of metaphysics of morals; a principle which provides categorizations and taxonomies regardless of external social influence on morality. Because this metaphysics of morals serves to uphold the normative order, it seeks out and establishes a female behavioral

pattern that totally precludes the female will. The three men's uniform attitudinal reaction to Lucy's condition suggests that hegemonic masculinity is not reducible to interpersonal domination - Robert's over Lucy - but is a set of practices which situates men in a position of domination in relation to women. It is this complicit hegemonic practice that Braddon believes should be sealed off from the interest of science, especially mental health science.

"Live here and repent!" Robert tells Lucy upon leaving her in the asylum; the place of female confinement *par excellence*. Lucy's conduct is criticized on moral grounds. This judgment echoes Spurzheim's remark that "insanity is that peculiar state of the mind which is attended with the loss of moral liberty" (1829: 93). The moral/religious regimen of the asylum – very well documented and discussed by Foucault in his seminal works *The History of Madness in the Classical Age* (1961) and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) – has been supplemented in the nineteenth century by the adherence of many reputable alienists to phrenology. Combe's identification of the faculty of "veneration" urged alienists to embrace and use the moral principles of phrenology in their treatment of the insane. Combe declares: "no creature presents such anomalous appearances as man" actuated by Combativeness, Destructiveness, Aquisitiveness, and Self-Esteem, the moral sentiments being in abeyance, he is almost a fiend," but when "inspired by Benevolence, Veneration, Hope [and] Ideality […] a highly-elevated nature beam[s] from his countenance […]" (1974: 2). Combe further recommends that people resort to "reflection" and "conscientiousness" to avoid fanaticism. The phrenological belief of the moral reformation of the insane confirms phrenology's strong ties to ideology by the medium of religion.

The realization of the patriarchal dividend through marriage

The purpose of this second part is to gauge the influence of phrenology on marriage for it is indispensable to our understanding of marriage in *Lady Audley's Secret* as, in Shroeder and Shroeder's words, "a species of domesticated crime" (2006: 48). In the first part I have shown that Lucy's madness is not the product of nature/biology but the outcome of social conditioning, a stringent network of social regulation and what I referred to as a male conspiracy. In this part I wish to argue how the institution of marriage in particular consolidates these regulations and leads to a more efficient realization of the patriarchal dividend. Phrenologists almost uniformly adapted their science of the brain to the issue of gender stratification within marriage. In 1834 Alexander Smart preached the ideals of marriage based on the principles of phrenology in "On the Application of Phrenology in the Formation of Marriages." He maintained that while "the impulse to the connubial union" is Amativeness, or the sexual feeling – which in itself "leads to libertinism and conjugal infidelity; but when under the guidance of the moral and reflective faculties, it excites to mutual kindness, and the exercise of all the milder amenities between the sexes" (1834: 464–465). The higher faculties are

needed to control all the domestic affections – Amativeness, Love of Offspring, and Adhesiveness – "for their gratification is pregnant with evil." One must therefore choose one's partner carefully, not being carried away by blind emotion or "bitter days of repentance […] follow." The best choice is "guided by intellect to an object pleasing to itself and the moral faculties […] doubling the delights afforded by the domestic affections, and rendering the enjoyment lasting" (465). Smart's recommendations are informed by bourgeois ideology. To women he recommends that they acquire "orderly, cleanly, and industrious habits," that they be "habitually agreeable; that they "act with great caution" that they do not let themselves be fooled by "the honeyed accents of a lover" until he proves his moral and intellectual worth. If a man fails to prove his good intention, Smart recommends women "shun him as [they] would a pestilence." To men, Smart recommends that they know "the physical and moral sciences, to fit [them] for […] the duties of active life" and to "know [themselves]" (through phrenology). Then, the "joyful husband" will find "by delightful experience that:

> It is to lovely woman given
> To soothe our griefs, or woes allay,
> To heal the heart by misery riven,
> Change earth into an embryo heaven,
> And drive life's fiercest cares away.

Smith's definition of a good marriage marks the confluence of phrenology and ideology. Leahey and Leahey are right to point out that "through phrenology one aspires to reach the very pinnacle of Victorian domestic happiness" (1983: 98). By idealizing women as passive, compliant, and easily accepting of gender stratification, phrenology reinforces the hierarchy of masculinity/femininity, authority/compliance. Smart's division is remarkably close in spirit to the ideology informing Maudsley's remark that "under the institution of marriage, [a woman] has the position of a subordinate, herself debarred from the noble aims and activities of life, and ministering, in a silent manner, to the comfort and greatness of him who appropriates labour and enjoys the rewards" (1867: 203). Both suggest that women are commodities in the male-centred sexual economy and that they can never experience an independent consciousness of self. Phrenology championed the spirit of gender stratification within marriage even though it worked superficially on the eradication of the deep-seated system of gender differences through the education of women. Housewives came in great numbers to the phrenological lectures delivered by Combe, James Simpson, and John Epps in the hope of learning how to stake a place for themselves in the hegemonic culture. "Phrenologists," De Giustino writes, "wanted to bring women out of their cosy domestic confinement: to allow them to join and lead public associations, to provide opportunities for their exercise and education, and to liberate them from the dictates of fashion" (1975: 73). At face value phrenologists understood that by restraining women legally and socially marriage sets out to prevent them

from feeling independent. They made it part of their agenda to side with women in their struggle against the patriarchal culture and to foster revolutionary ideas in order to ameliorate women’s second-sex status. Yet because of its significant support of the values of the established institutions, phrenology led to a more significant entrenchment of ideology. Its attempt to reconcile women’s position with ideology ended up consolidating and naturalizing socially-constructed gender roles. Braddon’s reaction to this gender regime – which offers women exposure only as “ministering angels” or creatures of “more heavenly endowments” – is to offer Lucy a polar exposure as a victim and as a culprit. She is a culprit insofar as she conceals her former marriage and the existence of her child, assumes a false identity, falsifies records, commits bigamy, derelicts her parental duty, and attempts to murder her former husband George Talboys. Yet she commits these crimes to rescue herself from the disastrous social predicament befalling poor, single, or deserted women. Consequently it is the social pressure that overrides Lucy’s moral values. To avoid the constraints of her precarious situation and its alienating effects, Lucy became fraudulent. School education has fostered her materialist spirit and has prepared her for a brutal environment of self-seeking predation. “I had learnt” Lucy confesses to Sir Michael and Robert “that which in some indefinite manner or other every school-girl learns sooner or later--I learned that my ultimate fate in life depended upon my marriage, and I concluded that if I was indeed prettier than my schoolfellows, I ought to marry better than any of them” (350). School is represented as a disorienting milieu. It provides a conceptual map of marriage as a site of opportunism and a self-serving way that involves self-deception for the sake of achieving social satisfaction. Phrenology is again under tacit attack because phrenologists believed that public education would encourage the growth of human intelligence. This belief is severely undercut by their failure to liberate the educational system from the firm grip of the patriarchal system. Acting within the boundaries of Victorian ideology, and abiding by the laws of cerebral determinism – which completely undermines women’s intellectual capacities – phrenologists did not leave much room for the improvement of women through education. In school Lucy learns that beauty is a highly marketable value and that forfeiting her right to be the full owner of her own body is a legitimate act to make up for her economic disempowerment. The main “flaw[] in the Victorian marital ideal” (Schroeder and Schroeder 2006: 22) is the sanction of men’s use of the female body as a form of permissible infringement in exchange for the material and social compensations men provide.

The more radical import of Lucy’s comment about marriage is broached when, a bit further, she describes marriage as the “world’s great lottery” (350). It might initially be thought that Braddon uses the trope of lottery to establish a compromise between the competing claims of lineage (noble birth) and merit, or to invent a democratic appeal to the institution of marriage. Yet the meritocratic aspect is based on a material condition (beauty) and not on a moral one (virtue). In the rest of her confession Lucy endorses the role of femininity in gender hegemony: “‘I would have been your true and pure wife to the end of time,” Lucy

insisted to Sir Michael "though I had been surrounded by a legion of tempters. The mad folly the world calls love had never had any part in my madness; and here at least extremes met, and the vice of heartlessness became the virtue of constancy" (354). Her statement is conventional in its general outlook if we take "true and pure wife" to suggest the recognition of sexuality as a component of stable domesticity and part of the spousal obligations. Voskuil interprets this passage as "[Lucy's] brazen refusal to believe in the construction of her marriage as motivated by authentic love" and concludes that "she performed the behaviors of marital affection but never felt them inside" (2001: 624). Though we learn from Voskuil's argument on the sidelines, it is difficult to concur that the rejection of love marks out this statement as unconventional because love, according to the Victorian moral standards – wherein phrenological philosophy is embedded – is an expedient whose reach in practical life is to sustain and uphold matrimonial bliss. Lucy's statement is conventional even where it implies that sexuality is desirable for it casts interest in sexuality as a further compliance with Victorian domestic morality. Lucy does not then evade her gender identity. Commenting on the performance of gender in *Lady Audley's Secret* Voskuil again maintains that Lady Audley "is a heroine who captivated Victorian readers (variably thrilling or disgusting them) precisely because she 'looked the part' of Victorian woman and wife but refused to 'be' it inside." Voskuil is right to argue that Lucy refuses to integrate the patriarchal sphere and to embody the sociopsychological profile of the "angel in the house," yet she overlooks the fact that by enacting femininity, Lucy is already inside the patriarchal space. Femininity is a position that has validity only in its social relation to masculinity, and feminine character is not independent of the patriarchal culture because it is the latter that governs the production of cathexis (the social arena of desire and sexuality) and regulates women's relation to their bodies. Even when she impels Phoebe to wear makeup, Lucy does not impel her to stand off what she takes to be an unjust, yet deep-seated system of inequality. In this sense Schroeder and Schroeder maintain that "Lucy does not question the rewards of the bourgeois vision of upward social mobility, nor does she protest its limitations [...]. Though she is uncommonly beautiful, uncommonly resourceful, and uncommonly independent, Lucy's ambitions turn out to be surprisingly conventional" (2006: 29–30). Lucy's behavior and self-presentation do not resonate with the assumed qualities of an upper-middle class woman, and she defies the ideology of passionlessness and prudery, yet she engages in practices that match her gender and class category. She is not a heroine who defies the long-standing patriarchal structures of femininity. Her feminine practice, consisting mainly in an erotically charged public demeanour, the use of seduction to get what she hankers after, performativity and opulence, are perceived as matching her gender category. She even exaggerates her feminine role to the point of raising the specter of extramarital affairs. Robert Audley imagines that he is "falling in love with [his] aunt" (94). Contra Voskuil, then, we might assume that though Lucy does not epitomize "sexual repression, modesty, and innocence" her behavior is still in keeping with an institutionalized female role.

Now if Lucy’s self-presentation resonates with the assumed qualities of a middle-class woman, her mind does not. She engages in practices that match her gender and class category because she understands that she is pre-imaged in the male aesthetic as a commodity and because she is aware that she would jeopardize her status if she acts in contradiction with the specular objectification her status calls for. Dr. Mosgrave himself anchors the idea of Lucy’s sensibility. He explains that the pathological use to which she has put her reason is what makes her “dangerous” implying, therefore, that her peril is intellectual and moral rather than physiological. According to him, Lucy’s intellect is deviant, not deficient. And it is deviant because she defies the moral rules. He tacitly acknowledges that she is an intelligent woman who can follow through on all her resolutions. The mental power she deploys in committing several offenses and crimes goes some way to correcting the view that women’s cerebral inferiority makes the attainment of rational thought impossible. Lucy’s sensibility is juxtaposed to Michael Audley’s sensitivity-where sensitivity is understood as sentimentality. The latter “believed [the simple account of Lucy’s youth] as he had believed in the gospel” (349). His gullibility makes Lucy secure in her influence on him: “I can twist him which way I like. I can put black before him, and if I say it is white, he will believe me’” (282). Mr. Audley’s gullibility is a sign that his masculine traits are overrated. By integrating men in the province of women and women in the province of man, Braddon turns the traditional portrayal of gendered psychology on its head. Through this new gender mapping she explores the permeability of such putative oppositions as female sentimentality and male sensibility/rationality. The whole cluster of positive qualities attributed to Lucy – all deducible from the special degree of her sensibility, quickness of perception, self-knowledge, self-control, courage, resilience, foresight, flexibility and perhaps most daring of all, intellectual freedom – is a reaction to what Lorraine Daston calls the “naturaliz[ation] of the female intellect.” Daston explains that this happened toward the late nineteenth century when “the link between the ‘female’ and ‘intellectual’ was all but severed” owing to the fact that the “reasonable necessity of natural laws had given way to the physical constraints of laws of nature” (1996: 181). Lucy’s critical judgment and the breadth of her knowledge come into play in the chapter entitled “Preparing the Ground.” The chapter marks the consolidation and the confluence of the previous symptoms of her sensibility. These symptoms are buried in arguments, bent in some other direction and often missed on first reading. After responding to Robert Audley’s accusation of madness with aplomb, Lucy engages in a long definition of madness:

> What is one of the strongest diagnostics of madness- what is the first appalling sign of mental aberration? The mind becomes stationary, the brain stagnates, the even current of the mind is interrupted; the thinking power of the brain resolves itself into a monotone. As the waters of the a tideless pool putrefy by reason of their stagnation, the mind becomes turbid and corrupt

> through lack of action; and perpetual reflection upon one subject resolves itself into monomania. (287)

Lucy's spirited speech compels readers to cast aside their assumption about women's intellectual inferiority. Mr Audley is bewildered by Lucy's intellectual stirring for it is not part of the normal spectrum of emotion attributed to women. Her vulnerability is suddenly off the mark. She now poses unprecedented challenges for her husband's understanding. "My lady paused. The words died away upon her lips. She has exhausted herself by the strange energy with which she had spoken. She had been transported from a frivolous childish beauty into a woman strong to argue her own cause and plead her own defense" (287–288). Yet because Mr Audley is not sensitive to his wife's intellectual vicissitudes, they have wrought no significant change in his neotinized picture of her: "the big words sounded strange from my lady's rosy lips, but her newly adopted wisdom had a certain quaint prettiness about it, which bewildered her husband" (288). His bewilderment suggests that he does not initially consider her as an equal.

Braddon laid the axe to the root of the pseudo-scientific theory of phrenology because it supported the system of biological determinism and has given valence to hegemonic masculinity by consolidating the idea that insanity is a gendered affliction. In the first part of the paper I showed that as a subject of scientific analysis Lucy Audley is treated in ways that reproduce gender-normative stereotypes and support the cult of domesticity. In the second part I mapped the gender relation within marriage from a phrenological perspective. My aim was to demonstrate that instead of helping the gender relation evolve more equitably, phrenology has greatly alienated women by regulating their relation to their body and by promulgating a materialist interest in marriage.

Notes

1 For scholarship on women and madness see N. Tomes, 'Feminist histories of psychiatry' in M. S. Micale and R. Porter (eds.), *Discovering the History of Psychiatry* (Oxford, 1994), 348–383. See also M. MacDonald, 'Women and madness in Tudor and Stuart England', *Social Research*, L lll, 2 (1986), 261–281; M. S. Micale, 'Hysteria and its historiography: a review of past and present writings (II)', *History of Science*, xxvii (1989), 319–351; C. Vanja, 'Gender and mental diseases in early modern society: the Hessian hospitals' in L. de Goei and J. Vijselaar (eds.), *Proceedings of the 1st European Congress on the History of Psychiatry and Mental Health Care* (Rotterdam, 1993), 71–75.

2 For phrenology's place in the history of science see R. M. Young, 'The Functions of the Brain, Gall to Ferrier,' *Isis* 59 (1968): 251–268; Oswei Temkin, 'Gall and the Phrenological Movement,' *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 21 (1947): 275–322; Edwin Clarke and C. D. O'Malley, *The Human Brain and Spinal Cord* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

3 The occasion for Maudsley's statement in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1874 is an exchange between him and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the second woman ever to gain the necessary qualifications to practise as a doctor in 1865. The object of the exchange is how much biology determined women's capacity to study, and to have a role outside their immediate

domestic environment. To stress the argument that women are biologically unable to engage with labour on their own terms, Maudsley used the insight of Dr. Edward H. Clarke, an anti-feminist intellectual who spells out his misogynistic theory in *Sex in Education*. For an elaborate comment on this exchange see Elaine Showalter and English Showalter 'Victorian Women and Menstruation' in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, *The Victorian Woman* (Sep., 1970), 83–89.

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