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Proceeding:

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**WOMEN'S IDENTITY CHANGES IN MANGUNWIJAYA'S *DURGA/UMAYI*
AND MARY ELIZABETH BRADDON'S *LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET*:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH A SOCIOLOGICAL TOUCH**

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to compare the identity changes of the female main characters in Mangunwijaya's *Durga/Umayi* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* particularly using Taine's concepts of "race/nation, milieu/surroundings, and moment/epoch" in the feminist criticism perspective. The results indicate that although both female protagonists change their identities several times proving that identity is not static, the underlying motivations are different revealing contrastive characters. The identity changes also reveal different paths of life, from small city in the country to big cities overseas and from lively common area to serene aristocratic zone, which further reveal the spirit of the age; namely, the spirit of achieving and preserving freedom in *Durga/Umayi* and the spirit of achieving and preserving nobility in *Lady Audley's Secret*.

Key words: identity changes, female characters, Taine's concepts, feminist criticism,

Abstrak

Tujuan dari makalah ini adalah untuk membandingkan perubahan-perubahan identitas tokoh utama perempuan dalam novel *Durga/Umayi* karya Mangunwijaya dan novel *Lady Audley's Secret* karya Mary Elizabeth Braddon khususnya menggunakan konsep-konsep Taine tentang "race/nation, milieu/surroundings, and moment/epoch" dalam perspektif kritik feminis. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa meskipun kedua protagonist perempuan mengubah identitasnya beberapa kali yang membuktikan bahwa identitas tidak bersifat statis, motivasi yang melandasinya berbeda yang mengungkapkan sifat yang bertentangan. Perubahan-perubahan identitas tersebut juga mengungkapkan perbedaan jalur kehidupan, dari kota kecil dalam negeri ke kota-kota besar luar negeri dan dari daerah yang biasa namun penuh keramaian ke zona yang tenang berkebangsawanan, yang lebih jauh mengungkapkan semangat jamannya, yaitu semangat mencapai dan mempertahankan kemerdekaan dalam *Durga/Umayi* dan semangat mencapai dan mempertahankan kebangsawanan dalam *Lady Audley's Secret*.

Kata Kunci: perubahan-perubahan identitas, tokoh-tokoh perempuan, konsep-konsep Taine, kritik feminis

1. Introduction

Identity and its changes are topics that arouse concern because they are closely related to human life in an ever changing society. This paper will compare the identity changes of Iin, the female main character in Mangunwijaya's *Durga/Umayi*, and Helen, the female main character in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audrey's Secret*. The comparative study will focus on the motives behind the identity changes relating them to the characters of the two female main characters and the deep meaning symbolized by the identity changes. A close analysis of the identity changes demonstrates that although both female main characters deliberately choose several different identities, their choices to change their identities several times reveal their different characters and their paths of life symbolize the spirit of the different eras.

2. Literary Review

Since the focus of analysis is on the female main characters, feminist criticism is used as the frame of analysis. Humm says that "Feminist criticism reads writing and examines its ideology and culture with a woman-centred perspective. Criticism is feminist if it critiques existing disciplines, traditional paradigms about women, nature or social roles, or documents such as work by others, from the point of view of women" (Humm, 1995: 51).

Associated with the focus on identity changes, some concepts on identity need to be considered. Hall states that "identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (1990: 222), while Brah, Hickman, and Ghail assert that "identity is never an *a priori*, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an "image" of totality" (1999: 2). Rajchman argues that "identities are historically conferred, that this conferral is ambiguous ..., that subjects are produced through multiple identifications" (1995: 11), and Rutherford declares that "It is within their polarities of white/black, masculine/feminine, hetero/homosexual, where one term is always dominant and the other subordinate, that our identities are formed" (1990: 10). From those opinions it can be summarized that identity is not only not fixed but it is also a never ending process in which many factors are inter-related.

In order to dig out the hidden meaning behind identity changes, Taine's concepts in French called "*race, milieu et moment*" often translated as "race/nation, milieu/surroundings, and moment/epoch" are borrowed. Taine as quoted by Clarke says that "What we call the *race* are the innate and hereditary dispositions which man brings with him" ... "marked differences in the temperament and structure of the body" ... "vary with various peoples" (<http://www.rlwclarke.net/courses/lits2306/2010-2011/10ATaine,HistoryofEnglishLiteratureIntroduction.pdf> accessed October 5, 2014). Clarke states that Taine's milieu or surroundings is "the physical and social environment in which one lives" while Taine's moment or epoch is "one of those wide intervals which embrace one or more centuries" (<http://www.rlwclarke.net/courses/lits2306/2010-2011/10ATaine,HistoryofEnglishLiteratureIntroduction.pdf> accessed October 5, 2014). Thus, Taine's concept of race refers to inherent characteristics and physical appearance of humans, while Taine's concept of milieu refers to setting of place and social setting or social class, and Taine's concept of moment refers to the setting of time. These three elements influence the formation of human identity. Concerning Taine's concept of moment, some critics consider that it is similar to "*Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age" (http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Hippolyte_Taine accessed October 5, 2014).

To complete the concept of race and class implied in Taine's, the concept of gender is needed considering that the subject of analysis is women. Humm states that gender is "A culturally shaped group of attributes and behaviours given to the female or to the male" (1995: 106) and as an example is the construction of gender trait of the women of the nineteenth century: "weak; passive; timid; domestic; illogical; emotional, susceptible to madness, hysteria; social/familial; dependent; unable to resist temptation; pure; content; not sexual/sensual; sphere: private" (http://www2.ivcc.edu/gen2002/women_in_the_nineteenth_century.htm accessed Januari 5, 2014).

3. A Comparative Study of *Durga/Umayi* and *Lady Audley's Secret*

Both *Durga/Umayi* and *Lady Audley's Secret* have female characters as the protagonists. These two female main characters come from poor families. In, the Javanese female main character in *Durga/Umayi*, is the daughter of Legimah (already deceased), the poor seller of fried cassava snack, and Captain Obrus, used to be KNIL and *heiho*, who

becomes Indonesian military man (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 32) while Helen, the British female main character in *Lady Audley's Secret* is the daughter of an insane mother who died in asylum and a drunken low rank military man (Braddon, 1997: 17, 277). These two female protagonists represent Taine's concept of race/nation.

Both female main characters want to change the poverty and the condition they live with. Although both of them change their identities several times, they choose different ways of life in achieving a better future. Iin chooses to work and she has a variety of jobs that later place her in the public sphere while Helen chooses to get a husband and keeps herself in the domestic sphere. These differences will be further analyzed in the next sub-section of the paper.

4. Women's Identity Changes in *Durga/Umayi* and *Lady Audley's Secret*

This sub-section will focus on the stages of identity changes and relate each stage of identity changes with the characters of each female protagonist. The identity changes are divided into four stages reflecting four important phases of life of the female protagonists.

The first stage of Iin's life in *Durga/Umayi* is when she is involved in domestic work. Young Iin helps her aunt who works as a laundry woman for Soekarno's family in Jakarta (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 48). Then she helps her 'dampit' brother to handle the public kitchen for the Indonesian war guerillas (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 64). However, since she was very young, deep in her heart she really dislikes domestic work considered suitable for her gender role as a woman. It is reflected in her jealousy over her 'dampit' brother's freedom to play outside the house while she is just "a cooking-cleaning-and-cuddling slave" (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 73). Thus, the identities as a laundry woman and as a free helper in the public kitchen are not what Iin really wants for her existence. This seed of refusing gender roles for a woman will lead Iin to tread a life completely different from most other women.

On the other side, the first stage of Helen's life in *Lady Audley's Secret* is marked when she arrives at a conclusion that to have a comfortable life she has to get a rich husband and the means to realize her choice of life is by using her beauty (Braddon, 1997: 278). In other words, Helen exploits her beauty and femininity to obtain what she wants. Her marriage at a young age with George Talboys, a son of a rich family, for a moment transports her to the luxurious life she craves for. Her identity thus changes from Helen Maldon to Helen Talboys, the wife of George Talboys. Different from Iin in *Durga/Umayi*, Helen Talboys enjoys her new gender role and her new life as far as she has a luxurious life, as reflected by the following quotation: "I loved him very well, quite well enough to be happy with him as long as his money lasted, and while we were on the Continent, travelling in the best style and always staying at the best hotels" (Braddon, 1997: 279).

The next phase of Iin's and Helen Talboys' life is called the transition phase although this phase means differently for each female character. For Iin, her full name is "Iin Sulinda Pertiwi Nusamusbida" (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 25), in *Durga/Umayi*, this is the phase of life when she deliberately leaves the domestic jobs she has been involved so far. Iin decides to visit her father who lives in military barrack in Bandung area. She makes up her mind to learn martial art to protect herself triggered by her unpleasant experience of being threatened to be raped when she was helping in the public kitchen (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 68). Although Iin has a sensual body arousing sexual excitement among her father's friends until she gets a nickname of "Miss Jugs" because of her big breasts, she never exploits her sexuality or femininity (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 71). She makes an impression as a tomboy and she even involves in guerrilla's action in which in one occasion she beheads a Gurkha who is badly wounded. She executes this action out of pity although after that she has nightmares and internal conflicts for many days (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 72-73). Thus, in this transition stage, Iin's identity has changes

from carrying out the gender roles as laundry woman and a helper in the public kitchen to a guerilla girl who has martial art skills and dares to kill for mercy.

For Helen Talboys the transition phase is not a deliberate one. Her starting a serious quarrel due to her unwillingness to face the economic problem in her new marriage drives her husband, George Talboys, to leave his wife and the baby boy to find fortune as a gold-digger in Australia (Braddon, 1997: 18). Detesting the poor life again after a moment of glamorous marital life, Helen Talboys leaves the baby boy to her drunken old father in Wildernsea, Yorkshire. She heads to London to earn a living as a governess, changing her name into Lucy Graham. However, she hates working as a governess: "I had to work hard for my living, and in every hour of labour – and what labour is more wearisome than the dull slavery of a governess?" (Braddon, 1997: 279). This transition phase shows Helen Talboys' identity and characters. She not only changes her name, from Helen Talboys into Lucy Graham, and her occupation, from house wife into governess, but it also reveals her characters as a selfish young woman who only wants wealth and happiness and who is incapable to love even her own child: "hating the man who had left me with no protector but a weak, tipsy father, and with a child to support ... I do not love the child; for he had been left a burden upon my hands" (Braddon, 1997: 280). When finally she gets a job as a governess in the family of a village surgeon, Mr. Dawson, Lucy Graham keeps her background and past life a secret. She hides behind her femininity and coyness to become a much-admired governess.

The third phase of Iin's life is the turning point of her life in which she becomes a completely different person. Caught by the NICA soldiers while being alone, she is gang-raped and is put into prison for several years. Nobody knows her existence and it is political turn which finally releases Iin from the imprisonment (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 77). Hopeless with the unbearable misery, Iin becomes a prostitute. Iin, who was previously a tomboy virgin girl, now is a prostitute and under the care of a keen pimp she turns into a high-class prostitute. Her ability to speak foreign languages, such as Dutch, English, and French, greatly helps her existence in the new profession. Exploiting her ability to the fullest, Iin is not only a common high-class prostitute, but she also climbs the steps as an international lobbyist for political and/or economic transaction (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 78). She is also known as "Miss Iin or Sister Linda or Auntie Wi or Comrade Tiwi or Nus, or Madame Nussy or Sis Bi (depending on the situation and mood)" (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 261).

For Lucy Graham, used to be known as Helen Talboys, her third phase of life is her entering Audley Court as Lady Audley. Sir Michael Audley, aged 55 who has become a widower for 17 years, is smitten by love when he sees her with: "the tender fascination of those soft and melting blue eyes, the graceful beauty of that slender throat and drooping head, with its wealth of showering flaxen curls; the low music of that gentle voice; the perfect harmony which pervaded every charm" (Braddon, 1997: 8). Although his grown up only daughter is displeased with her father's plan, Sir Audley still marries Lucy Graham so that she becomes Lady Audley of Audley Court: "No more dependence, no more drudgery, no more humiliation" (Braddon, 1997: 12). This is the respectable wealthy life that Helen Maldon, then Helen Talboys, then Lucy Graham, then Lady Audley, wants for her life. However her honor, authority, and wealth are soon in danger because her previous husband, they are not legally divorced, returns from Australia with great fortune. Knowing that he will surely look for her, Lady Audley fakes her own death by sending the death news in *The Times* (Braddon, 1997: 29). Her luck as Lady Audley will not last long as unexpected events arise one after another as will be discussed in the next phase of her life.

The last phase, the fourth phase, of Iin's life is when she has existed as an international prostitute and lobbyist all at once. She is the woman behind all important transactions and decisions concerning political or economic sectors. Her wide connections abroad, especially with the old acquaintance that is the young bald-headed

man with the wooden gun from the early days of pre-independence day, support her secretive but amazing activities (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 99). She becomes very rich and influential: "a *Madame* of the *jet set*, eating breakfast in bed at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, spending her afternoon in London, the evening in New York, and sleeping that night in Sydney, having breakfast in Tokyo, and always in five-star hotels, in suites of course" (Mangunwijaya, 2004:102). While being abroad, she is anxious to know the fate of the young male painter living in Yogya, whom she is secretly deeply in love, after a short wave of communist outbreak swept Indonesia. Unable to return home in her physical appearance because of her alignment with Gerwani, Iin takes the bold decision to totally change her appearance through plastic surgery in Singapore so that now Iin's appearance is as follows: "a bit of the China miss or those special Eurasian sort of spices, so you might guess she was a Macao girl with a bit of Portuguese mixed in, or maybe French mixed with Japanese" (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 127) under the identities of:

Madame Angelin Ruth Portier born to Meester Corelis, son of father Mijnheer Willem Pieter Portier and mother Pailah Kromodimejo of Prontakan Magelang, alias *Madame* Charlotte Eugenie, youngest daughter of father François de Xavier Pierre Charles Baron du Bois de la Montagne (calling herself the widow Nussy de Progucléaux) and mother Wang Cing Mei, Border Alley Semarang, alias Tukinah Senik (calling herself the widow Madame Nusa Musbida) of father Colonel Yamashita and Ma Basket, from Cokrodiningratan in Yogyakarta" (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 127).

She is supported by three illegal passports issued for her with the help of the old acquaintance who is now an influential secret agent abroad (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 127). She signs an international mega project located in Java in this European physical appearance with a European name. However, her longing to meet and be recognized by her '*dampit*' brother makes her undergo another plastic surgery to be back to the original Javanese physical appearance (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 155). Unexpectedly arrested at the Halim airport because detected as the member of Gerwani/Communist party, Iin will be released if she continues the international mega project in Indonesia. The crucial problem is that she signs the project with the banks abroad in the other physical appearance and if she has to continue the mega project she has to be in the European appearance. Iin is trapped between two poles of different physical appearances, trapped in coming and going out of plastic surgery clinic: "to live a life of doubles full of dilemmas full of conflicts full of contradictions without a break for the rest of her life, and why and what for, and to what end" (Mangunwijaya, 2004: 168). Iin cannot let the other form of existence go since half of her is in it. Iin is both appearances, both forms of existence. Iin is forever trapped in the technological sophistication of plastic surgery if she wants to continue her double life.

The last phase for Lady Audley begins when she cannot get rid of her first husband as easily as she thought before. It is true that her fake death stops her first husband, George Talboys, from finding her especially after he sees her tomb (Braddon, 1997: 35). However, there is a coincidence that her first husband, in his frustration, lives temporarily with his close friend, Robert Audley, the nephew of Sir Michael Audley. Alicia Audley, the only daughter of Sir Audley who is not in good terms with her young stepmother, invites her cousin Robert Audley who will come to Audley Court with George Talboys. Lady Audley tries to avoid meeting the two guests giving many reasons that not all are reasonable which eventually arouse the two guests' curiosity of her existence leading to their stealthily entering her room, with the help of Alicia Audley, to see her half finished picture. George Talboys is so shocked seeing the picture of his wife whose tomb he visited last year: "he sat before it for about a quarter of an hour, with the candlestick grasped in his strong right hand, and his left arm hanging loosely by his side. He sat so long in this attitude" (Braddon, 1997: 58). After this event, George Talboys looks

for ways to meet Lady Audley secretly face to face. However, their meeting results in Lady Audley pushing him into an unused well with the intention of silencing him forever (Braddon, 1997: 312-313). This heartless action of Lady Audley cannot save Lady Audley's position for a long time. As a barrister, Robert Audley investigates the sudden disappearance of his best friend leading to Lady Audley's involvement. Cornered by her maid's husband who blackmails her because he knows her action and by the incessant accusations of Robert Audley, Lady Audley plans to silence both men forever by setting the fire in the inn owned by her maid's husband in which Robert Audley stays overnight. Her cruel plan only partially successful because Robert Audley is saved from being burned to death (Braddon, 1997: 272-273). Considering Lady Audley's strange confession, Robert Audley invites a famous psychologist who diagnoses her dangerously insane and strongly suggests to send her to a private asylum in Belgium to avoid any rumor harmful for Sir Michael Audley's good name (Braddon, 1997: 302). In the asylum Lady Audley under the new name of Mrs Taylor dies years later. In other words, Lady Audley loses everything that she has fought with whatever means, ending her life in exile in an asylum abroad.

From the four phases of life of the female characters in the two novels, it can be concluded as follows. Both female characters change their identities. Changing name several times, changing occupation, changing social status, and even changing physical appearance through plastic surgery are done to get what they want in their lives. However, besides these similarities, there are significant differences especially in their characters. Iin in *Durga/Umayi* basically does not have a cruel heart. It is true that she beheads a Gurkha, but it is an action driven by pity to shorten the terrible suffering caused by severe injury. It is a spontaneous action and she gets no financial benefit from this action, instead she suffers from nightmares and internal conflicts. As for Lady Audley, she is very cruel. She plans to eliminate all forms of obstruction even though she has to take someone's life for that. Moreover, she repeats her action. After she thinks that she successfully eliminates George Talboys, her first husband, she carefully plans to eliminate Robert Audley and her maid's husband under the camouflage of a fire accident. Her actions are categorized as murders because they are carefully planned. Besides, she gets direct financial benefit if she succeeds because her position as wealthy and respectable Lady Audley will be secured forever.

5. The Sociological Meaning of the Women's Identity Changes

The identity changes in *Durga/Umayi* and *Lady Audley's Secret* do not only reveal the characters of the female characters but identity changes also imply a deep meaning if they are traced sociologically. For that purpose, the analysis will be divided into 2 parts, through the direction of the female characters' geographical movement and through the implicit passion of the period that the female characters live.

5.1 Paths of Life

The analysis will reflect Taine's concept of milieu or surroundings. Iin in *Durga/Umayi* and Helen in *Lady Audley's Secret* take opposite geographical routes while changing their identities which symbolize the typicality of their periods.

Iin in *Durga/Umayi* was born in Magelang, a small town in Central Java, and she lives there until she finishes her *Bijzondere* H.I. School. Then she moves to Jakarta following her aunt who becomes a laundry woman in the household of Soekarno, later known as the proclaimer of Indonesia's independence. After that she moves to Yogyakarta to help her 'dampit' brother, then to Bandung to visit her father and learn martial arts, after that she goes abroad to Singapore, Tokyo, Paris, Beijing, and other big cities. In short, it can be said that starting from small cities Iin moves to big important cities in Indonesia then she ventures to big cities abroad. Her geographical movement is towards a wider scope and is cross-continent. It is in line with her growing social and economic life. From a poor nobody in a little town's social life, then Iin becomes the

fascinated spectator in the margin of wider and important social life, and finally she has an important role in international affair owning a lot of properties and foreign currencies.

Helen's geographical route in *Lady Audley's Secret* is different. Born in Wildernsea, an imaginary lively little port town near Hull, England, she has a short honeymoon visit to Europe, then she secretly goes to London, becomes a governess in a village in Essex, and finally settles as Lady Audley in Audley Court, Essex. Thus, her geographical movement is from small town to the capital city and then to a small village and finally to small court in a small village. Her social life is from open and lively but poor social life in a port town, to noisy and individualistic poor city life in London, to solitary normative poor life in a village, and then to a secluded but respectable and luxurious aristocratic life in Audley Court. In other words, Helen moves from lively commonplace area to a quiet remote aristocratic area. From a poor nobody she becomes a lady who is highly respected and quite wealthy.

5.2 The Spirit of the Different Eras

The analysis will reflect Taine's concept of moment which is loosely interpreted as *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age. Iin in *Durga/Umayi* and Helen/Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret* portray the situation at the time of their lives.

Iin reflects the Durga/Umayi situation at that time. Sometimes she feels like Durga, the symbol of badness, sometimes she feels like Umayi, the symbol of goodness, and sometimes she feels like both of them. Her life is a continuum of Durga-Umayi. She starts as nobody who is invisible, ugly, poor, and from a small town, a symbol of being colonized, caged like Durga in Corpstrenchfield, to become somebody who is influential, very visible, beautiful, super rich, and roaming big cities abroad, a symbol of freedom and free life like Umayi in Heaven. Iin's life symbolizes the spirit of freedom, freedom from invisibility/ugliness, freedom from poverty, freedom from isolation/remoteness, freedom from colonization. This reflects the spirit of the middle of the twentieth century of Indonesia which was struggling for freedom and maintaining freedom.

Helen/Lady Audley reflects a life of secrecy, a life of isolation, a life of seclusion. She starts as a common person living in a remote area to finally settle as a Lady in a secluded area away from the bustle of the world wide. She is nobody who becomes somebody. She is a common person who becomes a Lady. There is a dimmed hint of Cinderella here, although she reaches the high status using all means including committing murders. However, the point is that she symbolizes the high admiration and preservation of the nobility and the life of nobles which are the characteristics of England not only in the nineteenth century, which is the time and social setting of the novel, but also until now.

6. Conclusion

Comparing *Durga/Umayi* and *Lady Audley's Secret* using Taine's concept of "race/nation, milieu/surroundings, and moment/epoch" through the frame of analysis of feminist criticism it can be seen that the similarity between the two novels is that the two female main characters change their identities several times. However, starting from this similarity it is discovered that the motivations underlying the identity changes are different revealing the character differences between the two female main characters. Iin, the female protagonist in *Durga/Umayi*, who resists the gender roles of traditional Javanese woman as "a cooking-cleaning-and-cuddling slave", does not have murderous intention. On the contrary, Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*, supports the gender roles and gets married very young to have a comfortable life. However, she tries to murder more than one person for her own benefit. Iin and Lady Audley clearly indicate that "identity ... is never complete, always in process" which is in line with what is called race/nation by Taine, that is, "the innate and hereditary dispositions which man brings with him."

For Taine's concept of milieu/surroundings, Iin and Lady Audley take opposite paths. Iin starts from small cities to big important cities in the country to several big cities overseas while Lady Audley originally called Helen starts from open, lively but poor, common, little town to solitary, serene, rich, aristocratic, secluded area. As for Taine's concept of moment/epoch, Iin's life symbolizes the spirit of freedom –freedom from invisibility, poverty, ugliness, isolation, colonization– which is the spirit of the middle of the twentieth century in Indonesia while Lady Audley's life symbolizes the spirit of achieving and preserving nobility which is the spirit of all ages in England.

Based on Taine's three concepts, it can be derived that both female protagonists, although different in characters, are from nadir to zenith, from poor to super rich person, from nobody to influential person, from invisibility to visibility. They struggle for their life including using all means. They change their identities even to the extreme one. In short, they construct their own forms of existence to the point of breaking normative rules. They pay the consequences of their choices of life, trapped in two opposite identities involving changing total physical appearance through comprehensive plastic surgery for Iin and trapped to death in a private and luxurious asylum for Helen/Lady Audley.

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