A GHOST OF HERSELF: FEMALE SPECTRALITY AND THE UNDEAD MADWOMAN

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Literature in English – Master of Arts

2024

ABSTRACT

The specter has long been a figure of study within Victorian literary criticism. Haunting dark stairwells and appearing in the reflection of windows, the Victorian specter is known for bringing madness to those who perceive it. While many have discussed the Victorian specter and its connection to madness, there remains a gap in the scholarship surrounding female spectrality and the role the specter plays in representing female mental illness. While the early nineteenth century was known for classic ghost stories, there was also an emerging body of literature "[that] aimed to provide 'rational' and scientific explanations for widely believed supernatural events" (Mangham 283). This shift largely has to do with an increased interest in psychological study and what the Victorians called the sciences of the mind. As Suzy Anger notes, the Victorians "read and wrote widely on subjects connected to the mental sciences" with conversations about the mind appearing in popular periodicals, magazines, and newspapers (Anger 276). These conversations in turn had an influence on popular fiction of the time. Through an examination of spectrality and madness in *The Woman in White* by Willkie Collins and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, I will demonstrate how madness is used as a social label to subjugate women to an undead existence and how Collins and Brontë offer their texts as depictions of as well as interventions against this subjugation. This reading will be supported by an analysis of the material in the periodical press Collins and Bronte would have been reading at the time, drawn from *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *Household Words*, to demonstrate how this critical work was beginning in these periodicals, largely, through their braiding together of conversations related to madness, spectrality, and the mental sciences.

ACKOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my wonderful thesis advisor Dr. Kristin Mahoney for her expertise and skilled mentorship. Without her guidance my ideas never would have come to fruition. I would also like to recognize Dr. Zarena Aslami for her recommendations, especially pertaining to disability studies, as well as for her Race, Gender, and the Human course which first spurred my interest in madness. Beyond these academic mentors, I would like to acknowledge my parents, Ilene & John Mast and Cesar and Kim Blanco, my partner Alexis Andrews, my best friend Julia Middleton, and my close friend and colleague Kyle Flanagan for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout my graduate studies. At times the only thing propelling my writing forward were the kind words of a loved one, so to them I am eternally grateful. Lastly, I would like to thank my cats, Booger and Beetle, for the hours they spent with me in my office purring on my desk and warming my lap. If dogs are man's best friend, then surely cats are the writer's.

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INTRODUCTION

It is well documented that ghosts and spectral forces took up a great deal of space in the Victorian imaginary. Whether it be ghost stories or real life seances, the Victorians were obsessed with the undead. Moreover, as trends shifted in the mid-Victorian era towards scientific exploration and explanation, their obsession did not end. These topics instead began to collide. Thus, we begin to see ghost stories alongside scientific attempts to explain the spectral. While this unusual convergence has been subject to study before, there is little research exploring how these topics and this literary convergence affect another very Victorian issue, female madness. My analysis sets out to address this gap and examine the convergence of these very topics and how they shaped Victorian consciousness surrounding female madness in the mid-Victorian era.

Before beginning this analysis, it becomes essential to understand the dramatic shifts that were occurring in the perceptions and treatment of female madness. During this period there was an extreme push to drastically reform mental asylums across Britain. This was due to the increased number of institutionalized women. Not wanting to allow women to experience the strict physical punishment and restraint customary in most asylums for fear of damaging their gentle constitutions, a system of domestic moral management was alternately adopted. Essentially, asylum care shifted from a male system of domination to a feminized system of domestic care. As Elaine Showalter notes in *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980,* "the domestication of insanity and its assimilation by the Victorian institution coincide with its feminization" (52). Showalter writes that "by the 1850s there were more women than men in public institutions" and that "by 1872 out of the 58,640 certified lunatics in England and Wales, 31,822 were women" (52). The Victorian era not only saw a rise in the number of women in lunatic asylums, but it saw new approaches to the treatment and

diagnosis of mental illness. While, as we know today, there are myriad mental illnesses, when it came to defining what ailed women sent to these lunatic asylums, most were simply categorized as "mad." As Showalter points out, women "are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind," thus "madness, even when experienced by men, is metaphorically and symbolically represented as feminine" (4). In other words, "madness is a female malady" (Showalter 3).

While this line of thinking has crossed centuries, it flourished in the mid-Victorian as "'Moral Insanity,' [a concept that] redefined madness, not as a loss of reason, but as deviance from socially accepted behavior" (Showalter 29). Thus, moral management became the default form of treatment for those in lunatic asylums. Moral management utilized "close supervision and paternal concern" along with a family structure with the patients representing children "in an effort to re-educate the insane in habits of industry, self-control, moderation, and perseverance" (Showalter 29). This was done with the hope that "homelike mental institutions would tame and domesticate madness and bring it into the sphere of rationality" (Showalter 17). This change in the treatment of madness was, of course, heavily influenced by the mid-Victorian emphasis on science and rationality over the fantastical and supernatural. Thus, what were once potentially possessed, raving madmen were now simply unruly women in need of paternal guidance.

Much like the spectral and the scientific explanations that surrounded this concept during this period, these shifts in the asylum, conceptions of madness, and the madwoman have received a great deal of attention. In particular, the madwoman has been dissected and stripped to her metaphorical meaning many times over. Most notably, in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue that the madwoman is utilized in the text to speak on the female author's subjugation in a patriarchal society:

> "much of the poetry and fiction written by women conjures up this mad creature so that female authors can come to terms with their own uniquely female feelings of fragmentation, their own keen sense of the discrepancies between what they are and what they are supposed to be." (78)

Gilbert and Gubar's madwoman offers a way to liberation for female authors and in many ways, female readers. She has agency through her madness that allows her to exist and function outside of patriarchal structures. Through her madness she reclaims power. Gilbert and Gubar, and those literary critics that have followed in their path, utilize the madwoman as a metaphor for female liberation. However, while the madwoman is a powerful framework analysis, this line of inquiry lacks space for one woman in particular, the madwoman herself.

As critics such as Marta Caminero-Santangelo and Elizabeth Donaldson note, the madwoman is not always the powerful metaphor she's argued to be. In her book *The Madwoman Can't Speak, or, Why Insanity Is Not Subversive,* Caminero-Santangelo argues that the madwoman is an "enticing figure," but she only "offers the illusion of power" and "a symbolic resolution whose only outcome must be greater powerlessness," noting that madness offers no woman authentic power (3). Donaldson builds on this in her article "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness," arguing that thinking of madness in this way romanticizes it when in reality "madness itself offers women little possibility for true resistance or productive rebellion" (101). What both Caminero-Santangelo and Donaldson point out is the true subjugation of the madwoman within literature and, with what we know of the asylum system in the mid-Victorian era, within Victorian society as well. Noting this subjugation does not however mean that the madwoman does not offer valuable social critique through her analysis. Instead, her depiction in Victorian literature is

incredibly noteworthy, especially when her appearance coincides with appearances of the spectral and conversations about scientific discovery.

One notable critic, Andrew Mangham, argues that the madwoman when represented in literature calls attention to a real-life negative positionality for women in the mid-Victorian era. As noted previously, the shift in the treatment of female madness meant that more and more women were losing their autonomy due to male diagnosed madness. We see female anxiety about this displayed in several pieces of popular literature through the presentation of various forms of female death and transformation into the spectral. In his article "Life After Death: Apoplexy Medical Ethics and the Female Undead," Mangham argues that this anxiety registers in Victorian literature in representations of the "female undead," a state where the woman is alive but "those around the individual assume otherwise" (285). This state was most often caused by "psychiatric aberration," or mental disorder (Mangham 286). While he specifically focuses on apoplexy, "it was possible to experience being undead by undergoing a range of debilitating psychological conditions" (Mangham 285). This means that a woman could become undead simply by experiencing madness. Mangham discusses that this phenomenon was in part due to heightened fear in the Victorian era of being buried alive. This fear was so pervasive in the nineteenth century, that "special devices (safety coffins) were invented to ensure that premature burial was avoided" (Cascella 345). Additionally, the fear of being buried alive was "included among the neuroses" coined as "taphophobia" by Italian psychiatrist Enrico Morselli (Cascella 345-346). While there was the odd case of someone being prematurely buried alive, Mangham argues that this increased fear in the Victorian era was seemingly linked to increased scientific study surrounding the mental sciences.

Mangham's theory presents an interesting assessment of the madwoman, because it begins to braid together conversations about the madwoman, madness, and Victorian scientific study. However, Mangham's study predominantly focuses on defining the female undead and displaying how she appears in literature of the time. Consequently, it fails to fully illuminate how the female undead is a product of the collision of conversations about madness, spectrality, and Victorian science as well as what her presence in the text attempts to get across to readers. Thus, this analysis seeks to build on Mangham's theory of the female undead to demonstrate how authors at the time deployed the female undead as a tool to call attention to the positionality of the madwoman and argue for improved treatment and liberation. Through an analysis of the treatment of mental illness in *Household Wor*ds and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* I will demonstrate how conversations about Victorian psychology, madness, and the spectral were braided together in popular conversations during the mid-Victorian era. Additionally, through close critical analysis of spectrality and madness in *The Woman in White* and *Wuthering Heights* I will demonstrate how Collins and Brontë were not only drawing on these discourses in their texts, but that through their depictions of madness and spectrality they are commenting on and denouncing the subjugation of the madwoman to existence as the female undead.

Chapter one argues that Wilkie Collins denounces the subjugation of the madwoman to the position of the female undead and illuminates the torment and damage experienced by all due to this subjugation through his depictions of Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie in *The Woman in White*. Furthermore, Collins attempts to sway his audience to mirror his perspective through a call for sympathy and community care for the madwoman. I begin by discussing "Spectrality and Psychology in Dicken's *Household Words,"* examining several articles from Charles Dickens' *Household Words* that center on conversations about madness, the spectral, or the Victorian

sciences. “Spectrality and Psychology in Dicken’s *Household Words”* demonstrates how topics of madness, spectrality, and the Victorian sciences were conceptualized during the mid-Victorian period. Each article has been carefully selected for not only the way it discusses these topics, but for what it demonstrates about the broader politics of the era. The material that I analyze in this section, (the serialized novel *A Wife’s Story* [1855]; a critique of Spiritualism, “Man as a Monster” [1854]; a scientific debunking of ghost sightings, “New Discoveries in Ghosts” [1852]; and a history of a plan for the treatment of madness, “The Cure of Sick Minds” [1859]), display that there was an attempt at widespread public critique of these topics happening in *Household Words*. However, the critique we see put forth in these articles lacks the call to action or the more developed route to change we see presented in the novels. Thus, these articles mainly function as opinion pieces, sandwiched in the periodical amongst a crowd of other conversations and opinions. This is, however, not to say that these critiques are doing nothing. On the contrary, “Spectrality and Psychology in Dicken’s *Household Words”* will demonstrate how these critiques in there more larval state are picked up by Collins and fleshed out to their full potential through *The Woman in White*.

I then turn to a discussion of “*The Woman in White* and The Female Undead,” in which I argue that Collins’s *The Woman in White* denounces the poor treatment of the madwoman and argues for sympathy and community care for her through its depictions of madwomen Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie. Through Anne and Lauran Collins displays the harm that comes from treating madness with punishment and force. His depictions not only allow the reader to see the madwoman as victim rather than villain, but they illuminate how society can intervene in her subjugation. Through Collins’s depictions, we are also able to see how the critiques presented in

Household Words are cemented as fully developed criticism that has the potential to influence mid-Victorian society and politics.

In chapter two I argue that, like Collins, Emily Brontë denounces the subjugation of the madwoman through her portrayal of Catherine in *Wuthering Heights.* However, where Collins seeks to show the reader the error of their ways through a call for sympathy, Brontë instead uses fear to sway her audience, depicting the danger and fear that arises from the mistreatment of the madwoman. Unlike the quiet fragile madwoman Anne, Catherine's madness is all consuming often leading to violent outbursts and fits of sobbing. In her depiction of madness and the female undead Brontë leans far less on conventional gender standards than Collins, demonstrating that if mistreated the madwoman can and will fight back.

Additionally, like in chapter one, I examine a periodical known for its influence on Victorian culture more broadly as well as the writing of Emily Brontë in particular, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in the section "The Influential and Topical *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine."* The most notable difference between *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *Household Worlds* is their audience, which influences how these articles affected their audiences and of course the authors discussed in this analysis. Unlike *Household Words*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* caters to more of a learned audience (Stewart 156). Due to this, the articles found within are less varied in perspective. Despite this, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* still demonstrates how these periodicals affected discourses of the time especially as *Blackwood's* is known to have influenced the writing of many notable writers including all of the Brontës siblings. While we can see the beginning phases of criticism happening in *Household Words*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* goes a step further, offering education and heightened understanding of madness and spectrality as its intervention to this larger social and political

conversations. This will be demonstrated in all the discussed articles, (a scientific critique, "Great Wits, Mad Wits?" [1860]; a journaling of madness, "It is No Fiction" [1844]; a critical retort to ghost debunkers, "Ghosts up to Date" [1894)]; and a personal account of Spiritualism "'Unfathomed Mysteries'" [1883]). This intervention, and the conversations surrounding it, are, however, picked up by Brontë in *Wuthering Heights* to demonstrate how simply understanding is not enough, and that instead action in necessary. As will be shown, *Wuthering Heights* details the danger of inaction.

In combination, these texts demonstrate how the spectral, madness, and the Victorian sciences were conceptualized alongside one another. They additionally illuminate how *Household Words* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* influenced the writing of Collins and Brontë, which indicates the effect popular media sources had on the common imaginary. Moreover, this survey allows us to understand how Collins and Brontë were conceptualizing these topics and commenting on Victorian societal structures controlling the treatment of women deemed mad through their novels. The analysis that follows will thus build off of Mangham's theory of the female undead to argue that both Collins and Brontë denounce the treatment of the madwoman and attempt to intervene in this treatment through their depictions of madness, spectrality, and the female undead in *The Woman in White* and *Wuthering Heights*.

CHAPTER ONE: WILKIE COLLINS

It is well documented that Wilkie Collins felt a deep sorrow for the subjugation of women in Victorian society, a sorrow that he often articulates in his writing. Virginia Morris notes that "prominent among [Collins] concerns [in his novels] was the violence which stemmed from women's vulnerability in male-dominated Victorian society" (Morris 105) and that Collins "shows profound sympathy for women faced with the unpalatable choice between suffering and violence (Morris 106). Collins's answer to this was not only the depiction of such suffering in his novels, but to create women within these tales who acknowledged the problem and attempted to fix it. In fact, Collins's works were some of the first that depicted endangered women fighting back or otherwise having agency. As Morris discusses, "before [Collins's novel] *Armadale*, physically abused wives died or ran away." However, Collins gave them the authority to go after the abuser (Morris 106). While *The Woman in White* was published before *Armadale,* this earlier text operates similarly to vindicate the wronged and abused woman.

While some critics, such as Mahinur Gözde Kasurka, argue that *The Woman in White* places women in a "'less than' status when compared to men in the text" and reduces them "to disposable bodies," they ignore the real-world implications Collins's novel offers for women deemed "mad" by dominant society (57). While Collins's novel does inevitably uphold certain gendered social standards of the time, it also critiques and denounces dominant ideas surrounding "mad" women, details the suffering of women subjected to life as the female undead, and calls for sympathy and community care to rectify the harm done. Additionally, this was done at no small cost, as it was noted that Collins's female heroines "infuriated the critics" and thus his novels received harsh criticism from many (Morris 107). However, as will be shown, the argument and critique Collins takes up in *The Woman in White* was one that was

already occurring in popular media sources at the time. One such source being Charles Dicken's *Household Words,* which Collins is known to have worked for and was often published in. Ultimately, what both *The Woman in White* and *Household Words* bring us to is an interest in, and in Collins's case, a denunciation of the treatment of madness in women during the mid-Victorian era.

Spectrality and Psychology in Dicken's Household Words

Within the pages of nineteenth-century British periodicals, popular magazines, and novels, spectral presences hovered alongside discourses concerning Victorian sciences, particularly what they called the sciences of the mind. As Suzy Anger notes in "The Victorian Mental Sciences," "as revealed by the number of pieces in popular periodicals," the Victorians "read and wrote widely on subjects connected to the mental sciences" (Anger 276). The mental sciences sought to lift the veil of mysticism that surrounded many Victorian ways of thinking about what we now refer to as psychology. Specifically, the mental sciences worked to disrupt growing support for Spiritualism and aimed to use scientific evidence to explain away the spectral. Thus, popular conversations about the mental sciences converged with conversations concerning Spiritualism, the supernatural, ghosts, and the spectral. One popular magazine at the time that featured such conversations was Charles Dicken's *Household Words*.

Dicken's *Household Words* first appeared in early 1850 (Lohrli 4). The magazine "was the fulfilment of Dicken's long-cherished wish to conduct a journal in which he could speak personally to the large circle of readers who his novels had drawn to him" (Lohrli 4). At its core, *Household Words* was "a family journal for a middle-class audience" that sought "to help in the discussion of the most important social questions of the time" with the paramount goal of positive social reform (Lohrli 4). It included scientific conversations, poetry, short stories,

supernatural inquiry, tours of local asylums, and firsthand tales of varying topics. While it still managed to cover topics that could have been considered "sensational," it did so in a calculated way that pushed the reader towards science, logic, and reason, and it worked to call out social horrors and push its readers towards care for the less fortunate. Unsurprisingly, Dickens relied on the writings of many of his esteemed literary friends to fill the pages of his magazine. One such friend was none other than author of *The Woman in White* (1859), Wilkie Collins. Collins published in *Household Words* several times throughout the life of the periodical. Additionally, he accepted a job offer from Dicken's in late 1856 that spanned five years. During this time "Collins wrote articles and stories for Dickens and in collaboration with him" (Pykett 98).

Collins's participation in and investment in *Household Words* is important not only to provide historical context, but to provide a clear example of the literature that would have influenced his personal writing. While perhaps not unusual in magazines of the time, the diversity of conversations within *Household Words* specifically surrounding spiritualism, madness, the spectral, and the supernatural is noteworthy. While conversations concerning these topics spanned many of the issues throughout the life of *Household Words,* here I will focus on issues that highlight particularly pertinent conversations about connections between the spirit and the mind, scientific explanation of the supernatural, criticism of the spiritualism movement, and social desire for a greater understanding of madness. The articles that I discuss, (*A Wife's Story* [1855], "New Discoveries in Ghosts" [1852], "Man as a Monster" [1854], and "The Cure of Sick Minds" [1859]), each argue for heightened attention to discourses of madness and spectrality, signifying the importance of these topics within Victorian consciousness and to Victorian society. Additionally, these articles demonstrate the way in which *Household Words* was operating as a starting ground for the criticism about these topics that we see take full shape in

Collins's *The Woman in White*. While the articles I will discuss demonstrate how the criticism found in *Household Words* is still very much in the process of becoming, paying attention to the periodical as a site of the inception of what will later become recognized criticism and political commentary highlights the impact of popular periodicals in the mid-Victorian era.

A Wife's Story (1855), a book published in sections throughout the periodical, much like Collins's *The Woman in White* displays the madwoman as the female undead though it does not take the hard stance of demanding justice for her. Though in this way it falls a bit flat in its call to action, this section of the book still does something important as it argues for a connection between conceptions of the mind and spirt and critiques the torment experienced by women subjugated to existence as the female undead. While in an asylum the narrator finds herself in somewhat of a catatonic state. She remarks on being livid, even though she is unable to communicate this to those looking after her. While in this state, she often speaks of her mind and her spirit in connection to one another, in one instance revmarking, "I did not suffer much, even mentally; for spirit and flesh were alike subdued" (*A Wife's Story* 181). Here it is unclear if her mental state is connected to "spirit" or "flesh." However, later she notes that her doctor tried to "quicken [her] spiritual life to rouse [her] from [her] almost idiotic apathy" (*A Wife's Story* 181). As the rousing of her spirit is the cure for her mental apathy, the narrator draws a connection between her spirit and her mind. This is noteworthy because in this assertion the speaker is bringing conversations of madness and spectrality together, arguing that mind and spirt are inextricably linked and in fact influence one another. In this way it becomes not so outlandish to think of the depictions of madness and spectrality as linked.

As the story continues, while still in this state of internal entrapment, the narrator not only makes several connections between her mind and her spirit, but she also makes commentary

on her undead existence. Despite still being very much alive, due to her mental state, she comments on how those caring for her "thought [her] dying, thought [her] brain was dead already" (*A Wife's Story* 181). It is because of this treatment that the narrator refers to this time as the "oblivion of [her] death in life" (*A Wife's Story* 181). While on the surface *A Wife's Story* (1855) is the firsthand account of a woman sent to an asylum by her husband and the woe that she experienced along with the woe that continued once she was released, this story goes beyond a depiction of madness and argues for better treatment of women deemed mad as well as for heightened awareness surrounding the ailments madness can cause for the sufferer.

While the spiritual world and spirits themselves were popular topics of conversation at the time, "New Discoveries in Ghosts" (1852) is striking in its arguments for a shift towards scientific study to explain the phenomena of ghost sightings, displaying the collision of scientific ideas and ideas about the spectral. "New Discoveries in Ghosts" (1852) offers a scientific explanation for common ghost sightings and displays the duality of content pertaining to spectrality housed in *Household Words*. The author of "New Discoveries in Ghosts" discusses common beliefs about ghosts and works to rationalize them using popular Victorian scientific theories. He opens with the assertion that there exists a tendency "among men to ascribe to supernatural, fantastic causes, events wonderful only by their rarity" (*New Discoveries in Ghosts* 403). This is to say that he believes many things are seen as supernatural simply because they are not viewed often. To support this claim, he gives the example of eclipses once thought of as supernatural events only to be discovered as natural phenomena.

What is most interesting about this article is that the author does in fact believe in ghosts, but he also believes they can be explained scientifically. He states that he does "believe in ghosts—or rather, spectres—only [he does] not believe them to be supernatural" ("New

Discoveries in Ghosts" 404). While perhaps a confusing paradox, the author goes on to describe a scientific phenomenon that involves sensitive individuals and earth's magnetic currents. He states, "it would appear that certain persons with disordered nervous systems, liable to catalepsy or to such affections… are more sensitive to magnetism" ("New Discoveries in Ghosts" 405). This heightened sensitivity means that these folks "are able to detect, by their sharpened sense what we may reasonably suppose to exist, a faint magnetic light" ("New Discoveries in Ghosts" 405). In other words, he argues this magnetic light is what one interprets as a ghost. Additionally, as this light is emitted from the body, it can be reasonably seen in graveyards or other settings where one might encounter a ghost. The author thus combines the supernatural and scientific in a way that ratifies belief in both. This demonstrates how intertwined these topics and conversations become in the mid-Victorian era, and thus elaborates on why these topics converge in Collins's writing.

Despite the varied conversations discussing spirts, *Household Words* also notably features articles disavowing belief in the supernatural and tying this belief to madness. "Man as a Monster," (1854), is one example of this in which it is argued that Spiritualism and the belief in ghosts is a form of madness. This article thus demonstrates on one hand how madness and the spectral begin to become connected and on the other how seemingly freely madness is applied to individuals who may be seen as thinking outside dominant narratives. However, "Man as a Monster" is also unique in that it displays not only a desire to better understand madness or "insanity" but to understand how society produces it and keeps record of this production as part of European history.

The author of this article begins with a conversation of all the phenomena that were once viewed as supernatural but later found to have a scientific explanation. However, unlike the

author of “New Discoveries in Ghosts,” this author is unwilling to entertain any belief in ghosts. He instead states that “it is proved that, in our own day, the mere folly of belief in one relic of old ignorance, spirit-rapping, has supplied many inmates to the mad houses” (“Man as a Monster” 410). Here the author not only calls belief in ghosts an outdated ignorance, but he also connects belief in ghosts and the spectral to madness. He argues that the belief in the supernatural is nothing more than mere superstition, and that “the annals of superstition include much that should properly be only the annals of a madhouse” (“Man as a Monster” 410). While it could be easy to cast the author as a judgmental non-believer, he makes an argument for studying as well as understanding superstition’s role in lunacy to better understand the mad. He advocates that “this production of lunacy by superstition, and this reaction of lunacy upon superstition that produced it, should be always remembered in connection with the whole study of either subject” (“Man as a Monster” 410). This advocacy comes from his assertion that “the importance of a history of insanity in connection with the social history of Europe … does not seem yet to have been thoroughly felt” (“Man as a Monster” 410). While the author of “Man as a Monster” holds a negative opinion of madness, this article demonstrates that even those who held this negative view demonstrated an interest in better understanding madness, especially its convergence with topics related to the spectral.

The need to understand the mad continues in “The Cure of Sick Minds” (1859), which argues that madness is misunderstood and because of this society allows for preventable suffering. Unlike “Man as a Monster,” however, “The Cure of Sick Minds” argues not only for better understanding of madness, but additionally advocates for education and social change. The article opens with the assertion that “there are few household calamities so utterly deplorable as loss of reason in a husband, wife, or child” (“The Cure of Sick Minds” 415). While initially it

seems here that the author is asserting that madness is deplorable, as the article continues it becomes clear that what he denotes as deplorable is that inaction of one's loved ones that ultimately leads one to madness. He argues that "insanity is a disease of bodily weakness" usually due to malnutrition or the abuse of illicit substances, but "in its first stages, insanity is generally curable" ("The Cure of Sick Minds" 416). Thus, the reason there are those within society with incurable insanity is because there was inaction by their loved ones or other members of society. He uses as an example "pauper" who are retained in a workhouse after displaying symptoms of madness "to save the expense of their maintenance in the county asylum" ("The Cure of Sick Minds" 416). He admonishes those who would not seek to aid the insane in this case and advocates for the importance of immediate care. Ultimately, he argues that this lack of urgency when it comes to care comes from a lack of education surrounding lunacy and points to common harmful ideas held such as madness as the work of the devil.

What *Household Words* demonstrates is not only interest in and conversations occurring concerning Victorian psychology, the spectral, and madness, but it demonstrates how these conversations were woven together through the periodical. Additionally, these articles illuminate just how many varied perspectives on these topics were published for public consumption. Articles such as "Man as Monster" and "The Cure of Sick Minds" express a desire to better understand madness and its treatment, though they offer very different sympathies towards those actively suffering from madness. The author of "The Cure of Sick Minds" shows a degree of sympathy for those suffering from madness and argues for greater care and education surrounding madness in a hope to aid those suffering. In contrast, while the author of "Man as Monster" also seemingly advocates for increased education surrounding the causes of madness, he links the development of madness to an overactive belief in ghosts and spiritualism. Despite

their differing views on the topic, they appear in the same periodical and thus were consumed by the same audience. On top of this, the readership would have experienced a first-hand account of madness through "A Wife's Story" and a scientific explanation of ghosts in "New Discoveries in Ghosts," both of which seem to dispute ideas put forth in the previous two articles. This is especially pertinent when we consider how popular media sources like *Household Words* influenced the writing of authors at the time. Given Collins work with the magazine, we can easily see how these topics featured in *Household Words* affected his writing, and how conversations of madness, spectrality, and the mental sciences are woven together in *The Woman in White*.

The Woman in White and the Female Undead

The treatment of Spiritualism, spectrality, madness, and sciences of the mind in *Household Words* inflected Collins's treatment of these topics in *The Woman in White*. *The Woman in White* was first published in another popular magazine of the time, *All Year Round* (Gasson). The story first appeared in 1859 as a forty-part series and quickly become "Collins's most popular novel" (Gasson). As Andrew Smith asserts in his book *The Ghost Story 1840-1920: A Cultural History,* "Wilkie Collins's sensation fiction drew upon a Gothic tradition" namely characterized by his use of the "ghost story" (49). However, Smith argues that Collins "employ[s] an oblique form of ghosting" or a ghost story that veers off the path of the traditional Gothic ghost story (49). Through this oblique presentation Collins displays the madwoman, Anne Catherick, as the female undead through her living spiritualization, which draws together common threads between conversations of spirituality and Victorian sciences of the mind occurring in the mid-Victorian era. I argue that through his presentation of the female undead Collins denounces the treatment and subjugation of the madwoman, demonstrates how social

labeling creates madness, and ultimately advocates for sympathy and community care in the treatment of female madness.

In Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* we encounter a depiction of the female undead through Anne Catherick, a figure who allows us to better understand the common threads between discourses concerning female spectrality and Victorian psychology. *The Woman in White* tells the story of Walter Hartwright, an English gentleman hired as a drawing teacher, and his encounter with the "madwoman," Anne Catherick. When Hartright first encounters Anne he refers to her as "this extraordinary apparition" (Collins 15). While in part this description is spurred by Anne's mysterious appearance on the road coupled with her all-white attire, it is also the beginning of Anne's transformation into the spectral and into the female undead. In fact, it is from this point that Anne begins to haunt the text. This transformation takes form through the combination of multiple factors, including the way she is embodied in the text, her appearance, her doubling with Laura, and her experience with madness.

Despite her story driving a large portion of the plot, Anne is rarely physically present throughout the course of the story. After the initial meeting in the street, we learn that Anne has escaped from a nearby asylum and is thus on the run. Due to this, and her spectral existence, while often mentioned Anne is rarely embodied in the text. In fact, Anne only appears in an embodied form that the main characters interact with four times throughout the entire book. Additionally, each time she appears it seems rather out of the blue and startling like Hartright's initial interaction with her, almost as if she is appearing out of thin air. In his first interaction with Anne Hartwright tells her, "I only wondered at your appearance in the road, because it seemed to me to be empty the instant before I saw you," emphasizing her ability to seemingly

appear out of nowhere (Collins 12). On top of her ability to materialize seemingly instantly, Anne is also seen in a place one might call especially fitting for a specter, namely the graveyard.

After their first encounter Hartwright does not encounter Anne again until after he's uncovered her identity and through sleuthing comes to meet her at the grave of the late Mrs. Fairlie. Finally, Anne's last two appearances happen in the boathouse. In the first she is only seen from afar and the characters question whether what they saw was truly a person. In this way, though she is embodied, she is not fully recognized and due to their lack of recognition is mystified. This mystification carries on to her last embodiment, as while in this scene she shows herself and speaks with Laura, we get this information through two degrees of separation. This is because Laura retells the encounter to Miss Halcombe who then retells it to the reader. This extra layer of separation once again allows Anne to have somewhat unsteady embodiment. In contrast, to her physical appearances, Anne's name appears 168 times throughout the text. In this way, Anne haunts the text as she is ever present even when not embodied.

In combination with her sparse appearances, when Anne is embodied, she is described as having a ghostly appearance. Most strikingly of course, Anne has an affinity for dressing in all white. While perhaps peculiar, we learn that this affinity for white stems from Anne's past relationship to Laura's mother. While caring for Anne, Laura's mother tells her that "little girls of her complexion looked neater and better all in white than in anything else" (Collins 27). In response to this assertion Anne declares that "[she] will always wear white as long as [she] live[s]" in order "to remember [Mrs. Fairlie], ma'am, and to think that [she is] pleasing [her] still" (Collins 27). Despite knowing this information, Anne's manner of dress still manages to add to her spectral existence as it draws upon the classic images of ghosts. As Aviva Briefel discusses in her article "Spectral Matter: The Afterlife of Clothes in the Nineteenth-Century

Ghost Story," the connection between ghosts and white clothing emerged because "ghosts had been associated in the popular mind with the apparel of white linen" a type of cloth that recalled images of the "deathly shrouds" (Briefel 67).

However, it is not only Anne's clothing that make her resemble a ghost. She is often described as thin, pale, and sickly in appearance. Upon first encountering her Hartwright describes her as having "a colourless, youthful face, meagre and sharp to look at about the cheeks and chin" as well as "large, grave, wistfully attentive eyes" (Collins 11). Moreover, due to her all-white attire and her ghostly features, Anne is mistaken for a ghost on more than one occasion. As discussed, she was described as an apparition by Hartwright, and later in the novel a schoolboy spots her in the graveyard and is admonished at school for his insistence on seeing a ghost. The boy describes Anne as "arl in white—as a ghaist should be" and insists she is "T' ghaist of Mistress Fairlie" (Collins 40).

As the story progresses it seems Anne harbors the uniquely ghost-like skill of possession. We see this through the way she doubles Laura and in her ultimate possession of Laura's life, name, and persona. Clear connections are made between the two characters throughout the entire novel beginning with their looks. After spending some time with Laura and in the process of discovering Anne's identity Hartwright makes the connection between the two women's appearances. While Laura stands on the terrace he exclaims that "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 28). In this way Anne begins to "possess" Laura as anytime Hartwright looks at her he sees Anne in her visage as well. He at once questions, "Was there no possibility of speaking of Miss Fairlie and of me without raising the memory of Anne Catherick

and setting her between us like a fatality that it was hopeless to avoid" (Collins 33). Hartwright is thus haunted by Anne through Laura.

Additionally, Anne's possession of Laura doesn't stop at looks. As the novel progresses Laura begins to take on aspects of Anne's personality. Anne is often depicted as fearful, anxious, and flighty. We see Laura's adoption of these qualities after Sir Percival refuses to free her from their engagement and especially after they're married. Laura is described as "pale and sad," melancholic, and uneasy (Collins 63). As the story progresses, she continues to grow paler, more uneasy, and eventually hysterical. At one instance described by Miss Halcombe as "[breaking] from [her] with hysterical vehemence" after which she "threw herself on the sofa in a paroxysm of sobs and tears that shook her from head to foot" (Collins 77). After this second step of possession Laura not only now resembles Anne but seems to suffer from a similar disposition and her madness as well.

Inevitably, we see the possession come full circle when Anne and Laura's identities are switched towards the end of novel. It is revealed that, after receiving word of her death, Hartwright makes the journey to visit Laura's grave. It is here that he learns that the body in the grave is that of Anne, and that Laura is still very much alive, forced into existence as the late Anne Catherick. We are then retold the whole tale of Sir Percival's wicked plan in which he poses the ill and soon to be deceased Anne as Laura and had Laura committed to the asylum under Anne's name. Because he told her close friends and family that Anne suffered from a delusion that led her to believe she was the late Laura, none of her friends or family uncovered his plot. It was only when Miss Halcombe visited "Anne" in the asylum that she "recognised her sister—recognised the dead-alive" (Collins 184). Walter laments that despite being very much alive, due to Sir Percival's actions and her existence now as the madwoman, Laura is" socially,

morally, legally—dead" (Collins 181). It is in this final role reversal that Anne fully possesses Laura, turns her into herself, and thus they both become specters and the female undead.

It is essential to understand the role madness plays in this transformation from living, breathing woman to specter or female undead. We learn very early on in the novel that Anne is a madwoman, having just escaped a lunatic asylum when Hartwright encounters her. Yet despite her defined existence as a madwoman Hartwright exclaims that "the idea of absolute insanity which we all associate with the very name of an asylum, had, I can honestly declare, never occurred to me, in connection with her" (Collins 15). In fact, many of the descriptions of Anne lean closer to the representation of a troubled girl rather than a raving lunatic. After accepting Anne into her school, the late Mrs. Fairlie remarks that "this poor little Anne Catherick is a sweet, affectionate, grateful girl" (Collins 27). Her only concern seems to be that "the poor little thing's intellect is not developed as it ought to be at her age." However, the doctor's "opinion is that she will grow out of it" if given the proper care (Collins 27). After Anne's separation from Mrs. Fairlie, her mental condition worsens, and she is ultimately committed to an asylum by Sir Percival. Thus, it seems as though Anne's childhood and the lack of proper care led her to madness versus intellectual disability as is asserted in the text. Ultimately, it is the label of madness itself that turns her into a madwoman.

We see the power the label of madness holds as the same circumstances befall Laura, who, before her tie to Anne, is never described as having mental aliments. In fact, Laura is described often as beautiful, well mannered, and kind. Yet, at the end of the novel when she is forced into the role of Anne and given the label of madwoman, that is what she becomes. Walter and Marian are easily able to identify the identity swap that has occurred, despite the assertion that the madwoman Anne Catherick lives while Laura lies dead and buried. However, the notion

of insanity is enough to convince everyone else close to Laura that she is the mad Anne Catherick. Walter describes how Laura is "dead to her uncle, who had renounced her; dead to the servants of the house, who had failed to recognize her; dead to the persons in authority, who had transmitted her fortune to her husband and her aunt," all of whom refuse to see Laura in Anne because of her perceived madness (Collins 181). Once assuming Anne's identity, Laura is described as having an aggravated "mental malady" (Collins 183), "insane," and "mentally afflicted" (Collins 184), all conditions that arise exclusively from her being labeled a madwoman, as Laura suffered no such conditions earlier in the novel. While the asylum doctor does note that there are "certain differences between his patient before she had escaped and his patient since she had been brought back," he remarks that "such changes no doubt [are] not without precedent in his experience of persons mentally afflicted" and refuses to investigate the changes further (Collins 184). Once again, this ultimately comes down to the label of madwoman making one mad.

Through Anne and Laura, Collins not only demonstrates the power of societal labeling, but he also brings together conversations about the spectral and madness to further illuminate a common positionality for Victorian women. This presents a unique perspective. While both madness and spectrality were popular topics of discussion, as we saw through *Household Words*, the impact of these topics in conversation with one another is rarely analyzed. As discussed previously, many critics of Collins's work argue that he subjugates his female characters and does not allow them agency. Conversely, when the text is analyzed paying attention to the role madness and spectrality play in the story, we can see how Collins's depiction of his female characters strives to call attention to the subjugation forced upon them by Victorian society. While we would be remiss to claim that Anne and Laura are liberated women who receive

agency through the text, they are sympathetic characters who represent real life "mad" women existing at the time as the female undead. In this way Collins attempts to give agency to the madwoman through the acknowledgment of her plight and of the perpetrators of it, namely well-connected men as we see in *The Woman in White*. What Collins does through his portrayal of the female undead in *The Woman in White* is draw attention to how societal labeling creates the female undead and subsequently subjugates unruly women to an undead existence. In this way Laura and Anne to in some way gain agency through their ability to comment of Victorian society.

CHAPTER TWO: EMILY BRONTË

Criticism concerning Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* has often touched upon elements of illness, psychology, and haunting represented in the novel. Lakshmi Krishnan discusses the power the mind holds over the body in her article "'It has Devoured my Existance': The Power of the will and Illness in the *Bride of Lammermoor* and *Wuthering Heights,"* focusing on psychosomatic illness and how it appears in the novel. Krishnan notes that "mental and physical illness [courses] through *Wuthering Heights*" (32) and argues that "while Cathy's illness has a physical cause, psychological elements certainly exacerbate, and most likely trigger it" (34). Moreover, in "Folklore, Fear, and the Feminine: Ghosts and Old Wives' Tales in *Wuthering Heights,"* Paula Krebs delves into another popular theme of critique within *Wuthering Heights*, ghosts and hauntings. Krebs argues that "*Wuthering Heights* is haunted of course. But not only by the ghost of Catherine" but in addition by what she calls the "folk," or the "other against which the middle-class English could be defined" (41). In this way Krebs links the haunting that takes place in the text to cultural othering.

What both Krishnan and Krebs draw our attention to is an interest in the topics of illness (physical and mental), psychological study, and haunting in the analysis of *Wuthering Heights.* However, they fail to analyze these topics in tandem or consider how they influence once another within the text. My analysis seeks to analyze these topics in conversation with one another and demonstrate how they are woven together in both *Wuthering Heights* as well *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Additionally, I argue that *Wuthering Heights* denounces the treatment of madwomen in Victorian society and her subjugation to existence as the female undead and that through its depiction of Catherine and her all-consuming madness Brontë attempts to frighten the reader and scare them into action in response to the reality and horrors that accompany this

mistreatment. A survey of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* is essential to this argument because it demonstrates how these topics were discussed in influential media sources at the time, and thus how dominant society thought of and conceptualized these topics in conversation with one another. *Blackwood's* influence on Brontë's writing is well documented, thus understanding how these topics collide in this influential periodical allows us a vantage point to understand how Brontë came to understand these topical conversations through the magazine and consequently how *Blackwood's* shaped her depiction of madness, spectrality, and the Victorian mental sciences.

The Influential and Topical Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine was created and published by William Blackwood I in April of 1817 (Finkelstein 8). As David Finkelstein asserts in *Print Culture and the Blackwood Tradition*, "William Blackwood I and his successors were portrayed as Scots able to set the men (and women) of genius at work spinning literary threads of gold," ultimately positioning themselves as "as central players in locating and sustaining a specific late-Victorian vision of nineteenth-century British literary culture" (Finkelstein 3). *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* was known for the diversity and ingenuity of its publications. While the magazine was well known for publishing attacks on authors such as "Coleridge [and] Wordsworth," it also supported "key authors such as George Eliot, Charles Lever, and Anthony Trollope" (Finkelstein 3) as well as acting "as a showcase for new talent" (Finkelstein 11). While initially created as part of an "ongoing battle with Archibald Constable … the high-profile publisher of the *Edinburgh Review,*" the magazine grew to be one of the most widely read magazines of the Victorian era (Finkelstein 25). Though *Blackwood's,* much like Dickens' *Household Words,* featured commentary, poetry, essays, and short stories on the time's most topical conversations, it differed

in its audience, catering less to the public and more to a learned audience. Despite this difference in audience, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* still features several noteworthy articles discussing madness, asylums, sciences of the mind, spectrality, and Spiritualism. The articles that follow discuss the idea of madness as genius, firsthand experiences with madness, madness as a phantom haunting the sufferer, ghosts as hallucinations, the practices of spiritualism, and the first-hand account of a séance. Each of these articles offer a window through with to understand how *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* was conceptualizing these topics and putting them in conversation with one another.

While the magazine worked to present a variety of perspectives, the contributions within *Blackwood's* often present dominant negative views about madness and the mentally ill. We find an example of this in "Great Wits, Mad Wits?" (1860), an article in which the author discusses the age-old assertion that madness and genius are linked and ultimately demonstrates the dominantly held negative beliefs surrounding madness during the mid-Victorian era. The author notes that while "the irritability and eccentricity often noticed in illustrious men [has] been regarded as indications of incipient insanity" the mad man and the genius should not be thought of as one in the same ("Great Wits, Mad Wits?" 302). While he does acknowledge that there have been cases where both madness and genius exist in the same mind, such as in the case of "Tasso, among poets; Newton among philosophers; and Peter the Great, among statesmen," these men are the exception not the rule ("Great Wits, Mad Wits?" 302). He makes this argument by asserting that mad individuals have diseased brains, and that because of this they are less fit for thought and creation. He argues that man's "mental energy is … dependent on the organic condition of the nervous system," and "a diseased brain will act less coherently than one in health" ("Great Wits, Mad Wits?" 303). The summation of his argument being, "the energy of

genius is strength not disease" ("Great Wits, Mad Wits?" 303). In making this argument the author calls into question and attempts to dispute the work of an "M. Moreau" who had published work at the time on the connection between genius and madness ("Great Wits, Mad Wits?" 303). Ultimately, "Great Wits, Mad Wits?" presents a hierarchy of mental capacity and function with those considered mad at the bottom. The author goes so far as to assert that "when [cerebral development] falls into unhealthy activity, insanity is the result" ("Great Wits, Mad Wits?" 309). This not only demonstrates the low opinion held of the mad, but it also positions the mad as mentally disabled or suffering from an intellectual disability.

While many of the works within the magazine presented dominant negative narratives of madness, there was the occasional contribution that provided an alternative sympathetic perspective on the topic. One such piece entitled "It is No Fiction," (1844) displays the perspective of a self-identified mad individual, thus allowing us an intimate window into the treatment and experience of madness. The unnamed author discusses the woes of his life, his battle with madness, and the loss of his great love. We learn that the author is imprisoned as he details how he has "been pent up in this prison, pining for freedom, though it is unclear if this is a physical prison or madhouse, or a mental prison of his own making ("It is No Fiction" 364). While he does refer to asylums or madhouses, exclaiming "few there are in this busy world who, when passing those abodes of wretchedness—'private madhouses'—can imagine the agony, the misery, the despair that dwells there," we are left to wonder if he inhabits such an institution ("It is No Fiction" 364). Despite this mystery, we are not left to wonder about the author's mental state, as he tells us often that he is a mad man.

What strikes us as unique however about this author's madness is that he describes it as an outside entity, a phantom or a spirit, preying upon him. He describes how even as a boy "a

dark phantom pursued" him and this phantom or "shadowless spirit" "was madness coming upon" him ("It is No Fiction" 365). Unfortunately, the only remedy the author seems to find from this madness is the close comfort of loved ones, namely his mother and a woman he desires named Julia. It is in the death of his mother and the ultimate death of Julia that lead him to be completely consumed by madness. Thus, his madness is linked to death due to its description as a phantom or spirit, as well as its worsening due to the death of his loved ones. This piece not only offers the direct perspective of someone suffering from madness, which is often absent from popular media, but it demonstrates ideas about the connection between madness, death, and the spectral.

Works within *Blackwood's* also braided together conversation about madness, psychology, and the supernatural. This can be seen through "Ghosts up to Date" (1894), which builds on the conversation about the spectral displayed in "It is No Fiction" and melds together conversations of Victorian psychology, mental illness, and ghosts. The author of "Ghosts up to Date" begins the article by lamenting over the various pastimes that have been "degenerating into scientific exercises," emphasizing that "even ghost stories, the delight of Christmas Eve, have been ravaged and annexed by psychology" (Lang 47). This opens the way for a conversation surrounding the popularly held beliefs of phycologists at the time on the topic of ghosts, which are discussed and disputed by the author. We are told that popular psychologists have "decided that ghosts [are] merely 'hallucinations,'" a viewpoint the author openly disagrees with. The author's main assertion in that while "many people who report abnormal experiences may fall under the uncomplimentary categories of mad, drunk, knave, fool, visionary, and so forth," there are "hundreds of other cases in which men and women of good character, sober, sane, not in a condition of expectancy, not excited in any way declare themselves to have had

abnormal experiences" (Lang 49). What the author points towards here is the commonly held belief at the time that those who have had experiences with ghosts are mad or some other category of socially undesirable person. He goes on to support his assertion about the existence of ghosts by explaining that it might be easy to chalk ghost sightings up to hallucinations "if only schoolgirls or poets like Shelley (a small class), or uneducated persons, or cowards, or fools came forward with their tales," but inversely there are many accounts by "honorable men [and] honorable women" who "have nothing to gain, and some consideration to lose, by reporting their experience" (Lang 56-57). Thus, not only is it the sanity of those coming forward that validates the existence of ghosts, but their social standing as well. This article is noteworthy because it shows the connection being made between madness and the spectral in the periodical press during the period.

Lastly, "'Unfathomed Mysteries'" (1883) demonstrates the hesitant and negative viewpoints surrounding spiritualism, its validity, and the sanity of those who follow its practices. This piece tells the story of a sceptic of Spiritualism who attends a séance that ends with a warning to stay away from its dark practices, demonstrating one popular view of spiritualism at the time. The author begins by telling the story of a séance that a woman he encountered attended. He notes that what stands out about this séance is that it "was given by a gentleman who wished simply to prove the power of thought-reading, without making any claim whatever to supernatural power" ("'Unfathomed Mysteries'" 628). He states that, while hearing the events that happened at this séance seemed to be "a very strange experience," they were "nothing out of the common but would appear a perfectly natural incident to those who are in the habit of dabbling in spiritualism" ("'Unfathomed Mysteries'" 629). Despite his assertion that the practices of spiritualism are all "suggestive of some form of deception," the author recounts his

own experiences with the practices of spiritualism that seemingly happened on a whim while visiting Boston ("'Unfathomed Mysteries'" 629).

While there are many interesting details shared about the séance, most notably he comments several times on the medium's appearance and constitution, often describing her as unnatural and resembling a specter. He notes that he was informed that the woman was "a very fair and delicate little lady," yet all in attendance were "startled by the unnatural pallor of her wax-like complexion—due [they] supposed, to passing so large a portion of her life in some unnatural condition" ("'Unfathomed Mysteries'" 630). We are not told what this unnatural condition is, though we can gather it may have something to do with her close connection to the spectral and her work as a medium. This sense of her proximity to the realm of the undead and unnatural only intensifies from there, as after the séance the author describes how "the death-like pallor which had first struck us so painfully, seemed even more ghastly than before" ("'Unfathomed Mysteries'" 634). Untimely, the author concludes that spiritualism is "a labyrinth in which light becomes darkness," but his account of the practices of spiritualism and most importantly his descriptions of the medium, much like the aforementioned "It is No Fiction," show the connection between illness and the spectral happening in popular media sources.

Much like *Household Words*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* displays a clear interest in and convergence of conversations pertaining to psychology, the spectral, and madness. One main difference observable between the articles pertaining to these topics in *Household Words* versus those found in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* is that the latter seems to gear its articles towards a more learned audience meaning there was less variation in perspectives compared to those found in *Household Words*. Despite this we are able still able to see how these similar conversations were of interest to both the learned middle class and the more general lower and

working class public alike. As well, unique to the periodical form, we encounter these articles alongside one another, meaning that their impact comes not only from their individual critiques, but from the critique they create in conversation with one another. These articles thus position *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,* much like *Household Words*, as a platform for the formation of social commentary and critique. These articles do, however, demonstrate that unlike *Household Words*, the criticism in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* is taking a more solid shape. This is to say it is building off of already published criticism and scientific studies to make claims about how to understand madness and spectrality. Despite this, it still fails to offer solutions to the issues discussed or levy a true call to action. This is where we see Emily Brontës step in with her novel *Wuthering Heights*, warning the masses about the dangers of madness when ignored.

Madness in Name and Spirit in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

The conversations happening in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* directly informed the thinking of Emily Brontë, as she was a frequent reader of the periodical. As Christine Alexander notes in her article "Readers and Writers: Blackwood's and the Brontës", the Brontës "began reading *Blackwood's* in about 1825, and borrowed not only current issues but back numbers of the magazine" as well (56). Alexander goes on to elaborate that while "there were of course many other sources for the Brontës early imaginative world… none were as influential as *Blackwood's* in the early years of the Brontë juvenilia" (58). Joanne Shattock similarly notes that "the impact of *Blackwood's Magazine* on all four Brontës was far-reaching, both as a source of knowledge about politics, history and geography and as a stimulus to their own writing" (271). Furthermore, not only was *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* impactful to the Brontës writing, but the magazine was impactful to the genre of terror fiction as a whole. As Robert Morrison

notes in "'The Singular Wrought Out into the Strange and Mystical': Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine and the Transformation of Terror", the magazine "was especially interested in short, unnerving terror fiction," and "the magazine's most characteristic tales of terror set new standards of concentrated dread and precisely calculated alarm that had a powerful influence on writers such as Charles Dickens, Robert Browning, the Brontës and, of course, Edgar Allan Poe" (129). What Morrison points to here is not only *Blackwood's* effect on influential writers of the time, but the influence *Blackwood's* held over Victorian culture as a whole.

The influence of these broader conversations about mental illness and the supernatural taking place in the Victorian periodical press registers clearly in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Originally published in 1847, *Wuthering Heights* was the first and only novel written by Emily Brontë (Thormählen xxviii). *Wuthering Heights* presents a story of woe that effectively braids together conversations of psychology, the spectral, and madness and displays how these topics influence and affect one another. Additionally, I argue that Brontë denounces the treatment of the madwoman and her subjugation as the female undead and uses fear to warn readers of the danger of this type of subjugation through the character Catherine Earnshaw, her madness, and the way she haunts those around her.

When we first meet Catherine, it is in name only. She enters the story simply as a name scratched into the paint on the windowsill discovered by Lockwood, disembodied and without a story. Despite her lack of connection to an embodied person, Catherine begins to haunt Lockwood. He describes how, when resting with his eyes closed against the window, his eyes "had not rested five minutes when a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres" and through this "the air swarmed with Catherines" (Brontë 21). It is in this moment of haunting that Catherine becomes a character and thus, her existence as a character in the tale

begins from a place of spectrality before she is ever given a body. This sets the groundwork for her to be viewed as a specter or as undead even when she exists as a living character later in the novel. Furthermore, Catherine's haunting by name, and thus her subjugation by spectrality, does not end in this opening scene with Lockwood, as she haunts the text even after her death through her daughter. After learning about Catherine's life and decline we learn that shortly before her death she gave birth to a daughter who "was named Catherine" (Brontë 124). While the junior Catherine goes on to live her own life, merely her name conjures forth the specter of the late Catherine senior throughout the entirety of the text.

To add to our understanding of Catherine's representation as spectral, it is important to note that, even when Catherine does receive a form in this introductory scene, it is in a dream. Lockwood describes dreaming of an irksome tree branch rapping outside his window, only when he eventually reaches out the window to silence it he does not seize the branch, but the "fingers of a little, ice-cold hand" (Brontë 24). We, of course, come to discover that this hand belongs to the ghostly form of Catherine. Having her first "embodied" appearance in the text take place in a dream further cements her as spectral as she is only allowed to exist embodied in a space outside of waking consciousness. Not only is she a ghost but she is merely the dream of a ghost, so entrenched in spectrality she cannot even haunt Lockwood in the real-world.

Having now a clear understanding of Catherine's existence as spectral, we move to understand how spectrality is connected to madness in the text through her character. After his encounter with Catherine Lockwood enters an argument with Heathcliff brought on by his retelling of his spectral encounter. In Heathcliff's response to Lockwood, we see the conversation surrounding Catherine shift from one of ghosts and spectrality to one of madness as Heathcliff becomes enraged at Lockwood's assertion and raves that Lockwood is "mad to speak so" (Brontë

26). While Lockwood ignores this assertion, it links Catherine's existence to the development of madness. Moreover, this madness created by Catherine's entrance in the story seemingly spreads as once Lockwood exits the room, he describes how from the hallway he watched Heathcliff "[get] on to the bed, and [wretch] open the lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears" (Brontë 26). For both men it is their proximity to and their relationship with Catherine that connects them to madness in this scene. Thus, we see how through Catherine conversations of spectrality and madness begin to converge.

The convergence of madness and spectrality only intensifies, we come to see, as the non-spectral Catherine is introduced, and we bear witness to the madness she suffered. Even in childhood Catherine is describes as being quite haughty, emotional, and ill-mannered. Nelly details how Catherine "never had the power to conceal her passion" which is displayed through the many occasions she is seen physically harming other characters during emotional outbursts (Brontë 52). In one such emotional outburst, Nelly describes how Catherine "stamped her foot, wavered a moment, and then, irresistibly impelled by the naughty spirit within her, slapped [her] on the cheek" (Brontë 52). Through Nelly's descriptions of her, we come to understand Catherine as emotionally turbulent and thus come to associate her with madness before she ever goes mad. Catherine is also often described as using her emotional outbursts to control others. In the previously mentioned scene, after Edgar is shocked by her actions and attempts to leave, Catherine blocks the exit telling him he must not go, asserting that if he does, she will "cry herself sick" (Brontë 56). This scene not only begins the link between Catherine's emotional outbursts and illness, but it demonstrates how through her emotions she controls those around her and eventually the entire world of the text, demonstrating the all-consuming nature of her madness.

Eventually, after a lifetime of turbulent emotions, Catherine does succumb to madness. This madness is of course brought on by a fit she enters after Heathcliff runs away upon hearing her plan to marry Edgar. Nelly details how "Catherine would not be persuaded into tranquility" and how instead she wondered "in a state of agitation which permitted no repose… crying outright" and beating those around her who attempted to interfere (Brontë 62). While we've watched as Catherine's emotions were used to control all those around her this is when they seemingly take full control of her. In her madness, Catherine stays out all night during a storm soaking all her clothing and which we are told causes her to fall ill. However, after being sent to her chambers it becomes clear that the illness Catherine succumbs to is mental more than physical, as Mr. Dean remarks that she would "never forget what a scene [Catherine] acted when [they] reached her chamber" and how she "thought [Catherine] was going mad" (Brontë 64). It is in this scene that Catherine's madness is fully realized. She is no longer an overly emotional and violent child. Instead, she has become the madwoman and is doomed to this existence for the remainder of the novel.

After her marriage to Edgar, Catherine's madness continues ultimately pushing her towards death. While for a period Catherine seems to get her emotions under control, this stillness does not last. Nelly describes Catherine's emotions as "gunpowder [that] lay harmless as sand, because no fire came near to explode it." However, the fire eventually comes for Catherine in the form of Heathcliff (Brontë 67). As Heathcliff is positioned as the original driving force of Catherine's madness, it comes as no surprise that his presence sends her once again into a fit. While initially Catherine is elated to see Heathcliff, her mood quickly darkens. Heathcliff's pursuit of Catherine's sister-in-law along with a fight between Edgar and Heathcliff ultimately send Catherine into complete madness. In response to these events, Catherine laments that "'a

thousand smiths' hammers are beating in" her head, after which Nelly details how Catherine "lay dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, so that you might fancy she would crash them into splinters" (Brontë 83). Here Catherine connects her behavior to her mind and thus to her madness. In addition, having at this point in the novel fully transformed into the madwoman, Catherine is incapable of separating herself from her madness and thus, resigned, she locks herself in her chambers dooming herself to a slow decline towards death.

After remaining in her chamber for three days she allows Nelly to visit her. It is in this visit that Catherine herself connects her experience of madness to the spectral. Catherine details to Nelly how while locked in her chambers for the past three days she has "been tormented" as well as "haunted" (Brontë 85). While she does not describe what it is that is haunting her, we are led to believe that it is her own actions and madness as well as the events of the days previous. Despite the hope that a visitor might help bring her back to her senses, instead Catherine begins "tossing about," increasing "her feverish bewilderment to madness" (Brontë 85). It is here that she slips into complete madness, losing recollection of even her own reflection. Upon spying herself in the mirror she questions "don't you see that face" before yelling in a fit "who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted!" (Brontë 86). Here, we are once again confronted with Catherine's spectrality, as the spectral Catherine begins to haunt the living Catherine, pushing her further into madness. Having witnessed her own spectrality, Catherine is unable to free herself from her spectral fate or from her madness. This, of course, untimely leads to her death fully situating her existence as the mad female undead.

Much like Collins's madwoman, Anne, Catherine's madness is inextricably linked to her spectrality. We see this most notably in the way her name alone, haunting those around her, leads surrounding characters to madness. Additionally, as Catherine descends deeper into madness she

also slips further away from the world of the living and closer to her final spectral existence. This is demonstrated through her mistaking her reflection for that of a ghost haunting her when she sees herself in the mirror. This once again brings us back to Mangham's concept of the female undead a role we see Catherine fall into. Much like the authors of "It is No Fiction" and *A Wife's Story,* we see Catherine's own recognition of this positionally as she acknowledges her proximity to death. Ultimately, in both life and death Catherine is subjected to an all-consuming madness that she is unable to escape once it is named simply due to the world she exists in.

While much like Collins's depiction of Anne, Brontë's depiction of Catherine demonstrates her disavowal of the treatment of the madwoman in Victorian society, the two authors take noticeably different approaches in their call to action. Where Collins calls for sympathy and community care, Brontë leans on feminine rage, utilizing gothic horror to frighten her audience about the dangers of mistreating the madwoman. This difference in approaches is important to note because it points towards, a gendered difference in not only the portrayal of female madness, but in the investment in the improvement of its treatment. Collins's madwoman is quiet, nervous, and ultimately a plot device. Her existence is in fact so fragile that it causes her spectrality while she is still alive. In contrast, Brontë's madwoman is loud, demanding, and physically violent. It is impossible to ignore her whims and desires, even after she is dead. Acknowledging this difference is essential, because it demonstrates a gendered difference in the perception of female madness. Where Collins sees Anne as a frail childlike figure in need of male intervention, Brontë acknowledges Catherine's agency, and thus uses her own agency as a female author to present the madwoman, in perhaps her truest form, and demand attention for her, or else risk her wrath.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that through their depictions of female madness and representations of the female undead Wilkie Collins and Emily Brontë both denounce the treatment of the madwoman and call their readers to action to intervene in her treatment. Both Anne Catherick and Catherine Earnshaw clearly depict the convergence of madness and spectrality and how this convergence defines their positionality as the female undead. Additionally, they demonstrate the societal factors that lead to this subjugated identity. While both novels share these similarities they also differ, most drastically in the methods Collins and Brontë deploy to urge their readers towards action on behalf of the mad woman.

As has been discussed, Collins's novel relies heavily on sympathy, encouraging the reader to feel pity for his madwoman, Anne. This in turn urges them to want to aid her, which is modeled by the many individuals that provide community care to her throughout the novel. Collins imagines a soft, quiet, and skittish madwoman who needs to be saved. This demonstrates that, despite his sympathy towards the madwoman and his denouncement of her treatment, he still in many ways fits her into gendered stereotypes. As noted previously, Anne lacks agency in the text, which in part leads to her living spectrality. In other words, she is so insignificant that she ceases to exist even while still alive. This highlights the gendered differences between Collins's and Brontë's writing, their representations of madness, and the way they view the madwoman.

In contrast, Brontë takes a much darker approach, instead using fear and gothic tradition to force her readers to consider her madwoman, Catherine. Where Anne is soft, quiet, and skittish, Cathy is loud, poorly behaved, emotionally volatile, and physically violent. Cathy comes from wealth and privilege, and yet due to her madness and its treatment, or lack thereof, her life

falls apart, taking those around her down with it. Cathy's madness is all consuming taking over the lives of those around her and demanding attention. We see this with main characters in the novel though most clearly with Heathcliff. Cathy's tale is thus a cautionary one, aid the madwoman, or else. Unlike Anne, Brontë's madwoman has agency, projects female rage, and demands to be acknowledged.

This analysis has additionally shown how conversations about spectrality, madness, and the Victorian sciences of the mind are woven together through the popular periodical press, such as *Household Words* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. This is noteworthy because it illuminates how these periodicals controlled dominant narratives, and thus the common consciousness, surrounding these topics through their publishing of the featured articles and others like them. It also demonstrates how these periodicals directly influenced the writing of Collins and Brontë, specifically related to female madness and the spectral. Moreover, this analysis has positioned the periodical press as a foundation for social commentary and critique, publishing opinions on topical issues that would later become fully formed criticism in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Woman in White*.

Ultimately, this analysis has proven not only an extreme interest in the madwoman and the spectral in Victorian society, but that Collins and Brontës were actively building of critiques put forth in *Household Words* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* to create criticism of the positionality of the madwoman and advocate for better treatment. Additionally, I have shown that in their depictions of the madwoman and calls to action, Collins and Brontë demonstrate gendered views of the madwoman which ultimately affect their offered solutions to her mistreatment. This paper has also demonstrated a convergence of conversations related to madness, spectrality, and the Victorian Sciences of the mind in Victorian literature not often

discussed in current literary criticism. Additionally, following the thoughtful direction of Brontë and Collins, I put forth this thesis as my own piece of criticism of the treatment of the madwoman in Victorian culture, ultimately advocating for increased critical research and literary criticism surrounding the convergence of madness, spectrality, and the Victorian sciences of the mind in mid-Victorian literature.

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