



# THE ORIGIN OF MODERN MYSTERY: SENSATION NOVEL AND ITS DISTINCTIVE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN THE WOMAN IN WHITE AND LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET

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## ABSTRACT

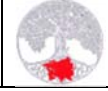
Victorian sensation fiction is considered to be an important genre of British fiction which flourished in 1860's and lost its thrive in a few decades. However its legacy continued in several other forms such as modern mystery novels, detective fiction, suspense and thriller. The main characteristic of sensation novels was to stimulate only basic sensations such as fear, shock, terror on their reader, as they chose their themes from sensational journal articles. As a consequence of this superficiality, the authors of this genre kept themselves responsible to create new techniques to achieve literary success and reputation in the eyes of the reader and literary critics. The interest of today's reader towards detective novels is indisputable. The aim of this essay is to examine the distinctive narrative structures of sensation fiction by referring mainly to the two most important representatives of the genre The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins and Lady Audley's Secret by Mary Elizabeth Braddon in order to evaluate the genre of sensation fiction with its modern off-springs. In this respect the study will bring into light the relationship between the author and the reader created by the author using innovative narrative techniques.

**Keywords:** Sensation fiction, detective novels, The Woman in White, Wilkie Collins, Lady Audley's Secret, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, narration

## MODERN GİZEM ROMANI'NİN KAYNAĞI: BEYAZLI KADIN VE BAYAN AUDLEY'NİN SIRRI ROMANLARINDA SANSASYONEL ROMAN'IN KENDİNE ÖZGÜ ANLATIM TEKNİKLERİ

## ÖZET

Britanya Edebiyatı'nda önemli bir tür olarak nitelendirilen Viktorya Dönemi sansasyonel edebiyat, 1860'larda ortaya çıkıp sadece on, yirmi yıl içinde kendini tüketmiştir. Bununla beraber, modern gizem romanları, dedektif romanları, gerilim ve polisiyeler gibi birçok başka



biçimde tür devam etmiştir. Sansasyonel romanlar, konularını ikinci sayfa gazete haberlerinden edindiklerinden, temel özellikleri okuyucuda sadece korku, gerilim, endişe gibi basit duyguları açığa çıkartmaktır. Bu yüzeysellikten dolayı türün yazarları okuyucu ve eleştirmenler nezdinde başarı ve saygınlık kazanmak için kendilerinde yeni teknikler geliştirmek sorumluluğu hissetmişlerdir. Günümüz okurunun dedektif romanlarına olan ilgisi gözardı edilemeyecek durumdadır. Bu makalenin amacı sansasyonel edebiyatın, modern ardılları ile olan ilişkisini değerlendirebilmek için, Wilkie Collins'in Beyazlı Kadın ve Mary Elizabeth Braddon'ın Bayan Audley'nin Sırrı gibi türün iki çok önemli temsilcisine atıfta bulunarak kendilerine özgü anlatım tarzlarının yapısını incelemektir. Bu bakımdan çalışma, yazarların yenilikçi anlatım teknikleri kullanarak okurları ile aralarında oluşturmaya çalıştıkları ilişkiyi gün ışığına çıkaracaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sansasyonel edebiyat, dedektif romanları, Beyazlı Kadın, Wilkie Collins, Bayan Audley'nin Sırrı, Mary Elizabeth Bradon, anlatım teknikleri

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sensation fiction is considered to have emerged from melodrama, Gothic romance and the Newgate novel as a sub-genre of British fiction, which flourished in the 1860s but eventually died out in a few decades. However, sensation fiction's off-springs continue their existence in popular culture in several other forms such as modern mystery, detective fiction, suspense and thriller. As a result, today, sensation novels are generally referred as the "parents of the detective novels" (King, 2008: 55). The genre is sensational because of its content, as it usually dealt with: "[...] crime, often murder as an outcome of adultery and sometimes bigamy, in apparently proper, bourgeois, domestic settings." (Brantlinger, 1982: 1) The reason that the novels are made out of these contents is that they build their plots on sensational news accounts. It is understandable from the choice of these themes that sensation fiction is "[...] aimed to stimulate readers' nerves, not their moral faculties." (Palmer, 2009: 87) However, it is believed that every work of art has something unique in itself, and what gives some of the representatives of this genre their uniqueness is the underlying narrative structure. The aim of this essay is to study the special narrative techniques of sensation novel, which were adopted later by mysteries and detective fiction, referring mainly to the first and finest examples of this genre, *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins and *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon.

The popularity of sensation fiction follows the Industrial Revolution. The increase in the circulation of newspapers due to urbanization, and reforms in public education that led to an increase in the number of readers were only some of the reasons that contributed to the rise of the genre. Usually three names and their three novels are given as the founders of the genre. Jonathan Loesberg states that:

Between 1859 and 1862 Wilkie Collins, Mrs. Henry Wood, and M. E. Braddon, in relative independence from each other, published three novels, respectively *The Woman in White*, *East Lynne*, and *Lady Audley's Secret*, that established the genre of sensation fiction. The term *sensation fiction* itself was first used in these years in literary reviews discussing these works. Throughout the 1860s, novels classified under that term were extraordinarily popular, and their production and reception was a topic of intense debate among Victorian critics and writers of fiction. (Loesberg, 1986: 115)

According to Mary Elizabeth Braddon, at that time there was a "[...] growing appetite for the lurid, scandalous and melodramatic in Victorian fiction." (Braddon, 1997: v) Conveniently, the genre was dealing with crude subjects such as ruthless crimes, theft, murder, bigamy, adultery,



prostitution and drugs. The authors were aimed at making the reader only to feel basic sensations such as fear, shock, terror and sexual excitement. As a result, there were harsh criticisms on sensation fiction, all of which conversely contributed to their popularity. Significantly, to satisfy the reader with ubiquitous themes, it was necessary for the authors to use radically new techniques, and some authors eventually secured a worldwide reputation for their success in their innovative techniques.

## 2. NARRATIVE STRUCTURES

The nature of the genre involved mysteries. So the best sensation novels were considered to be the ones that embodied a secret and used a distinctive way to reveal it. As it was the secret that aroused the reader, it was better to “[...] tantalize the reader by withholding information rather than divulging it.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 2) The sensation novel authors such as Ellen Wood, Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon had experimented with the narrative structure and narrative point of view to establish the aim to keep the mystery at its highest by withholding and revealing information.

There were two major distinctions in narrative structures. While most authors preferred using third-person omniscient narration, some like Wilkie Collins took more innovative paths such as using multiple first-person narration. Maybe because of his creative contributions to the genre, Collins was generally considered as the representative of sensation fiction as Walter M. Kendrick says:

“Throughout the 1860s, most critics gave dubious credit to Wilkie Collins for having ‘founded’ the sensation novel, and they looked to him for the best that could be done in the genre. Collins took the responsibility of his position very seriously, endeavoring to win recognition for himself as an artist and for his novels as advances in new directions.” (Kendrick, 1977: 22)

Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* is considered to be among the first of the genre, and *The Moonstone* which was published serially in *All the Years Round* between 1867 and 1868, is often regarded as the first detective novel. Just like *The Woman in White*, Collins had chosen to write this novel again in multiple first-person narration. Furthermore, Collins’ *The Woman in White* is considered to have “[...] a standard of perfection that later mystery writers have failed to meet.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 3) It is considered to be unique for the time it was written. This novel was also serialized in *All the Year Round* between 1859 and 1960. It advances linear, “[...] step by step, with occasional flashbacks or departures from chronology to accommodate some piece of missing evidence.” (Lonoff, 1982: 144) So, it can be said that the novel has an agenda to achieve which is to reveal as small amounts of information as possible by withholding it from the reader by the help of a well-developed pattern. In Kieran Ayton’s words: “[...] narratives are designed to specifically reveal pieces of information which Collins needs to convey the reader in order to further the plot.” (Ayton, 2005: 21)

The novels that Collins used multiple first-person narration “[...] are narrated by several of their characters who functioned both as actors and witnesses.” (Lonoff, 1982: 143) Other than the chief narrator of *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright, there are nine other characters. It is stated in the ‘Preamble’ of the novel that:

When the writer of these introductory lines (Walter Hartright by name) happens to be more closely connected than others with the incidents to be recorded, he will be the narrator. When not, he will retire from the position of narrator; and his task will be continued, from the point at which he has left it off, by other persons who can speak to the circumstances under notice from their own knowledge, just as clearly and positively as he has spoken before them. (Collins, 1993: 3)

The chapters of the novel are designed to indicate the narrators, as it begins with Hartright’s narrative under the title: “The Story Begun by Sir Walter Hartright (of Clement's Inn, Teacher



of Drawing)” (Collins, 1993: 5). It ends with an inscription stating: “The End of Hartright's Narrative” (Collins, 1993: 97). Each narration has similar titles such as: “The Story Continued by Vincent Gilmore (of Chancery Lane, Solicitor)” (Collins, 1993: 98) or “The Story Continued by Marian Halcombe (in extracts from her diary)” (Collins, 1993: 125). Towards the end of the novel some witness accounts are given place under: “The Story Continues in Several Narratives” (Collins, 1993: 315). This part includes short narratives titled separately such as: “The Narrative of Hester Pinhorn, Cook in the Service of Count Fosco (taken down from her own statement)” (Collins, 1993: 315). It can be seen that each of these narratives resemble witness accounts of a criminal trial in style and tone as one of them follows: “I was the person sent in by Mr. Goodricke to do what was right and needful by the remains of a lady who died at the house named in the certificate which precedes this.” (Collins, 1993: 320)

Collins had actually found his inspiration in a courtroom as Ann E. Gaylin explains that: “[...] the novel's beginning asserts that the narrative itself imitates the proceedings of a court of law and deliberately models the presentation of a legal case, with individual narratives representing the accounts of different “witness[es]” (Gaylin, 2001: 307) It is narrated in the novel that “[...] the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the law is told in Court by more than one witness.” (Collins, 1993: 3) Furthermore, the form of *The Woman in White* has the main elements of a criminal trial, giving place to witness accounts, material evidences and a final judgment. According to Sue Lonoff, Collins himself indicates that: “[...] a trial he had attended in about 1856 suggested the structure of *The Woman in White*. As he listened to witness after witness, he was struck by the way the evidence built up and the mourning excitement of the spectators.” (Lonoff, 1982: 148) All these stylistic elements show us how good Collins was as an observer and how unique and creative his technique is. By far the most important thing about the technique is that, by using this form of a narration, the withholding of information is established with the help of the accounts given by the witnesses, which are eventually limited to their own knowledge. Additionally the readers are encouraged to draw their own conclusions and incorporate to solve the case by comparing and contrasting these accounts, judging the witnesses and weighing the evidence to put the pieces together. In this respect the novel is designed to arouse and sustain the readers' interest, as in David Seed's words: “The reader participates in this formation of continuity. He becomes a reader among other readers.” (Seed, 1985: 73)

Likewise, in *The Moonstone* “Collins relates his story by means of eight first-person narrators, characters who function as reporters or witnesses, reliably reporting what they have observed and revealing themselves as they do so.” (Lonoff, 1982: 155) In addition, in both *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*, the revelation of the plot happens through diary or journal entries, letters, confessions, and written reports of eye witnesses that Lonoff indicates: “What they have not seen, cannot see, or in some cases, will not see prevents them from knowing.” (Lonoff, 1982: 149) So, by using this kind of narration Collins imitates man's limited perception which suspends truth and reveals the mystery more powerfully. A well known example that can be given for multiple first-person narration which again embodies many documents such as letters, journals, telegrams and newspaper articles is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. It is obvious that Stoker is influenced by Collins' technique. Beth Palmer states that, in his work, Stoker, “[...] like Braddon and Collins, brings a range of print and non-print forms (advertisements, newspaper articles, diaries) into his narrative in order to tease out the ways in which these forms structure the thoughts and behaviors of his characters, along with our reading.” (Palmer, 2009: 90) Additionally, the usage of several private or legal documents increase the curiosity of the reader by serving to hide the secret, as “[...] the gaps between the narrating documents become as important as the sections of the narrative proper.” (Seed, 1985: 68) When the narration was given through a series of documents, the reader should make connections between these



documents, and produce ideas on their necessity regarding the rest of the plot. Accordingly, the reader was taken more into the narrative with this method as Kendrick emphasizes: “By focusing the reader’s attention on the chains that constitute a novel’s plot, they made of fiction merely a game.” (Kendrick, 1977: 21)

In the second narrative of *The Woman in White* which belongs to Vincent Gilmore, there is a letter from Anne Catherick that Gilmore gives place by stating that: “[...] the reply from Mrs Catherick. I took a copy of the document, which I have preserved, and which I may as well present in this place. It ran as follows -” (Collins, 1993: 106) As the readers do not yet know the real identity of Anne Catherick, they try to understand the meaning of the letter and the reason why it is presented here abruptly. They try to make a relation between it and the rest of the plot by working with the chapter's narrator, Gilmore, as the narration continues with an attitude of investigation by Gilmore's evaluation on the letter: “Short, sharp, and to the point; in form rather a business-like letter for a woman to write – in substance as plain a confirmation as could be desired of Sir Percival Glyde's statement. This was my opinion.” (Collins, 1993: 106) In this regard it can be said that they include the reader to the intellectual process by using witness accounts and documents and placing gaps inside them. They want the reader to try to find their relations with others to solve the mystery. For example the heroine of *The Woman in White* Marian's dairy creates gaps by skipping some dates or by only stating: “23<sup>rd</sup> – A week in these new scenes and among these kind-hearted people” (Collins, 1993: 138), and leaving out the details of what happened throughout that week. Emily L. King states that in *Lady Audley's Secret* similar gaps are used: “Lady Audley’s speech is frequently interrupted, and the text displays these gaps through its liberal use of dashes: “He wanted to talk to me, he said, and I went, and he said such horrible things that-...have you ever-I am so afraid of vexing you-or-have you ever thought Mr. Audley-a little- (285).” (King, 2008: 59) These gaps, according to King, provoke Robert and also the reader to uncover what is left unsaid.

Both third-person omniscient and multiple first-person narration have their own advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages of multiple first-person narrations are listed by Lonoff as:

For any mystery writer, such a method would have a number of appealing features: to shift the perspective at will, to lead the reader astray legitimately through the words of an honest but misinformed witness, and to avoid the appearance of omniscience of knowing what will happen, as of course by channeling the action through speakers whose knowledge is demonstrably incomplete. (Lonoff, 1982: 155)

The flexibility in the narration, created by using more than one narrator, makes it available to shift the perspective. It is obvious that the perspective of each witness or narrator changes in each chapter. While Walter's narrative is a personal account, Marian's narrative consists of diary entries which are more limited in presenting information. Another important aspect is that she only knows and relates the reader what she has perceived herself, as Marian enters into her dairy about Walter that: “Sad news by this morning's post. The expedition to Central America sailed on the twenty-first. We have parted with a true man – we have lost a faithful friend. Walter Hartright has left England.” (Collins, 1993: 138) She can only inform the reader about the news she gets which says that Walter has left. Other witness accounts are also very limited that they achieve their purpose of revealing only what they have witnessed but nothing more, in other words what the author wishes to be revealed.

Nevertheless, sensation novel is generally criticized for its superficiality as Seed suggests: “[...] the reader of a sensation novel engages in the discovery of an artificial pattern, and the enterprise need not teach him anything.” (Kendrick, 1977: 21) It is widely accepted that there is also a subordination of character for the sake of plot as Kendrick emphasizes by saying that: “[...] subordination of character to plot which critics of the 1860’s took to be the hallmark of sensationalism.” (Kendrick, 1977: 34) Similarly Loesberg states that sensation novels: “[...]”





emphasize complexity and exaggeration of incidents rather than character,” as long as these incidents are “[...] sufficiently unusual, shocking, or violent.” (Loesberg, 1986: 129) The choice of using documents such as diaries and journals, the prolonged and unnecessarily detailed entries which are necessary for telling the story unfortunately makes these documents unrealistic. Furthermore, if the narratives are not well-developed they are considered to be artificial as they are only “designed to specifically reveal pieces of information to convey the reader in order to further the plot.” (Ayton, 2005: 21) The choice of narrators or speakers in the novels is arbitrary, and it is under the authority of the author to serve the needs to construct a well-wrought mystery. For example in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* “[...] only Dracula's opponents are granted narrative voices.” (Seed, 1985: 68) Kendrick shares a similar opinion about the narrator of *The Woman in White*'s saying that: “Hartright's privilege is shared by no other narrator.” (Kendrick, 1977: 25) Because of this, Kendrick entitles Hartright as “the editor of the collection of documents” (Kendrick, 1977: 25). However, the main difference about the choice of narrative lies in the ability to withhold information from the reader.

When we take third-person omniscient narration into our consideration, again we can see that: “The narrator, even while foreshadowing with fatalistic implications, ceases to convey all information and begins to disguise much of its hints.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 14) So rather than being omniscient, the narrator becomes secretive and a figure that is not to be trusted. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* is a very fine example of third-person omniscient narration. The omniscient narrator of *Lady Audley's Secret* withholds information in an artificial way, regarded to multiple first-person narration. For example, when Robert meets George he wants to know what George had done when they were separated, Robert asks: “and now, George, tell us all about it.” (Braddon, 1997: 29) and rather than a long answer the narrator can easily hide information by only narrating that: “George Talboys did tell him all about it.” (Braddon, 1997: 29) King says that: “Lady Audley has secrets of her own, and the text itself has more than a few as well. As opposed to other sensation novels, this narrative deliberately excludes the reader from the secrets that Robert Audley exposes.” (King, 2008: 59) This kind of secrecy makes the reliability of the narrators questionable and causes them to be referred as ‘unreliable narrators’. On the contrary, multiple first-person narrations are exempt from such authorial comments because the withholding of information is done more naturally by limiting the narration to witness accounts and making the reader only know what the witness knows, in Kendrick's words: “The reader's encounter with the events is limited by the very thing which is supposed to make it complete-confinement to the experience of one or another character.” (Kendrick, 1977: 33) It can be said that the most important advantage of multiple first-person narration as Patrick Brantlinger says is the ability of: “[...] interjecting correspondence without authorial comment.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 17)

The third-person omniscient narrator “[...] seems to acquire authority by withholding the solution to a mystery.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 15) The same happens in the multiple first-person narration in a more subtle way. In this respect, there is nothing mysterious about the sensation fiction as the narrator himself knows the solution to the mystery beforehand but chooses not to share it with the reader. Kendrick emphasizes that in *The Woman in White* Walter Hartright writes and arranges the narratives sometime after the events occur: “Hartright sees the story whole, from the beginning, and he has arranged its components so that they for at once a temporal and causal continuity.” (Kendrick, 1977: 25) It happens in *Lady Audley's Secret* when George sees Lady Audley's portrait but the narrator gives the reader no sign of recognition of George of his wife. As it would be revealed later on that George is the first husband of Lady Audley, the narrator seems to give only a clue here with the abrupt indifference of George by giving place to Robert's thoughts: “George fell back immediately. He took no more interest in



my lady's picture than in all the other weariness of this troublesome world.” (Braddon, 1997: 57) These kinds of intrusions are called narrative interpolations.

In *Lady Audley's Secret* Braddon uses this technique very often, she “intrudes as narrator.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 13) The reason for making these intrusions is to shock the reader as it comes long before the reader is certain that something mysterious has occurred. One of these intrusions can be seen before the disappearance of Lady Audley's first husband, George Talboys. The tenth chapter of *Lady Audley's Secret* titled as 'Missing' opens with Robert Audley's search for George who had suddenly gone missing while Robert was taking a nap on their fishing trip as it is narrated: “When Robert Audley woke he was surprised to see the fishing-rod lying on the bank [...] he strolled away to look for George Talboys.” (Braddon, 1997: 65) Each chapter of the novel ends with a sentence which embodies a new discovery or a shocking statement to keep the curiosity of the readers alive and make them want to read the next chapter. For example, chapter twelve of the novel, titled ‘Still Missing’ ends with: “‘My God!’ he said, ‘what is the meaning of this? I shall go to Liverpool tonight, and make inquiries there.’” (Braddon, 1997: 77)

Every time Robert Audley makes a discovery the narrator hides the details from the reader. “Robert’s discovery remains both private and privileged by the text. In other words, these discoveries are left as gaps themselves in the text,” says King “[...] the text itself bars the reader from that knowledge.” (King, 2008: 60) Lady Audley’s quarrel with Phoebe can be given as another example. “Phoebe Marks, you have told *this man!*” cries Lady Audley and Phoebe exclaims: “He forced it from me, or I would never, never have told!” (Braddon, 1997: 89) Yet the readers are excluded from the knowledge what Phoebe has told to Luke.

### 3. THE DETECTIVE

Just like correspondence through letters is given place in sensation novels as a result of the commonness of this kind of communication of the century, Brantlinger says: “[...] the creation of the police and detective forces in nineteenth-century cities,” is closely connected with “[...] the fascination of Dickens, Collins, and other writers with them.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 16) In some narratives that are closer to mysteries, such as *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*, there usually is a character who is a detective, or acts like one, in order to solve the mystery. These characters seem to work as the personification of the role of a narrator which reduces the omniscience of the former type of narration. In this respect Brantlinger suggests that the detective was used “as a substitute for the forthright narrative personae [...] or as a personification of the morally ambivalent role of the narrator.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 16) We can say that the detective had a double role as being a narrator or the henchman of the author, who can sometimes even be used as a manipulator in order to lead the reader to a false path. Brantlinger states that the detectives in the third-person omniscient narration generally:

[...] are at first as much in doubt as the reader. They do not have a solution but they know how to arrive at one. They can follow the clues that the no longer trustworthy narrator-author places in their path, leading towards a restoration both of social order and of some semblance of narrative omniscience, often through a recapitulation of the hidden events by the detective, at the end of the story. (Brantlinger, 1982: 16)

As the detective investigates, the reader only knows of the information that is discovered by the detective as “[...] his knowledge is usually greater than the reader's, but incomplete; he may finally know even less than the reader.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 19) Furthermore the importance of choosing a protagonist who has nothing to do with solving mysteries – rather than a professional detective – such as Walter Hartright of *The Woman in White* or Robert Audley of *Lady Audley's Secret* serves for hiding information in a more easier way. King states that: “[...] ‘amateur-detective-hero’ Robert Audley is privy to knowledge through his meticulous attention to detail



and his seemingly preternatural ability to see beyond façades.” (King, 2008: 57) While a professional detective can withhold the solution from its reader until the end of the story such as in *The Stories of Sherlock Holmes* or in the works written in the omniscient narrator of the third-person narration who knows everything but refuses to share the knowledge with the reader; an unprofessional protagonist who narrates his findings through first-person is closer to the reader and even encourages them to put the pieces together. The latter also makes the narration more realistic. Britta Martens explains:

Readers of detective fiction derive enjoyment first from imitating the detective in trying to reconstruct the criminal’s thoughts and actions, and second from the fact that the story of the investigation is partially hidden from them because the narrative usually gives no direct access to the detective’s consciousness. It is sometimes focalized through the detective’s less brilliant confidant, the ‘Doctor Watson’ figure, with whose inferior level of knowledge readers may identify. (Martens, 2011: 203)

In his *The Typology of Detective Fiction* Tzvetan Todorov gives place to the homology of “author : reader = criminal : detective” (Todorov, 1977: 49). According to this, we can say that in detective stories, criminals usually resemble authors while the readers identify themselves with the detective. Martens explains this by saying that: “In detective fiction the criminals resemble authors in that they plot first their crimes, and then false stories of the crimes, by eliminating clues or planting false ones that initially lead the investigator(s) and the reader to construct a logical, but wrong, plot.” (Martens, 2011: 202) On the other hand, “[...] the detective-readers adjust their interpretations of the ambivalent elements of the ‘texts’ (i.e., physical clues and verbal witness statements) as they encounter more evidence, trying to read the mind of the criminal, until a coherent meaning emerges and they finally arrive at the true story.” (Martens, 2011: 203)

According to Ellen O’Gorman, in detective novels detective is the character that seeks to find the solution of the mystery. He does this by uncovering and bringing together the material evidence and witness accounts. Detective is also bound by an important obligation which is in her words “an obligation to Truth” (O’Gorman, 1999: 20). She further points to the relationship between the reader and the detective by saying that:

The most important feature of the detective novel is not the story of the crime but the story of its detection. The questioning of witnesses, the scrutiny of clues; the narration of these actions is where narrative pleasure and its expectation are situated. What occupies the reader’s interest is not the witness or the clue or the crime or the criminal, but the questioning, the scrutiny, the process of recovery, and the act of detection, and the most importantly the one who questions, scrutinizes, and recovers: in short, the detective. (O’Gorman, 1999: 21)

Yet, first detectives – the detectives of sensation fiction – served the opposite purpose as they generally worked as criminals, closer to authors. “The detective, moreover, is not so much the antithesis of the narrator, trying to recover what the narrator secretes,” says Brantlinger, “as one of his personifications in the text, presiding over the plot and leading the reader down several false paths before discovering – or recovering – the true one.” (Brantlinger, 1982: 19) So that the narrator of the sensational novel has to reveal and withhold information, the detectives having a double role, on the one hand can be used to help the reader to uncover the secret and on the other, lead the reader to false findings while doing so. Either way, the role of the detective is again to reveal and withhold information. In *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright has “[...] the power to manipulate what the reader takes in.” (Ayton, 2005: 17) As being the chief narrator of the story who begins and concludes it, he has the authority to decide which of the documents and accounts, and how much of them will be included in the work. This ability comes from his close connection with the author of the work.





It can be seen that the novel embodies two contradictory statements of Walter Hartright in the beginning and at the end of the work. While he first states that the events of this story will be told as it is told in a Court of Justice “[...] to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspects; and to trace the course of one complete series of events, by making the persons who have been most closely connected with them.” (Collins, 1993: 3) Then he says at the end of the novel that “I tell this story under feigned names.” (Braddon, 1997: 438) Although some critics believe that it can be a mistake made by Collins as the novel was written as a serial (and had these kinds of mistakes) we can also consider Walter Hartright is an unreliable and manipulative narrator as a result of his contradictory statement. Just like the narrator of *Lady Audley's Secret*, Walter Hartright harbors the aim to keep the mystery alive until the end of the novel but also creates sensations that give the genre its name as “Each time a narrator belatedly uncovers some fragment of the truth, there is an abrupt adjustment of his and the reader's vision. These adjustments produce what for mid-Victorian critics was the real aim of a novel like this – a series of 'sensations’” (Kendrick, 1977: 26)

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Sensation fiction in general or sensation novels in particular are built upon a mystery, and either the unreliable narrators of the omniscient third-person narration or the first-person narrators of the multiple narration serve the purpose of keeping the interest of the reader by withholding the crucial information that is necessary to solve this mystery. While it seems that the third-person narrator already knows of the secret but refrains to reveal it, multiple first-person narrator does the same thing more naturally as it relies on the limited perspective of its numerous narrators. The detective figures – whether professional or amateur – were first used in this genre then continued as an off-spring. Their job was to work as the personification of the author which can make them a manipulator by taking advantage of its close ties also with the reader, or be a guide for the reader to solve the mystery together. Eventually what the narrators of the sensation novel provide is a sequence of well-developed events that embody a secret, and series of sudden revelations to solve the mystery by each time uncovering some fragment of truth from the given evidence. From this point of view, sensation novel actually is not mysterious at all. In several examples given above from different works it can be understood that the narration techniques created by the authors of the genre actually function to blind the reader's eyes.

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