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THE STATUS OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN IN A GOTHIC NOVEL: WILKIE COLLINS'S *THE WOMAN IN WHITE* (1859)*

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Abstract

Though it is widely thought that Gothic fiction aims at evoking fear and terror in readers with the employment of Gothic elements, this genre actually addresses certain taboos and dogmas of its time intending to break or undermine them. By encompassing the othered and the marginalised minorities, it can be asserted that Gothic fiction aims to give them a sense of existence. As a consequence of such an aspect, in the examples of this genre, certain concerns related to the woman question, social classes, and particular ideologies that dominate specific periods can be scrutinised. To make it more precise, in certain Gothic novels, the secondary position of women in society can be discussed through the characters and their relationships. In particular Gothic novels, the gap between the social classes and how the lower classes are exploited can be examined. In this sense, in line with the concerns that are on the agenda of Gothic fiction, this paper aims at analysing Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859) in terms of the representation of its female characters by considering the changes regarding the status of women in nineteenth-century England.

K**eywords:** *Gothic fiction, Wilkie collins, The Woman in white, The status of women, Nineteenth-century England.*

GOTİK BİR ROMANDA ON DOKUZUNCU YÜZYIL KADININ STATÜSÜ: WILKIE COLLINS'İN *BEYAZLI KADIN* (1859) ESERİ

Öz

Gotik edebiyatın, Gotik elementleri kullanarak okurda korku ve dehşet duygularını uyandırmayı hedeflediği düşünülse de bu tür aslında yazıldığı dönemin tabularına ve dogmalarına değinip bu tabu ve dogmaları kırmayı ya da sarsmayı hedefler. Ötekileştirilen ve marjinde kalan azınlıkları kapsayarak onlara bir tür varoluş duygusu vermeyi hedeflediği söylenebilir. Türün bu özelliğinin bir sonucu olarak, gotik eserlerde kadın sorunsalı, sosyal sınıflar ve dönemi domine eden belirli ideolojilerle ilgili belli birtakım sorunlar incelenebilir. Daha açık ifade etmek gerekirse, bazı Gotik romanlarda, karakterlerin ilişkilerini inceleyerek kadınların toplumdaki ikincil konumu ya da sosyal sınıflar arasındaki fark ve alt sınıfların nasıl sömürüldüğü incelenebilir. Bu bağlamda, Gotik edebiyatın gündeminde olan bu sorunlar ile uyumlu olarak bu yazı Wilkie Collins'in *Beyazlı Kadın* adlı romanında on dokuzuncu yüzyıl İngiltere'sinde kadınların mevcut durumlarıyla ilişkili değişiklikleri göz önünde bulundurarak kadın temsillerini incelemeyi amaçlar.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Gotik edebiyat, Wilkie collins, Beyazlı kadın, Kadınların sosyal durumu, On dokuzuncu yüzyıl İngiltere.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gothic is chiefly associated with fiction that emerged as a genre in the second half of the eighteenth century, which "is hardly 'Gothic' at all. [Rather] [i]t is an entirely . . . post-Renaissance phenomenon" (Hogle, 2002:1). What is meant by post-Renaissance is the fact that Gothic fiction, unlike its architectural form, does not attempt to praise or glorify religion and/or God. It, on the contrary, aims to break certain taboos. In other words, since the Renaissance is an era in which clerical dogmas pertaining to humans' being worthless are shaken, which is a long-lasting taboo, this newly-emerged fiction, likewise, targets different taboos or dogmas of its time. Pertaining to the target of this genre, it can be claimed that gothic fiction aims to correct the wrongs in society. Including 'others' in itself, Gothic intends to give voice to the ones that are othered in society. To highlight the function of the genre, Çiğdem Pala Mull claims in the preface of *Gotik Romanın Kıtalararası Serüveni* (*The Intercontinental Journey of the Gothic Novel*) that resistance is peculiar to this genre as it sparks its emergence. Hence, it is apt to deduce that it targets to reveal or sometimes fix inequalities and problems in societies concerning social classes, gender-related or political issues through terror and fear (2008:11-12). In this respect, one of those long-lasting inequalities in societies is definitely about the perception of women or their social status. In this sense, in line with the concerns that are on the agenda of Gothic fiction, this paper aims at analysing Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859) in terms of the representation of its female characters by considering the changes regarding the status of women in nineteenth-century England.

In societies, not only in the nineteenth century but also in much earlier times, woman and man – the binary conception of gender – are always regarded as a dichotomy of one another rather than complementing each other. Male and female are juxtaposed in a dichotomous structure and defined in relation to one another. In this respect, it is apt to claim that the two basic genders are the oldest and most common binary since the existence of humankind. Considering them as binary, man is the embodiment of power, wisdom, and strength, whereas woman is always associated with fragility, incompetence, and weakness. This indicates that the former is superior to the latter and even in the story of creation in the *Bible*, as "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (*The King James Study Bible*, 2013:Gen. 1:27). It is implied that the male is created before the female and even in this one line, the superiority of man is apparent. Indeed, there are several interpretations of the story of creation, and "[t]he dominant reading has found in Genesis 1-3 a hierarchical creation, with woman subordinate to man" (Kvam et al., 1999:6-7). Besides, when the discourse King James' version employs is considered, it is explicit that the Creator also has a gender – male. Thus, rather than being pictured as a divine or almighty figure, "[t]he god of the story is highly anthropomorphized. From the very start, *he* is more of this world than a higher one" (Scult et al., 1986:117; emphasis added). In this sense, the anthropomorphic God's having a gender is of great importance as it also contributes to the highly believed and accepted claim that there is subordination of women to men.

As a result of this widely acknowledged ideology concerning women, until the nineteenth century, almost no marked changes related to women's status in society took place. The patriarchal system retains its ideology, which continues to dominate in the nineteenth century. This male-dominated structure persists despite notable societal changes brought about by new laws related to women's rights, the passionate writings of female authors, and societal reforms, which constitute the primary focus of this study. In other words, in this century, the Industrial Revolution and its effects are observed in almost all layers of society, and considering mechanisation and inventions such as railroads, rapid alterations take place in life. However, the status of women remains unchanged until the second half of the age just like the reigning patriarchal code. This contrasting situation is propounded by Barbara Welter as follows: "In a society where values changed frequently, where fortunes rose and fell with frightening rapidity, where social and economic mobility provided instability as well as hope, one thing at least remained the same – *a true woman* was a true woman, wherever she was found" (1966:151-2; emphasis added). The term "true woman" has great significance because it is used to label the opposite sex as idealised or fallen/corrupt. Pertaining to the dichotomous definition towards them, it is maintained that women can either be ideal or fallen. Considering what is expected from women, the 'true womanhood' "prescribed a female role bounded by kitchen and nursery, overlaid with piety and purity, crowned with subservience" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1985:13). The reason for the emergence of such an opposing label to define them is the fact that the urge to keep the second sex in boundaries or confinements was still valid at that time. In the previous century,

they started to step out of their houses owing to the Industrial Revolution and the notions favoured by the Enlightenment caused them to demand equality. These changes enable women to awaken as well as demand or desire more. That is why, so as to establish dominance over the othered gender, between 1820 and 1860, a new term emerged for them, which is "the Cult of True Womanhood." According to this new perception,

> woman was the hostage in the home . . . [and] [t]he attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbours and society could be divided into four cardinal values – piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife – woman. (Welter, 1966:151-2)

At this point, it should be highlighted that these cardinal values are attributed to the second sex by the patriarchal society, which is the husbands, neighbours, and even religion, and also when these values are embedded in them, they turn into 'mother,' 'wife' or 'sister.' In this regard, it is to be noted that apart from being a mother, wife, sister, or daughter, they cannot have any other titles. In other words, it is not possible for them to dream of other labels except for the mentioned ones. This restrictive ideology aims to prevent females from having other roles or statuses like being a teacher, scientist, factory worker, and the like. Moreover, such a mindset is so effectual that it is agreed "'true womanhood' was the centerpiece of nineteenth-century female identity" (Roberts, 2002:150).

Another point concerning the nineteenth-century perception of woman is the fact that when these four major values are regarded, it is apparent that this limitative system and religion go hand in hand. Welter further argues in her article that "[r]eligion or piety was the core of woman's virtue, the source of her strength. . . . Purity was as essential as piety to a young woman, its absence as unnatural or unfeminine" (1966:152, 154). In this regard, the opposite sex is expected to be pious as well as pure and in order to have such traits, women are supposed to remain in the private realm, which is the last attribution for them. The reason why they are completely associated with the private/domestic sphere is the fact that they are thought to be the "guardian of the family against the moral corruption of the marketplace" (French, 2008:129). In other words, they are 'the angel in the house' just like Coventry Patmore (1823-1896) presents the idealised woman in his widely known poem of the same phrase (1854/62). When this mindset is compared with the patriarchal ideology of the eighteenth century, it is palpable to maintain that they are still associated with the private sphere. In this respect, in order to be regarded as feminine or a true woman, they are supposed to reign in their houses and protect their family from corruption through their pious and pure nature. Frances B. Cogan aptly pinpoints the overall characteristics of an ideal Victorian woman as follows: "The Cult of True Womanhood held that woman was to fulfil herself in the 'instinctive' arts of child rearing, domestic pursuits, and spiritual comfort" (1989:68). This rigid way of thinking renders a woman as someone wholly devoted to her family and its wellbeing, and unfortunately, prevents her from having her own dreams or desires in life.

Among the attributions embedded on the opposite sex, submission is the most foregrounded virtue that they are supposed to have (Welter 1966:158). Although submission and obedience seem similar in terms of their meaning, there is a slight but notable difference between them. While the former is actually submitting to an authority or accepting the hegemony, the latter is the practice of obeying. In other words, the former actually means accepting the superior position of another, whereas obedience simply means carrying out orders or commands. Within this scope, for the androcentric system, acknowledging the supremacy of the superior sex is expected. That is why women are supposed to be submissive. Pertaining to this virtue, it is indicated that the common mindset of the eighteenth century about their weakness and inferiority to men is still dominant and women are still seen as the second sex; thus, they ought to submit to the superior gender. The dichotomous and discriminative difference between the sexes causes men to become "the movers, the doers, the actors", while it makes women be thought of as "the passive, submissive responders" (Welter, 1966:159). In spite of the fact that the latter are quite enthusiastic and willing to be regarded as equals to men and display their desires through their writings in the preceding century, it seems that they cannot make inroads into their cause. Regarding the expectation that women should be submissive, one point is to be highlighted: It is ironic that "while a True Woman was assumed to be a pillar of moral strength and virtue, she was also portrayed as delicate and weak, prone to fainting and illness", which results in their need to be "protected by a male family member" (Cruea,

2005:189). With regard to this, this ideology, though put forward in the nineteenth century, is strikingly similar to the roles of a husband and a wife in marriage in the eighteenth century. A husband is the lord, whose duties include breadwinning and protecting as well as ruling his family, whereas a wife is the *feme covert* (covered woman) who is regarded as an inseparable entity from her husband.

In addition to "the Cult of True Womanhood," yet another term that is widely considered appropriate and accepted to define women and their status is 'the angel in the house.' This is actually a poem penned by Coventry Patmore between 1854 and 1862. For Patmore's widely known poem, *The Angel in the House*, Carol Christ asserts that "it is culturally significant, not only for its definition of the Victorian sexual ideal, but also for the clarity with which it represents the male concerns that motivate fascination with that ideal" (1977:147). In this respect, this work veritably reflects the androcentric mindset's perception of the opposite sex through Patmore's eyes. As the title of the poem reveals, women are regarded as angels, but only in their own homes. This cast of mind is perfectly in accordance with the cardinal value—domesticity—attributed to them. Furthermore, this term is mostly used to define Victorian women in the preceding century, too, they are associated with the private realm in which they can show their excellence. In other words, the idea of confining the opposite sex into their houses claiming that they can flourish there or be angels is not a new mode of thinking. In Patmore's poem, the Patmorian woman is portrayed as subservient to men and also as the embodiment of the domestic sphere, while men belong to the public sphere (Ruskin, 2017:54; Hartnell, 1996:458; Hogan and Bradstock, 1998:1). Labelling females as angels in their houses, the patriarchy solely allows them to exist in the private sphere because if they are eager to be a part of the public realm, the label is already ready for them, which is the fallen woman. Within this scope, the subordinated sex is unable to gain new experiences or broaden their horizons because an "ideal woman [is defined] as domestic woman, woman who has no existence outside the context of her home and whose sole windows on the world is her husband" (Hartnell, 1996:460). In terms of this ideology, they are mere shadows of their husbands, without whom their existence may be questioned or even ceased. At this point, it is of significance to note that today, these distinctive spheres and women's confinement to the private sphere can be regarded as both oppressive and discriminative; but in the nineteenth century, it was a part of the social order. In other words, "the most jarring element of *The Angel in the House* seems to have been its attempt to cast the everyday events and details of Victorian middle-class existence in verse" (Moore, 2015:42-3). In this respect, labelling Patmore's portrayal of women as misogynistic might risk an anachronistic reading not only because of the complex gender discourses of the time but also because their being angels in their houses is among the norms and codes of the nineteenth century and widely accepted by almost all layers in society.

2.THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

Building upon the discussion about the terms such as 'the Cult of True Womanhood' and 'the angel in the house,' that emerged in the nineteenth century and the undeniable impact of religion on women to make them ideal through rendering them as mere subjects, it is evident that women were still perceived as inferior and associated with the private sphere; however, their struggle for emancipation had also begun. When compared with the preceding century, the women's liberation movement in the nineteenth century seems more organised or planned and certain important male figures support their causes, which assists the opposite sex's receiving more solid outcomes or achievements regarding their emancipation. Hence, the nineteenth century is of great significance for their liberation in terms of the progress made for women. Initially, it is to be noted that concerning the second sex and their cause, a term emerges and marks the Victorian era, which is called "the Woman Question," which is commenced by the middle class in order to question the social and economic status of women (Bozer, 2018:3). This new phenomenon, which causes a considerable alteration in the mindset of society concerning women and their status, actually emerged in France much earlier. Karen Offen elaborates on 'the Woman Question,' which is originally named as "*Querelle des Femmes*," in her work entitled *The Woman Question in France, 1400-1870* (2017) as follows: "For six centuries the woman question has occupied a central position in the political debates of the French state and its educated elite" (2017:2). Regarding the discussions, she furthers that "[d]ebates on the woman question throw into relief the instability and shifting character of the balance of power between sexes; it reveals a series of legal and institutional efforts by men as a group . . . to control, dominate, and subordinate women as a group, but it also allows us to uncover women's efforts . . . to contest such hegemonic claims" (2017:2). In this respect, it is of importance to highlight that through the

debate known as 'the Woman Question,' how each sex approaches the status of women can be analysed. In addition to that, the fact of this discussion's emerging in France may not be coincidental. To make it clearer, in the eighteenth century was published "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" (1789), through which it is emphasised that people, specifically men, are born equal in themselves. Also, in the same year, another significant phenomenon – the French Revolution – took place, causing striking changes in the social and political agenda of France. Regarding the questioning and resistant nature of the nation, it is not unanticipated that the debate on the status of women appeared in France much earlier than in England.

'The Woman Question,' likewise, almost aims to address or problematise similar issues concerning the feeble sex and their status in Victorian England. Pertaining to this debate in England, Elizabeth K. Helsinger aptly posits that

> [c]lose study of public opinion between 1837 and 1883 suggests that the traditional model of 'a' Victorian attitude – patriarchal domination, expressed publicly as 'woman worship' – is inadequate. The predominant form of Victorian writing about women is *not pronouncement but debate*. Moreover, the arguments in this debate were both more complex and fluid . . . [Thus], the Woman Question . . . really was a question. Almost any public statement bearing on the Woman Question . . . was likely to generate a chain of responses, and to be read as a response to prior statements in an ongoing public discussion. (1983:xi; emphasis added)

Within this scope, it is indicated that the discussions about the status of the opposite sex are more organised and planned and also the writings of these women have serious arguments, which make their demands more than a sole pronouncement. Since 'the Woman Question' was prevalent throughout the century in Victorian England, almost all the alteration in their status is related to this debate. In the nineteenth century, just like in the preceding century, a number of female figures penned several non-fiction works on their emancipation. Their primary intention was to achieve their sex's economic and social independence. Besides, these figures were significant in their fellows' liberation movement since they were regarded as the first-wave feminists; thus, the precursors of the feminist movement. As Richard J. Evans claims, "British feminism was chronologically the second after the American movement to emerge in an organised form. It really dates from the 1850s, though a few organisations were founded earlier" (2013:63). Besides, in the nineteenth century, along with female figures, prominent male writers such as Irish philosopher and reformer William Thompson (1775-1833) and the utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) dwelled on the need of the opposite sex's liberation in their works. Furthermore, in relation to the 'Woman Question' debate, substantial legislation improving women's rights was proposed. Most significantly, a transformative notion emerged to redefine women's duties both physically and functionally: the 'New Woman,' as coined by Sarah Grand (1864-1943) in her 1894 article entitled "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" (1894). Considering such substantial changes, it is apparent that solid steps were taken for the suppressed sex's emancipation in the nineteenth century. In this respect, at the beginning of the century, the patriarchal system defines woman and womanhood through 'the Cult of True Womanhood' and attributes certain values to a supposedly true or angellike woman. Towards the end of the century, a woman redefined the same notions and her redefinition created a completely different woman, both physically and mentally. Through her concept, Grand pushes the limits that the androcentric code draws for women, and she accuses men of the situation they are in:

> *Man deprived us of all proper education*, and then jeered at us because we had no knowledge*. He narrowed our outlook on life* so that our view of it should be all distorted, and then declared that our mistaken impression of it proved us to be senseless creatures. *He cramped our minds* so that there was no room for reason in them, and then made merry at our want of logic. Our divine intuition was not to be controlled by him, but he did his best to damage it by sneering at it as an inferior feminine method of arriving at conclusions; and finally, after having had his own way until he lost his head completely, *he set himself up as a sort of a god and required us to worship him*, and, to our eternal shame be it said, we did so. (1894:272; emphasis added)

Her stance supports the idea that the hegemony of men is the reason why her fellows are perceived as such. When the discourse Grand employs in her essay is taken into consideration, it is palpable that she is rather direct and accusatory. For her, it is the patriarchal ideology that prevents them from accessing knowledge, broadening their horizons, and becoming rational individuals. She also highlights that men's privileged and superior status makes them act like a sort of god, which denotes the strikingly biased ideology about two sexes. Furthermore, in her thought-provoking essay, Grand dwells on the physical appearance of her sex, and just like American feminists Charlotte Perkins-Gilman (1860-1935) and Sarah Moore Grimké (1792-1873), she reminds her women readers that they do not need to wear womanly clothes and be a doll-like figure (Perkins-Gilman, 1998:274; Grimké, 1838:71): "[W]e shall be afflicted with short hair, coarse skins, unsymmetrical figures, loud voices, tastelessness in dress, and an unattractive appearance and character generally, and then he will not love us any more or marry us" (1894:274). In other words, in order to be appreciated or accepted, the appreciation coming from the male gaze is not required. This manifestation is so strong and deliberate that it certainly aims to break the taboos of society and pave the way for a new life for the oppressed sex.

3.REFLECTIONS OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY CHANGES IN WILKIE COLLINS'S *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*

With respect to the solid steps taken towards the emancipation of women in the nineteenth century, *The Woman in White* (1860) by Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) definitely reflects Victorian England and the changing status of women to a considerable extent. In the novel, there are various characters representing each and every layer in English society. To be more precise, since Collins's characterisation is diverse, some of his characters are the embodiment of the patriarchy, whereas some others are the representation of the ones questioning or rejecting this hegemony. The novel is a compilation of narrations, the first of which starts with Walter Hartright, a teacher of drawing who is hired by Mr. Fairlie in order to teach his niece and her half-sister how to draw. On his way to Cumberland, he comes across a woman in white and helps her go to London. After this incident, he arrives at Limmeridge House and mentions this incident to Marian—one of his pupils—and upon hearing the name of her mother from this woman in white's lips, she has a look at her mother's journals so as to find out who this woman in white is and mentions this woman's striking resemblance to Laura—her half-sister—to Walter. During his stay, he falls in love with Laura, and so does she. Yet, he learns that she is supposed to marry a man much older than her upon her father's will on his deathbed, which makes him leave Limmeridge House, but before that, one day, Laura receives an anonymous letter in which it is written that her future marriage will make her wretched. Since the letter is written by the woman in white, Anne, and is followed by another letter from Anne's mother claiming that her daughter is mentally ill and has been taken to the asylum, Marian is reassured and begins to believe that Sir Percival is not evil. However, since Laura is quite young and rich, a marriage settlement should be made, and the future husband's solicitor demands a settlement that completely favours his client, not the wife, which thoroughly complies with the male centred legislation regarding marriage prior to the introduction of the Matrimonial Acts. According to the arrangement, if she dies, all her money will be transferred to her husband, and her uncle, Mr. Fairlie, interestingly does not object to this. They get married and go on honeymoon for a long time. When they return, they bring Count Fosco and his wife, Laura's aunt, with them. Marian learns that her sister is quite unhappy, and her husband is after her money, which makes their marriage quite problematic. The husband forces his wife to sign a paper and later he locks his wife in her bedroom. Since Marian is suspicious of both the husband and Count Fosco, she eavesdrops on their conversation and gets soaking wet in the rain, which causes her to become seriously ill. Meanwhile, according to Fosco and Percival's plan, they shift Laura and Anne's identities so that they can get all her money. Yet, an unexpected thing happens, as Anne dies owing to her heart disease, and they put Percival's wife in the asylum in place of Anne. Rescued by her half-sister, the actual Laura starts to live with her sister. They come across Walter and tell him everything. In order to restore her identity, he decides to reveal her husband's secret and find Anne's mother. After some investigation, he finds out that Sir Percival's mother is not married to the rich man who is the father of him, which makes the son disinherited. Furthermore, it is revealed that Anne is the half-sister of Laura, which explains their striking resemblance. While Walter is learning these truths, he comes to find him but is killed when the fire breaks out. He forces Count Fosco to write their conspiracy so that she regains her identity. Fosco accepts this provided Walter would let him go and Pesca, an Italian former politician who pursues Fosco in England, would not see the letter. In the end, she and Walter marry, and their son inherits Limmeridge. With regard to the synopsis of the novel, the devices employed that have the work categorised as Gothic are pinpointed by Lyn Pykett as follows:

> These novels frequently employ devices which echo the Gothic, such as menacing villains (some of them 'foreign'), the incarceration of heroines, suggestions of the supernatural and the uncanny in the settings, the use of dreams and coincidence and so on, but they all have plots focusing on the implosion or disruption of domestic stability as a result of secrecy or concealment of one kind or another. The families at the centre of these novels are not what they seem. (2006:54)

In this regard, through Collins's diverse characterisation, the themes as well as the devices he employs that comply with the Gothic genre, gender roles or the changes in the status of women as well as the patriarchal structure in society can be explored.

As is seen in the synopsis of the work, not only Sir Percival but also Count Fosco is the embodiment of the diminishing patriarchal structure in English society, which makes them the villains in the novel. As stated by Clyde K. Hyder, "a victim can hardly exist without a villain" (1939:302); both characters intend to make women subservient with their deeds as well as intentions throughout the novel. Sir Percival is "adequately but conventionally characterized as a particularly English type of shabby bully, cruel in speech and violent in action" (Peters, 1991:218). In addition to his being a male, his title—sir, a baronet—empowers him in the course of the work. Within this scope, he resembles Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) by Horace Walpole (1717-1797), as both characters misuse both their status in society and gender to subjugate the opposite sex. Collins's character's suppression of females is explicitly observed through his marriage with Laura Fairlie. Actually, he elaborately reflects what is normative in terms of marriage in the nineteenth century. This means that "[t]he novel is set in 1851" (Bachman and Cox, 2006:10), and at that time acts concerning matrimony were not released yet, and the hegemony of men/husbands was prevalent in this institution. That is why, through the union of Sir Percival and Laura, marriage as a patriarchal foundation is actually open for discussion. Actually, Collins, through his characters, makes a serious critique of marriage (Vanden-Bossche, 2014:93; Bachman and Cox, 2006:27). Indeed, in the course of the work, these two characters' connubiality impedes this institution rather than foregrounding its positive aspects. In this respect, the first point to be highlighted is the age gap between Laura and her future husband. While Marian and Walter talk about the future husband, Walter is shocked when he learns his age: "Forty-five; and she was not yet twenty-one! Men of his age married wives of her age every day" (Collins, 2002:63). Although he is shocked, his further comment about the age gap indicates that it is almost a custom in society. This mindset is actually what Harriet Martineau calls "mercenary marriages" (1837:242-3). Rather than love or mutual feelings, the wishes of families are realised. For Laura's case, it is her father who wishes her to marry Sir Percival on his deathbed. Marian's words about this arranged marriage reveal the impact of fathers on daughters. She states that:

> [i]t is an engagement of honour, not of love; her father sanctioned it on his deathbed, two years since; she herself neither welcomed it nor shrank from it – she was content to make it. Till you came here she was in the position of hundreds of other women, who marry men without being greatly attracted to them or greatly repelled them, and who learn to love them (when they don't learn to hate!) after marriage, instead of before. (Collins, 2002:55)

As she indicates, daughters have no right to claim about their future husbands that their families choose themselves. Their future is completely up to their parents, and in relation to this, Mill in *The Subjection of Women* (1869) asserts that "[o]riginally women were taken by force, or regularly sold by their father to the husband" (2010:153). In Collins's work, Laura is veritably sold to her husband by her father and cannot go against her father's will. At this point, it is to be pointed out that although her father has been dead for years and is not an actual character in the novel, his impact on her is undeniable. Both her father and husband make her life miserable. Besides, prior to their marriage, Sir Percival wants his wife to sign a settlement, which is completely detrimental to her interests. According to the settlement, with Laura's permission, he is able to use three thousand pounds a year, and if she dies, he will have a right to claim her money. Additionally, if he has a son, the inheritance of their estate in Cumberland will pass to their son (Collins, 2002:115). Such an arrangement is actually an indication of his intention. Since husbands in marriages are considered to be powerholders in the household and have rights to own their wives' property, Percival aims to benefit from such priority that is given to men. As Ann Cvetkovich elaborately points out, "the legal system is not extensive enough to protect Laura Fairlie from exploitation by

her husband" (1992:73). Aware of his superiority, he resolves to exploit his future wife's property by marrying her. Another point on which the husband abuses her through the prerogatives that the Common Law of England provides him is the age of his future wife. To be more precise, Percival wishes to marry Laura before she becomes twenty-one (Collins, 2002:113) because at the age of twenty-one a woman is regarded as mature, and unless she is twenty-one, she needs a guardian, and for Laura's case, it is her uncle, Frederick Fairlie (2002:117). Since she is not thought to be an individual, she "[has] to be protected from the crimes made possible by the husband's legal prerogatives" (Cvetkovich, 1992:73). Nevertheless, her uncle is another male character in the novel that has certain hesitations to act on behalf of the opposite sex, though he is not a typical man acknowledging the patriarchal code.

Frederick is more like an "effeminate" man (Liddle, 2009:39) and "hypochondriac" (Peters, 1991:218), which makes him far from the attributions embedded in the superior sex. In the course of the novel, he determinedly stays in his room because of "the wretched state of [his] nerves" (Collins, 2002:31). Pertaining to his confining himself to his room, Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox propound that "Fairlie's complaints about his health are fraudulent, that he suffers from an illness simply fabricated so he does not have to interact with the world at large" (2006:11). In this regard, it is plausible to assert that he prefers not to see or meet others around him unless necessary, which actually can be associated with his pure selfishness. His egotism also becomes apparent when a problem arises about Laura's marriage settlement. When their family lawyer explains the content of it to Frederick, he simply responds that:

> Was it likely that a young woman of twenty-one would die before a man of forty-five, and die without children? On the other hand, . . . was it possible to over-estimate the value of peace and quietness? If those two heavenly blessings were offered in exchange for such an earthly trifle as a remote chance of twenty thousand pounds, was it not a fair bargain? Surely, yes. (Collins, 2002:117)

His reaction towards Sir Percival's malevolent settlement can be considered an indication of his fondness of his own comfort. In addition to that, his physical appearance as well as his surprise upon seeing strong people around him are other reasons that cause him to be regarded as effeminate. When Walter Hartright meets him for the first time, his description of Frederick is rather detailed: "He was dressed in a dark frock-coat . . . His feet were effeminately small, and were clad in buff-coloured silk stockings, and little womanish bronze-leather slippers" (Collins, 2002:30). His physical appearance and clothing disclose that he has more feminine than masculine characteristics. Besides, when Walter proposes to carry the portfolio to his room on his own, Frederick is amazed at his strength and explicitly shows his hypochondriacal attitudes:

> Will you really? Are you strong enough? How nice to be so strong! Are you sure you won't drop it? So glad to possess you at Limmeridge . . . Would you mind taking great pains not to let the doors bang, and not to drop the portfolio? . . . Gently with the curtains, please – the slightest noise from them goes through me like a knife. (Collins, 2002:34)

With regard to his responses and attitudes, Frederick does not seem to be as strong as men are expected to be. His case is appropriately explained by Pykett in "Collins and the Sensation Novel" as follows: "Frederick Fairlie seems to belong to an intermediate sex or gender" (2006:55). He neither performs what is expected from his sex nor do his effeminate behaviours or hypochondriacal attitudes make him a man sensible towards women and their interests. His approval of such an evil-intentioned settlement discloses his nature as well. Since the father of the Limmeridge House is dead, and Frederick is the head of the house in the novel, his negligent decisions for his own relative reveal that "Limmeridge House is anything but a safe haven from the outside world; it is the site, rather, [the hegemonic male] is well within his legal rights to exercise an absolute and sinister power over" females, and through this house "Collins shatters the myth of the domestic sphere as a repository of peace, security, and moral values" (Bachman and Cox, 2006:27). This aim of Collins actually is in accordance with the stance of him, as while penning the novel, he also intends to make a critique of marriage as an institution. To make it clearer, Laura cannot find peace either at her father's house or that of her uncle upon the death of her father or at Sir Percival's house. She submits to her father's wish regarding her future marriage to Sir Percival (Collins, 2002:55); she cannot resist her uncle when he readily accepts the marriage settlement Sir Percival wants

her to sign prior to their marriage (2002:113), and she also cannot find happiness or peace upon her matrimony with Sir Percival as he constantly dismisses Laura's feelings and looks down on her (2002:190), forces her to sign another contract that is related to the transmission of her inheritance to Sir Percival in case of her death without having a child (2002:188-99), and isolates her by locking her in her room (2002:229). All these examples from the novel indicate that the domestic sphere is not a secure place for women, nor is marriage a happy destination. Additionally, although commonly homes or houses connote security, peace, or happiness, in Gothic works, their function or connotation is more like a prison specifically for the oppressed sex (Kilgour, 1995:9). For instance, in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the castle itself is a claustrophobic place for the women, especially Isabella, and in this sense, it is evident that both settings are rather similar in terms of their function.

Count Fosco, as mentioned previously, is another male character adopting the hegemonic patriarchy. Like Sir Percival, he resolves to suppress the female characters in the novel. Relating to his character, Collins bluntly expresses that he is a flesh-and-blood persona: "Though Wilkie Collins once said that 'Fosco is not modelled on any one or any half-dozen persons', he also wrote, 'many models, some living, and some dead, have 'sat' for Fosco'" (Peters, 1991:215). Through the explanation of the author, it is understood that the character is actually a blend of several men living in the nineteenth century. Similar to his friend, Fosco is another villain and "[c]ertainly, what makes [him] such a fascinating and memorable villain in Collins's novel is the mesmeric power he exerts over practically every character in the novel—his wife, Sir Percival Glyde, Marian Halcombe, even his pet mice" (Bachman and Cox, 2006:22). Unlike Laura's husband, Fosco has the capacity to dominate both women and his friend, which makes him a rather powerful figure. His dominance over his friend is purely because of Percival's being a bad-tempered man and the decisions that he makes rather hastily. As a man thoroughly considering each and every point prior to making up his mind, Fosco certainly leads him so that both parties can be content at the end. To make the point clearer, when the husband forces Laura to sign the document that is about her permission for him to use her money and she does not want to sign unless she reads it first, he becomes enraged and explicitly humiliates his wife. In order to settle the problem, "[t]he Count took one of his hands out of his belt and laid it on Sir Percival's shoulder . . . with unruffled composure" and he says that "'Control your unfortunate temper, Percival, . . . Lady Glyde [Laura] is right'" (Collins, 2002:190). His determined and confident attitudes definitely have an impact on the husband. Fosco's behaving as such is not due to his belief in the rightness of her; instead, aware of the danger they are in, he solely tries to decide strategically. That is to say, he deliberately warns Sir Percival, realising his temper. By doing so, he in a way intends to have a positive impact on both Laura and his wife by pretending that he is on their side. Such an attitude of his merely makes him a cautious character, not an advocate of women's rights, as his perception of the opposite sex can explicitly be examined through his marriage. Besides, Count Fosco and his wife's conjugality is another example through which marriage as a patriarchal foundation can be scrutinised. Both parties perform rather traditional roles of a spouse during their union. What is meant by traditional is that Fosco's sovereignty over his wife is apparent, whereas the wife, without any questioning, accepts the hegemony of her husband. In the course of the novel, Fosco almost all the time and "habitually addresses her as 'my angel'" (Collins, 2002:172). Actually, his calling her an angel is rather symbolic, as it is apt to assert that he perceives Madame Fosco as a woman possessing the attributes mentioned by Patmore in *Angel in the House*. She is a docile woman as well as a silenced one. Whenever the Countess' opinion is needed or asked, she replies that "'I wait to be instructed, . . . before I venture on giving my opinion in the presence of well-informed men'" (Collins, 2002:181). Her reply definitely accords with what is expected from the angels in the nineteenth century. At this point, it is to be pointed out that the Count "looks like a man who could tame anything" (2002:168) and indeed "Countess Fosco [is] the woman who has been 'tamed'" (Gaylin, 2001:318). As for the reason why the wife is said to have been tamed, she was a former advocate of women's rights prior to her marriage (Collins, 2002:181), and upon their union, it is plausible to claim that she is completely subjugated by her husband and has lost all her previous enthusiasm to have a contribution to provide a better life for her own sex. In this respect, regarding the considerable change in the Countess relating to her stance, Fosco's sovereignty over her is crystal clear.

As stated beforehand, the Count has the charm to impact almost everyone in the novel, including Marian. His influence over her is of importance because she is a prominent female character "who most strikingly refuses to conform to gender type" (Brewster, 2002:xiv). She is definitely the opposite of what her half-sister represents

in the novel. In fact, their striking difference in terms of their characterisation is pointed out by Marian herself when she first meets Walter:

> I am dark and ugly, and she is fair and pretty. Everybody thinks me crabbed and odd (with perfect justice); and everybody thinks her sweet-tempered and charming (with more justice still). In short, she is an *angel*; and I am – Try some of that marmalade, Mr. Hartright, and finish the sentence, in the name of female propriety for yourself. (Collins, 2002:26; emphasis added)

Her portrayal of her sister as a sweet, fairy-like angel, and herself as ugly and odd explicitly reveals how they differ. Although Marian wishes Walter to attribute appropriate characteristics to her, Walter, out of courtesy, refrains from completing her sentence; nevertheless, he conveys his opinions of her in his narrations:

> The lady's complexion was almost swarthy, and the dark down on her upper lip was almost a moustache. She had a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute brown eyes . . . Her expression – bright, frank, and intelligent. (Collins, 2002:25)

The depiction of Marian by Walter is crucial to comprehend her and her stance, as she does not have angellike physical features as expected from Victorian women; rather, she has masculine-like traits and seems intelligent. Within this scope, as Ann Gaylin aptly propounds, "Marian Halcombe, the most compelling female character and narrator in the novel, represents 'anima virilis in corpore muliebri inclusa': a man's spirit imprisoned in a female body" (2001:311). Indeed, her remaining unmarried, her appearance and her being intelligent are some of the aspects that make her far from the expectations of her gender. Additionally, her interests are rather distinct when compared with those of her half-sisters. While Laura likes to draw and play the piano, Marian can play chess, backgammon, écarté, and billiards (Collins, 2002, p. 27). Considering her preferences and capabilities, she accords with the idea that "'the attribute of sex does not extend to mind'" (qtd. in Murphy, 2006:18), which Lydia Becker asserts in her work entitled "Is There any Specific Distinction between Male and Female Intellect." By the same token, Perkins-Gilman also rejects the supposed relation between mind and sex: "There is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex" (1998:149). Unlike the mindset of the hegemonic patriarchy, which blindly and insistently claims that there is a distinction between a female and a male mind, nineteenth-century women writers such as Becker and Perkins-Gilman refuse such a discriminative ideology. In this sense, in accordance with the arguments of the female writers, though a woman—a supposedly weaker sex in the eyes of patriarchy—Marian has the potential to do almost everything that a man can. In this sense, it can be claimed that through her authority-challenging portrayal, she transcends the borders of her sex.

In the course of the novel, aware of the intentions of Sir Percival and Count Fosco, Marian does her best to save her sister from both patriarchs. While attempting to help her sister, she "is morally irreproachable; more importantly, she acts bravely and intelligently in investigating the crime committed against her half-sister, Laura Fairlie" (Matveenko et al., 2017:124). Since both males are in fact after her money, they secretly make a plan to take possession of her fortune as she hesitates to sign the document that allows her husband to use it. While planning how to get her money, Marian secretly listens to Percival and Fosco, and through "her defiant act of eavesdropping on Count Fosco and Sir Percival's conversation in the library, violates established Victorian assumptions about gender" (Gaylin, 2001:313). As a woman, she is not expected to intervene in the affairs or business of men; yet, she not only listens to them, but also writes their conversation down in her diary, which gives her agency as a narrator:

> In listening to and then writing down Fosco's private conversation with Sir Percival, Marian transforms private knowledge into a form which can be easily circulated, reproduced, and transmitted to others who can frustrate the criminals' plots. By transcribing the secret conversation she overhears into her diary, Marian possesses the information necessary to forestall their devious plans, or so she thinks. (Gaylin, 2001:316)

In this respect, her actions disclose that unlike the Countess, she is not docile or tamed; instead, she is rather resolute and willing to trespass the expectations of her gender. During her eavesdropping, another significant point that is to be highlighted is the fact that she takes off her petticoat so as not to be noticed (Collins, 2002:250-

1). Although her main motive is not to be found out by Percival and Fosco, as the latter believes that "[s]he is sharp enough to suspect something, and bold enough to come downstairs and listen" (Collins, 2002:249). Her taking off the petticoat can also be regarded as her stripping off the attributions embedded on her by the patriarchal system. Within this scope, self-fashioning[1] herself, she attempts to go beyond what is expected from her. Through her action as such, it is plausible to argue that her stance resembles Sarah Grand's or Charlotte Perkins-Gilman's points of view as both women point out that their fellows do not have to wear doll-like clothes such as petticoats to remain more feminine. What is more, Perkins-Gilman furthers her argument that such clothing restricts their physical activity, thus curbing their freedom (1998:55). Pertaining to Perkins-Gilman's point of view, it can safely be maintained that the motive of Marian to take off her petticoat is related to her stance.

When the stance, actions, and attitudes of Marian are taken into consideration, she can be depicted as a woman having agency. Pykett elaborates on her character and outlook as follows:

> Marian is certainly full of passion and purpose. She rails against the restraints of her petticoat existence, engages in a battle of wits with Count Fosco (Glyde's fellow plotter and mentor in villainy), and joins forces with Walter to solve the mystery of Anne Catherick, and to restore Laura to health and reclaim her half-sister's social identity and property. Unlike Laura or Anne, Marian also has a role in telling her own (and their) story, as her journal is one of the several sources of 'testimony' from which the narrative is (re)constructed. (2006:57)

In this respect, it is apt to assert that Marian is an "unconventional" or "transgressive" (Pykett, 2006:56) female character as she resists being silenced and the attributions embedded on her, remaining docile, and such characteristics of her can be the reason why Fosco "is challenging as well as warning Marian, whom he admires for her courage and unconventionality, when he advises her to stay within acceptable female boundaries" (Peters, 1991:215). He appreciates as well as realises her intelligence and courage; nonetheless, as a man adopting the patriarchal ideology, he decides to tame her just like his wife because Marian resists staying within her gender's boundaries. Following her eavesdropping on both patriarchs, since she is exposed to heavy rain, she becomes fatally ill. Fosco finds her diary and "possesses her narrative, and controls its ending" (Gaylin, 2001:317-8), which can be considered a serious abuse or even rape. Regarding his action, it is pointed out that he usurps the agency of Marian. Once she is a narrator through whom Laura's story is told, which gives her authority in a way; nevertheless, seizing her diary, Fosco denies her agency. As Catherine Peters propounds, "[e]ven the strongest, most masculine of women is often at the mercy of men" (1991:225). Indeed, the Count is successful in taming her.

When Marian is actually regarded as a transgressive woman owing to her deeds, her half-sister is completely opposite of her. Just like the way she describes, Laura is an angel with her preferences or stance. Her submissive nature is explicit in the course of the novel. In the very first pages, it is revealed that her father wants her to marry Sir Percival on his deathbed and such desire is actually what Martineau names as 'mercenary marriages' (1837:243) because Sir Percival is "[a] man of the rank of Baronet, and the owner of property in Hampshire" (Collins, 2002:58) or how Mill elaborately pinpoints this patriarchal institution as a destination for women by being sold by their fathers (2010:153). Nevertheless, the point that needs to be highlighted is that Laura submissively accepts whatever his father wishes, and this is a clear indication of blind obedience that Mary Astell passionately rejects (1700:88). Her acceptance of her fate, first woven by her father and then by her uncle, is actually what makes her different from Marian. Besides, such a reaction of hers displays that she acknowledges the sovereignty of men over her since it is "the only possible fate for a woman in a world controlled by men" (Kilgour, 1995:120). This outlook of hers is also apparent when she decides to confess to Percival that she is in love with someone else. Upon her confession, she tells her future husband that "'[t]he breaking of our engagement must be entirely your wish and your act . . . not mine'" (Collins, 2002:130). Even though she does

[1] Self-fashioning is a term coined by Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980). In his work, Greenblatt propounds that self-fashioning is "a way of designating the forming of a self" (2). Although he may have grounded his theory on the Renaissance, it would not be wrong to use self-fashioning to change or establish identity. Within this scope, when Marian's case is examined, it can be claimed that by taking off her petticoat, a symbol of femininity, she intends to transcend the restrictions of her sex, thus establishing her identity regardless of her gender.

not wish to marry him and loves Walter, she leaves the final decision up to Percival, which discloses that she cannot decide her own future on her own; thus, she becomes "the gentle, pretty [and] the ideal innocent girl of Victorian male fantasy" (Peters, 1991:223). Actually, throughout the novel, Marian is aware of such nature of her half-sister because when Laura cannot come downstairs to have breakfast due to her headache, she informs Walter that her half-sister suffers from an "'essentially feminine malady, a slight headache'" (Collins, 2002:25). This shows that she has almost all the attributions that the patriarchal structure embeds on the second sex, and she also submits to male hegemony. Her acknowledgement of the dominance of men and submission of her sex becomes obvious when she comes across her aunt after she marries Count Fosco. That is to say, for Laura, her aunt is "so much changed for the better – so much quieter, and so much more sensible as a wife than she was as a single woman" (Collins, 2002:156). Since her aunt, once an advocate of women's rights, is tamed and subjugated by the Count, Laura claims that she has changed for the better as her "vision of female maturity is that of total acquiescence to male authority" (Kilgour, 1995:120). Hence, as a docile and suppressed woman, she is acquiescent to the dominance of the supposedly superior gender.

Upon her marriage to Sir Percival, "the new world [Laura] enters is also clearly a nightmare version of her own . . . past" (Kilgour, 1995:117). After both her father and uncle—two male powerholders in her life—shape her future by themselves regardless of her interests or wishes, her husband becomes the new authority figure. However, her husband's authority is slightly more different than that of her relatives. Since Percival definitely perceives the opposite sex as weaker or beings prone to being dominated owing to their gender, he constantly positions himself as superior to her. His main motive to marry Laura is to have her money, as under Common Law, women's right to possess property or money is denied to them until the Married Women's Property Act 1870. In order to obtain her inheritance, Percival forces her to sign a contract allowing him to use her fortune. Nevertheless, when she reluctantly wishes to read its content, her husband's positioning himself superior to her is explicit: "'I have no time to explain . . . [I]f I had time, you wouldn't understand. . . . What have women to do with business? I tell you again, you can't understand it'" (Collins, 2002:190). Regarding his reaction, he has the mindset of a patriarch. For him, there is a clear-cut distinction between the roles of two sexes, and it is prevalently believed that women do not have the potential to comprehend a man's business. In this regard, Sir Percival and Walpole's Manfred are definitely alike as both men passionately believe that there are certain boundaries that the female sex should not go beyond. In this sense, pertaining to the relationship between Laura and her husband, it is plausible to argue that the sovereignty of the husband is apparent. That is why Marian, aware of the fact that her sex is "condemned to patience, propriety, and petticoats for life" (Collins, 2002:153), resolves to stand for her sister by her "transgress[ing] of the unwritten laws of proper female behavior" (Gaylin, 2001:309). Actually, her initial motive is not to support her during her marriage but to be a companion; yet, upon realising that Percival does not treat her fairly, she manifests the hegemony of men and decides to protect her half-sister: "'Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace—they drag us away from our parents' love and our sisters' friendship—they take us body and soul to themselves and *fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel*'" (Collins, 2002:140; emphasis added). Her resembling her sex to a dog being chained up to a kennel is both factual and pathetic. Since the amelioration made in the Married Women's Property Act in 1884, women were regarded as chattels—just like property that men could claim as their possession (Cook, 2005:122); for Marian, her fellows' bodies and souls are captured by their men which results in the fact that their individuality is denied.

The metaphor that she uses to point out how her sex can be likened to a dog in terms of the expectations for them to be obedient is definitely applicable for her half-sister as well. What is more, the husband's hegemony takes one step further when his future is in danger. Since the beginning of the novel, there is a secret that is detrimental to the wealth and future of Percival, and in the course of the novel, his secret is about to be unveiled by Laura through the aid of the woman in white. Realising that a light can be shed on his past, he increases the severity of his dominance, and this actually indicates that there is "the disruption of the family by female transgression" (Cvetkovich, 1992:73). What is meant by such a claim is that if Marian did not intervene in her sister's marriage or Anne did not insist on revealing his secret, or she obediently accepted to sign the contract, all of which actually are female transgressions, Laura and her husband's marriage would last without any problems since there would be his total sovereignty because women "are expected to conform to nineteenth-century

conceptions of purity, constancy, and fidelity, both toward other siblings and toward the family at large" (May, 1995:82). Nevertheless, these three females' deeds not only challenge Percival's sovereignty but also risk his future. In order to secure his future, he imprisons his wife for her actions (Collins, 2002:228-9), which is an indication that Blackwater Park in Hampshire becomes another insecure place for Laura just like Limmeridge House in Cumberland. Such an attitude of Percival is elaborated by Bachman and Cox as follows:

> Collins engages the topical question of wrongful incarceration in *The Woman in White* to expose the wicked and sadistic nature of men who will go to extraordinary lengths to control and silence those women who threaten their power and privilege. (2006:21)

Within this scope, it is pointed out that men, specifically husbands, can treat the opposite sex cruelly or abuse them until the act (Matrimonial Causes Act 1878) that enables a woman to divorce her husband provided that he treats his wife cruelly is passed in 1878 (Perkin, 1989:174). Aware of the fact that women are protected under Common Law, Marian challenges Percival: "'There are laws in England to protect women from cruelty and outrage. If you hurt a hair of Laura's head, if you dare to interfere with my freedom, come what may, to those laws I will appeal'" (Collins 2002:229). Her such courageous reaction is actually expected as she is more prone to go beyond her boundaries because as it is pinpointed, "[t]he old behavioural stereotypes also came under challenge as women themselves started to struggle for their rights in the spheres of education, labour and the family" (Matveenko et al., 2017:119). In addition to her rebellious reaction towards Sir Percival, other traits of Marian also display that she is not a typical, conventional Victorian woman. At the very beginning of the novel, while Marian describes herself and Laura to Walter, she makes it clear that she does not have Victorian idealised feminine characteristics. To make it clearer, aware of the common perception towards women related to their being silent and obedient, Marian alludes to this fact by saying that "'[I] do all a woman can (which is very little, by-the-bye) to hold my tongue'" (Collins, 2002:26), which showcases her desire to be less silenced/silent in the domestic sphere. During Marian and Walter's conversation, she furthers that "'[she]can match [him] at chess, backgammon, écarté . . . even at billiards as well'" (2002:27), which demonstrates that she does not have 'feminine' hobbies or interests; rather, she is intellectually more capable. Apart from her interests, another trait of hers that shows her intellect and amazes as well as scares Count Fosco is her keeping a journal. In the course of the novel, Marian writes whatever happens and conveys her opinions in her journal. When Fosco finds her journal, his commentary displays both his amazement and fear: "[T]hese pages are amazing. The fact which I find here, the discretion, the rare courage, the wonderful power of memory, the accurate observation of character . . . have all inexpressibly increased my admiration of this sublime creature, of this magnificent Marian" (2002:264). All these examples regarding Marian and her personality exhibit that Marian intentionally resists having Victorian idealised feminine conventions; instead, she struggles to embrace certain traits that are peculiar to men in that period. In that sense, the changes taking place in the society concerning the status of the suppressed sex that result from their willingness to demand an equal life along with the rights denied to them are the causes that challenge the old behavioural stereotypes. In other words, the desire for a change changes the way women behave or react.

Although Marian struggles very much to rescue her half-sister from the hands of Percival, Count Fosco and the husband scheme a devious plan to obtain her fortune. According to their plan, the only way to take possession of her money is to kill her (Collins, 2002:256). They desperately need the fortune of Laura because Percival has certain debts (Collins, 2002:117) and the Count can be regarded as a fugitive owing to his relations to a society in Italy (Collins, 2002:476). Additionally, if Percival's long-hidden secret is unveiled, his life would be ruined (Collins, 2002, p. 259), which is actually the chief motive for him to let her get killed in a way. Pertaining to both villains' desperate situations from which they crave to find a way to free themselves, it is apt to claim that "[m]ale carceral representations, 'more consciously and objectively' elaborated, tend to be 'metaphysical and metaphorical:' whereas female ones remain 'social and actual.'" (Miller, 1986:119). In relation to how D. A. Miller propounds, both men are not physically or literally imprisoned but they feel entrapped because of their deeds whereas both Laura and Anne are incarcerated physically and literally. Actually, in order to free themselves from their metaphysical incarceration, the male characters intentionally confine the female characters because of the fact that "[m]ale security in *The Woman in White* seems always to depend on female claustration" (Miller, 1986:119). Consequently, through their sinister plan, the Count and Percival decide to switch Laura's and Anne's identities

by putting the former into the asylum and killing the latter so that as her husband, Percival is able to obtain her money and it would be almost impossible for his secret to be unveiled. As blatantly propounded by Dallas Liddle, "the theft of the identity of Lady Glyde/Laura Fairlie is matched in the novel by a strong thematic concern with how the identities of all Victorian women were constituted and regulated" (2009:38). Indeed, in the nineteenth century, the patriarchal mindset forms women's lives along with their roles and their identities are mostly shaped by this structure just like Welter elaborates in "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" (1966:151-2). Likewise, in the novel, Laura's future is at first designated by her father, then her uncle and lastly her husband and the Count. Besides, her pseudo death and actual incarceration are authorised by the androcentric system as well. What is meant by this is that her supposed death is made up by two men; the narrative of the doctor along with the death certificate makes her pseudo death official (Collins, 2002:319), and the statement of the doctor at the asylum concerning Laura's being Anne (Collins, 2002:331) causes the former to be imprisoned at the asylum in place of the latter. All these narratives belong to the patriarchs in the novel and her fate is determined by them. Furthermore, even the narrative of the tombstone represents the patriarchy and acknowledges her existence through the attributions that the male-dominant mindset embeds on the second sex: "Sacred to the memory of Laura, Lady Glyde, *wife* of Sir Percival Glyde, Bart., of Blackwater Park, Hampshire, and *daughter* of the late Phillip Fairlie Esq., of Limmeridge House, in the parish" (Collins, 2002:320, emphasis added). As is obvious from the narrative of the tombstone, she is solely identified with her roles as a daughter and wife, which also discloses that her life is thoroughly constructed by the hegemonic patriarchy (Gaylin, 2001:318).

Since Laura's and Anne's identities are switched so that Percival can obtain his wife's money, it is actually Anne that dies in the novel, which makes her the victim of patriarchy. She is one of the "physically and mentally debilitated characters who struggle against the devious plots of educated criminals" (Wynne, 2001:38) so as to guarantee their futures, Fosco and Percival include Anne in their devious scheme. Nevertheless, her portrayal is far more different than Laura's owing to her physical entity, deeds, and stance. Her physical entity remains completely mysterious in Collins's work:

> From the beginning to the end of the novel, Anne Catherick remains a spectre. She first emerges from the shadows in a ghostly fashion. She is pale as a ghost . . . she comes and goes like a ghost, she is mistaken for a ghost . . . and, both living and dead, she haunts the novel. (May, 1995:87)

Her constantly clothing herself in white (Collins, 2002, pp. 16-9, 78), wandering in the graveyard (Collins, 2002:71-82), and specifically appearing at midnight (Collins, 2002:16-9, 71-82) are the causes of her remaining a ghostlike figure in the novel. Besides, another reason for her persistence as a spectre is Percival and his imprisonment of Anne in an asylum (Collins, 2002:81). Just like Laura, she poses a threat for the future of Percival due to the fact that he thinks she knows his secret, and that is why he shuts Anne up in a madhouse that "is not simply the conventional site of Gothic imprisonment, but rather is a target for social critique" (Pykett, 2006:56). Her confinement into a madhouse is rather symbolic because Anne goes beyond her boundaries stating that she knows his secret and has the potential to ruin Percival. In this respect, "madness could be interpreted through the lens of virtually any kind of socially disturbing or disruptive behavior. Anyone who overstepped the bounds of acceptable conduct—particularly women—invited an accusation of madness" (Bachman and Cox, 2006:18). In this sense, when a woman struggles to transcend the borders of her sex or cease to be the 'angel in the house,' she is destined to end up in an asylum. Actually, in the nineteenth century, women and madness are tightly related (Showalter, 1985:29; Pykett, 1992:89). Since the nineteenth century is a period full of particular changes, especially in the status of the oppressed sex, women who attempt to transcend their boundaries are labelled as mad. Moreover, Elaine Showalter (1941-) furthers her argument that the relation between madness and women intensifies the hierarchies of gender (1985:51-73). Her claim actually has serious grounding as according to the Newtonian paradigm, anything that is grounded on rationality is regarded as appropriate or normative and everything that is beyond normative is categorised as 'other,' which causes females to be perceived as 'other' (Donovan, 2015:23-4). In this sense, the dichotomy concerning the sexes is still prevalent in Victorian England within a different concept. Hence, in Collins's novel, owing to Anne's knowledge and threat to Percival's future, "her narrative voice has been silenced" because "[t]hose individuals who threaten and transgress of law, narrative, and gender are punished" (Gaylin, 2001:306). Anne's punishment is her imprisonment at an asylum. Apart from that, another point that makes her entity mysterious is her resemblance to Laura. As Peters points

out, "the resemblance between Laura and Anne is vital to the plot, and is finally given a rational explanation, as it might be in the Gothic novels of Mrs. Radcliffe. But in its uncanny aspect, in which one girl becomes the *doppelganger* [an alikeness between two people] of the other . . . it creates deep unease in Hartright, and in the reader" (1991:220). Indeed, their striking resemblance is of significance because their alikeness enables the male characters to scheme to save their future. Nevertheless, her being the *doppelganger* of Laura creates an uncanny atmosphere and causes Walter distress: "There stood Miss Fairlie, a white figure, alone in the moonlight; in her attitude, in the turn of her head, in her complexion, in the shape of her face, the living image, at that distance and under those circumstances, of the woman in white" (Collins, 2002:46). Considering this situation, such an aspect of Anne also contributes to the Gothic elements in the work. Because of her alikeness, her silencing through confinement, and her physical appearance, Anne is regarded as a spectre in the novel. Nevertheless, despite her apparitional appearance, she has agency; that is why, Percival wishes to silence her. Regarding her agency, the first point to be highlighted is that she is able to escape from the asylum through her critical thinking and her strategies. Upon Walter's enquiring about her getaway, Anne explains that "'[i]t was easy to escape, or I should not have got away. They never suspected me as they suspected the others. I was so *quiet* and so *obedient*, and so easily *frightened*" (Collins, 2002:77; emphasis added). Actually, she manages to deceive doctors at the asylum because she uses the patriarchal norms that are expected from women to set her ground to flee, which is an indication of her ability to think critically and this is what Wollstonecraft, Wright and several others foreground in their works. They specifically focus on the fact that women are deliberately denied their right to educate themselves and there is also a societal construction of women's being irrational. Since they believe that women have the capacity and potential for reason, rationality, and critical thinking, they intend to motivate their fellows to gain their critical thinking through education (Wollstonecraft, 1988:40-2; Wright, 1988:113; Murray, 1988:19). Through her strategy to display herself as docile, she attempts to challenge a patriarchal institution and succeeds. Apart from that, upon her escape from the asylum, she has the courage to wander in the streets alone at night (Collins, 2002:15-21, 71-82). Even though it does not seem significant initially, when the androcentric ideology is considered, it is almost impossible or rather inappropriate for a woman to walk in the streets unaccompanied at night since the subordination of women is commonly believed, which "includes the possibility of voluntary acceptance of subordinate status in exchange for protection" (Lerner, 1986:234). However, Anne, without any doubts or fear, wanders outside at midnights, which is a display of her going beyond her boundaries just like Marian. Besides, she has the potential to change the course of events for Laura, which also supports the fact that she has agency. With her letter, again a kind of narrative, Anne casts certain doubts on both Marian and Walter (Collins, 2002:60-4) and it is specifically Walter that strives for unveiling everything hidden. In this respect, when Anne with her stance and agency is taken into consideration, she is actually a capable woman, which is the reason why Percival at first silences her through imprisonment and then kills her. Sir Percival does not kill her because of her madness; he intentionally kills her because her knowledge and potential pose a threat to his social standing and financial security. Upon her death, her story is also found out by Walter, and it is revealed that she is the half-sister of Laura, which complies with her resemblance to her (Collins, 2002:439-40).

In Collins's *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright is of crucial importance as the novel starts and ends with his narrative. As Deborah Wynne points out, "Walter Hartright, the novel's main narrator, positions himself as the 'editor' of various first-person testimonies, a self-imposed task" (2001:42). Considering his being the main narrator, as a male figure, he has the greatest authority in editing others' narratives in spite of the fact that he pays more attention to the female characters' needs, desires, or interests, unlike other male characters. In other words, though not so masculine as the Count, Percival, or the deceased father, it can be claimed that Walter represents the patriarchal mindset to a certain extent. He not only helps Laura regain her identity as "the romantic hero and principal detective figure of the novel" (Thomas, 2001:181) but also sheds light on the lineage of Anne, which accords with the Victorian male-dominated idea that women actually are in need of the accompaniment of a man. In Walter's narrative—a narrative of a male—it is indicated that the "internment that renders Laura's body docile, and her mind imbecile, also fits her to incarnate the norm of the submissive Victorian wife" (Miller, 1986:122). In other words, she desperately needs Walter to survive, which highlights the fact that he is indispensable for her. Apart from her, after the Count's grasp of Marian's narrative, a striking change in Marian is also apparent, which is her feminisation process. As Gaylin propounds, she "is indeed given a life sentence, 'condemned' to wear again the narrative petticoats that she had earlier removed to eavesdrop

. . . Thus, in Walter's second narrative, Marian appears completely femininised. Her first words to Walter simultaneously invoke patriarchy and designate him as the prime actor: 'Father! strengthen him. Father! help him in his hour of need' [Collins 324]" (2001:319-320). Her calling him as father discloses that she perceives him as an authority figure and indeed, in Walter's narrative, he is the main character. At this point, it is of importance to remind that his authority is quite different than the other two villains in the novel and his letting Marian finish their story (Collins, 2002:498) is an indication that women are not subordinate to men; rather, they are companions of men.

4.CONCLUSION

With regard to this, it can be concluded that the nineteenth century is a noteworthy period for the emancipation of women because their status in society and family is ameliorated to a significant extent. Certain acts are introduced, through which their visibility both in public and domestic spheres increases. Rather than being perceived as dependent entities, they are given opportunities to become more individualised. Even though these reforms have made undeniable contribution to their status, they do not completely liberate the second sex because their enfranchisement is still denied, and the emancipation process of women is in progress. Through the acts passed in this period, they can be admitted into universities to study, earn their money and hold their property, take custody of their offspring, divorce their husbands in certain circumstances, and cease to be regarded as chattels. Considering these reforms, their secondary position both in domestic and public spheres is altered significantly. Besides, while at the beginning of the century, women are defined through 'the Cult of True Womanhood' through which restrictive attributions are embedded on them, at the end of this period, with the 'New Woman' concept coined by Grand, they are redefined and gain a chance to control over their bodies. In other words, instead of being doll-like or angel-like idealised women that patriarchy imposes and/or forces them to turn into, they can be in control of their own bodies and their physical appearance.

In this sense, in Collins's novel, a microcosm of Victorian England can be observed. Instead of having completely docile, submissive, tamed, and colonised women characters, he creates multiple female figures, each of whom addresses one aspect of the period. When Collins's diversity in characterisation and the issues he deals with in *The Woman in White* are taken into consideration,

> [t]he vehement recurrence of *The Woman in White*'s narrative incarcerations suggests an excessiveness with significant implications about Collins's ambivalent, sympathetic yet defensive, attitude toward women's narrative and social agency. His fiction, like his life, demonstrates anxiety about offering women complete social and economic equality. Although Collins offers abundant portrayals of intelligent, resourceful, and active women, his novels usually retreat toward a more conventional stance regarding women's narrative and social power in their conclusions. (Gaylin, 2001:325)

In this framework, Collins, aware of what is normative at his time and the particular changes taking place in the status of the opposite sex, makes a critique of his time through his work. With his various women characters such as the Victorian angel—Laura and the Countess—the spinster determining to go beyond her boundaries – Marian –, and the victim of the patriarchy owing to her agency – Anne –, Collins employs the alterations occurring in the Victorian period. In the same vein, his male characterisation is also diverse: Count Fosco and Sir Percival as the villains that consider their sex superior, Frederic Fairlie as an effeminate man that can be regarded as an in-between character, and Walter Hartright as a male figure that is concerned about the female characters' well-being, though his maleness is also apparent, which highlights the fact that the patriarchy is challenged to a certain extent. Nevertheless, although he dwells on such significant issues in his work, it would be wrong to claim that he adopts or accepts these changes completely. His characters are various; yet, in the end, Anne is killed, which denotes that she is silenced; Laura becomes the Victorian angel of Walter because she is a compliant and docile young maiden who is in constant need of a male companion around her; and Marian is feminised, being turned into a good angel with her petticoat. Besides, Madam Fosco, once an advocate of women's rights, is 'tamed' by her husband and is subjugated to her husband. In other words, it is apparent that more transgressive female characters are noticed, but in the end, they are somehow silenced because the work is penned in 1860 and significant acts about the status of women are introduced mostly in the second half of the

century. Hence, there are not completely transformed female characters. This accords with the claim that Collins depicts the stereotypes in society. Besides, in the preamble of his novel, he asserts that "[t]his is a story of what a *Woman's patience* can endure, and what a *Man's resolution* can achieve" (Collins, 2002:3; emphasis added). His attribution of patience to women and resolution to men are actually the "conventions of gender: those Victorian assumptions about women's passivity and men's activity" which displays that "gender roles are fixed and absolute" (Gaylin, 2001:306) for Collins as a Victorian author. Thus, in spite of his critique of the Victorian period, it is apt to assert that Collins adopts or internalises some of them.

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