The Sense of Time in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Ghost Stories

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Introduction

In Mary Elizabeth Braddon's ghost stories, ghosts appear at 'odd times' deviating from the time running in our ordinary lives. They do not appear at a particular set of times such as dark midnight or cold wintertime, the time which we conventionally associate their appearance with. Nor do they appear in particular settings and conditions as we can see in traditional gothic fiction, such as on the occasion of someone's confinement in a gothic castle remotely situated from a town, or, during a character's temporal morbidity or delirium. Instead they appear at all hours in the middle of people's daily pursuits, for example, when a housewife is trying to have a rest tired from her regular domestic tasks, or, when a man is on his way home from his work. Ghosts also often appear at some 'memorial' times in ordinary lives, for instance, at exactly the same hour of the time in the past when a certain incident happened before. Moments will be special and memorial when they coincide with the dates and hours when some significant events occurred in the past. The characters in Braddon's ghost stories who either see ghosts or who appear in the figure of a ghost, are all conscious of time to a certain degree; in some cases they are quite obsessive about time, especially with the ordinary 'clock time' of public life.

Braddon herself must have been very conscious of time, considering her job as a writer and an editor, who wrote and published a huge number of novels and stories, regularly working with people who always had to be conscious of deadlines and publishing dates. Not only Braddon but many Victorians came to be fascinated with time after the Industrial Revolution. As we can see from the cases of factory workers, people were often oppressed and controlled by time. In particular, the concept of time in people's minds greatly changed because of the standardization of time, which followed the unification of the railroad system and the mechanization of industrial works. It was also influenced by the rise of interest in science and geology, which infiltrated mathematical concepts of time into the mind of general people. The most influential concept of time will be linear time, which is also associated with clock time. This conception of time changed the way of people's life in terms of its management and control by an exact time-schedule, which I will, first of all, explore in the first section of this paper.

In Braddon's ghost stories, while characters are conscious of public time which is running in their ordinary lives, they also have a nostalgic sense of time, a sense of loss which is perceived personally and deeply rooted in one's experience. We can see this particularly in her later ghost stories. Braddon's early writings in this genre do not show particular concerns about the past. They rather retain a conventional style, particularly, the elements of a mixture of the romance and the gothic. Stories are set up in a foreign and exotic place, without particular attention to the

details of the period. Ghosts represent tenacious feelings of love or hate of the characters, as we can see for example in 'The Cold Embrace' (1860) and 'Eveline's Visitant' (1867). The world these early ghost stories reveal is that of the passion of youth; it is the world of affection and obsession, romantic and purely emotional. After Braddon suffered from a mental and physical breakdown in 1868 because of the death of her mother and sister, her ghost stories changed. They came to show a concern for time, the past and memory. The relationship between her nervous breakdown and her creative imagination in ghost stories has not been fully discussed yet in recent criticism, but during her breakdown she seemed to suffer from ghostly dreams, for example, dreams of a meeting with her dead uncle.[1] It is not unreasonable to say that her experiences in dreams influenced her ghost creation with a keen sense of her personal memory and ideas of the past. Since then, along with the start of her career as editor of and contributor to *Belgravia* in 1868, she started writing ghost stories regularly for middle-class readers, and by the late-Victorian period her ghost stories came to be fully recognized as one of the vehicles to express her ideas on contemporary issues as well as her sensation novels.

It is my contention that Braddon's ghost stories reflect some social strictures and anxiety regarding time in the Victorian period. Ghost stories became one of the most popular genres for middle-class people in the mid-nineteenth century because, first of all, they served as entertainment. However, Braddon wrote ghost stories not only for this purpose but also for expressing social problems and criticism, using ghosts as a metaphor. According to Eve M. Lynch, Braddon in the 1860s, who was quite famous for her sensation novels at that time, was 'agitated to experiment with fiction that considered more pressing social issues, particularly in the problems she saw arising out of Victorian reform policies'.[2] One of the genres she chose was a ghost story, 'a genre ideally suited to adapting a double effect'.[3] That is, using the device of the supernatural, she was able to provide readers with a sense of mystery as well as a clue to her conception of society. For example, as I will demonstrate in this paper, Braddon shows how time governed the Victorian domestic environment and how it suppressed women in terms of both their manner of living and their narrative treatment. They are easily governed by the ruling time in the family house, which resulted from the domination of the modern concept of time in the domestic environment.

Ghosts and time are closely related to each other in terms of narrative. Ghosts are fictionally made by manipulation of time in a narrative. For example, in fictions people can often be ghost-seers when they happen to be there when the bell chimes the exact time, or, when they happen to come to a site earlier than any other person. Ghosts can represent the arbitrariness or fictionality of time, and the contradiction and problems that such fictionality of time can possibly bring on. Therefore, by analyzing the manipulation of time in Braddon's ghost stories, I consider that we can examine the complexities of Victorian concepts of time; moreover, by paying attention to the social issues of class and gender that Braddon represents, we can also have an idea about how Victorian people were influenced, perplexed and sometimes frustrated by the conception of time.

The Sense of Time in the Mid-Victorian Period

The unification and integration of the English national railway system made standardization

necessary to eliminate the time 'lags' that had previously been everywhere in the transitions between different lines. Greenwich Mean Time was introduced as the standard measure for railway traffic as well as shipping, and this became general standard time in England by the end of the nineteenth century.[4] Until its introduction, each town and village had had their own forms of measurement and kept their individual times. People staying in one place did not mind the variation between regions and it was enough for them to know their own local time. However, after travel became relatively easy because of the development of the railway system, they came to be much more aware of exact temporal precision. The railway time-table, which was current in every region as universal and public time, and furthermore, which was precisely demarcated by the hour, minute and second, inevitably pushed travelers to observe the time and to be punctual to the minute. Managing time and sometimes overcoming time as if it were an external agency run by some motive power separate from human beings, which I will explain in the following, continues to form the basis of our contemporary sense of time, which has taken root in our life through the conception of this standardized measurement according to the clock.

The railroad time-table not only made Victorian people aware of the idea that time is ticking away from one minute to the next with exactness and precision, but also meant that time was no longer perceived in nature along with the transition of a day but instead calculated by mechanical and mathematical quantity. According to Wolfgang Schivelbusch, one of the effects that the railway and its steam power produced was 'the annihilation of time and space', whose continuum had traditionally been understood through its association with nature.[5] Before the invention of the railway, space was perceived by passengers of carriages with its geographical features and shapes, and also with the bodily exhaustion and the time duration of the physical process of journeying. Space and time were directly proportional: the farther you went, the more energy was needed and the more time it took. However, locomotive power enabled trains to move so smoothly that passengers ceased to perceive the geographical nature of space. Certainly, there was an immediate reduction, by about two-thirds of the time that people used to spend, to go to the same destination. People came to lose the sense of space because of the loss of the perception of nature, geography, and rhythm that people used to measure it. As for time, too, it became perceived as working stably forever, regardless of natural and geographical transition. The standardized time can keep itself without the socio-cultural environment which used to work as the standard of measurement. In this way, people lost the traditional sense of a time-space continuum, and time became an autonomous entity which runs of itself. It is not only a mechanical agency but also an abstract entity with nothing substantial and actual to define it.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that both railway and clock time came to be identified with an image of linearity, in the same way as 'the natural irregularities of the terrain [...] were replaced by the sharp linearity of the railroad'.[6] While the previous demarcation of time had been one day, which accorded with the transition from sunrise to sunset, the railway time came to mark each single hour and minute. This made people feel that time was 'shrinking' fast and swift, not only because it was measured precisely by the minute but also because people could have a sense of a beginning and an ending at any time whatsoever. For example, in traveling by train, they could complete a certain journey within half a day and then go on to another completely separate destination for the rest of the day. The sense of beginnings and endings occurred within a sharply

contracted time-span, and repetitively as well. Frank Kermode argues that the sound of a clock, tick-tock, is the most basic pattern which exemplifies the 'tendency' of human beings to introduce a structure of the beginning and the end into anything they can think of.[7] To develop the argument of Kermode, being conscious of the demarcation of time in our ordinary life allows us to give a linear, singular and causal order to our way of thinking. People can easily secure the sense of an arrival and a departure, a start and an end, an object and a result, a cause and an effect, by management and manipulation of this clock time. The railway clock time standardized in the Victorian period effected not only the sense of personal time but also people's way of conceptualizing their life and history.

Histories of both the individual and the world were reorganized by this sense of linear time. Each life-narrative is considered to form a progressive and organic growth from birth to death, as we can see, for example, from the development of the *Bildungsroman* in literature and the popularity of autobiographical writings in the nineteenth century. Not only in that genre but in many other forms of the Victorian novel we can find the plots and structures which treat individual lives and society as a whole, 'single', system.[8] Behind this single system of the whole lies the heightened conception of time. To quote Kermode again, it is ' "temporal integration"—our way of bundling together perception of the present, memory of the past, and expectation of the future, in a common organization'.[9] Thus 'time' was no longer a duration that flows naturally in people's minds, but came to be separated as an object to be controlled.

In the Victorian period, time thus came to be treated as an abstract entity. It is measured mechanically, mathematically and quantitatively; it is what is conceived in mind. It also reflects a more general consciousness of a shared public identity. Clock time, in our ordinary life, is for the purpose of synchronizing ourselves with other events and other people, such as for checking the railway time-table schedule or making an appointment to meet someone. The contingency produced by the simultaneity of clock and calendar then becomes important; people can feel that they share the same time simply because the hour hands of their clocks coincide with one another. In other words, people can 'imagine' their connection through 'homogeneous, empty time' running through a society.[10] It might be said that the concept of public time is another way of expressing the time-space continuum, which is able to expand by means of abstraction and imagination. In a sense, time became 'subjective'. At the very least, Victorian people came to realize that 'time' will change; that it can shrink and expand like a space. It is more reasonably grasped and assumed by quantitative measurement.

This conception of time was mostly established by the late nineteenth century. However, at the same time, especially towards the end of the period, a certain reaction towards this influential sense of time emerged. First of all, such a mathematical time could easily result in the loss of a sense of 'reality'. To give another example of the railway from Schivelbusch, one of the effects of the quick and fast train is that people lost contact with the landscape.[11] The particulars are gone out of the sight because of the velocity of the train, and what one can see and mostly pay attention to is the passing of a number of telegraph poles. It can be further argued that a similar mental process operated with other forms of temporal demarcation. Departure and arrival are more important things in railway transportation than in other slow-moving forms of transportation or walking, and thus the outside reality tends to escape from one's eyes. Moreover,

even when people arrive at their destination, it is difficult to have any sense of standing 'there'. This is because they move from one place to another at such speed that they feel that the space between has been destroyed or the two places have merged into an immediate vicinity. It becomes difficult to have a right sense of grasping what is reality. The more 'subjective' time became, the more disoriented and confused people felt in bringing their senses down to earth.

It will be interesting to consider what degree of loss and anxiety this 'subjective' time may have brought to the Victorians. For example, the conception of linear and demarcated time with a sense of a beginning and end, more or less, affected the idea of mortality. Along with the tendency towards secularization in the mid-Victorian period, individual lives came to be treated with an increased feeling of transience and evanescence. To consider the immense elongation of natural history, it is impossible to remember and understand the whole number of small records and events, or of species and individuals, which are destined to be totally forgotten. As Gillian Beer says, '[t]he Victorians were faced [...] with the problem of "storying" events prior to the human and regardless of the human—and of making sense of the human story in this enlarged field'.[12] From these two examples of the changing perceptions of temporality, in the railway and in the idea of human history, we can understand that there was a certain widespread anxiety for the loss of 'reality'. Thus the dominance of public time brought a certain sense of loss of private time, which is not only personal but also related to a continuous undercurrent in what may be termed a collective consciousness.

Private time is, in other words, a sense of stagnation about one's self, which cannot be incorporated into the advancement of public time or history. However, it cannot be wholly grasped, since it is concerned with a deeper level of mind and unconsciousness, which cannot be understood by intelligence and reason. It always brings with it a sense of gap and emptiness. Private time might also be associated with the Victorian sentiment of nostalgia, which became a prevalent mood in the late nineteenth century, produced by the sense of distance and disjunction of the past, that events and individuals cannot be retrieved by records or writing. Nostalgia 'conjure[s] up a past defined not by the painstaking investigation of the historical record but by positing a series of absences, of negatives'.[13] It is a kind of late reaction against the high degree of integration and unification about time, history and fiction in the nineteenth century. This new sense of nostalgia is described and represented in many novels from the mid-nineteenth century; to name a few of the authors, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot. Especially in ghost novels or Gothic fiction, which represent one's inner and hidden psychology by using such devices as ghosts and the supernatural, we can also find many examples in which ghosts reveal a certain sense of loss unconsciously hidden in the mind of the characters. Among them, a series of M. E. Braddon's ghost stories, which expresses 'the spirit of social reform'[14] more than the horror of the supernatural, represents the people's sense of time and history in a critical way. In particular, her ghost stories represent how people's minds tend towards the past privately. Sometimes the characters seek after the past only to live in a dreamy world, giving up their actual, public life; sometimes they are too obsessed with the past with a full conviction that they can retrieve it.

Furthermore, some of Braddon's ghost stories are successful in representing how people's consciousness of public clock time comes to produce a sense of remembrance and nostalgia.

'John Granger'(1870) is one of the first examples of this. John Granger, 'a stalwart young fellow of the yeoman class',[15] has to give up marrying his childhood friend, Susan, and decides to leave his hometown for America, because he cannot endure living in the same place now that his dream is broken. He promises to write to her after he has settled in America, and departs for London by taking the latest train which was to leave the station at half-past nine, bringing with him all the money he had. However, he writes no letters to Susan, and instead of his letter she sees his ghost three times in her house. Never being able to forget John and being worried about him all the time, she asks her newly-wed husband to investigate the matter. Finally her husband solves the mystery and it transpires that John was actually murdered on his way to the station by his wicked friend, Stephen Price.

Apparently, this is a story about the lasting friendship across the boundary of life, which eventually helps to expose evil. However, what is interesting about the narrative is that this friendship, connecting this world and the other world, is a metaphor representing the object and mechanism of nostalgia. The railway clock time that passes as an undercurrent in this narrative plays an important role in creating a sense of nostalgia. One of the reasons that John cannot marry Susan is that he is actually governed by a time which he cannot manage and control. He lost the last chance of recovering his relationship with Susan because he had to catch the last train: 'His fate trembled upon a breath in that moment. A word from Susan, and he would have stayed. [...] It was too late now for any change.'[16] He set up this final train of the day because 'he had been seized with a fancy for prolonging his time to the uttermost',[17] but, in reality, he could not prolong his own time because he was caught up with the fixed railway time. At the last moment, he realized with a sense of regret that he should stay: 'I did not know how much I loved this place and all belonging to it.'[18] However, his life went on and he had to catch his train. In this narrative, the railway clock time represents life itself. Time of life is as linear and progressive as the route of the railway. In order to follow this, his own affection for the place and its belongings has to be dismissed and distanced. His inner feelings and sense of identity hidden in the deep layer of the mind cannot be revealed and have to stay in the realm of the unconscious. However, we can say that it is the distance and estrangement produced by the railway clock time that in turn produces the inclination to look back on the past with a sense of regret.

John is an orphan; his identity is based on nothing except his longing for belonging to the place of Susan. When he said to Susan, 'I will come back [...] and ask for a corner beside your hearth',[19] he not only longs for a domestic life but also yearns for his lost identity. However, this can only be established by his sense of delayed recognition of his affection and sentiment towards the place, that is, by an attachment to the past with an understanding of the impossibility of retrieval. If John were to be alive, he would relate his narrative with an affirmed sense of nostalgia and of where his identity is rooted; however, because he was murdered, he can only show himself as a ghost. However, this ghost is the remains of the 'place' of his own identity. John kept his words literally and 'actualized' his yearning by appearing as a ghost repetitively. This repetition belongs to a different sense of time from linear clock time. John could not catch his train but stayed there as a ghost, which belongs to the world of recurrence. The ghost is, on one hand, a signifier of his death and absence, a product and result of his being sacrificed and murdered by the observation of the railway clock time; on the other hand, it is a trace of his

identity, in other words, a trace of his subjectivity, which was able to be 'embodied' by means of freezing and preserving the moment of his past and making it recalled by its repetitive appearance. He kept both 'his own time and space' by becoming a ghost. In this way, the ghost of John represents the object and the mechanism of nostalgia, while showing us the mutual relationships between Susan and him, this world and that world, and the present and the past.

In Braddon's ghost stories, it frequently happens that orphans become the main characters. For them, the act of nostalgia is mostly equivalent to the act of confirmation of their identity. Their yearning is to imagine the 'space' which will get rid of the actual differences or absences of their real environment in order to secure their stability as if it were their present situation. Ann Colley maintains that nostalgia is 'a genuine impulse to discover refuge from the vicissitudes of time and to nestle in an environment where one's being is confirmed rather than always doubted. It is a way of closing the question of identity'.[20] 'My Dream'(1889) is also a story in which the narrator Elizabeth relates the past in her youth in a nostalgic way. In her act of narrating her own story, she seeks to redefine her identity by tracing back her happiest memory. To tell her brief story, an orphan Bessie, who is engaged to Gilbert Strangford, whose family keeps their old-fashioned house and tradition for a long time, stays at his home for a while, three weeks before their marriage. One day her fiancé decided to go hunting despite his reluctance to go outside the house, saying 'I have new duties, and home has new charms'.[21] That night Bessie had a dream in which four men carry the body of a dead man coming slowly towards her. Thinking that it was his future husband, she tried to entreat him to stop going hunting before his leaving, but it was too late. Later his ghost appears and she knows that he was dead and that her happiest days came to an end.

In this narrative, Bessie narrates the golden days spent with her fiancé. At the same time, she also tells us about her unfinished process to secure 'her own time and place'. Her tendency of dreaming in her life suggests the unstableness in her position and identity. She frequently has a dream in which 'the image of [her] second self was always present in some form or other; sometimes in the wildest entanglements of events and circumstances, in the strangest combination of people and places'.[22] Moreover, there is a hidden desire and struggle to occupy the family and domestic space. Bessie has a secret desire to have her own corner in the house so that she can arrange everything 'without fear of reproof from the mistress of the house'.[23] Furthermore, while Gilbert was absent, she is ready to call his mother as 'mother': 'I [...] rushed to the door screaming, "Mother, mother!" It was the name by which I had learnt to call *his* mother.'[24] In Braddon's ghost stories, a domestic place often becomes a topos of nostalgia, as we can see John's yearning for 'a corner of the hearth' in 'John Granger'. However, the domestic place in Braddon's ghost stories cannot be quite real. It often happens that the characters can only occupy a shadowy corner of the 'place', where ghosts are likely to haunt around, or, it also happens that the 'place' can only be represented as dreamy and unfulfilled.

In a similar way as nostalgia works to create a 'space' of identity, it also works for the creation of a purified moment. When Bessie cursed the time lag caused by her watch, which ended up with her missing the chance to persuade her fiancé not to go out hunting, she thought that it was this time lag that brought the fatal moment in her life. Bessie did not know that her watch was half-an-hour slow: 'He was gone—gone beyond my power to recall him. [...] [T]hat

accursed watch had deceived me. [...] I dashed the poor little Geneva watch down upon the floor, shivering the glass to atoms, and marking the enamelled case with a bruise which it bears to this day; a watch that never went again, and which has lain in the secret drawer of my dressing-case for thirty years—witness of my life's sorrow.'[25] This quotation shows how Bessie's life relied on her watch and how her consciousness of clock time produced her sense of nostalgia. In the same way as the railway time, the demarcated time of the clock creates a sense of finality, a sense of impossibility of retrieval, and thus a sense of the preciousness of the moment. In narrating her story, the sorrow of her whole life converges on one moment. Furthermore, the mechanism to think of that as 'the eternal moment' is based on one's impulse to create the 'moment' of time which has no difference and incongruity. Bessie blamed the fact that there were differences and incongruity in measure of time when she realized that the hour of half-past-five might be the hour of six o'clock. In our ordinary life influenced by the homogeneous clock time, we tend to forget the possible lags of time everywhere and dismiss the assumption that time is a product of fiction. However, what Bessie seeks to do is to sublimate time and lose the incongruity existing in the fiction of time. In other words, it might be said that Bessie seeks to establish her private moment in her life, which is out of the public clock time. A private time is thus produced by the consciousness of clock time and also by the sense of regaining the lost time by means of 'creating' it in another time framework. Nostalgia is an act of securing the place and moment, which works in reaction against the reality of changeable environment and of the progressive time movement. In this way, ghosts of Braddon represent the purified moment of time in the act of nostalgia.

Women and Time in Braddon's Ghost Stories

One of the most distinctive features of Braddon's ghost stories is that many 'career' women appear as the main characters. They are engaged in a wide range of professions, from stage performers to domestic workers, and include an actress, an animal trainer, a governess, a maid-servant, and a lady's companion. There are also the roles of domestic wives, widows and dowagers. Furthermore, it is often the case that these women happen to be orphans, who have to seek a professional job to earn money, or, to marry as soon as possible in order to get a stable environment to live in. Female orphans in Braddon's stories are crucial insofar as they are free to move, crossing places and classes. To give a couple of examples, Sarah in 'At Chrighton Abbey'(1871) can go around several foreign countries without any restraint from her family, and she can form connections with many people of higher rank than she could have expected in her hometown. Barbara in 'Her Last Appearance'(1876) can also have social contact with many more people through her acting on stage, though she is confined to her house in her everyday life because of her violent husband. Bella in 'Good Lady Ducayne'(1896) is able to get a job as a lady's companion only because of her lack of education and accomplishments; that is, she is such an exception to be qualified that it is actually easier for her to jump across the classes. Women in Braddon's ghost stories can sometimes obtain a better environment than the majority of middle-class women of the period. However, their situations also mean that because they enter the edge or margin of the world of different classes and communities, they always have to adjust their

own standards and rules to the others', or more frequently, they have to be totally governed by those of the others. In particular, they are subjected to the time management of others. It was in the mid-Victorian period that the consciousness of time-schedules which had been structured by industrialism and the railway time-table entered the domestic environment. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have explained the situation at that time: 'Both the desire for efficiency and moral purpose had elevated the ordering and separation of time, tasks and space to a central place in middle-class life. This was true for women as for men, for domestic affairs and housing space as for business.'[26] What can be most influential to women, in particular 'dependent' women, is the rule of time, the time-schedule which controls and unites the whole family.

According to Davidoff and Hall, the time of the whole family was determined by the master of the house, and the master's needs decided the daily time-schedule of the wife, in general. The time of domestic chores performed by servants is then defined by that of domestic wives, and the time of maids (from a parlour maid to a scullery maid) is dependent on that of the head of the servants. There seems to be a certain hierarchy in the definition of time in Victorian home, where people of several classes get together. A woman working as 'a dependent' in a family whose position is always on the margin, is inevitably ruled by and subjected to the governing time there. In Braddon's ghost stories, these women characters are conscious of time and also suffer from the tension existing between the classes. As orphans and dependents without a stable identity, their longing for the definition of their position is crucial, but they end up by confronting its conflicts. Their 'time and space' has to be defined by the other existing classes, and in some cases it ends up with its suspension. That is, they sometimes have to die and can only reappear as ghosts. In what follows, I will explore the relation between women and time in Braddon's ghost narratives, and furthermore, I will examine how the ghosts and visions of these women characters function in the story of women's life.

From the story 'The Shadow in the Corner'(1879), we can get a hint of the domestic time management, and the difference of time among classes in one household. This story also suggests that the tragedy of a girl happened because of her subjection to the ruling time there. Maria, a girl who recently became orphaned because of the death of her father working as a small tradesman, gets employed as a servant maid, a maid of all work, in one family. The family consists of only three members, Michael Bascom, a retired professor, and Daniel Skegg and his wife, elderly servants. Michael is a 'fanatic' scholar of natural science and locks himself up in his study, where all his books are 'stacked in blocks upon his spacious writing-table'.[27] Daniel and his wife live in the north end of the house, where 'she [=his wife] ruled over the solitude of a kitchen, that looked like a cathedral, and numerous offices of the scullery, larder and pantry class, where she carried on a perpetual warfare with spiders and beetles'.[28] Both the master and the servants have their own territory in one household. Maria's work is, in a sense, to bridge the gap between the master and the servants. She has to move from the north end to her master's study, from downstairs to upstairs, 'trotting up and down these everlasting passages'.[29] Her work consists of 'the scouring of pots and pans'[30] in the kitchen and dusting all the books in her master's study. Her own room is in the attic at the north end, which is said to be haunted by one of the ancestors of the Bascoms, Anthony Bascom. Maria actually sees a ghost there every night and she is frightened to death. Recognizing her worries, Michael once sleeps in the attic room by

himself to persuade her not to believe in the supernatural. On that night he had exactly the same experiences as she had. However, attributing it to the product of his indigestion or mere fancy, he tells Daniel that he did not see anything. Daniel, getting upset with Maria's troublesome behaviour, tells her to be ashamed of herself and keeps her sleeping in the same room. Eventually Maria goes 'mad' and hangs herself exactly in the same way as the ghost she saw did, and also in the same place, at a corner of the room.

The jury's verdict on Maria's death is 'temporary insanity',[31] but certainly there are many implicated and alternative motivations in the narrative: a hard physical labour inappropriate for her education, a lack of sympathy from Michael and the Skeggs, the morbidity arising from the recent loss of her father, her literary imagination because of her good education and her own religious faith in what she sees. However, there is no decisive cause, because she hangs herself remaining silent about her own experiences. In this narrative there is a lack of her own voice, or sense of space and time. Since it is one of her duties to make herself invisible so as not to disturb her master and the Skeggs, she always has to be in the corner; living at the corner of the house, sitting at the corner of the kitchen, dying at the corner of the attic. Her time is also limited. Her private time is considered to be quite little because of her all-day working: 'Whatever work she did there was done early in the morning, before the scholar's breakfast.'[32] The maid's work starts long before her master's working time, and continues afterwards. Even during the daytime her labours have to be out of sight, since no interference with her master is permitted: '[T]he girl withdrew, drifting out of the room as noiselessly as a flower blown across the threshold. [...] He saw her no more about his rooms.'[33] Maria's own private time is pushed to the edge of the day, because of the existing ruling time determined by her master and his work.

In the Victorian middle-class household, in general, the time of servants is decided by the routine and rituals of the family. Family members were supposed to be engaged in household management of financial works of buying and selling; or, in the cultural works of interior decoration, charity and needlework. Roughly speaking, men were engaged in the former work and women in the latter. On the other hand, servants were supposed to be engaged in productive things such as making food. There was a clear distinction in the kinds of engagement between family and servants, as we can understand from the new segregation in Victorian houses between the upstairs parlour and the kitchen at the basement. The middle-class habit of making an exact time-schedule is, first of all, for the purpose of organizing these activities of management and culture of the family members. Time for prayer, dinner, needlework, shopping and visiting neighbours and the poor, were all allocated in the daily time-schedule and followed by the family. Furthermore, this schedule also worked for the purpose of managing and manipulating domestic servants. As Davidoff and Hall and some other critics have shown, around mid-century, their management became one of the most important tasks of the mistress of the family. Hiring and firing servants was still carried out by the male master, but the management and surveillance of servants was added to the task of the mistress who was mostly engaged in the cultural activities. Managing the time of servants was especially important, as well as supervising both their everyday work and their outer social activities: 'One of the latent consequences of order and strict routine [for servants] was to prevent servants slipping away at odd hours.'[34] Time manipulation of the middle-class family thus changed the working conditions and hours of

servants. Furthermore, Davidoff and Hall maintain that one of the reasons 'why [...] middle-class families [strove] to include servants in their well-regulated homes' is to sustain their time for their own activities: 'If wives and daughters had had to scrub the floors, wash all the household linen, produce meals for large households as well as care for five or six young children, they would have become exhausted drudges, incapable of much cultural or religious activity. [...] Servants resident in the home provided round the clock help and fitted the familial model.'[35] It is true that the Victorian family managed all the members of the house by time manipulation, but it is also true that it was servants that enabled the family time-schedule to work and actually sustained the whole domestic mechanism of the home.

Maria also supports her master's time by working at 'invisible' hours, before and after his meals and in spare moments of his work. Consequently, her private time can only be found 'at odd hours'. It is located very early in the morning, in the short transition period between night and morning. However, it is at this time that she has to suffer the appearance of the ghost: '[J]ust at daybreak—it begins to be light a little after six—I woke suddenly [...] and knew that there was something dreadful in the room. [...] In the corner, between the fireplace and the wardrobe, I saw a shadow—a dim, shapeless shadow— '.[36] The ghost appears when she is temporarily free from her tedious and mechanical tasks. Her vision might result from the physical exhaustion caused by her hard labours, but it is also suggested that she is under the control of this mechanical time-schedule. Her suicide actually results from the fact that Maria and Michael never met each other during the day; he had already decided to tell her to move out of the attic, but he just did not meet her to tell this. Maria's death is thus caused by disparity of time between the master and the servant. The time of servants and of their master never overlaps; the servants' time is always subordinate or adjacent to the master's.

This disparity and difference of time within a household can be seen in other Braddon's ghost stories. In the story 'At Chrigton Abbey', there is a description explaining that seasonal festivals are also held separately: 'It was the day after the great anniversary—a very quiet day for the guests and family at the Abbey, but a grand occasion for the servants, who were to have their annual ball in the evening—a ball to which all the humbler class of tenantry were invited.[...] It was a thorough wet day—a depressing kind of day for anyone whose spirits are liable to be affected by the weather.'[37] The time and place of servants in Braddon's ghost stories are always indicated by coldness and dampness, in contrast to the warm hearth of families. Maria in 'The Shadow in the Corner' also works as a shadow and disappears as a ghost into the shadows. The ghosts of Braddon thus often represent the time of 'dependent' people, who are always in the shadowy corner. They stand on the margin of the household; nonetheless, they actually support the whole mechanism of the time running in the house.

Maria is considered to be a typical victim of the Victorian hierarchy. Michael Bascom represents the essential character of the Victorian dominant male: a rational materialist with knowledge of science and power of reason. Lowell Frye maintains that Michael represents 'a reasoning machine',[38] 'a single-minded devotion to a reductive, even mechanical version of [reason]', which 'figures as a weapon by which men dismiss and often destroy women'.[39] Maria, who suffers from supernatural terror, is one of his best 'object[s] of study',[40] to be watched, analyzed and finally 'conquered by rational treatment'.[41] His detached observation and self-

absorption creates her tragedy. It is true, as Frye maintains, that Maria is subjected to the discipline of 'scientific' reason dominated by a male-master; however, it is also noteworthy that she is actually a victim of another agency, which belongs to the realm of gossips, legends and the supernatural. This is associated with servants, who like gossiping behind the back of the family and who have a persistent belief in ancient legends. It is obvious that Maria's death is also caused by the control of the Skeggs, who believe in the ghost story more than any other people. Daniel Skegg hired Maria because he thought that he could get rid of the ghost gossip by having a young girl stay in the attic, but he himself tried not to face up to it, for fear that it should cause trouble. Therefore, Maria is actually subjected to the two 'masters', Michael and Skegg. Servants occupying a lower position in the household are considered to be vulnerable to the hierarchical and patriarchal system, but it is also possible that servants could become a threatening other to the upper class. In the mid-Victorian period servants actually became recognized as one of the potential counterforces against the middle-class family. For example, the Victorian middle-class family exhibits a great deal of anxiety about the spying and eavesdropping of servants, because this might reveal domestic secrets to the public and destroy the family.[42] As I have also tried to show above with the example of the significance of the servants for the maintenance of family time, the relation between masters and servants in the Victorian period cannot be treated according to a simple hierarchy.

Maria is thus in suspension between the two dominant systems. Their difference can be clarified in terms of differences in the conception of time. Here is a quotation from the comic conversation between Michael and Daniel Skegg:

> '[M]y missus must have a girl! [...] She's getting weak on her legs, poor soul. We've none of us grown younger in the last twenty years.'
>
> 'Twenty years!' echoed Michael Basom scornfully. 'What is twenty years in the formation of a strata—what even in the growth of an oak—the cooling of a volcano!'
>
> 'Not much, perhaps, but it's apt to tell upon the bones of a human being.'
>
> 'The manganese straining to be seen upon some skulls would certainly indicate—' began the scientist dreamily.
>
> 'I wish my bones were only as free from rheumatics as they were twenty years ago,' pursued Daniel testily; 'and then, perhaps, I should make light of twenty years.'[43]

Michael's sense of time is conceptual and intellectual: time measured quantitatively and mathematically. This is the time 'discovered' in the nineteenth century along with the development of natural science; the exploration of geology and anthropology revealed the 'triviality' of the span of time and existence of human beings. 'Twenty years' is nothing compared to the 'progressive' time of nature and the world. Norton Wise paraphrases this new sense of time as 'the "discovery of time", the linear time that became synonymous with history'.[44] Conversely, Daniel's sense of time is traditional, measured as it is according to the transitions of nature perceived by each human being. In contrast to the idea that time can be manipulated and controlled by reason and intelligence, Daniel thinks that it can only be perceived physically; time is not progressive but gradually declining and becoming slower in the

same way as the human body. It is also the time that will be shared and realized naturally by everyone, as everyone will experience age. It is especially the time for people who are engaged in physical labour, compared to the time that can be measured only by intellectuals.

In Braddon's story, both the old and the new conceptions of time are criticized. The linear, scientific time is theoretically progressive, but in reality it ends up with the sterile repetition, as we can see from the life of Michael Bascom. For him, the entire universe that he pursues and all the life he forms is 'a great machine, governed by inexorable laws'[45]; however, what we can find there is nothing but the repetition of ghosts. His mechanical and machine-like routine suppresses a girl's life and produces another ghost duplicating the wasted life of Anthony Bascom, the ancestor of Micahel, who committed suicide long time ago before Maria. In a similar way, the old and traditional sense of time is also represented as another sterile repetition. It should be 'natural' time that can be perceived physically by everyone, but at the same time it is quite easy to stagnate and end up with mere repetition with nothing to change. As we can see from Daniel's belief in the village gossip and the legend of the ghost, he is easily influenced by the shared sense of time by the community. According to Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, gossip in Victorian novels sometimes represents 'a form of tribalism, a way of constructing history without regard to veracity'.[46] Gossip represents a shared sense of time on history, often entailed with unverifiable and supernatural matters, among the local members of a certain community. It sometimes 'preserves the group from confusion, doubt, even choice, but at the cost of truth and even vitality'.[47] Traditional time is thus opposite to scientific time; often formed by habits, it flows so 'naturally' and 'physically' without a critical spirit in the individual mind because it is also shared by the group; Daniel exclaims, 'I don't know about proof; but the country people believe it as firmly as they believe their Gospel'.[48] Thus the story of the ghost is repeated, inherited and further infiltrated into Maria's mind as well. In this way, she is caught up in the opposition between old and new time existing together in the same house. She is a victim of the two ruling times there. It can be also said that Maria is not only the victim of the hierarchical system of the house but also the victim of the existing contradiction, which was produced by the introduction of the modern frame of time into the middle-class household.

In some other of Braddon's ghost stories, we can find a similar opposition between old and new time, natural time and mechanical time, and it is always represented as an opposition between servants and masters. Furthermore, there is always a 'dependent' woman like Maria caught between the conflicts that it produces. In 'At Chrighton Abbey', Sarah, who is an orphan and governess, is the only member in the household there that can associate freely with both the master and the servant. The Chrighton family has suffered long from successive misfortunes, which are about the death of the heirs before their marriage. They have also been accompanied by rumours of a ghost, which have been told and spread out by servants. The Chrighton family tries to cut off this abominable legend by marrying the eldest son to Julia, who has a radical mind which does not fit quite well into traditional sensibility of the family. While the family wants to maintain 'some friendly link'[49] between themselves and the servants, the middle-class and the working-class, Julia wants a total segregation between the classes. Neither does she believe any ghost stories, which derive from the gossip and belief of servants. Even after a new mind-set was thus introduced, the Chrighton family cannot cut themselves off from this old gossip, which has

been kept secret from the public by the housekeeper, Mrs Marjorum, who has been 'a fixture at the Abbey in time of the present Squire's father'.[50] Thus the worlds of reason and unreason, radicalism and archaism, exist at the same time in this household. However, neither of them can prevent another misfortune; Julia failed in preventing her fiancé from going out hunting, which eventually caused his death, and Mrs Marjorum also kept silent about the warning of his death, which was received by Sarah beforehand. The successive loss of the heirs suggests the gradual decline of the Chrightons; Sarah says at the end, 'I have little more to tell. Life goes on, though hearts are broken. Upon Chrighton Abbey there came a dreary time of desolation'.[51] Sarah, who comes back to the Abbey in order to confirm that she is one of the members of the Chrighton family, has only to recognize that there is no home for her.

A similar opposition or pattern of conflicts between servants and masters can also be found in 'The Face in the Glass'(1880). Mr Monroe, who became the new owner of the house of the Monroe, is quite an active, scientific, and modernized person. He can also enjoy 'ghost-hunting' with his wife in his old manor house, which had long been uninhabited before he came except for the housekeeper, Betty, and the other servants. In the house there are many doors which cannot be opened unless they use the keys that Betty has kept; most doors are closed as if the house rejected its new owner. One day he opens one of these rooms with Betty's key and finds his wife's face reflected on the mirror. According to Betty and her ghost legend, this is a warning of her death. Eventually what she said is realized and his wife has to die. Betty concludes at the end: 'No one tempts Providence now by going to look in the glass there; for the ghost can only be seen by a Monroe, and it would be very dreadful [...] if they saw their own faces looking at them out of the glass.'[52] As long as Betty repeats this ghost story, the house will be hers, because no Monroes will dare to see the mirror and open every door. 'The Face in the Glass' obviously presents the tension between the master and the servant over the power of governing and owning the house. However, what is a more significant thing to be noticed is the fact that the victim is again the woman. A housewife, Mrs Monroe, who is a stranger and outsider to the house and Monroe family, cannot find herself in her husband's house after all. She is not related to the power conflict between the new and the old inhabitants in the household; nonetheless, she has to die. Maria, Sarah, and Mrs Monroe, none of them can find themselves in the house and have to disappear from it as a ghost, or, to a ghostly existence, eventually. Therefore, what is demonstrated in Braddon's stories is not simply social conflicts between the classes; what is suggested here is that there is a large gap or contradiction within the whole framework of time that was discovered and redefined in the Victorian period. Women in particular have to sacrifice themselves within this framework because it cannot embrace their individual lives.

Recent criticism dealing with conceptions of time in the Victorian period has tended to argue in terms of gender. Time was gendered at that time: the new, linear, progressive and scientific time was associated with masculinity, and the old, circular, retrogressive and primitive time was associated with femininity. According to Wise, in the nineteenth century, workers, children and the crowd were regarded as holding a primitive, feminine character; 'both workers and their time were feminized', with the image of 'eternal repetition' of the mass 'without individual wills of the power to reflect or resist'.[53] What this Victorian gender distinction means is that the linear and mechanical time produced by industrialization not only replaced the traditional idea of time

but also redefined this old time by categorizing it as something 'feminine' and therefore 'retrogressive'. In the ghost stories of Braddon I argued above, however, this gender distinction cannot be entirely applied to the two opposing times of the middle-class family. First, the traditional time is not associated with women or femininity, though it is represented in relation to servants and working-class people. Furthermore, the conventional notion held by servants is represented as another threatening and suppressing agency that can be equally opposed to the time of masters. Its system of repetition by gossip and rumours reflects the 'reality' that cannot be wholly grasped by the intellectual time manipulation, and furthermore, it almost nullifies the scientific time by the reappearance of the ghost and the recurrence of past events. However, this traditional and circular time, which was shared by the community, cannot stand as a 'history' without sacrificing the life of an individual woman. As we can see from these three stories of Braddon, this tribal and monolithic time marginalizes the individual who cannot share the same sense of time in the community.

In a sense, these two ruling times reflect their own shadowy doubles of each other. Each time cannot work as a history without excluding the life of an individual. This reveals the ideological function of the conception of time in the Victorian period. Patricia Murphy explains how time can work as an ideological tool: '[A] culture's construction of time offers a means of demonstrating difference, whether measured by sex, socioeconomic status, or racial origin. Time thus becomes an "instrument of power" [...] and underscores the distance between an individual identified with modernity and a lesser "mirror image" associated with archaism.'[54] However, each difference and category demonstrated by such a construction of time is actually a 'mirror image' of each other that works within the same framework. Both old and new time brought the definition and segregation by which people can be classified. Consequently, an individual who cannot belong anywhere has to be excluded.

According to Ermarth, the marginal individual in the Victorian period was nearly always a woman, especially one within the house: a married woman, mother, housewife, governess and lady companion. 'Home is where the fault-line is',[55] explains Ermarth; home is the place where the private and the public are confronted with each other inside and where contradiction and tension can be found. In particular, a contradiction is inherent in 'the insistence on the patriarchal, hierarchical organization of domesticity quite in opposition to the increasingly democratic and horizontal organization of public life. Women themselves become the break-point between the one system and the other, with predictable consequences for their health and longevity'.[56] Ermarth refers to the social movement of women's equality in public and the persistent hierarchical system remaining in the middle-class private household. Women cannot withstand the hierarchical system inside the home, but cannot even get outside of it because the public law outside is basically governed by the system of market and competition, which still applied only to men and was against the value of each individual woman. In terms of time, as I have tried to demonstrate above, the traditional and modern time coexisted in the same house, and a woman has to be sacrificed in suspension between them. The linear time, which is most easily recognized as the mechanical time-schedule, deprives a woman of her private time and space. At the same time, the circular time, which can be represented as the repetitive story of gossip and rumor, deprives a woman of any chance of a real voice. There is no chance to give the

truth of her own life to the public, because gossip needs endless repetition without doubt and choice. The three ghost stories of Braddon reveal such an ambivalent and dangerous position for a 'dependent' woman, who is caught between both systems of time. Each woman seems to have her own story. Maria's sorrow and depression is sometimes expressed when she sees the sea, 'where the land melted into water'[57]; but she cannot describe her own anxiety, except in phrases like 'a dim, shapeless shadow—'.[58] Mrs Monroe's sorrow over the loss of her twin sister, her fear of death, and her desire for her husband, is not described in the narrative, because she is deprived of any of her voice from the moment her husband sees her face in the mirror. Sarah, who is a narrator of the story, pretends to be a cool observer with reason and calmness, and she cannot tell her own sorrow except by recounting the experience of the tragedy of the other family and thus sharing her grief with them. Their own private feelings and sorrows are dispersed into the figures of ghosts, another ghost story and legend. In this way, women's private feelings cannot be expressed; their own real 'time' cannot be found except in figures of ghost in Braddon's ghost stories. Women's real 'time' might be only found out of the ideological framework, that is, in an ahistorical or atemporal framework. Their identity cannot be found anywhere in this existing segregation of the classes.

Conclusion

The sense of linear clock time thus had a great influence on Victorian people's minds and ideas. It affected the way people conceptualize the past, that is, the idea of history and personal memory. It also entered the domestic environment and influenced people's everyday lives, providing a time-bounded framework to the ordinary household. This time-frame, in a sense, resulted in a 'discovery' of personal and private time which cannot be included in this framework. Nostalgia, a private and sentimental inclination towards one's past, is produced by the clock time which is already internalized in people's mental processes. However, its impulse is grounded on securing one's own private time and space, and its orientation further tends to the fictional creation of that private time and space in another framework. Victorian women, who can be regarded as representative of people who are 'dispossessed' of their space, time and voice, seek their own 'privacy' in their own way. They cannot be included in the Victorian distinction and norm of the categorization of the private and the public. Their own time is always in suspension, out of any framework of time and space that a Victorian authorial system imposed on them.

Notes

[1] Jennifer Carnell, *The Literary Lives of Mary Elizabeth Braddon: A Study of Her Life and Work* (Hastings: The Sensation Press, 2000), p. 181.

[2] Eve M. Lynch, 'Spectral Politics: the Victorian Ghost Story and the Domestic Servant', in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. by Nicola Bown, Carloyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 67-86 (p. 71).

[3] Lynch, p. 73.

[4] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986), p. 44.

[5] Schivelbusch, p. 10.

[6] Schivelbusch, p. 23.

[7] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 45.

[8] Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *The English Novel in History: 1840-1895* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 118.

[9] Kermode, p. 46.

[10] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 30.

[11] Schivelbusch, pp. 36-7.

[12] Gillian Beer, *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative from Woolf to Sidney* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 21.

[13] Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, 'The Dimensions of Nostalgia', in *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, ed. by Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 1-17 (p. 8).

[14] Lynch, p. 71

[15] Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *The Cold Embrace and Other Ghost Stories*, ed. by Richard Dalby (Ashcroft: Ash-Tree Press, 2000), p. 55.

[16] Braddon, p. 62.

[17] Braddon, p. 61.

[18] Braddon, p. 62.

[19] Braddon, p. 62.

[20] Ann C. Colley, *Nostalgia and Recollection in Victorian Culture* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), p. 77.

[21] Braddon, p. 196.

[22] Braddon, p. 194.

[23] Braddon, p. 197.

[24] Braddon, p. 203.

[25] Braddon, p. 199.

[26] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, Revised edition (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 358-59.

[27] Braddon, p. 136.

[28] Braddon, p. 135.

[29] Braddon, p. 134.

[30] Braddon, p. 137.

[31] Braddon, p. 148.

[32] Braddon, p. 137.

[33] Braddon, p. 137.

[34] Davidoff and Hall, p. 389.

[35] Davidoff and Hall, pp. 393-94.

[36] Braddon, pp. 138-39.

[37] Braddon, p. 82.

[38] Lowell T. Frye, 'The Ghost Story and the Subjection of Women: The Example of Amelia Edwards, M. E. Braddon, and E. Nesbit', *Victorian Institute Journal*, 26 (1998), 167-209 (p. 173).

[39] Frye, p. 175.

[40] Frye, p. 185.

[41] Braddon, p. 142.

[42] Brian W. McCuskey, 'The Kitchen Police: Servant Surveillance and Middle-class Transgression', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 28 (2000), 359-75 (p. 361).

[43] Braddon, p. 134.

[44] Norton M. Wise, 'Time Discovered and Time Gendered in Victorian Science and Culture', in *From Energy to Information: Representation in Science and Technology, Art, and Literature*, ed. by Bruce Clarke and Linda Dalrymple Henderson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 39-58 (p. 41).

[45] Braddon, p. 142.

[46] Ermarth, p. 174.

[47] Ermarth, p. 175.

[48] Braddon, p. 135.

[49] Braddon, p. 81.

[50] Braddon, p. 74.

[51] Braddon, p. 95.

[52] Braddon, p. 158.

[53] Wise, p. 47.

[54] Patricia Murphy, *Time is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), p. 28.

[55] Ermarth, p. 183.

[56] Ermarth, p. 199.

[57] Braddon, p. 142.

[58] Braddon, p. 139.

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