BEAUTIFUL BLEMISHES: GENDER AND FEMALE CRIMINALITY IN FOUR VICTORIAN NOVELS

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by
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ABSTRACT

BEAUTIFUL BLEMISHES: GENDER AND FEMALE CRIMINALITY
IN FOUR VICTORIAN NOVELS
(May 2010)

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This thesis analyzes the close connection between female criminality and gender in the Victorian novels *Adam Bede*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Armadale*. Each of the female criminals in these novels demonstrates gender deviance, while maintaining the appearance of conforming to the standards of femininity. Therefore, under the guise of femininity, these criminals act out gender deviance through cunning and violent behavior, making these female criminals especially dangerous to patriarchy and male homosocial bonds in particular. Also, the rural setting of these novels highlights the growing fear that crime and dangerous activity is not simply a problem of the unruly city. In order to contain these threatening females, the patriarchal gaze is drawn to them in an attempt to penetrate their feminine façade. The working class female criminals in *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are easily caught and punished publicly for their crimes. The middle class females in the sensation novels, *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Armadale*, are more deceptive, demonstrating the ability to reverse the patriarchal gaze, and they both suffer quietly for their crimes against patriarchy. All of these female criminals are seen as dangerous, unwomanly, unchristian, unEnglish and in need of being controlled. Ultimately, this thesis works to

begin a new conversation about female criminality and female masculinities and its connections to male homosocial, homoerotic, and homosexual bonds.

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INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to Cesare Lombroso's *The Female Offender* (1909), W. Douglas Morrison notes that among criminals there exists "sexual peculiarities, such as femininism in men, masculism in women, and infantilism in both. […] The habitual criminal is a product, according to Dr. Lombroso, of pathological and atavistic anomalies; [she] stands midway between the lunatic and the savage; and [she] represents a special type of the human race" (xvi). In a section regarding atavism and the female offender, Lombroso explains that although primal women seldom committed murder, they were almost always prostitutes and thereby sexually abnormal. Victorian doctors and psychiatrists assumed that women, because of their "natural" purity and physical weakness, possess less sexual desire than men.[1] Consequently, Lombroso is led to the conclusion that atavism, or the recurrence of genetic features that have been absent for several generations, explains "the virility underlying the female criminal type; for what we look for most in the female is femininity, and when we find the opposite in her we conclude as a rule that there must be some anomaly" (112). On the next page are the portraits of what Lombroso calls "Red Indian and Negro

[1] In *Uneven Developments*, Mary Poovey refers to W. R. Greg's 1862 essay "Why Are Women Redundant?" in which Greg suggests sending "redundant" women to the colonies in an attempt to control the spread of syphilis. Poovey comments that, "Greg always imagines removing or sequestering the women, not regulating male sexual appetite. The reason he imagines controlling women and not men is that, according to Greg, women are not dominated by the irrepressible drive that governs the sexual lives of men. Women's sexual desire is not a problem, in other words; men's sexual desire is" (5). Also see Nancy Cott's "Passionless: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," *Signs* 4.2 (1978): 219-36, in which she explores how the definition of women's sexuality shifted from women being more lustful and carnal than men, to possessing no sexual desire.

beauties" (112); (see Figure 1). Lombroso's seeming compliment is ironic, since he goes on to degrade these "savages" who he states are "difficult to recognise for women, so huge are their jaws and cheek-bones, so hard and coarse their features" (112). Lombroso clearly does not think these women are beautiful, since they lack the "normal" feminine and soft characteristics that are markers of beauty in civilized, Victorian England. In other words, according to Lombroso, female criminals are closer to savages because of their masculine characteristics and their childlike mental deficiencies.

Anomalous and misbehaving women throughout history have garnered considerable attention whether in literature or the media in general. The female criminals that fascinated Lombroso were also a popular topic in newspapers, which covered scandalous legal cases; they were also a popular topic in the growing nineteenth century literary genres such as the penny dreadful (or penny blood) and sensation novels. One early nineteenth century literary representation of female criminality is seen in the character of Sally Brass found in Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841). Given the racial, class and gender stereotypes about criminals, as demonstrated by Lombroso, it is not surprising that Sally works in the masculine profession of Law as a clerk and demonstrates physical masculine characteristics. Because of Sally's unfeminine appearance and occupation, she is clearly marked as abnormal and accordingly described as monstrous, grotesque and animal-like. Criminals, male and female, were often thought to have physical characteristics that marked them as social deviants. Therefore, Sally Brass, with her notable physical differences, is easily identifiable as a female deviant and serves as a warning for other women against becoming like her or even associating with women of her type. In the following pages, I will be investigating representations of female criminals in Victorian literature; however, the aberrant females I will be discussing are less obviously deviant and therefore, more deceitful and dangerous to English society than women like Sally Brass because of their lack of

physical markers of criminality. More specifically, although two of the female characters possess working class status, all of these women are feminine in appearance and therefore embody the opposite of Lombroso's atavistic markers of female criminals. They are instead, physically typical English and civilized women. However, these women do in fact commit serious, sexual and violent crimes against society, which in turn denotes them as social deviants. Their seeming conformity to social, gender and racial expectations, and their ability to mimic "real" femininity represented by the middle class "angel in the house," makes them increasingly difficult to detect and thereby control.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1895, a writer in *The Englishwoman's Review* comments about the new Blue Book report of 1893, which highlights criminal statistics throughout England. Addressing the tables given in the article, entitled "Women and Crime," which concerns the sex of criminals, the author affirms English expectations, saying that this report gives "full confirmation of the often-made observation that women form the most law-abiding portion of the community" (220). However, despite this author's confident statement there was still remarkable anxiety regarding women and violence in Victorian England. Judith Rowbotham shows how with the growth of the British Empire, there became more concern over the definition of Englishness. Criminal behavior increasingly came to be seen as unEnglish and a mark of the uncivilized savage. Although violence in men was often condoned given the "positive stereotyping of a more physically aggressive masculinity," violence in women was a mark of savagery (92). With the expansion of the empire and contact with other less "civilized" nations, the English noticed "the presence in colonies of native women reportedly given to regular violent outbursts [such as *sati* or twin murder] provid[ing] an affirmation of their lower standards" (92-3). Violence in women was especially seen as horrific, since as Rowbotham notes,

women and womanhood were seen as the signs of a civilized society. Therefore, "the violence of women, toward men and especially toward other women, was identified as a particular concern, with instances treated with increasing disapproval and severity" (102). One of the standards used to judge these "savage" people was appearance. Rowbotham notes that, "there was within Western cultures a traditional heavy reliance on appearance, including dress (or lack of it) as a clear external measure. In missionary propaganda, the symbolic importance of appearance was further amplified and explained by linking it to heathen behavior" (97). Like in the writings of Lombroso and other social scientists, appearance serves as an indicator of degeneracy, or from the perspective of the missionary, "heathen behavior."

Crime in particular was assumed by the middle and upper classes to be a problem of the lower classes, in part, because of media representations, which often depicted criminals as foreign, dirty, diseased, less than human and therefore completely Other. As William A. Cohen explains, "in a general sense, filth is a term of condemnation, which instantly repudiates a threatening thing, person, or idea by ascribing alterity to it. Ordinarily, that which is filthy is so fundamentally alien that it must be rejected; labeling something filthy is a viscerally powerful means of excluding it" (ix). Henry Mayhew and Edward Chadwick's study of the lower and criminal class contributed to such othering of the lower class and thereby criminals. Chadwick writes that, "the fever nests and seats of physical depravity are also the seats of moral depravity, disorder, and crime with which the police have most to do" (qtd. in Stallybrass and White 131). "Physical depravity," "moral depravity," and "disorder" are all associated with crime, which implies the lower classes. The foreignness, dirtiness, and animal characteristics associated with criminals are clearly illustrated by the given cartoon (see Figure 2). In this particular case, the Irish are the ones being stereotyped as not only foreign, but also animal-like. The cartoonist obviously means to liken the faces of the Irish criminals

to monkeys. Portraying criminals in this light gives justification for making stricter and unjust laws in order to control and contain these uncivilized animals.

The most common and perhaps most "dirty" crime among women was prostitution. David L. Pike writes that in cities such as London and Paris, "prostitutes became identified as the sewers of the city, transmitters of disease and immorality, disposal systems for excess libido, thresholds between above and below, between purity and filth" (53). In fact, prostitutes in the Victorian era are often held up as examples of the direct opposite of what women were supposed to be; Lombroso also spends a considerable amount of time discussing the prostitute and the physical and mental characteristics that define the prostitute. Lombroso comes to the conclusion that prostitutes have more prominent physical abnormalities, such as "bigger calves than honest women" and "prostitutes are almost free of wrinkles and other anomalies that create ugliness" (126 and 134). He presents several images of prostitutes and remarks that these "examples of both criminals and prostitutes exhibit characteristics of madness as well as criminality. The wild eyes, perturbed expression, and facial asymmetry of some remind one of women in insane asylums, especially maniacs" (140-2). What is striking about Lombroso's study is not necessarily his findings, which although interesting, are almost laughable to 21st century readers, but his lack of context. Lombroso and many other anthropologists of his time, fail to take into consideration the social and economic position of these women, criminal or prostitute. Instead, he simply sees them as objects to study and the "anomalies" of these women as a matter of biology and not social and environmental factors.[2] Because these women have not been socialized to be the ideal, feminine,

[2] Some writers and social scientists in the nineteenth century were attuned to the effects of environmental and social factors on the growth of prostitution. In 1842 Flora Tristan writes concerning prostitution in the *London Journal* that, "prejudice, poverty and servitude combine to produce this revolting degradation. Yes, for if men did not impose chastity on women they would not be rejected by society for yielding to the sentiments of their hearts, nor would seduced, deceived and abandoned girls be forced into prostitution" (qtd. in D. L. Pike 73). Also see George Bernard Shaw's play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1898), which he wrote in order to draw attention to

English woman, they as a result can only be dirty, abnormal, degenerate, savage and most importantly dangerous.

While there was certainly anxiety about the growth of prostitution there was also concern about less extreme forms of gender deviance among women. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and the rise of the New Woman, the definition of "woman" was being disputed. Eliza Lynn Linton in "The Girl of the Period" descries the changing standards of English women. She writes,

> Time was when the phrase, 'a fair young English girl,' meant the ideal of womanhood; to us at least, of home birth and breeding. It meant a creature generous, capable, modest; something franker than a Frenchwoman, more to be trusted than an Italian, as brave as an American but more refined, as domestic as a German and more graceful. It meant a girl who could be trusted alone if need be, because of her innate purity and dignity of her nature, but who was neither bold in bearing nor masculine in mind; a girl who when married, would be her husband's friend and companion, but never his rival. (1)

For Linton, the English woman was supposed to be the epitome of womanhood and femininity. Her references to French, Italian, German and American women as lesser than English women, shows the strict nationalist ideas surrounding what it meant to be a "proper" or "ideal" woman. To Linton the new woman emerging in England is vain, only concerned with her appearance, immodest, lacks a sense of duty to home and country, and possesses a "dissatisfaction of the monotony of ordinary life, horror of all useful work" (5). Linton also states that men are afraid of this new woman appearing in England. And although men "may amuse themselves with her for an evening […] they do not readily take her for life. Besides, after all her efforts, she is only a poor copy of the real thing; and the real thing is far more amusing than the copy, because it is real" (7). What Linton fails to

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the fact that prostitution is caused by the low wages and poor treatment of women who try to earn a living through "respectable" means.

realize is that the "real thing" she longs for in English women has been socially constructed by English society. And men are the ones who have created this "real," docile, feminine, English woman, in order to uphold the bourgeois patriarchal order. Men in fact fabricate the "real" and women have remained, for the most part, complicit. What Linton is noticing and lamenting is women's dissatisfaction with their prescribed role as the "angel in the house."

Women's role as the "angel in the house," and the safety it provides for women who remain in the house, is noted by the English historian Luke Owen Pike. In *A History of Crime in England,* Pike pointedly notes that when women attempt to break out of their limited position and procure their independence, they are most often led into a life of crime. He writes that, "so far as crime is determined by external circumstances, every step made by woman towards her independence is a step towards that precipice at the bottom of which lies a prison" (527). Pike's comment suggests that women are better off remaining dependent on the men in their lives, or else they will end up in jail. English women have become so confined and restricted that any step towards freedom requires a criminal act. Therefore, as long as women remain in the home, where they belong, women would remain safe and chaste. In light of the novels I will discuss, Pike's statement is telling and yet problematic at the same time. The working class female criminals that are a part of this study do in fact leave the domestic sphere; however, the criminal acts these women commit are not done in order to gain independence from men, but in fact to bind themselves more closely to them. The middle class, bourgeois female criminals are in fact trying to release themselves financially from the men in their lives, but they do so by working within the domestic sphere. Therefore, while Pike's claim is true to a certain extent, his statement is misleading given the complications that social class present to women's situations.

In writing about crime in English towns versus the country, Pike attributes the migration of the English population from the rural to urban districts to a rise in crime in the cities. However, Pike goes on to state that,

> the towns make no criminals but such as were of the fitting material before they committed a crime but the country was for ages the scene of every deed of violence perpetrated under every pretext […] the remote provinces contribute to them a supply of inhabitants among whom the instincts of violence and rapine are apt to re-appear upon the smallest provocation. (526)

In other words, the rural districts, because of their history of violent behavior, are a breeding ground for criminals; but only when placed in the right environment, the unruly and dirty city, do these violent and criminal tendencies appear. Therefore, Pike's observation suggests that the country is in fact not the idyllic, picturesque scene of tranquil life that many artists and writers make it out to be. In fact, as the novels I discuss will show, the country is as dangerous, if not more so, than the cities given the misperceptions about the country. Also, the deviant women found there serve as a source of contamination, which, in order to maintain the status quo of patriarchy, need to be dealt with.

BEAUTIFUL BLEMISHES

This thesis, in short, will argue that in Victorian literature, female criminals are represented as dangerous, unEnglish, unwomanly and in need of control in order to protect male homosocial bonding, the buttress of patriarchy. While crime was mostly thought of as an urban problem, the novels I discuss demonstrate how female degeneracy was spreading beyond the cities and into the countryside, causing cultural anxiety around gender, class and power. Therefore, in order to control these dangerous and degenerate females, the male, patriarchal gaze is turned on them, driving

these women to feelings of extreme guilt and/or madness. Ultimately, these women's crimes are revealed, relieving cultural anxiety and causing them to serve as aberrant examples of English law and English society. Furthermore, I will show that how these female criminals are treated once their crimes are uncovered reveals as much about the patriarchal system as it does about the female criminals.

In all four novels I discuss, madness is, if not directly stated, as least hinted at as a cause of these women's behavior. Using Elaine Showalter's work on female madness, I will show how madness came to be seen as a moral problem that needs to be dealt with through moral reform, a more humanizing and Christian response than simple brute force or incarceration. A conviction of madness allows patriarchy to appear sympathetic, while at the same time gets rid of the deviant and dangerous female.

In order to make this argument I will be using several queer theoretical frames of reference. In particular, I will be using Judith Butler who destabilizes gender by positing the idea that gender is performative, meaning there is no ontological thing called gender; but rather as members of society we inevitably mimic and also deviate in our gender performance from the "scripts" handed down to us.[3] Following Butler, and building upon Lyn Pykett's work about the ways in which Victorian women writers rewrite what it means to be a female person, I will discuss the different forms that aberrant femininity take in Victorian novels. The female criminals I discuss upset the idea that to *be* properly feminine simply means to look a certain way. Although Lombroso argues that degenerate females, such as prostitutes, are recognizable, the female criminals in the novels I discuss go undetected until crimes have already been committed.

Furthermore, as this thesis will show, despite the fact that all the female characters I will discuss perform Victorian femininity, they are still viewed as Other and markedly masculine. This

[3] See Judith Butler's, *Gender Trouble*, New York: Routledge, 1999; and *Bodies That Matter*, New York: Routledge, 1993.

female masculinity is, as Judith Halberstam argues, used to highlight the "real" masculinity represented by male-bodied men. That is, these female criminals, who would be culturally understood as morally deficient, are set in opposition to the pure, noble, and honorable masculinity represented by either the bourgeois middle class male, or the hard working, upward moving working class male.

My work also draws upon Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Luce Irigaray, who both argue that in a capitalist society based on private property, women have become objects of exchange. Irigaray in particular argues that woman has historically served as a "commodity," who is "marked phallicly by their fathers, husbands, procurers. And this branding determines their value in sexual commerce. Woman is never anything but the locus of a more or less competitive exchange between two men" (31-2). Irigaray goes on to argue that the exchange of women and the appearance of the heterosexual norm allows a cover for male homosexuality. She writes that, "although prohibited in practice, hom(m)o-sexuality is played out through the bodies of women, matter, or sign, and heterosexuality has been up to now just an alibi for the smooth workings of man's relations with himself, of relations among men" (172). Therefore, women not only serve as commodities, cutting them off from participating actively in economic exchanges, but women also serve as a screen for male homosocial, homoerotic, and even homosexual bonds to hide behind.

Sedgwick also discusses male homosocial bonds, focusing her study on the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth-century, and argues that during this period the

> concomitant changes in the structure of the continuum of the male 'homosocial desire' were tightly, often causally bound up with the more visible changes; that the emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality was in an intimate and shifting relation to class; and that no element of

> that pattern can be understood outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole. (1)

Following Sedgwick's theory of male homosocial bonding, my analysis of four Victorian novels will foreground the way that female criminals, as social deviants, interrupt the male bonds central to patriarchy. Although these female criminals endanger society and therefore need to be eliminated, they are ultimately necessary in order for male homosocial bonds to continue. Without the misbehaving female criminal, men would lack a means of comparison needed to reinforce their moral superiority and role as leaders. Ultimately, female criminality in Victorian literature deflects the reader's attention away from suspicious and degenerate forms of male masculinity, therefore, hiding the underlying homoeroticism of male homosocial bonding.

What this theoretical lens allows me to do is essentially queer the traditional reading of Victorian female criminals. Using Butler and Halberstam allows me to highlight the way female criminals, as masculine females, upset the gender binary. Female criminals in literature and the way they are punished or contained point to the anxiety and determination of Victorians to keep females feminine and males masculine. Also, using Sedgwick and Irigaray's theories about male homosocial bonds allows me to reveal why the Victorians were invested in this gender project and thereby why these female criminals are so threatening to Victorian society.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Several important historical and literary works have been written concerning crime in general in Victorian England. Judith Rowbotham and Kim Stevenson's anthology, *Criminal Conversations: Victorian Crimes, Social Panic and Moral Outrage* (2005), is an important text in which most of the collected essays look at specific criminal court cases and the implications these cases had for the society at large. These essays also examine the print media's representation of

these scandalous crimes, which in turn affected citizens' reaction to them. The purpose of this text is to demonstrate how the print media's coverage of criminal cases caused "both large-scale and more minor panics feeding this continuing sense of insecurity in society, and providing key insights into the Victorian age" (xxix). Class, race and gender are also discussed in terms of how crime was talked about and perceived by Victorians. There are several essays in this text that deal with female criminals in particular, including Kate Gleeson's "Sex, Wives, and Prostitutes: Debating *Clarence*." Gleeson's essay discusses the fear surrounding prostitutes, as evidenced by the Contagious Diseases Act, but also the view of prostitution as a necessary evil and therefore the need for clean prostitutes free of disease.

Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore's anthology, *Victorian Crime, Madness, and Sensation* (2004), is also a provocative text that discusses canonical works as well as lesser-known literary genres and texts. Maunder and Moore bring together a range of essays that address the "nineteenth-century reformulation of attitudes to crime" (1). In short the editors' purpose is "by surveying a diverse range of crimes, criminals, detectives, modes of detection and reportage, we chart the development of crime writing as a genre and the growing dialogue between fact and fiction throughout Victoria's reign" (1).

Lynda Hart, in her foundational text *Fatal Women* (1994), discusses the different representations of lesbianism and how criminality and madness in the Victorian era were associated with homosexual behavior among women. Specifically regarding *Lady Audley's Secret*, Hart argues that the text is "better understood as the pathological repetition of a profoundly paranoid culture that ironically displays what it suppresses. The homosocial structure of patriarchal heterosexuality is not invisible" (46). Instead, male homosociality is put on display while female homosocial relations must be disbanded in order to protect patriarchy. My text builds on Hart's argument about *Lady Audley's Secret*, but instead of focusing on female homosocial bonds as a

source of anxiety to patriarchy, I will focus on individual female deviants that disrupt male homosocial bonds.

Another more recent text about female deviance is Jennifer Hedgecock's *The Femme Fatale in Victorian Literature* (2008), which discusses the social positions of Victorian women and the rise of sensation literature. Hedgecock focuses on the dangerous female represented by the femme fatale. Hedgecock argues that the femme fatale instead of a simply one-dimensional bad or dangerous character in Victorian literature is in fact a representation of women fighting against their socio-economic position. Hedgecock discusses several of the novels I do, but instead of focusing on these female characters as "femme fatales," I have chosen to highlight the effects of women working against their economically disadvantaged position and patriarchy in general. Hedgecock points to the fact that the femme fatale must perform femininity in order to wield power within the domestic sphere; however, she fails to show how these women's performance of femininity destabilizes gender by their simultaneous masculine behavior.

Lyn Pykett's *The 'Improper' Feminine* (1992) is an influential text in that it defines what the "improper" female looked like. However, Pykett's text strictly focuses on sensational novels and the late Victorian genre known as New Woman Writing. Her main concern is to explore the way that "women's writing of the 1860s and 1890s, like all writing by women, is marked by the writers' specific experiences as women, and by the ways in which their biological femaleness is structured and mediated by social-cultural concepts of femininity" (5). Pykett admits that these women writers, to a certain extent, "reinscribe their culture's stories about femininity" (5). However, Pykett's main goal is to show how these women "participated in a rewriting of this script of the feminine, as, in various ways and to varying degrees, they self-consciously explored or implicitly exposed the contradictions of prevailing versions of femininity, or developed new styles and modes through which to articulate their own specific sense of the feminine" (5). In other words, Pykett's

main focus is on how femininity is disrupted and disputed by women writers of the 1860s thru 1890s. While Pykett's work is certainly useful to my argument, I depart significantly by focusing on female criminals and by using a queer theoretical framework.

Finally, Virginia B. Morris's *Double Jeopardy* (1990) is an important text that discusses, after a brief historical background of female criminality in England, significant literary representations of female criminals. Morris's central argument is that "when the killers are women, their crimes violate more than the legal code and the underlying ethical norms, and their guilt is judged differently" (8). Unlike violence in men, which is often an acceptable expression of masculinity, "women guilty of violent crime are at odds with the culturally nurtured image of acceptable womanly behavior, and they are punished as much for this violation as for the actual crime they commit" (8-9). While the above texts are useful and the arguments being made are similar to my own, I will also focus on *why* women were judged differently. What is at stake in keeping women quiet and locked up, either in a prison or at home? Why is violence, and by default, masculinity, so dangerous in women? Also, by looking at deviant women in country settings, I will show how the dichotomy between city and country is becoming less distinct and the male anxiety concerning this discrepancy. These are the types of questions I will address in the following chapters.

PROJECT ORGANIZATION

In the first chapter, I will discuss George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). Both of these novels focus on lower class female criminals; therefore, I begin this chapter with a short discussion about social class stereotypes in terms of gender and sexuality. In the section on *Adam Bede,* I demonstrate how Hetty's moral and criminal deficiencies are contrasted to that of the pure, masculine, hard working Adam. Also, Hetty's sexual conduct serves as a blot on the clean and picturesque countryside. Finally, I show how Hetty's criminal trial,

and subsequent conviction, bring together and solidify the homosocial bond between the two male protagonists, Adam and Arthur. In the section on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, I demonstrate how Tess, although sexually innocent given that her "fall" is a result of being raped, is still corrupted by feelings of guilt brought on by societal norms. Also, Tess, as an unchaste woman, becomes a threat to her husband, Angel's, ideal family. Finally, I show how, like Hetty, through Tess's punishment, male homosocial bonds are bolstered.

In the second chapter I will analyze the female criminals in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Wilkie Collins's *Armadale* (1866). Because these novels are sensation novels, I begin this chapter with a brief historical discussion about the significance of this genre. The female criminals found in these sensation novels are contrasted to those in Eliot and Hardy's novels based on realism. In the novels discussed, I analyze how the female criminals perform middle class femininity in an attempt to "fascinate" or deceive those around them. This chapter works to answer the questions: How do female criminals appropriate or manage the male patriarchal gaze in order to avoid detection? How are the male homosocial bonds different in kind and function in the sensation novel? What purpose does the rural setting serve in highlighting or obscuring the female criminals found there? How do middle class households deal with the dangerous females, once they are discovered, and what purpose does madness play in reinforcing male bonds and patriarchy?

Through my investigation of literary representations of these "beautiful blemishes," I will uncover several mechanisms of control used by the male, bourgeois, ruling class. By depicting female criminals as dangerous, unEnglish, unwomanly and unchristian, they are condemned by their society so that male homosocial bonds can be maintained and even strengthened. Given the cunning and deception used by the female characters in these novels, and because of the

supposedly peaceful and innocent country setting these “beautiful blemishes” inhabit, the male patriarchal gaze must become more efficient in uncovering female degeneracy.

CHAPTER 1—NOT SO INNOCENT COUNTRY GIRLS: DANGEROUS SEXUALITIES IN *ADAM BEDE* AND *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

In this chapter, I will be discussing *Adam Bede* (1859) by George Eliot and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) by Thomas Hardy. In both of these novels social class plays an important part in the way female criminals are read not only by readers but also by the other characters in the novel. During the nineteenth century, social scientists and critics such as Henry Mayhew and Edwin Chadwick made moral judgments about the different social classes. David Englander points out that in Mayhew's writings, "the nomadic poor are likened to primeval savages who are ruled by brute passions and animal appetites and live without structure and restraint. They are dangerous and depraved, restless and indulgent, improvident, licentious, and lewd" (100). It was thought that within this class existed the most dangerous and violent criminals, and the growing of this unproductive and destructive class caused a great deal of anxiety among England's middle class.

In order to calm these fears Mayhew defines his mission as an investigator of the lower classes to "act as an intermediary between the classes and to explain to one half how the other half lived" (93). In order to assure his class loyalty, Mayhew set himself firmly in the middle class saying,

> to this middle class we ourselves belong, and, if we ever wandered out of it, we did so but to regard the other forms of life with the same eyes as a comparative anatomist loves to lay bare the organism and vital machinery of a zoophyte, or an

> ape, in the hope of linking together the lower and the higher forms of animal existence. (qtd. in Englander 93-4)

This passage clearly demonstrates Mayhew's contribution to the popular belief that the poor were savage animals or completely "other forms of life" as compared to the middle class and need to be studied in order to determine if and how they are similar to the "higher forms of animal existence," or in other words the upper classes. This Othering of the lower classes allowed the upper classes to justify their social superiority and dominance of the lower classes. Jeffrey Weeks writes that "the trend towards a form of social colonization was accentuated throughout the nineteenth century by the perceived otherness of the working class, condemned, it was believed, to the sexual rampancy and immorality, and often even physically different from the more leisured classes" (33). Because the lower classes were thought to be inferior and simply organisms to be studied, the majority of the middle and upper classes firmly held on to these degrading stereotypes of the underprivileged. Viewing the lower classes as inferior allowed the bourgeois to mistreat this population, without guilt, in order to maintain their hegemony over the wealth and culture of the country. Class conflict and this degrading ideology are clearly seen in the novels I will be discussing in this chapter. Upper class men assume that both Hetty in *Adam Bede* and Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* are loose and promiscuous because they are from lower class society. Also, these women suffer under the sexual double standard that allows men, especially upper class men, the privilege of being sexually promiscuous, while women are denounced and punished for crimes against sexual mores.

Lower class and working class women were in particular thought of as "physically different" and judged to be loose and highly sexualized (Weeks 33). Martin A. Danahay points out that workingwomen were "often represented as releasing a dangerous sexuality rather than repressing sexual desire. Therefore, while it was appropriate for men to work, for women it was seen as an inappropriate libidinal activity" (7). Therefore, workingwomen, because of their "libidinal" status

outside of the home, where they ideally belong, were thought of as more likely to turn to prostitution. Also, women who worked were thought to be releasing or expressing their sexuality, which for Victorian women was thought to be unfeminine and in fact unnatural, since women were normally thought to not have sexual desire. In other words, women who worked outside the home were automatically suspected because they were stepping outside of their prescribed role as preservers of the home. Plus, by acting and being productive members of public society, Victorians believed women became more vulnerable to "fall" from sexual purity. According to Mayhew, prostitution was a direct result of women working, since those "who are born in labour for their bread, but who find the work inordinately irksome to their natures, and pleasure as inordinately agreeable to them" (qtd. in Englander 102). Therefore, women who worked, by releasing their sexual desires and as a result of finding work "inordinately irksome to their natures" turned to prostitution as a source of income. Although not all women who worked outside the home turned to prostitution, the stereotypes supported by Mayhew and other social scientists' studies and writings about the poor and working class helped contribute to these generalizations of workingwomen.

Also contributing to this ideology is the fact that the ideal of womanhood represented by middle class femininity was defined in opposition to prostitutes, or simply loose and promiscuous lower class femininity. Middle class women, who had no need to work outside the home, were often thought of as the "angel in the house" because their lives centered on keeping their husbands' home, and they were the epitome of chastity, decorum and motherhood. Therefore, given Hetty and Tess's working class status, they are automatically other than the ideal of true womanhood. These various class and gender stereotypes are demonstrated by the way Victorian readers and critics read female criminals, such as Eliot's Hetty and Hardy's Tess.

I. *ADAM BEDE*

George Eliot was well known for her realistic characters, particularly in *Adam Bede*, which is based on a true story told to Eliot by her aunt. While the majority of readers would have sympathized with Hetty, given the harsh punishment she receives at the end, Arthur L. Salmon wrote in 1892 in the *Ladies' Treasury* that it would have been better if "[Eliot] had taken [Hetty] to the gallows. However much good-natured readers may be pleased by the reprieve, the purposes of art would have been better served had the tragedy been culminated" (343). In other words, it appears this critic felt that it was more important for Eliot to paint a realistic picture of what would have happened to Hetty in "real" Victorian society. As noted in the introduction, because Hetty comes from the working class she is more likely to receive a harsher punishment by the English courts. This critic implies that although in fiction, people are prone to sympathize with criminals, in real life, lower class women like Hetty need to be properly and realistically punished, which in Hetty's case means execution.

The central plot in *Adam Bede* is about how Arthur Donnithorne, a captain in the militia and a rich squire, falls in love with the country farm girl Hetty Sorrel. Given her lower class status, Arthur has no intention of marrying Hetty, but he continues to flirt with her, have secret meetings in the woods and eventually has sex with her. As a result, Hetty becomes pregnant but Arthur leaves for military duty in Ireland before she realizes her situation. Hetty keeps her pregnancy a secret and soon after Arthur leaves, Hetty becomes engaged to Adam, a well-respected craftsman and friend of Arthur who has been interested in Hetty from the beginning of the novel. Before they get married and out of desperation over her condition, Hetty runs away from Hayslope in the hope of finding Arthur, whom she thinks will take care of her. Alone and out of money Hetty gives birth to her child; out of shame or perhaps a moment of disillusionment Hetty abandons her child, which later is found dead by a local farmer. Hetty is easily found guilty for her crime of infanticide and

sentenced to death. With Hetty, the female transgressor, out of the way, Adam marries Hetty's cousin Dinah, a Methodist preacher, and is reunited with his friend Arthur. Hetty's transgressions of sexuality, class and motherhood cause her to be labeled as a female criminal and to serve as an aberrant example of English femininity.

ADAM'S "MASCULINE PURITY"

In the first chapter of *Adam Bede,* Adam is described as the essence of Victorian masculinity. Adam is singing while working and the narrator remarks that "such a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned muscular man nearly six feet high […] he had the air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength" (Eliot 6). What is highlighted in this passage is Adam's strength and muscular build, one of the key markers of Victorian working class masculinity. Adam is clearly a hard worker with a good work ethic for the narrator explains that he possesses an "expression of good-humoured honest intelligence" (6). Adam is undoubtedly an example of what John Reed points out during the nineteenth century as a shift in the masculine ideal from wealthy, aristocratic men to that of the middle and working class. Reed notes that,

> along with this shift in the ideal of manliness downward through the ranks of the middle classes was a corresponding attempt to revive a rural exemplar often associated with the upper ranks of the working class. Craftsmen, yeomen, and the like were gradually represented as embodying a masculine purity opposed to the exploitive corruption of the aristocracy and the economically driven middle-class gentleman. (268)

This "masculine purity" is evident in the description of Adam Bede at the outset of the novel and is sharply contrasted to the transgressive and dangerous femininity of Hetty. Reed's observation of

the shift in the ideal of masculinity parallels the rise of the Victorian movement known as "muscular Christianity," promoted by writer and thinker Charles Kingsley. In writing about this influential movement, Donald E. Hall states that, "for Kingsley […] 'manliness' was synonymous with strength, both physical and moral" (9). Hall goes on to point out that the "term 'muscular Christianity' highlights these writers [such as Kingsley's] consistent, and even insistent, use of the ideologically charged and aggressively poised male body as a point of reference in and determiner of a masculinist economy of signification and (all too often) degradation" (9). Therefore, by presenting Adam as the epitome of muscular, honorable and Christian masculinity, Adam inadvertently serves as the example of a "masculinist economy," an economy where women are degraded and punished more severely for their transgressions because they are other than the pure masculine. Adam and his household in turn naturally fit in with the purity and innocence of the surrounding countryside.

The description of Adam's house where he lives with his brother Seth and mother Lisbeth also demonstrates the sense of purity and wholesomeness of the countryside:

> It was a low house, with smooth grey thatch and buff walls, looking pleasant and mellow in the evening light. The leaded windows were bright and speckless, and the door-stone was as clean as a white boulder at ebb tide. On the door-stone stood a clean old woman, in a dark-striped linen gown, a red kerchief, and a linen cap. (Eliot 12)

This clean and spotless house would never be imagined in the city. The fact that the house looks "pleasant" and "mellow" suggests a sense of quiet serenity and contrasts with the noise and action associated with the city. Also the words "bright," "speckless," "clean," and "white" suggest purity, particularly moral purity. Cleanliness is often associated with Godliness or Christian morals in Victorian literature as is seen when Mrs. Poyser chastises her housemaid Molly for not cleaning properly. Mrs. Poyser declares, "who taught you to scrub a floor, I should like to know? Why, you'd

leave the dirt in heaps i' the corners—anybody 'ud think you'd never been brought up among Christians" (75). Pamela K. Gilbert argues that the Victorians made important and influential connections "between disease, morality, and the body. For Victorians, epidemic disease was a sign of filth resulting from poor sanitary practices, which were tied to economic and moral sins; in turn filth *caused* immorality by so violating the boundaries of the body and psyche as to degrade the self's ability to preserve independence from its surroundings" (86).[4] Throughout the text, it is clear that morality and purity are connected to cleanliness and order in the imagination of the Victorians. And the clean, prestige countryside is the embodiment of good Christian morals.

GAZING AT THE CLEAN, INNOCENT COUNTRYSIDE

The innocence of the countryside, and the romantic relations found there, are also demonstrated by the narrator's description of the scenery. The narrator explains that, "that rich undulating district of Loamshire to which Hayslope belonged, lies close to a grim outskirt of Stonyshire, overlooked by its barren hills as a pretty blooming sister may sometimes be seen linked in the arm of a rugged, tall, swarthy brother" (Eliot 17). This passage demonstrates the assumption that only innocent and ideal romantic relationships are found in the country. The narrator goes on to say that a common traveler "at every turn […] came upon some fine old countryseat nestled in the valley or crowning the slope, some homestead with its long length of barn and its cluster of golden ricks, some grey steeple looking out from a pretty confusion of trees and thatch and dark-red tiles" (18). The countryside is represented as an ideal place where homes are found "nestled in

[4] Gilbert goes on to point out that the ideology of cleanliness is especially seen in Edwin Chadwick's sanitary movement of the 1840s through 1850s. Chadwick wanted to clean up the sewage and filth of the cities, which he saw as a source of "moral corruption on the social body and in the individual bodies that composed it" (86). Chadwick himself tellingly asks, "how much of rebellion, of moral depravity and of crime has its root in physical disorder and depravity" (qtd. in Stallybrass and White 131). Chadwick also writes that, "the fever nests and seats of physical depravity are also the seats of moral depravity, disorder, and crime with which the police have most to do" (qtd. in Stallybrass and White 131).

the valley." The word "nestled" carries with it connotations of comfort and especially safety. A "grey steeple" overlooks this place of safety suggesting that God is the keeper of the country homestead, and that it is a place where Christian morals are upheld. The only disorder found here is that of a "pretty confusion of trees and thatch and dark-red tiles" (18).

Although the narrator draws the reader's attention and gaze to the serenity and safety of the country, the male, patriotic, and Christian gaze is set on anyone who would disrupt this scene. At the end of the first chapter, the chapter in which Adam's "masculinity purity" is described, Adam sings the lines of a song that had been in his mind all day: "Let thy converse be sincere, /Thy conscience as the noonday clear;/For God's all-seeing eye surveys/Thy secret thoughts, thy works and ways" (Eliot 13). This hymn clearly shows the expectations of purity placed on every Christian. And what keeps everyone on the straight and narrow is the ever-looming "all-seeing eye" of God or God's gaze. Setting the tone for the rest of the novel, this hymn shows how the English people in the country are kept under control; God sees everything so there is nowhere to hide.

HETTY: A BEAUTIFUL BLEMISH

Hetty, the female sexual transgressor and eventual murderess, draws the gaze of those around her with her stunning beauty. As the picture of the Flower Girl illustrates (see Figure 3), the beautiful female and the beautiful countryside go hand in hand; however, Hetty's beauty is also cause for alarm. Hetty's beauty is described as innocent and compared to that of kittens, soft ducklings and babies: "a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you" (Eliot 83-4). This statement is full of insight into the Victorian attitudes toward female sexuality. It's acceptable and even expected that women be beautiful and even naïve as Hetty is described. But to be too beautiful or too naïve leads men to "feel ready to crush" because this type of beauty cannot understand how it

makes men feel. In other words, Hetty's beauty causes men to lose control, throwing them into a "state of mind" of sexual lust. Therefore, while Hetty and her beauty are immature and unsophisticated, she also has the ability to attract men's attention, tempting them to pursue Hetty as a sexual object and in turn upset sexual norms of women's purity and chastity. Consequently, Hetty is in need of close watching by patriarchal authority, which puts women in a double bind by holding men and women to two different sexual standards. Although men were allowed to have extramarital sex, women like Hetty were expected to remain chaste in order to be a "respectable" English woman. The narrator explains that Hetty's type of beauty is that, "which seems made to turn the heads not only of men, but of all intelligent mammals, even of women" (83). Indeed, Hetty is looked at by everyone, even Mrs. Poyser, who disapproves of Hetty's obsession with her appearance, "continually gazed at Hetty's charms by the sly, fascinated in spite of herself" (84). Mrs. Poyser, although not directly a part of patriarchy and the male gaze, is complicit with patriarchal ideals, such as has been seen in her attitudes towards cleanliness and Christianity, and she is accepting of patriarchal rule and the status quo. Therefore, indirectly Mrs. Posyer can be seen as employing the male gaze, watching Hetty to make sure she stays within the boundaries of English and safe femininity.

Although Hetty is described as innocent and self-absorbed, she is highly aware of the attention and the looks she receives, most notably from her handsome admirer, Arthur Donnithorne. In the chapter aptly entitled "Hetty's World," the narrator begins by describing how Hetty "was thinking a great deal more of the looks Captain Donnithorne had cast at her than of Adam and his troubles. Bright, admiring glances from a handsome young gentleman" (Eliot 96). After Hetty has caught the attention of Arthur Donnithorne she is aware of his admiration and notices that he "would take a great deal of trouble for the chance of seeing her; that he always placed himself at church so as to have the fullest view of her both sitting and standing; that he was

constantly finding reasons for calling at the Hall Farm" (99). Arthur takes every opportunity and even goes out of his way to look or gaze at Hetty's beauty. He is clearly obsessed and Hetty is conscious of Arthur's "looks" and attentiveness, as the former passage makes apparent. Throughout the novel, Hetty is not only sharply contrasted with Adam, but also her religious and pure cousin, Dinah. Although Dinah steps out of her role as a woman by preaching, she serves as the perfect example of what a woman should be, meek and submissive. Lyn Pykett writes that "within the patriarchal family, of which she was supposedly the cornerstone, woman was defined in terms of the discourse of the proper feminine, as meekly submissive, the very model of and for decorum and propriety" (56). The antithesis to the "proper" woman is the "improper" woman known for her dangerous sexuality. Hetty, before she even commits infanticide, fits into the category of the improper woman because of her vanity and the way she consciously uses her beauty to entice Arthur and his gaze. Hetty thinks she can improve her lower class position by marrying Arthur and dreams of the fine jewelry and clothes she will obtain. Hetty also spends what little money she receives from working on "bits of finery which Mrs. Poyser disapproved" (Eliot 156). Therefore, by presenting Adam and Dinah as more domestic and as better specimens of the working-class, Eliot shows from the beginning of the novel how Hetty transgresses her role as a working class, country woman; and this transgression makes Hetty dangerous to the quiet and serene English countryside.

Joan Manheimer argues that Hetty presents a threat to the Hayslope community and the patriarchal order not only through her excessive sexuality but also through her attempt to climb the social ladder. Manheimer writes that,

> Hetty doesn't know enough not to dream of being Arthur's lady; and where she enjoys some success, she poses a serious threat to the existing social order which depends on the unquestioning acquiescence of the lower classes to maintain its

> power. Hetty challenges one basis for family stability as she unwittingly violates the absolute barrier between domesticity and sexuality essential to the Victorian mythology surrounding wife and mother. (543)

Thus, Hetty crosses several boundaries as an improper woman, not just those of sexuality and class, but also through her lack of interest and care for children and the eventual murder of her child, Hetty transgresses the boundaries of motherhood and Englishness.

Mary Poovey in her essay "Domesticity and Class Formation" argues that during the Victorian era, although there were specific class differences among women, it was assumed that naturally women maintained and regulated domesticity. This idea was grounded on the assumption that "women's reproductive capacity is her most salient feature, that this biological capacity makes her naturally self-sacrificing and domestic" and with the proper instruction, "working-class women could be counted on to transport middle-class values into the working-class home" (124-5). In *Adam Bede* however, Hetty, although extremely feminine in appearance, fails to live up to the middle class values and standards of womanhood because of her various sexual and criminal transgressions. From the beginning of the novel, Hetty rejects motherhood and her role as a domestic servant. After her first covert meeting with Arthur, she can think of nothing but her future with the captain; "but of every picture she is the central figure, in fine clothes; Captain Donnithorne is very close to her, putting his arm round her, perhaps kissing her, and everybody else is admiring and envying her" (Eliot 154). The narrator then rhetorically and disapprovingly asks, "does any sweet sad memory mingle with this dream of the future—any loving thought of her second parents—of the children she had helped to tend" (154). The answer of course is no—Hetty in her images of the future can only see herself as the star, no thought of caring for children or returning the kindnesses of loving relatives, but instead thinks of everyone "admiring and envying her." According to Victorian ideology, because of Hetty's vanity and self-centeredness, she fails to live up

to the ideal standards of femininity. As a part of the lower class, aspiring to be a member of the wealthier, upper class, I will argue that Hetty not only becomes unwomanly, but also unEnglish and dangerous to the social order by disrupting class and gender boundaries. In contrast to Hetty, the hero of the novel, Adam, a hard working craftsman, serves as an example of what a lower class person should be and demonstrates the moral value placed on masculinity over femininity in Victorian society.

Throughout the novel, Hetty is said to be indifferent towards children. Hetty is in charge of taking care of her younger cousin, Totty, but she shows no real interest in her caretaking because she is more concerned with her own appearance and Arthur's attention towards her. When she does think of the children, they are "tiresome" and "they had been the nuisance of her life—as bad as buzzing insects that will come teasing you on a hot day when you want to be quiet" (Eliot 155). And the narrator explains that, "Hetty would have been glad to hear that she should never see a child again" (155). Instead, Hetty dreams of Arthur taking her away from both her work on the farm and the children, as well as the new clothes she will by able to buy. Unlike the "proper" female who glories in motherhood and is naturally self-sacrificing, Hetty wants nothing to do with children and eventually ends up killing her own child.

Josephine McDonagh in her essay, "Child Murder Narratives in George Eliot's *Adam Bede,*" traces the historical and literary influences on Eliot's treatment of infanticide in the novel and shows how the kind treatment of children came to be a marker of civilization. McDonagh quotes Adam Smith who writes in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759): "Can there be greater barbarity . . . than to hurt an infant? Its helplessness, its innocence, its amiableness, call forth the compassion, even of an enemy, and not to spare that tender age is regarded as the most furious effort of an enraged and cruel conqueror" (242). Smith goes on to point out that the cruel treatment of children is still present among savage, uncivilized nations. This belief came to have even more

importance in the middle of the nineteenth-century at the time Eliot writes *Adam Bede* and when England experienced an "epidemic of child murder" (McDonagh 123). McDonagh points out that at the time Eliot is writing, England had become known as a "nation of infanticides" by the French. Infanticide came to be a "sign of national disorder, just as its elimination would be a cause of patriotic pride. The very geography and temporality of the modern British nation were at stake; its networks of communication, its hygiene, its moral stature, all were threatened by the persistence and primordial stagnancy of child murder" (McDonagh 124). Although Eliot places her novel at the turn of the nineteenth century, Hetty's infanticide would be cause for concern to her mid-century Victorian English readers; Hetty's murder of her child not only makes her a bad or improper mother but it also makes her savage and in essence unEnglish.

GOD'S/MAN'S ALL SEEING EYE

Because of these various transgressions, Hetty presents a real danger to the patriarchal social order. Therefore, in order to keep her contained, the patriarchal gaze is once again set on her; however, instead of for her beauty, as seen before, this time for her sins. Once Hetty realizes she is pregnant and leaves Hayslope in order to find Arthur, who she thinks will marry her or at least take care of her, Hetty finds herself often subjected to the frightful gaze of men. The first coach driver Hetty encounters takes many "glances at Hetty out of the corner of his eye" and then makes a comment about Hetty's sweetheart whom the coach driver assumes Hetty is on her way to see (Eliot 369). This scene sets the tone for the rest of Hetty's journey by making her paranoid and afraid that people, mostly men, are looking at her in judgment. The narrator explains that Hetty "hated going into the public-houses, where she must go to get food and ask questions, because there were always men lounging there, who stared at her and joked her rudely" (375). Because Hetty is pregnant and beautiful, she most certainly would draw the gaze of strange men who, like

the coach driver, would make assumptions about Hetty's "situation" and the man who put her there. Hetty in turn internalizes the looks she receives, making her feel increasingly guilty and increasingly desperate to find Arthur.

Hetty eventually loses hope, flees from the towns and tries to find a pond in which she can drown herself. Out of exhaustion, Hetty falls asleep in a field and dreams that, "she was in the hovel, and her aunt was standing over her with a candle in her hand. She trembled under her aunt's glance, and opened her eyes" (Eliot 387). As was shown earlier, Hetty's aunt represents the patriarchal order, but unlike the previous looks of admiration, this time Hetty "trembled" at her aunt's "glance," suggesting that Hetty is afraid. When Hetty opens her eyes, she realizes she is not alone "and there was a face looking down on her; but it was an unknown face, belonging to an elderly man in a smock frock" (387). Hetty, ashamed of being found is this position, quickly justifies to the man why she is there and asks the way to the nearest village. Instead of answering right away, "the man looked at her with a slow bovine gaze" (388). The most striking aspect of this elderly man is the way he looks at Hetty. Evidently, as Hetty's dream implies it is this man's look that wakes Hetty up. Although the man's look is "slow" and "bovine," meaning stupid or unintelligent, it is a look of intimidation, startling Hetty enough to wake her up. Hetty also explains her feelings of being watched when she confesses to Dinah in prison. Hetty explains how after giving birth she flees in the night, trying to find her way home. It is dark outside until the moon came behind the clouds making it lighter and Hetty explains that the moon "frightened me when it first looked at me out o' the clouds—it never looked so before; and I turned out of the road into the fields, for I was afraid o' meeting anybody with the moon shining on me" (452-3). At this point, after giving birth to her illegitimate child, Hetty feels haunted and "looked" at by the moon. Like "God's all-seeing eye" mentioned in the beginning of the novel, the moon becomes a spotlight on

Hetty, revealing her in the dark and making her feel guilty. Because of the moon, Hetty feels the need to hide out of fear that someone will see her and find out her sins.

"SHAKE HANDS LIKE MEN"

However, Hetty cannot hide from the patriarchal gaze and is found out and punished for her crime of infanticide. Although Hetty is officially only punished for killing her child, throughout the novel, Hetty has transgressed several boundaries of what it means to be a lower class woman and an English citizen. Hetty's murder of her child simply gives society a legal cause to try and punish her. Hetty's punishment and displacement from the community is ultimately the result of the patriarchal order, which in turn works to maintain this order. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work on male homosocial bonding provides a useful lens for analysis. She writes that with "the presence of a woman who can be seen as pitiable or contemptible, men are able to exchange power and to confirm each other's value even in the context of the remaining inequalities in their power" (160). Adam and Arthur, who despite their difference in social position, are friends in the beginning of the novel and have a falling out because of Arthur's ill treatment of Hetty. However, at the end of the novel, with Hetty the "pitiable and contemptible" woman out of the way, the two friends can easily forget and forgive what separated them before. Reed argues that only after Hetty is taken away can both men stand on "comparable moral ground. Able to resume something like their earlier affection, they can shake hands like men, a manliness that now incorporates the awareness of their own failings, failings that will introduce into their new masculinity the kind of sympathy for others" (280). Therefore, by having a common bond of sympathy in the form of Hetty, Adam and Arthur are able to confirm their manliness and their value as patriarchal leaders.

In the novels soon to be discussed, I will show the important role that male homosocial bonds have in the rise of the middle class and thus the hegemony of the Victorian patriarchal order

over both men and women. Mary Poovey argues in *Uneven Developments* that as early as the eighteenth century

> men of the middling ranks began to consolidate their identity as a class through a number of related activities, both economic and social. Two of the most important of these were the constitution of social and economic alliances through networks of kin and the formation of same-sex relationships in such public meeting-places as coffee-houses. (125)

Women contributed to these same-sex relationships outside of the household by properly and efficiently managing the household, allowing the man to branch out of the home. However, "the formation of nonfamilial alliances entailed the exclusion of women. In the public but informal meeting places provided by coffee houses, men—but not women—discussed ideas and news, founded the characteristic organizations of the middle class (including the stock exchange), and developed shared standards for appropriate and effective behaviors" (125-6). The key features of these homosocial bonds are that women are excluded and that men alone developed the standards for "appropriate and effective behaviors." These standards, therefore, restricted the behavior of the wives whose role remained entirely in the home. Therefore, the homosocial bonds between men are important and necessary in defining female deviance. Hetty, and as I will show in the next section, Tess, are defined as deviant and aberrant examples of femaleness by the patriarchal system in order to maintain patriarchal and thereby male dominance.

II. *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*

Hetty's fate is not surprising and not the only example of a nineteenth century working class woman being punished for her sexual and violent crimes. Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is another example of a woman suffering under patriarchal authority. The fact that

both of these novels take place in the countryside highlights the fear among Victorians that crime and immorality, especially in women, was spreading outward from the cities. Also, these two female character's lower class status reveals the common stereotype that degeneracy begins with this class, and poses a threat to the rising middle class. As was noted above, Henry Mayhew was known for studying and classifying the lower classes and distinctly separating them from the higher classes. Mayhew evocatively divided "mankind into two anatomically and morally distinct classes, the civilized settlers and the unproductive wanderers; and the parasitism of the latter upon the former" (Englander 99). Within this class existed the most dangerous and violent criminals, and the growing of this unproductive class of wanderers caused a great deal of anxiety among England's middle class. One writer for the newspaper *Cleave's Penny Gazette of Variety* remarked in 1838 that although crime had overall decreased across England, there was an increase of crime in the agricultural districts. The writer states in the article "Statistics of Crime in England and Wales" that,

> it is remarkable that the increase of crime has occurred in the agricultural, and decreased in the manufactory counties; and this had taken place in a far greater degree than the total increase or decrease over the country. […] We have, in these facts, abundant evidence that the natural advantages in populous districts for conveying moral and religious education are being brought into use. (1)

This writer equates the decrease of crime in cities to the workings of reform groups that were helping to educate and convert the poor in an attempt to civilize them and make them productive members of society instead of criminals. While the writer claims the statistics presented give "abundant evidence," the writer's conclusion seems to be based more on assumptions about the poor and lower class and the criminals that supposedly make up this class. However, despite the author's prejudice, the fact that crime was beginning to infect the countryside would have been cause for alarm for those who reside in rural areas. And this trend would have made members of

the respectable working class, such as Adam Bede is an exemplar of, more suspicious of deviant behavior among members of their own class. In this section, I will show how Tess, as a female deviant and a member of the rural working class, draws suspicion because of her sexual, class and gender deviance and ultimately suffers at the hands of a patriarchal society.

Hardy's novel is about a lower class woman, Tess Durbeyfield, whose father learns that their family may be related to the upper class family, the D'Urbervilles. Tess feels ashamed of her parents and her economic and social position, and while apprehensive of leaving home, does so at her father and mother's encouragement and her family's need for financial assistance. Through the course of the novel, Tess is introduced to the world of romantic relationships, which she has been ignorant of before leaving home. After capturing the attention of Alec D'Urberville and being raped by him, Tess flees to another farm in order to get away from Alec and her fallen and socially criminal past. When Tess falls in love with Angel Clare, who comes from a good, religious family, she is torn as to whether or not to tell Clare of her unchaste past. Eventually, Tess does tell Clare, which leads to her killing her former rapist, Alec, in order to fully erase her past blemishes. However, Tess's criminal act of murder has extreme repercussions and results in her being punished by death. Tess's punishment is understandable, given the anxiety surrounding the boundaries circumscribing social class, nationality and gender.

As stated in the introduction, during the Victorian era there was growing concerns and fears about women and violence. Therefore, publishers and critics of his time met Hardy's insistence that Tess, a murderess, is "A Pure Woman," which his subtitle declares, with disapproval. Mowbray Morris, a contemporary critic of Hardy, remarked in 1892 in the *Quarterly Review*: "We are required to read the story of Tess (or Theresa) Durbeyfield as the story of 'A pure woman faithfully presented by Thomas Hardy.' Compliance with this request entails something of a strain upon the English language" (qtd. in Parker 274). Morris's reference to the "English language"

indirectly shows his alliance to all things English and as his disapproval of Tess shows, does not include women who murder. Another critic of Hardy, Mrs. Oliphant wrote in 1892 that,

> we do not object to the defiant blazon of a Pure Woman, notwithstanding the early stain [Tess's rape]. But a Pure Woman is not betrayed into fine living and fine clothes as the mistress of her seducer…She would not have stabbed Mr. Alec D'Urberville…Whoever that person was who went straight from the endearments of Alec D'Urberville to those of the Clare Angel…she was not Tess; neither was she a Pure Woman. (qtd. in Parker 274)

Mrs. Oliphant, a well-known antifeminist, echoes Linton's sentiments about what defines a Pure Woman and a proper, English woman in particular. Tess lacks modesty, and her demand for retribution through her act of violence marks her as anything but a Pure, English Woman. Plus, what makes Tess's transgression so surprising is the fact that it takes place in England's countryside away from the corrupting influences of the cities.

COUNTRY LANDSCAPE AS SPECTACLE

Like in *Adam Bede* the countryside and the small village where Tess lives is seen as a pure, unadulterated place. The narrator explains that, "the village of Marlott lay amid the north-eastern undulations of the beautiful Vale of Blakemore or Blackmoor aforesaid—an engirdled and secluded region, for the most part untrodden as yet by tourist or landscape-painter, though within a four hours' journey from London" (Hardy 18). In other words, despite its proximity to London, Marlott has yet to be corrupted by the people and values of urban areas. Instead, Marlott is pictured as an idealistic place: "fertile and sheltered tract of country, in which the fields are never brown and the springs never dry" where "with but slight exceptions the prospect is a broad rich mass of grass and trees, mantling minor hills and dales within the major. Such is the Vale of Blackmoor" (18). Tess's

home is a place where one can only imagine a positive "prospect," or outlook on life; and the natural world is always "fertile" and never lacking in water. Jeff Nunokawa argues that Hardy's novel is influenced by the growing genre of tourist handbooks or guides whose purpose is to reveal to the tourist the primitive and unindustrialized English countryside. Nunokawa notes that the "Bank Holiday Act of 1871 enabled the development during the late nineteenth century of a mass domestic tourist industry" (74). Popular destinations for the middle and upper class tourists included Stonehenge where Tess is caught at the end of the novel. As tourists visit the English countryside, they consequently turn it into a spectacle, which is simply nice to look at. Turning something into a spectacle often results in the spectator only seeing one side of the object making the spectator vulnerable to hidden aspects or dangers surrounding the object. I will show how Tess, as part of this serene, country spectacle becomes a threat to the landscape and the patriarchal authority that oversees society.

"FINE PICTURESQUE COUNTRY GIRL AND NO MORE"

Like Hetty in *Adam Bede*, Tess is beautiful and her innocence is seen in that she has youthful features. Tess is said to be a "fine and handsome girl—not handsomer than some others, possibly—but her mobile peony mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape" (Hardy 20). Also, "phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes; and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then" (21). Ultimately, Tess is not as beautiful as Hetty, however she is still looked at. The narrator states that Tess is a "fine picturesque country girl and no more" (21). While at first this phrase seems derogatory, the word "picturesque" suggests that Tess is nice to look, and even gaze at. Also, ending the passage with "country girl and no more" suggests that Tess is only good

for looking at. Although Tess is beautiful, Angel Clare overlooks her as a dance partner the first time he sees her. The narrator explains that, “owing to her backwardness, he had not observed her” (23). However, as Angel leaves the dancing party, he regrets not dancing with her and looking back, he sees her and “he wished that he had asked her; he wished that he inquired her name. She was so modest, so expressive, she looked so soft in her thin white gown that he felt he had acted stupidly” (24). Although close up Angel fails to see Tess’s beauty and womanly charms, from a distance Angel is free to gaze and scrutinize Tess’s appearance and thereby make a judgment about her simply by looking. And because of what he sees, a “modest,” “soft,” woman in a “thin white gown,” Angel is sorry for not paying attention to her. What Angel sees from his distant, detached position is the ideal, virginal, and pure woman.

Like the countryside that becomes an object simply to be looked at, Nunokawa also argues that Tess becomes a spectacle that is constantly looked at. Not only are the men unable to keep from gazing at her but “the narrative is unable to keep its eyes off ” of Tess’s beauty (72). Nunokawa argues that there exists within the novel “the presence of a fancying gaze within the novel, as well as the fancied gaze—the fictional gaze—of the novel itself” (72). Nunokawa argues that Tess as a “feminine spectacle,” while a consequence of the difference in power relations between men and women, is also influenced by travel and tourist handbooks written during this time. The purpose of these tourist guides is above all to make a person see the places they want to visit; and in Hardy’s novel, Tess’s beauty and femininity is put on display in order to make the reader see her. However, the act of readers and men in the novel looking at Tess as a “feminine spectacle” is not a benign occurrence, since Tess is scrutinized and judged through this process. Like Angel, who takes advantage of his distant, male perspective, Tess is also looked at and made into a “feminine spectacle” by her supposedly wealthy relative, Alec D’Urberville. As a member of the

aristocracy, Alec uses his male gaze to scrutinize and in turn make judgments about Tess as a lower class woman. Alec's male gaze eventually leads to her downfall.

When the Durbeyfields send Tess in search of their supposedly rich relations, Joan Durbeyfield believes that Tess will win her relative over by her good looks. Tess on the other hand is disgusted and turned off by Alec D'Urberville, who is attracted to Tess and tries to kiss and woo her. When Alec asks for a kiss, after which he promises to leave Tess alone, the narrator explains that Tess looks in "desperation, her large eyes staring at him like those of a wild animal. This dressing her up so prettily by her mother had apparently been to lamentable purpose" (Hardy 61). Tess is too innocent to realize that her mother's plan has in fact worked and Tess is being successful in attracting the attention of a wealthy man. Tess's expression, described as one of "desperation," "staring," and eyes of a "wild animal," suggests that Tess is not only innocent but also a more primitive creature than Alec. Also, when Tess dodges Alec's kiss out of reflex, Alec calls her a "young witch" for going back on her word. Witches are especially known to resist and trespass society's norms and expectations, and the fact that Alec calls Tess a witch shows that she is not what he expects her to be: a docile, loose, working-class woman. Finally, Alec suavely kisses Tess's cheek, which she at once wipes off. Alec then remarks that she is "mighty sensitive for a cottage girl!"—the meaning of which is lost on Tess (61). However, Alec's remark is clearly a judgment of Tess's class. As stated above, women from the lower class were stereotyped during the Victorian era as unchaste and sexually immoral. Therefore, Alec is surprised to find that Tess is so modest and proper. While men with Alec's upper class standing were allowed to be promiscuous, women in upper class society were deemed superior to lower class women because of upper class women's assumed purity and good morals. Patricia Murphy argues that although Tess cannot be classified as a New Woman, who were mostly members of the growing middle class, she inevitably

> serves as a cautionary tale for the New Woman. That Tess is a member of the lower class rather than the middle class of the New Woman is immaterial; the novel foregrounds the ways a woman, regardless of class status, is reductively appraised as merely a specimen of the sex in a culture that always defines women in broad biological terms rather than attend to individual characteristics or concerns. (72-3)

Women, regardless of the social standing, were meant to be chaste, maternal and natural caretakers of the domestic sphere. Alec wants to pigeonhole Tess as a "specimen" of the lower class, overlooking Tess's individuality. After Tess is raped, she is simply considered a "fallen" and impure woman by a society that only sees her as a "specimen of the sex." This fall ultimately marks her as aberrant and degenerate and, as I will show, causes the gaze of patriarchy to be drawn to her.

The night Alec rapes Tess, she is walking home to the D'Urbervilles with a group of drunken fellow workers. Tess gets into a scuffle with another woman worker causing her to ride home with Alec, who has mysteriously appeared in the dark. As the two ride off, the company of drunken workers stands "all with a gaze of fixity in the direction in which the horse's tramp was diminishing into the silence on the road" (Hardy 77). The workers are surprised and intrigued by Alec's sudden appearance and by the fact that he swoops her away in the dark. The "gaze of fixity" that the workers direct toward the couple riding off together shows that there is cause to pay attention to what is happening and that perhaps something scandalous is about to take place. In fact something shameful and immoral does take place—Tess is raped. Despite the fact that Tess is the victim in this situation, she leaves The Chase feeling extremely guilty and different from who she was before. When Tess gives birth to her child, an experience for Victorian women meant to be fulfilling and satisfying, Tess sees the child not as a mark of womanhood but rather a mark of her shame. Tess

therefore feels indifferent towards her child and this lack of attention and affection marks her again as a deviant woman in Victorian society.

A scene with the infant represents how Tess deviates not only sexually but also in terms of what is expected of mothers. After breastfeeding her child, a very intimate act, "the young mother sat it upright in her lap, and looking into the far distance dandled it with a gloomy indifference that was almost dislike" (Hardy 102). The use of the pronoun "it" shows Tess's attitude of detachment to her child; the child is more like an object, a thing, to Tess. Also, Tess's "gloomy indifference" and "dislike" is shown in the fact that she does not even look at the child, but rather stares into the distance as if she wished to be far away from this scene. Tess cannot handle the guilt she feels of which her child is a daily reminder. Apparently, Tess expresses her contempt for her own and her baby's life, for the other women insist that "she's fond of that there child, though she mid pretend to hate en, and say she wishes the baby and her too were in the churchyard" (103). These women cannot understand or fathom a woman not loving her child, despite the clear signs of disdain Tess shows.

As was seen in *Adam Bede,* women—working class or not—were expected to be good, loving mothers; but like Hetty, Tess refuses to accept this role. Only when Tess realizes that her baby's life is in danger does she begin to show concern for the child she has yet to name. Tess fears her un-baptized child will end up in hell when it dies and wants to secure its soul in heaven. Therefore, she baptizes the child herself with the name "Sorrow" before it is overcome by illness. Tess then pleads with the priest, asking him if her baby's baptism was good enough to make it a Christian. Unlike Tess's earlier feelings of indifference towards her child, she now deeply cares about whether or not her child is going to suffer. Because of Tess's guilt about her sexual past, she does not want the same guilt to fall on her child. The narrator comments, "so passed away Sorrow the Undesired—that intrusive creature, that bastard gift of shameless Nature who respects not the

social law" (Hardy 108). Tess realizes that her child is innocent despite the "social law" that she herself suffers under; however, because Tess is a part of a society she herself is under a "social law" in which this child does not belong. Rosemarie Morgan argues that, "Tess's defiant act of baptising her illegitimate child, seen through the eyes of innocents, is the purest act of grace and loving-kindness. Whether or not Christian orthodoxy would deem her act sacrilegious is to Hardy irrelevant. The relevance lies simply in innocence speaking to innocence, child-mother to child-son, before an audience of innocent children" (100). However, Tess does not feel innocent and in fact is driven out of guilt to baptize her child. Tess does not want her child to suffer for her own sins, causing Tess to be driven by fear. Morgan sees Tess's baptism of her child as a sign of Tess wanting to take Fate into her own hands and determine the path of her life and her child's. While Tess certainly is taking Fate into her own hands, her main motivation is guilt and fear. Because of cultural and social restraints, Tess cannot let go of the guilt she has inherited from society. I would argue that although Tess really is sexually innocent at this point, by usurping male religious power she becomes even more of a social outcast and a threat to patriarchal authority.

After the death of her child, Tess leaves home again in search of work and a new start. She eventually falls in love with a fellow farm hand, Angel Clare. As much as Tess tries to resist, Angel finally convinces Tess to marry him. Angel comes from a religious family, his father is a reverend, and Angel has been educated to become the same. However, Angel sharply disagrees with his father's form of Christianity and chooses to become a farmer instead. Angel's father sees this as a step down the social ladder and is greatly disappointed that Angel has not followed in the steps of his older brothers and become a minister. Angel's parents also look down upon his decision to marry Tess because she comes from a family of lower social standing. Angel's mother's first question about his soon-to-be wife is whether she is a "lady" or not (Hardy 181). Angel is forced to admit that she is not "what in common parlance is called a lady […] for she is a cottager's daughter,

as I am proud to say. But she *is* a lady, nevertheless—in feeling and nature" (181). What Angel fails to know is that Tess is not a lady, even according to his standards. Instead, Tess has a dark secret that makes her suspicious and dangerous to Angel's plans for his ideal family.

WATCHED AND DAMNED

Through a close reading of the text, I will show that Tess's guilt and changed disposition is caused by the patriarchal gaze that is fixed on women who stand out from the norms of ideal, middle class sexuality. Directly after the rape scene, the narrator comments that, "an immeasurable social chasm was to divide our heroine's personality thereafter from that previous self of hers who stepped from her mother's door to try her fortune at Tantridge poultry-farm" (Hardy 83). Tess's change is most notably a change in her perceived social position and in her relation to others. Tess is no longer naïve about what people, i.e. men, are capable of. Tess's change is even more vividly seen in the chapter that follows. Directly following the above passage, the second book starts entitled, "Maiden No More," and Tess begins to feel her changed position. Upon returning home, Tess looks on her home, which to her was

> terrible beautiful […] for since her eyes last fell upon it she had learnt that the serpent hisses where the sweet birds sing, and her views of life had been totally changed for her by the lesson. Verily another girl than the simple one had been at home was she who, bowed by thought, stood still here, and turned to look behind her. She could not bear to look forward into the Vale. (87-8)

Tess is so full of shame and guilt that she cannot stand to look at her home, where she used to be a "simple" girl with no knowledge of the "serpent" that "hisses." But instead of blaming Alec, who is clearly responsible for Tess's fall, Tess blames herself. As the two are parting, Tess declares to Alec that she does not love him because if she did she would not "loathe and hate myself for my

weakness as I do now!…My eyes were dazed by you for a little, and that was all" (89). Maggie Humm argues that during the nineteenth century men's sexual expectations for women were so pervasive and restrictive that women began to internalize and accept these mores as their only options. Humm writes that, "Hardy presents a series of expectations, of conventional male views, of female behavior in sexuality, morality and marriage and shows how these dictated women's own attitudes and reactions" (41). Tess's attitude and self-criticism after her rape is a result of the pervasive Victorian narrative about what a "good" English woman should be. As has been shown, these attitudes were created by a number of social influences including religion, the rise of the middle-class, and changing economic relations.

Another demonstration of the patriarchal gaze is seen when Tess is on her way home after leaving Alec. Tess comes across a man who paints scripture verses on barn walls and other visible places on the Sabbath, for the benefit of others. For Tess he paints "THY, DAMNATION, SLUMBERETH, NOT" (Hardy 91). The narrator explains the jarring impression this phrase makes saying, "against the peaceful landscape, the pale decaying tints of the copses, the blue air of the horizon, and the lichened stile-boards, these staring vermillion words shone forth. They seem to shout themselves out and make the atmosphere ring" (91). Some may have protested at the painter's choice of scripture, but "the words entered Tess with accusatory horror: it was if this man had known her recent history; yet he was a total stranger" (91). Like the stagecoach driver that Hetty encounters, Tess imagines that this man knows of her sins. This painter of scriptures shows the common assumption of the innocence of the country when he tells Tess that he saves the "hottest ones," meaning the most damning: "them I kips for the slums and seaports. They'd make ye wiggle! Not but what this is a very good tex for rural districts" (92). The man is assuming that country people commit fewer sins and have less to feel guilty about. What he fails to know is that Tess does feel guilty even though she is not responsible for her sexual transgression.

After this scene, Tess tries to avoid the gaze of others as much as possible. When Tess decides to go to church, she tries to stay as "much out of observation as possible for reasons of her own, and to escape the gallantries of the young men" (Hardy 96). However, Tess does not escape observation, but instead, people in front of her repeatedly turn around and stare. Tess notices their looks and sees that "they whispered to each. She knew what their whispers were about, grew sick at heart, and felt that she could come to church no more" (97). Whether or not Tess really knows what the people are whispering about, Tess's guilty conscience causes her to be paranoid of what others are thinking and saying about her. Plus, given her encounter with the man on the road, Tess feels extreme guilt and is afraid that God is sitting in judgment of her. Tess feels this way not only because of what happens in church but also because of her own sense of herself and the natural world. Walking alone through the countryside the narrator explains Tess's changing relationship to the natural world:

> Her flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene. At times her whimsical fancy would intensify natural processes around her till they seemed a part of her own story. Rather they became a part of it; for the world is only a psychological phenomenon, and what they seemed they were. The midnight airs and gusts, moanings amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae of bitter reproach. A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood, and could not comprehend as any other. (97)

I quote this passage at length because it shows that Tess has so deeply internalized her feelings of guilt, causing her to see her own guilt and shame projected in the natural surroundings. Tess's experience, and the social stigma attached to her fallen state, has colored Tess's vision so that she

sees “the midnight airs and gusts, moanings,” “winter twigs,” and “wet days” all as pertaining to her own socially aberrant position; when in reality these things have nothing to do with her. Also, Tess’s sense of who God is has changed from the personal and genial God of her childhood to some “vague ethical being.” Although Tess does have some belief that her feelings of guilt are socially constructed, she still looks at herself walking through the fields as a “figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence” (97). Tess cannot get away from her guilt and her past eventually comes back to condemn her. For although Angel is willing to accept Tess’s lower social standing, he is not able to accept the fact that Tess has a dark and even socially criminal past.

“YOU WERE ONE PERSON: NOW YOU ARE ANOTHER”

Tess tries to forget about her past and the affair with Alec; in fact she “dismissed the past; trod upon it and put it out, as one treads on a coal that is smoldering and dangerous” (Hardy 211). Tess’s love for Angel is said to sustain her and “irradiated her into forgetfulness of her past sorrows, keeping back the gloomy specters that would persist in their attempts to touch her […] She knew they were waiting like wolves just outside the circumscribing light, but she had long spells of power to keep them in hungry subjection there” (213). Because Tess has no financial independence or surplus of wealth, she is unable to completely cover up her past. Instead, she has to live in perpetual fear of being found out. Throughout the novel, Tess feels guilt for something that was not even her fault. Society has made her believe that as a sexually deviant woman she is automatically guilty of crime and sin. The “gloomy specters” which are “waiting like wolves” represent society’s use of fear and imaginary crimes in order to keep women in their place. The past is dangerous for Tess; however, the lengths Tess goes to in order to erase the past make her even more dangerous because she is driven to criminal behavior.

Jennifer Hedgecock argues against literary critic Rebecca Stott, who claims that Tess is a femme fatale and therefore dangerous to men. Hedgecock instead argues that Tess "only becomes a danger to men who try to oppress her, and she is not a threat to men in general" (170). According to Hedgecock, Tess does not fit the definition of a femme fatale because Tess does not use the imperfect social order in order to manipulate those in power. Instead "Tess internalizes the defective social order. Unlike the femme fatale, whose survival instincts derive from the fact that though she internalizes conventional hypocrisies but does not use them against herself by punishing herself as a fallen women, Tess does precisely the opposite" (Hedgecock 176-7). In other words, Tess punishes herself for being a fallen woman and out of fear and guilt confesses her crime to Angel, which subsequently leads to her killing of her rapist and source of shame, Alec. Hedgecock ultimately sees Tess as benign and not a cause of concern to the social order. She writes,

> though Tess is a literal threat to D'Urberville, even violent toward him before she becomes his mistress, she poses no threat to the hegemonic power structure, whereas the femme fatale specifically undermines patriarchy and dominant ideologies by mimicking its social codes in order to remain undetected as a menacing predator. Tess, on the other hand, is simply forced back into her place, and when she resists, she is punished. (185)

However, although Tess may not fit the definition of a femme fatale, she does pose a threat to the patriarchal social order and "dominant ideologies" because she deviates from the virginal and maternal ideal of Victorian, English womanhood. Tess stands outside of several boxes that society wants to put her in; therefore, she must be contained in some way in order to protect middle class, bourgeois values and dominance, which are perpetuated through the family.

Jeffrey Weeks traces the rise of the nineteenth century family and how this social unit came to dominate social relations. The family and domesticity came to define the rising middle-class and

increasingly became the "gateway to respectability and stability" for the working class (24). With this rise in the family unit and its respectability, the family came to be a site of "surveillance, and control of sexual behavior" (Weeks 25). Economic, religious, class and cultural influences affected the "ideology of domesticity, which not only proposed the family as a Christian haven in a disrupted world, but put forward a code of rules and regulations for the governing of individuals' lives" (Weeks 27). As Fredrick Engels argues, with the shift from communal to private property and the need to pass on property through legitimate male heirs, controlling female sexuality became increasingly important, especially for the middle-class. In *Uneven Developments* Poovey points out that because of the social hierarchy, which kept women subjected to men's needs and desires, "woman's sexual infidelity challenged not only the security of the paternal relation and the man's exclusive right to property, but also the illusion that women were 'fixed' as reproductive (not sexually autonomous) beings, as dependent (not socially autonomous) subjects" (80). Poovey goes on to assert that "because of the place that woman occupied in the symbolic order, she was the guarantor of truth, legitimacy, property, and male identity" (80). This explains the importance of women remaining virtuous before and after marriage. Therefore, Tess's sexual history is automatically cause for alarm because it places her as other than the "angel in the house," causing Angel to be anxious about his "exclusive right to property." Although Tess tells Angel that the child she gave birth to is dead, Angel's view of Tess has inevitably changed. Tess's impurity ruins Angel's idea of the perfect family he envisioned, a family based on, despite Angel's disagreements with his conservative, dogmatic family, Christian and middle class values.

Weeks explains that state sanctioned marriage and the family that this implies came to be seen as a step toward respectability. Weeks shows how this ingrained ideology of family,

> was composed of a series of rules relating to marriage, the family and Home that for the evangelicals were rooted in Christianity but were also clearly related to

> wider social and economic aspirations. A central part of this was expressed in two catchwords of the bourgeoisie: prudence and postponement, ritualistic guidelines to the bourgeoisie at this stage of its history but also presented secondarily as models for the poor. The importance of living up to what was required by one's status and what one had been used to came out over and over again in the discussions of the time, and 'prudence' became a moral imperative in the process of becoming axiomatic in the 1830's and 1840's. (28)

Prudence entails caution, forethought and most importantly discretion. Although Angel claims to be above middle class and Christian rules and regulations, his reaction to Tess's confession shows how pervasive the notions of Victorian respectability were. Like Tess, Angel cannot get away from his past and the socialization of what is acceptable and good.

Tess's threat to the family and patriarchal authority is revealed in several places in the novel, but most notably after Tess and Angel are married and before Tess tells of her sexual history. Because Tess is afraid someone will reveal her fallen and shameful past, she is relieved that Angel has decided to avoid a public ceremony and simply apply for a marriage license. After they are married, Angel surprises Tess by bringing her to the old mansion of the true D'Urberville family. On the walls are several pictures of the dead aristocratic women of the family, which frighten Tess by their appearance. The women in the pictures have "long pointed features, narrow eye, and smirk of the one, so suggestive of merciless treachery; the bill-hook nose, large teeth, and the bold eye of the other, suggesting arrogance to the point of ferocity, haunt the beholder afterwards in his dreams" (Hardy 235). Seeing that Tess is upset by the paintings, Angel later calls them "harridans," a word which suggests cruel and evil women that certainly would be threatening. The fact that Tess becomes upset after seeing these pictures, suggests that she sees an image of herself in them, an image that she does not want to be. Although Tess may not be a direct image of these women, the

text suggests that Tess's secret of her sexual past does cause a threat to Angel and his idea of family.

Right before Tess is about to tell Angel about her past, the narrator professes his doom by painting a lurid and apocalyptic picture of what awaits Angel:

> Their hands were still joined. The ashes under the grate were lit by the fire vertically, like a torrid waste. Imagination might have beheld a Last-Day luridness in this red-coaled glow, which fell on the face and hand, on hers, peering into the loose hair about her brow, and firing the delicate skin underneath. A large shadow of her shape rose upon the wall and ceiling. She bent forward, at which each diamond on her neck gave sinister wink like a toad's. (Hardy 243-4)

References to "fire," a "red-coaled glow" and the "Last-Day" suggests the coming of the end times when judgment will be meted out to everyone. However, in this scene, instead of Tess being the one to receive judgment or destruction she seems to be the carrier of Angel's ruin. Tess's "large shadow" looms over Angel and bending towards him the "diamond on her neck gave a sinister wink like a toad's." The imagery suggests that Tess is a witch or one of the "harridans" in the paintings and a menace to Angel. Although Tess herself may not be a physical threat to Angel, for she is clearly not trying to manipulate or take advantage of him, this scene demonstrates that her sexual past does pose a threat to Angel. And indeed Tess's past does threaten Angel's ideas of their future life and family.

Angel cannot accept Tess's sexual impurity even though he admits that Alec was the cause of her downfall and that he even forgives her. This new knowledge of Tess makes him see her as a completely different person. Angel states, "you were one person: now you are another. My God—how can forgiveness meet such a grotesque—prestidigitation as that!" (Hardy 248). Angel cannot look at Tess as the same innocent, pure woman that he once knew. Plus, Angel admits that,

"forgiveness is not all" (251). In other words, even though Angel may be able to forgive Tess for what happened to her, nothing can change the fact that Tess is not a virgin as he once thought. Despite Angel's ability to forgive Tess, he still has to consider what others may think of him and his family if Tess's past was to become known. The important and pervasive middle class value of prudence requires that Angel reject Tess because of her fallen-ness, despite the fact that she is not to blame. Tess spoils Angel's careful planning and ideal family, and even though he admits his ideas are socially constructed, he cannot step outside the community that passes judgment and governs his attitudes.

When Tess argues with Angel, saying that many men in his position have forgiven their wives, he ironically declares "different societies different manners. You almost make me say you are an unapprehending peasant woman, who have never been initiated into the proportions of social things" (Hardy 252). Angel willingly admits that his attitudes towards his wife's sexual past are constructed through society. Yet his middle-class, religious upbringing causes Angel to be unwilling to accept Tess as a fallen woman. Angel even goes as far as to associate Tess's behavior to her aristocratic ancestry. He says,

> I cannot help associating your decline as a family with this other fact—of your want of firmness. Decrepit families imply decrepit wills, decrepit conduct. Heaven, why did you give me a handle for despising you more by informing me of your descent! Here was I thinking you a new-sprung child of nature: there were you, the belated seedling of an effete aristocracy! (252)

This passage particularly reveals Angel's attitudes and ideas about social class since he assumes that Tess's lack of propriety is a result, not of her lower class social position, as would be expected from middle class men, but because of her aristocratic descents. As noted by Weeks the aristocracy was often thought of as a source of moral degeneration in Victorian England, leading to reform

movements spearheaded by middle class Christian groups. Therefore, not only does Tess's lower class status make her vulnerable to the sexual advances of Alec in the beginning of the novel, but now, according to Angel, her supposed aristocratic ancestors are perhaps the reason for her impurity and weakness. Contrary to Angel's previous belief that Tess is a perfect, unadulterated part of Nature, Tess has been corrupted by her aristocratic ancestors. Angel's view of the aristocracy anticipates the "effete" and even effeminate upper class men seen in the sensation novels, which will be discussed in chapter two.

After Tess returns to Alec, living with him as his mistress, she eventually kills him out of revenge for ruining her life and her chance of being happy with Angel. The novel ends with Tess fleeing from the authorities. But when she is found, Tess proclaims in an eerily calm and serene manner that, "it is as it should be […] I am almost glad—yes glad! This happiness could not have lasted—it was too much—I have had enough; and now I shall not live for you to despise me […] I am ready" (Hardy 418). As a female murderer and a fallen woman, Tess knows she cannot live in society anymore; justice must be done for her act of violence. As a deviant lower class woman Tess cannot defend herself against society's rules and norms. Tess has few options, therefore, she passively accepts her fate with the phrase "I am ready" (418). The common narrative among Victorian authorities and moralists regarding Tess would be that her first step into a life of crime happened when she deviated from sexual norms. Those in power saw this as one crime leading to another, which as has been shown, is why prostitution is one of the worst activities for a woman. Once a woman has crossed the line of decent sexual behavior there is no telling what she might do.

FATHER AND SON REUNITE

Both Hetty and Tess have been socialized and therefore are expected to uphold the middle class, and therefore dominant, values. When they fail to live up to these values and norms they feel

extremely guilty because of the patriarchal gaze which is fixed on them. As noted by Jane Thomas, writers and social reformers were aware of the double standard between men and women and the way this standard was produced through socialization and not Nature or biology. Thomas writes that these activists, "focused not on Natural Law but on the power of the social process to determine gender and recognized that men's domination of that process had shaped femininity according to a definition of truth that supported a patriarchal order" (28). Hetty and Tess both fall short of the definition of femininity, which as shown earlier was defined by men alone in order to keep women passive and controllable. Also, like in *Adam Bede*, where Hetty comes between Adam and Arthur, Tess also disrupts male homosocial bonds, only in this case between father and son. Angel's choice of Tess as his marriage partner causes an even deeper divide between Angel and his father. Mr. Clare is already disappointed with his son's choice of profession and lower class lifestyle, but Angel's decision to marry Tess, a lower class and therefore unladylike woman, causes the two men to completely separate. Despite the differences between father and son, Angel remarks before marrying Tess that he believed himself more similar to his father. Angel thinks, "indeed, despite his own heterodoxy, Angel often felt that he was nearer to his father on the human side than was either of his brethren" (Hardy 185). However, because of their difference of opinion regarding Tess, the two men are kept apart until the end of the novel, when Tess is out of the way allowing the two men to reunite.

Like in *Adam Bede*, where Hetty and her unfathomable crimes were a source of mutual grief between Adam and Arthur, so too Tess's violent crime and her subsequent fate allow her to serve as a catalyst to bring Angel and his father back together. As a father, Mr. Clare feels sorry for his son's predicament; therefore, the two men are brought together in order to lament the shame Tess has brought onto Angel and the family in general. While the father and son's reunion is never explicitly stated, the end of the novel suggests that the two stand on common ground. The novel

ends with Angel and Tess's sister Liza-Lu in the city of Wintoncester watching the black flag, "the one blot on the city's beauty," which represents Tess's death by execution (Hardy 420). The city is described in detail, highlighting the "broad Cathedral tower, with its Norman windows, and immense length of aisle and nave, the spire of St. Thomas's, the pinnacled tower of the College" (420). The combination of the images of the Church and College, the two aspects that Mr. Clare saw missing from Angel's life, and their juxtaposition with Tess's death, suggests that the two are now brought together through this trial.

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Ultimately, Hetty and Tess fail to live up to the definition laid out by the male-dominated, ruling class. Therefore, through the act of punishing these deviant females and through the grieving that follows, the men in the community are brought together, reinforcing patriarchy. With these degenerate women out of the way, men can continue to oppress other women, using Hetty and Tess's tragic fate as an example to deter other women from overstepping their roles in society.
As has been made evident, Hetty and Tess, because of their sexual promiscuity and subsequent violence, become a threat to patriarchal control. Also, Hetty and Tess's acts of violence mark them as uncivilized, unEnglish and incapable of remaining in society. While Hetty and Tess are most certainly seen as a threat to the stability of society, they are not as overtly dangerous as the female criminals I will discuss in the next chapter. Because of their naïveté and innocence, Hetty and Tess remain rather innocuous and incapable of doing but so much damage to society. These countrywomen are only driven to extreme, violent behavior by their extreme circumstances and the failures of men in their life. Hetty and Tess's crimes of infanticide and murder are done out of impulse and in psychological states that could be considered madness. However, the female

criminals presented in the sensation novels, which I will discuss in chapter two, are much more capable of plotting, scheming and manipulating those around them in order to get what they want. And unlike in *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the men in the two sensation novels *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Armadale* are more effeminate; and the female criminals, while feminine in appearance, abnormally display masculine characteristics. These masculine females, therefore, become even more of a threat to male homosocial bonds in the novels and in turn the British and Christian patriarchal social order.

CHAPTER 2—FASCINATING SENSATIONS: FEMININE CRIMINALS IN *LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET* AND *ARMADALE*

In 1866 *The Spectator* wrote of Wilkie Collins's popular novel *Armadale* that this sensation story "gives us for its heroine a woman fouler than the refuse of the streets, who has lived in the ripe age of thirty-five, and through the horrors of forgery, murder, theft, bigamy, gaol and attempted suicide, without any trace being left on her beauty" (qtd. in O'Neill 195). The above passage speaks to the growing fear among Victorians that things are not always what they seem. As demonstrated in the introduction, Victorians, such as Lombroso and Mayhew, were deeply invested in the idea that physical traits could reveal the inner character of a person, especially in regards to social deviants, such as female criminals. However, as *The Spectator* review indicates, the female criminals Lady Audley and Lydia Gwilt use their beauty to deceptively mask their treacherous motivations and behavior, making them even more of a threat to the English and Christian bourgeois society.

As illustrated by the cartoon entitled "Sensation novels" (see Figure 4), this genre, and the scandalous behavior found in them, fascinated people across classes; however, these novels were most available and most interesting for women in the middle class. Middle class women not only had the money to purchase these works but also the leisure time to read. Although Eliot and Hardy's novels of realism were popular across classes when they were published, the sensation novels of the mid-nineteenth century were even more popular because of the controversy they

stirred. The authors of these stories grabbed the readers' attention by writing about deviant, dangerous and scandalous female characters involved in some sort of criminal behavior, such as adultery, bigamy, deception, and even murder. What made these female characters' behavior scandalous is that they were most often situated in middle class households and involved the middle class women who used what little power they had in order to improve their economic and social position. Therefore, middle class female readers found in these novels an outlet for their own frustrations.[5]

In her study of female murderesses in the nineteenth century, Mary S. Hartman points out that middle class women of the time showed intense interest in cases of female criminality, going to the trials and following the cases in the newspapers. She states that, "the general female absorption in the cases was not an isolated and aberrant development, but rather an integral part of the fantasy experience of women of the class. And in the end, the trials gave women an occasion to voice their concerns and discontents" (Hartman 268). Because these cases often involved women killing their husbands or lovers in order to maintain or advance their social position, other women who felt the same type of oppression from the men in their lives were sympathetic to these women's causes. Hartman goes on to say that, "these spectacles, to be sure, gave everybody an obvious occasion to wallow in the morbid details of murderous intrigue, but more importantly, as their behavior demonstrates, women found in the trials an opportunity for release of frustrations and for vicarious fulfillment of unrealized desires" (269). Women across classes, but especially in the middle class, were sympathetic towards female criminals because these deviant women most

[5]Lyn Pykett points out that sensational novels fulfilled several needs of the female readers and writers. She writes that "it supplied readers with some of the excitement missing from their middle-class lives; it gave writers more or less an off-the-peg formulae for the satiric subversion of literary conventions and social codes; it drew upon and reinforced a community of values shared by women writers and readers; and, perhaps most importantly, it articulated suppressed female emotions and expressed women's covert anger at the limitations of their social domestic circumstances" (49).

often were searching and trying to create a better life for themselves—a life other women wished they could have for themselves.

All of these factors made these novels very popular among women in Victorian England; however, not everyone was enthused about this genre. Literary and social critics denounced this form of fiction as dangerous and harmful to the young women who read them. Margaret Oliphant in particular saw the women who read and wrote sensation novels as betraying both "their essential womanhood and their womanliness" (Pykett 48).[6] Lynda Hart remarks that critics in the nineteenth century "repeatedly expressed their fear that women would identify with the Victorian villainess and thus might follow her example mimetically" (43). Because of their popularity across social class, these novels were particularly seen as pervasive and insipid. One writer in 1863 remarked in an article entitled "'Sensation' Literature" in *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* that,

> 'sensation' literature of the age must be considered a very alarming symptom as regards the intellectual and the moral feelings of society at this present date. It is only a morbid appetite that feeds on garbage. It is proverbially a very weak and childish character of mind that can find entertainment in nothing else than the accidents and police reports while reading the daily papers. (14)

This author saw sensation novels not only a problem and threat to individual persons, but also more importantly a sign of national moral decline. If women, especially middle class women who were seen as the keepers of domestic purity and morality, became corrupted, then the entire nation was in danger of becoming more like uncivilized and unchristian nations.

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[6]Oliphant writes, "It is a shame to women so to write; and it is a shame to the women who read and accept as a true representation of themselves and their ways the equivocal talk and fleshly inclinations herein attributed to them. Their patronage of such books is in reality an adoption and acceptance of them. It may be done in carelessness. It may be done in that mere desire for something startling which the monotony of ordinary life is apt to produce; but it is debasing to everyone concerned" (qtd. in Pykett 48).

Lyn Pykett makes an important argument saying that the "key opposition in the sensation novel is not between the 'masculine' woman and the 'feminine' woman, but between conflicting versions of femininity, in particular the proper and the improper feminine" (82). As was shown in *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, it matters greatly which type of femininity is presented by the female characters. In the two sensation novels I will discuss in this chapter, Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and Wilkie Collins *Armadale*, the proper and improper feminine are clearly seen in conflict. Both of these novels were popular when they were published and both point to the threat that female criminals pose to individual Englishmen and women but more importantly to England as a whole. These two deviant females are such a threat to England because they come between the male characters in the novel. By disrupting the homosocial bonds between the male heroes, Lady Audley and Lydia Gwilt threaten the foundation of English patriarchal rule.

Luce Irigaray argues that, "the law that orders our society is the exclusive valorization of men's needs/desires, of exchanges among men. What the anthropologist calls the passage from the nature to culture thus amounts to the institution of the reign of hom(m)o-sexuality" (171). Women have historically been associated with nature and the body, therefore, in order for culture to be created men must exclude women, collaborating and exchanging their intelligence. Irigaray goes on to write that, "although prohibited in practice, hom(m)o-sexuality is played out through the bodies of women, matter, or sign, and heterosexuality has been up to now just an alibi for the smooth workings of man's relations with himself, of relations among men" (172). Women are exchanged through marriage from a male relative to their husband, and with this exchange goes along the women's work. While men do the serious work of creating culture, making money and keeping the national economy and spirit alive, women stay at home and work to keep men free to do this type of labor.

However as I will show, the female deviants in these novels refuse to go along with the "exclusive valorization of men's needs/desires." Instead, both use cunning and deception, as well as violence, in an attempt to climb the social ladder and break the boundaries of class. Both female criminals use their femininity, acting out their expected gender role, in order to deceive society, which ultimately draws attention to the fact that female deviance is becoming harder to identify. These female criminals also draw attention to the fact that femininity does not equal "good" or "pure" women; instead, they show how femininity is a performance, which can be used to fascinate and in turn manipulate. Also, as a part of the rural setting, the female criminals in these novels threaten the peaceful and serene English countryside. The middle class liked the idea of being able to tailor and control their environment, whether it is their pristine gardens or the way men and women behaved. However, with the female criminal on the loose the countryside threatens to become just as uncontrollable and dangerous as the streets of any major city. Therefore, because of female criminals' class and gender deviance and their placement in the deceiving countryside, they are a threat to middle class, Christian, bourgeois society—the heart of England.

I. NO ROOM FOR LADY AUDLEY

Lady Audley's Secret, was serialized between 1861 and 1862, and is a typical Victorian sensation novel, which relates Robert Audley's search for his missing friend, George Talboys, who mysteriously vanishes at the beginning of the novel. Eventually it is revealed that Lady Audley was once Lucy Graham Talboys, George's wife; but when he was gone overseas for an extended period of time, Lady Audley fakes her own death and changes her name in order to remarry and thereby gain a better means of financial support. Lady Audley, now a woman of the upper class by way of her marriage to a respectable and wealthy man, Sir Michael, goes to great lengths to cover up her crime of bigamy, desertion and lying, going even so far as arson and attempting to kill George. Her

nephew Robert Audley eventually puts the pieces together and figures out the schemes Lady Audley has been plotting. Robert also finds out that Lady Audley's mother suffered from madness, and therefore, succeeds in locking Lady Audley up in an insane asylum.

In this section I will argue that Lady Audley as a female criminal and a female deviant, threatens to undermine English, Christian, bourgeois society. Like Hetty who causes discord between Arthur and Adam, and Tess who stands between Angel and his father, Lady Audley gets in the way of the male homosocial/homoerotic bond between Robert and George. Lady Audley is responsible for George's disappearance causing Robert a great deal of anxiety and anguish. The two friends went to school together but although they have not been in contact since their school days at Eton, the two immediately form a deep and sustaining bond. The two friends' homosocial/homoerotic bond is seen early on in the novel when George learns about his missing and presumed dead wife. The narrator captures their feelings for one another saying that, "the young man looked at [Robert] with a pitiful, bewildered expression. The big dragoon was as helpless as a baby; and Robert Audley, the most vacillating and unenergetic of men, found himself called upon to act for another. He rose superior to himself and equal to the occasion" (Braddon 42). Seeing George's manliness being reduced to a helpless "baby" causes Robert to spring into action. Like a lover who looks at their beloved when in need, George's "pitiful" and "bewildered expression" is the only thing that seems to move Robert and give him a desire to "act for another."

Robert is a barrister by name, who "never either had a brief, or tried to get a brief, or even wished to have a brief" (Braddon 35). He is also said to be a "handsome, lazy, care-for-nothing fellow, of about seven-and twenty" (35). Robert spends his time "smoking his German pipe, and reading French novels" (35). Robert is described as having a "lymphatic nature" and "determination was so much the exception, rather than the rule" (92). While Lady Audley has worked and schemed to get where she is now, a rich and respectable woman, Robert is known to be lazy and the other

barristers make fun of him for his lack of gumption. Also, Robert's taste for French novels symbolizes his affectedness and degeneracy.

English masculinity in the mid-nineteenth century came to be considered under attack from outside foreign influences. As noted in chapter one, Charles Kingsley's idea of "Muscular Christianity" was an influential movement in the Victorian era. Kingsley's "Muscular Christianity" focused on self-discipline, which in turn helped to sustain what James Eli Adams calls the "Victorian cult of athleticism, and British imperial rule" (108-9). With British fears of French invasion exacerbated by the Crimean War and the terror invoked by the Indian Mutiny of 1857, there existed at mid century growing "anxieties about both the leadership and the fortitude of Britons charged with upholding the empire" (Adams 109). Therefore, as an upper class Englishman, Robert is supposed to be a person of authority, drive and above all else, productivity, not what Frenchmen were characterized to be: foppish, dandy, weak and effeminate. However, Robert fails to live up to these British standards of masculinity, which most certainly would have caused anxiety among readers, *until* his friend George becomes missing. Robert's homoerotic relationship to George allows Robert to become appropriately masculine by driving him to do whatever it takes to find him, even to the extent of accusing his aunt Lady Audley of his murder. Lynda Hart argues that, "Lucy Audley serves as both a catalyst to Robert's desire for George and an obstacle to be overcome. That is, by prohibiting the visibility of that desire she thereby permits it to proceed. The paradox of the criminal woman thus her positioning is, at once, problem and solution to the homosocial economy" (34). In other words, because Lady Audley stands in the way of the recently reunited friends, she is useful and necessary for Robert to become a full member of the male bourgeois world. And his pursuit to "unveil" Lady Audley makes Robert into a proper Englishman and as I will show, a proper Christian.

In regards to the homosocial bonding in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Richard Nemesvari makes a convincing argument that Robert's homosocial secret undercuts his role as an English patriarch. Nemesvari writes:

> The nature of Robert's detections, which uncover just enough to banish the threatening female presence while concealing the male desire which cannot be named, has been 'outed' sufficiently that the novel destabilizes the patriarchal/heterosexual norm of its closure. Braddon's presentation of her protagonist subverts his pose as reformed protector of what is right and proper by exposing the illicit foundation upon which his status rests. (527)

While Braddon may be exposing the homosocial and perhaps homoerotic bonds which patriarchy relies on, her readers would have read Robert as simply coming into his proper role as an English patriarch. The "subtexual secrets" would most likely remain secrets, since Braddon's readers would align the author's narrative with the mainstream Victorian narrative of female sexual and gender deviance. The wicked, female criminal and oppressor is locked away were she dies "peacefully" and the hero is "At Peace," as the title of the last chapter shows. Also, the "illicit foundation" or "patriarchal/heterosexual norm" remains in place within the novel itself, and within the Victorian readers' imagination. It would have been completely normal for male bonding to continue and flourish, and no one would have expected any type of "illicit" relationship. What is suspicious in *Lady Audley's Secret* is the incongruence between Lady Audley's feminine appearance and performance and her criminal, bad behavior.

ACTS OF FEMININITY AND HINTS OF EVIL

Lady Audley disrupts the rule of patriarchy by seeming to represent ideal middle class femininity, when in reality she is anything but the ideal female. When Robert first interacts with

Lady Audley after George's disappearance, Lady Audley is said to give him a "pretty mock ceremonious curtsey," which suggests that she is simply pretending or acting out the part of a gracious female (Braddon 87). Also, Robert notices that his aunt is "very charming" in that she showed the "most bewitching incapacity for carving the pheasant" (88). The words "charming" and "bewitching" demonstrate that Lady Audley is not simply beautiful, but that she can use her beauty to control the men around her and prevent them to see what she does not want them to see. Also, Sir Michael enjoys watching the impression that his wife's "beauty and fascination" make upon his nephew (88). The juxtaposition of "beauty" and "fascination" at first seems odd; however, given the fact that Lady Audley is putting on a performance, it makes since that her beauty fascinates or captivates, both terms which are often used to describe viewers of a performance. Similar to the way Hetty and Tess use their good looks in an attempt to move out of their low class standing, Lady Audley also uses her ability to perform femininity to increase her social and class standing.

Lady Audley was formerly a beautiful governess named Lucy Graham who married into wealth. Her beauty and youth caught Sir Michael Audley's attention causing him to propose to the young woman. It is said that "everyone" including her "employer; his visitors; her pupils; the servants […] united in declaring that Lucy Graham was the sweetest girl that ever lived" (Braddon 12). Also, like Hetty and Tess, Lucy/Lady Audley is described as young, innocent, beautiful and childlike. The narrator explains that "the innocence and candour of an infant beamed in Lady Audley's fair face, and shone out of her large and liquid blue eyes. The rosy lips, the delicate nose, the profusion of fair ringlets, all contributed to preserve to her beauty the character of extreme youth and freshness" (55). Because of Lady Audley's "innocence," "candour," "fair face," "delicate nose," reminiscent of an "infant" and "extreme youth and freshness" no one would expect Lucy of any evil or wrongdoing.

Judith Butler has convincingly argued that masculinity and femininity are simply performances or a repetition of acts of which there is no original or no ontological basis for gender. Robert anticipates Butler's theory saying that even beautiful people can be deceptive. He states that, "I believe rather that we may walk unconsciously in an atmosphere of crime, and breathe none the less freely. I believe that we may look into the smiling face of a murderer, and admire its tranquil beauty" (Braddon 144). Robert's statement is ironic given that he repeatedly looks upon and admires Lady Audley, a murderess's beauty. Therefore, although Robert and the Victorians believe Lady Audley's gender performance, which Robert notes here to be a "smiling face" or "tranquil beauty," Lady Audley is not essentially female, nor does she have the attributes that go along with female such as pure, passive, passionless and above all innocent. Instead, Lady Audley is performing these feminine traits when in fact she is a deceptive and cunning criminal. Robert's comment shows that he is on the brink of understanding gender as a performance; but as I will show later, Robert ultimately relies on essentialist discourse by claiming that Lady Audley, because of her criminal behavior, can no longer be a woman.

Although Lady Audley puts on a convincing façade of femininity, there are clear signs in the beginning of the novel that there lurks mystery and even evil behind Lady Audley's ideal, feminine appearance. This is particularly evident when Robert and George look at her portrait. When Robert and George sneak into Lady Audley's chambers to have a look at her portrait, they are surprised at what they see. The narrator eerily remarks that, "no one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait" (Braddon 72). The narrator makes excuses for the painter stating that most likely "the painter had copied quaint mediaeval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend" (72). This portrayal of Lady Audley clearly shows the contradictions involved in her upper class femininity. Lady Audley's "pretty pouting mouth," an

expected feminine feature, turns into a “hard and wicked” look in her portrait. Braddon’s use of the words “monstrosities” and “fiend” show the fear and anxiety surrounding Lady Audley’s feminine and yet wicked characteristics. While on the outside Lady Audley appears “normal,” her portrait reveals her potential for deviant, wicked behavior. Jennifer Hedgecock argues in *The Femme Fatale in Victorian Literature*, that even Lady Audley’s hair color points to the contradictions evident in her feminine appearance. Hedgecock writes that, “her long, flowing hair can be a symbol of vicious excess and lust, or paradoxically, an implicit desire for independence from the bourgeois conventions or a protest against them” (119). Lady Audley undoubtedly wants to belong to upper class society, however, the means she employs to gain access to this world, “independence” and “vicious excess and lust,” automatically mark her as other than the ideal feminine female, and in fact, as I will show, make her into anything but a woman. For now, this picture shows the potential Lady Audley has for evil and deviance.

Robert’s cousin Alicia pointedly states that, “*we* have never seen my lady look as she does in that picture; but I think that she *could* look so” (Braddon 73). Alicia suggests that perhaps this portrait of Lady Audley reveals what lies underneath her perfect exterior and lays bare the fact that Lady Audley wears a mask in order to hide “monstrosities” of evil (72). References to masks are numerous throughout the novel. Robert makes it his task to unmask Lady Audley; and with this vow, Robert becomes symbolic of the patriarchal gaze that wants to protect bourgeois homosocial male bonds. When contemplating what move to make next, Robert decides to “go straight to the arch conspirator [Lady Audley], and will tear away the beautiful veil under which she hides her wickedness, and will wring from her the secret of my friend’s fate and banish her for ever from the house which her presence has polluted” (251). Robert sees his uncle’s wife as a source of contamination polluting the bourgeois house she has gained access to. Within Victorian society, men must remain authoritative leaders and therefore in control of all members of the household.

But Lady Audley is a source of contamination because, as Jennifer Hedgecock argues, Lady Audley as a Victorian woman is non-normative. In fact, as Hedgecock writes, "in terms of the normative concept of what a woman should be, she is not. In her refusal to accept her poverty, she implicitly points to the fragmented and aberrant nature of her culture that allows certain people privileges while denying others the same advantages" (124). Throughout the novel, Lady Audley, having come from a life of poverty, is obsessed with gaining status and wealth. In fact, even when Lady Audley is being taken away from Audley Court, never to return, she steals whatever jewelry and silver she can. Lady Audley at first marries George, a military dragoon, in order to move up in social status; however, when she is abandoned she develops another plan to secure economic affluence. Similar to Hetty, who hopes to marry Arthur and become a member of the middle class, Lady Audley shows drive and determination to penetrate the upper classes. However, like Hetty, Lady Audley too is subjected to the patriarchal gaze, symbolized through Robert, whose purpose is to seek out social deviance in order for patriarchy to maintain its hegemonic status. Not only must Robert protect patriarchy and bourgeois authority, but he must also protect the countryside and the country itself from Lady Audley's deviant female devices.

HIDING BEHIND THE BUSHES

The beginning passages of *Lady Audley's Secret* present a mysterious and ominous Audley Court, which on the surface appears to be a quiet and serene haven away from the city. But like the female criminal, Lady Audley, the countryside is anything but what it appears to be. Audley Court, were the novel is primarily set, is said to

> lay low down in a hollow, rich with fine old timber and luxuriant pastures; and you came upon it through an avenue of limes, bordered on either side by meadows, over the high hedges of which the cattle looked inquisitively at you as

> you passed, wondering, perhaps, what you wanted; for there was no thoroughfare, and unless you were going to the Court you had no business there at all. (Braddon 7)

Like the picturesque countryside seen in *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Audley Court is also surrounded in beauty with "luxuriant pastures," "avenue of limes," and "meadows." At first glance Audley Court and the countryside appear to be idyllic and meant to be gazed at. However, with a closer look, it is clear that Braddon wants to highlight the reclusive and protectionist attitude of Audley Court in its country setting. The countryside of Braddon's novel is a place where visitors are generally unwelcome, for instead of the visitors staring at the beautiful landscape, they are met with inquisitive looks from the cattle "wondering, perhaps, what you wanted." Audley Court is also a place strictly controlled by gardeners and landscapers. The "avenue of limes, bordered on either side by meadows" is obviously constructed by people and does not occur naturally. Also, the "high hedges" signals that someone takes care of this avenue and hedges, keeping them high on purpose to keep out the glances of interlopers. Therefore, unlike the inviting countryside seen in the first two novels, Braddon presents a countryside that is not meant to be looked at, for the people who live here perhaps do not live open lives but instead, like Lady Audley, have secrets.

The rest of the description of Audley Court is even more ominous. The narrator points out that on the grounds there was "an orchard bordered by a dry moat, and a broken ruin of a wall, in some places thicker than it was high, and everywhere overgrown with trailing ivy, yellow stonecrop, and dark moss" (Braddon 7). The "dry moat" and "broken ruin of a wall" suggest that Audley Court is a place of barrenness and brokenness. The fact that the ruins are overgrown with "ivy" and "dark moss" suggests that Audley Court is past its prime and in a state of decay. Also, the house and garden is said to be "shadowed on one side by goodly oaks" causing a "darkening shelter" (7). Clearly Audley Court and the people there do not want to be disturbed and the description of the

house makes this even clearer. The main door of the house "was squeezed into a corner of a turret at one angle of the building, as if it was in hiding from dangerous visitors, and wished to keep itself a secret" (8). Unlike the description of Adam Bede's house, which demonstrated order and cleanliness, symbolic of Christianity and purity, Audley Court is in a state of disarray, darkness and secrecy. Audley Court, unlike the Christian and clean countryside in *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, is a place that not only hides from "dangerous visitors," but it also conceals its own secrets.

Later in the novel, the narrator describes a "fierce and crimson sunset" that colored everything including the hidden well (Braddon 28). Here, Braddon foreshadows Lady Audley's attempt to kill George Talboy by pushing him down the well, stating how the "crimson brightness penetrates in fitful flashes, till the dank weeds and the rusty iron wheel and broken woodwork seem as if they were flecked with blood" (28). And while the place does seem peaceful with the "lowing of a cow in the quiet meadows, the splash of a trout in the fish-pond, the last notes of a tired bird, the creaking of waggon-wheels upon the distant road," what follows signals that something is amiss among the stillness. The narrator explains that these noises which were

> every now and then breaking the evening silence, only made the stillness of the place seem more intense. It was almost oppressive, this twilight stillness. The very repose of the place grew painful from its intensity, and you felt as if a corpse must be lying somewhere within that grey ivy-covered pile of building—so deathlike was the tranquility of all around. (28)

The allusion to a "corpse" and the use of the adjectives "grey" and "deathlike" signal to the reader that something ominous is about to break the stillness of this haunted place. Also, the narrator's use of the word "oppressive" suggests that someone or something is bearing down and controlling the surroundings. An oppressive stillness implies that it takes effort to create this stillness and that

this withholding serves the one holding the secrets. Only later in the novel is it revealed that Lady Audley is the one holding the secrets in order to oppress and control those around her. Also, with the use of "you," the narrator draws the reader in, making her feel this oppression as well. This passage also stands out because of the narrator's juxtaposition of seemingly opposite words or phrases. The narrator uses "repose," a state associated with peacefulness, and turns it into something "painful" and intense. The narrator also adds to the mood of the scene by modifying "tranquility" with "deathlike." This odd juxtaposition jars the reader making her uneasy with the surroundings being described. Therefore, by using words that readers are not used to seeing together, the narrator draws attention to the foreboding atmosphere, foreshadowing events to come.

Braddon also draws attention to the surrounding countryside, suggesting that unlike the safe and peaceful rural area, the country is becoming just as dangerous as the cities. She writes,

> we hear every day of murders committed in the country. Brutal and treacherous murders; slow, protracted agonies from poisons administered by some kindred hand; sudden and violent deaths by cruel blows, inflicted with a stake cut from some spreading oak, whose very shadow promise—peace. In the country of which I write, I have been shown a meadow in which, on a quiet summer Sunday evening, a young farmer murdered the girl who had loved and trusted him […] No crime has ever been committed in the worst rookeries about Seven Dials that has not been also done in the face of that sweet rustic calm which still, in spite of all, we look on with a tender, half-mournful yearning, and associate with—peace. (Braddon 57)

I quote this passage at length because it reveals not only the atmosphere that Braddon is writing in, but also the other writers I discuss. England's countryside was long thought of as a place of "peace" and refuge from the hustle and bustle of London and other cities that were becoming increasingly

industrialized and infected with crime. However, as this passage points out, crime, especially "brutal and treacherous murders," was spreading to the "sweet rustic calm" or the country. Therefore, the countryside is even more dangerous than "Seven Dials" because the violence and horror of murder is unexpected in a place of supposed "peace." Robert Audley also notes this sentiment later in the novel when he begins to suspect Lady Audley of evil deeds.

Robert remarks to Lady Audley in an attempt to rattle a confession from her, "what do we know of the mysteries that may hang about the houses we enter? […] Foul deeds have been done under the most hospitable roofs, terrible crimes have been committed amid the fairest scenes, and have left no trace upon the spot where they were done" (Braddon 143). Robert's insistence that "terrible crimes" have been done under "hospitable roofs" and "amid the fairest scenes" shows indeed how deceptive a person's setting can be. Robert, whether he believes it or not, shows that no one in any place is safe, regardless of its supposed safety. Crimes can be committed, and have been committed, even in such guarded and serene places as Audley Court. Therefore, unlike the city, where crime was expected and a police force was beginning to be developed in order to deal with crime, the countryside and the peaceful setting of Audley Court is deceptive and especially dangerous. As Robert points out, no one can tell when they are in a place where crimes have been committed and is potentially precarious, or, as has been shown, who may be the perpetrators of violent crimes. Like the countryside that hides the horrific deeds done there, it is possible also for people to hide behind their innocent, good looks. The places and perpetrators of crime are not always obvious; and this indeed is dangerous to Robert and the Victorians who were so invested in categorizing and labeling good from bad in an attempt to recognize and control the bad. Similarly, Lady Audley herself is more dangerous than Hetty and Tess because she fits the norm of what an upper class woman should be, therefore making her harder to detect as a threat. Although Lady

Audley comes from the lower class, her beauty and seemingly innocent character protect her from suspicions of any wrongdoing.

THE FEMALE THREAT TO MASCULINE, CHRISTIAN ENGLAND

Robert's desire and drive to find out what happened to his friend George eventually causes him to refine his masculinity by turning to Christianity. Victorian masculinity, as defined and advocated by Charles Kingsley, was closely related to a man's devotion and duty to God. T. C. Sandars, in a review of Kingsley's work, writes that, "[Kingsley's] ideal is a man who fears God and can walk a thousand miles in a thousands hours—who, […] breathes God's free air on God's rich earth" (qtd. in Hall 7). Donald E. Hall points out that Kingsley's ultimate masculine man possessed "religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself" (7). Hall and other scholars note that Muscular Christianity and Victorian masculinity contributed to the hegemony of the male, white, wealthy, ruling class over women and non-dominant forms of masculinity. Therefore, although Robert goes through a Christian conversion, this does not change his misogynist attitudes and in fact only reinforces them.

In despair, and at a loss as to what to do next, Robert "rests his elbows on his knees and buried his face in his hands. The one purpose which had slowly grown up in his careless nature until it had become powerful enough to work a change in that very nature, made him what he had never been before—a Christian; conscious of his own weakness; anxious to keep to the strict line of duty" (Braddon 159). The narrator then notes that Robert "perhaps uttered his first thoroughly earnest prayer that night" (159). At this point Robert becomes the good, Christian and English hero who is needed to defeat the evil manifested in Lady Audley. After this period of prayer and meditation in which he thinks for his friend George, Robert heroically declares, "Justice to the dead first […] mercy to the living afterwards" (159). Robert's first priority is to deliver justice to his dead friend

and in turn to protect male authority and privilege not to find out the reasons *why* his friend is dead—George's abandonment of his family and women's fragile economic status. It is obvious throughout the novel that Robert does not want to listen to women or hear about their disadvantages. Instead, he is driven by what he now believes to be his Christian and masculine duty to apprehend the criminal responsible for George's disappearance, who he at first thinks to be George's former wife. Consequently, by asserting power and control over women, Robert, as a man, is finally able to become what Judith Halberstam calls the "real thing" (1). Halberstam claims that, "female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing" (1). Lady Audley, as a female who acts out masculinity, threatens to undermine Robert's masculinity. Therefore, Robert's misogynistic attitudes are a result of him as an English man feeling inadequate and not quite the "real thing."

Robert's contempt and misogynistic attitude toward women is obvious throughout the novel, since he often blurts out a diatribe about the many vices and shortcomings of women. After one such diatribe, Robert, out of despair states, "I hate women […] They're bold, brazen, abominable creatures, invented for the annoyance and destruction of their superiors" (Braddon 208). This passage clearly demonstrates Robert's sense of his inferior masculinity. The words "bold" and "brazen" represent what Robert, as an Englishman, should be. However, these characteristics present in a woman turn them into "abominable creatures," who are annoying and destructive to their "superiors," who are most certainly men. He continues to blame women for his friend's destruction and disappearance, saying that George's "good, honest, manly heart, [is] worth a million of the treacherous lumps of self-interest and mercenary calculation which beat in women's breasts" (208). Robert's comparison of George's "manly heart" to women's "treacherous lumps" shows Robert's contempt for women who get in the way of his bond between his dear male friend. Therefore, Robert recognizes that women, such as Lady Audley who take on masculine

characteristics, threaten his own masculinity making them destructive and dangerous to patriarchy and the homosocial bonds that uphold the gender hierarchy. The danger women, and specifically Lady Audley, present is represented in a dream Robert has when he visits the Victoria Hotel.

Robert visits the Victoria Hotel in his attempt to track down Lady Audley's past life. When he arrives at the hotel at night "he found himself upon a wide bowling-green of smooth grass, which surrounded a huge square building that loomed darkly on him through the winter's night, its black solidity only relieved by two lighted windows, far apart from each other, and glimmering redly like beacons on the darkness" (Braddon 240-1). The porter quickly assures Robert that the place is a popular destination for travelers in the summer months, despite its ghostly and darkly appearance now. Although the description of the hotel is somewhat ominous, it also suggests a place of security and safety. The fact that the hotel is called Victoria is symbolic of England itself and the monarchy that rules. Also, the "huge square building" is said to have "black solidity," phrases which both suggest stability. Although the building "loomed darkly" on Robert, he is reassured by two "light windows" that are "glimmering redly like beacons on the darkness." This imagery suggests that the Victoria Hotel, or England itself, is a "beacon" or lighthouse to its allies. England is a place of stability, safety and security in the menacing and troubling dark, welcoming those it considers friends.

The dream Robert has while at the hotel tells what happens to those who are not friends of England. In his dream Robert saw "Audley Court, rooted up amidst the green pastures and the shady hedgerows of Essex, standing bare and unprotected upon the desolate northern shore, threatened by the rapid rising of a boisterous sea, whose waves seemed gathering upward to descend and crush the house he loved" (Braddon 244). As the waves got closer to Audley Court Robert sees in his dream "a pale, starry face looking out of the silvery foam, and knew that it was my lady, transformed into a mermaid, beckoning his uncle to destruction" (244). Finally in Robert's

dream, he sees a “ray of light” break through the dark clouds and the waves recede leaving Audley court untouched (244). What is most striking about Robert’s dream is that Lady Audley is described as a mermaid. Mermaids have often been associated with the sirens in classical mythology who allured ships with their beautiful voices, making them wreck in shallow waters. And as the Oxford Dictionary notes, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mermaid was another word for prostitute, the lowest and most frequent form of the female criminal. In Robert’s dream the waves that threaten “bare and unprotected” Audley Court are personified as Lady Audley who is imagined by Robert to be a dangerous, deceptive mermaid, or worse an unnatural prostitute who preys on unsuspecting men like Robert’s uncle. But what is also present in the imagery of Robert’s dream is that Lady Audley in the form of a mermaid is a threat to not only Robert’s uncle and Audley Court, of which Robert is the inheritor, but Lady Audley is also a threat to England itself. The fact that Audley Court is presented on the shore, suggests that it represents England, an island nation that can only be threatened by enemies at sea. Also, the “green pastures and the shady hedgerows” are quintessential images of England and its well-groomed gardens and pastures, beauty that is about to be destroyed and overtaken by a dangerous woman. Therefore, Robert goes to great lengths to bring justice to his friend, but more importantly to preserve not only Audley Court and the surrounding countryside, which is his inheritance, but also England itself. And in order to do this he has Lady Audley committed to an insane asylum where he says she will “have ample leisure to repent the past” (378). Robert’s statement shows his new devotion as a Christian, and Lady Audley’s criminality and sinful existence makes Robert stand out even more as the hero and truly good and masculine man. In fact, Robert goes so far as to declare that Lady Audley is not only a sinner in need of repentance, because of her gender deviance, but also that she is no longer female or male.

LADY AUDLEY AS NOT WOMAN

When Robert finds out that Lady Audley tried to kill him by setting on fire the inn he was staying at, he declares that "henceforth you must seem to me no longer a woman; a guilty woman with a heart which in its worst wickedness has yet some power to suffer and feel; I look upon you henceforth as the demoniac incarnation of some evil principle" (Braddon 340). Robert cannot imagine a woman in Lady Audley's position doing such a horrible thing. Therefore, in his mind Lady Audley, although a beautiful, feminine person, is no longer a woman. Robert's declaration is related to what Hart references as "Masculinity Theory," which states that, "crime is already gendered" (13). To commit a crime not only marks women as detestable but also as masculine persons. Because the Victorians were strongly invested in the idea that only men can be masculine, for women to take on male attributes was a cause for alarm. In fact it is not possible, as Robert demonstrates, for masculine females are no longer considered women. However, these "not women" still needed to be controlled. Like in *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, where Hetty and Tess are taken away by men in power in order to be tried for their crimes, Lady Audley is placed in an insane asylum in order to be contained.

Once Robert has done the detective work needed to reveal Lady Audley's deceptive past, he calls on a doctor to determine whether or not she is insane. Robert wants to save his uncle the shame that a public trial would bring on the family name. The narrator explains "how often he had awoken in an agony of shame from a vision of a crowded court-house, and his uncle's wife, in a criminal dock, hemmed in on every side by a sea of eager faces" (Braddon 370). Therefore, in order to avoid this spectacle Robert calls on the service of a medical professional, Dr. Mosgrave. At first upon hearing Lady Audley's story Dr. Mosgrave does not believe her to be mad. He states that "she employed intelligent means, and she carried out a conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation in its execution. There is no madness in that" (370). However, after talking to Lady

Audley himself he declares, “there is latent insanity! […] The lady is not mad; but she has the hereditary taint in her blood. She has the cunning of madness, with the prudence of intelligence. I will tell you what she is, Mr. Audley. She is dangerous!” (372). Because Lady Audley’s mother was mad and because she is intelligent and capable of getting what she wants through manipulation, Dr. Mosgrave finally declares that “she is dangerous.”

Right before the doctor leaves, he gives Robert his professional opinion, saying that locking her up in a madhouse is the best option. He gives his reasons saying, “as a physiologist and as an honest man I believe you could do no better service to society than by doing this; for physiology is a lie if the woman I saw ten minutes ago is a woman to be trusted at large. If she could have sprung at my throat and strangled me with her hands, as I sat talking to her just now, she would have done it” (Braddon 374). Dr. Mosgrave begins this statement by reiterating his professional position and qualifications “as a physiologist.” The doctor is also sure to point out that he is an “honest man” and thereby pointing to his position as a member and guardian of the bourgeois, since upper class men were considered to be trustworthy and upstanding citizens. Because of the doctor’s superior social position, he also calls on Robert’s position and duty as a man of the bourgeois to do his “service to society” by locking up Lady Audley in a madhouse. Dr. Mosgrave says, “physiology is a lie,” meaning his profession is useless, if he cannot judge Lady Audley correctly. And although physiology is technically the study of the internal workings of an organism, Dr. Mosgrave judges Lady Audley by external appearances saying she would have killed him if she could.

PATRIARCHAL AUTHORITY RESTORED

Lady Audley clearly demonstrates female deviance through her refusal to be obedient and submissive. But Jill Matus also argues that, “Braddon’s sensation novel goes further than that as it puts a finger on the work done by discourses of morality and madness in establishing gender and

class boundaries, and contributing to middle-class hegemony" (351). Lady Audley tries to escape her inherited lower social class by using cunning and deception; however, she is eventually caught and made to account for her mother's madness. The Victorians believed that madness was most often passed down from mother to daughter, or mother to son. Therefore, because Lady Audley's mother suffered from madness, Robert and Dr. Mosgrave, representatives of the patriarchal order, make Lady Audley stay within her 'proper' social class through the use of inheritable madness discourse.

Whether or not Lady Audley is mad as the doctor proclaims her to be, she is still deemed unfit to remain a member of society. Robert justifies his actions, echoing Dr. Mosgrave's sentiments, saying that he has "done that which I thought just to others and merciful to you […] I should have been a traitor to society had I suffered you to remain at liberty" (Braddon 384). If Robert had let Lady Audley off for her crime he would not be fulfilling his duty as an upstanding English citizen or as a Christian. Also, because Lady Audley's current husband, Sir Michael, has money, he can afford to put her away in a mad house instead of having to deal with the police and an extensive trial. Unlike Hetty and Tess who must submit to the law, Lady Audley's deviance remains a private affair restricted to the authority of psychological and medical experts. Either way, Lady Audley becomes an aberrant example of a deviant upper class female, and through her example and dismissal from Audley Court, male homosocial bonds are secured and reinforced.

At the end of the novel Robert is finally reunited with his dear friend George, who ends up living with Robert and his wife, who is also George's sister, Clara. The three live "amid a little forest of foliage, [where] there is a fantastical dwelling-place of rustic woodwork, whose latticed windows look out upon the river" (Braddon 435). Once again the Audley family has sought the peace of the countryside in order to escape the terrors of the city. However, as was shown above, the country has its own dangers, which apparently Robert and his household are happy to overlook and instead

live in his "fairy cottage," without thought of the outside world (435). The only news of outside events are brought by a "foreign paper" which "announce[d] the death of a certain Madame Taylor, who had expired peacefully" in the foreign asylum she was taken to (436). And the narrator explains that, "the dark story of the past fades little by little every day, and there may come a time in which the shadow my lady's wickedness has cast upon the young man's life, will utterly vanish away" (436). The novel ends with the narrator declaring a Christian message, saying "I can safely subscribe to that which a mighty king and a great philosopher declared, when he said that neither the experience of his youth nor of his age had ever shown him 'the righteous forsaken, not his seed begging for bread'" (437). This passage is reminiscent of the Biblical scripture Psalm 37:25, which states "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging for bread" (qtd. in Braddon 454). In other words, Robert is the "righteous," Christian hero who has successfully become a full-blown patriarch of the Audley family. And Lady Audley, who has been given the new name Madame Taylor, is the wicked enemy who has fortunately "expired peacefully" overseas so that her "shadow" and "dark story" can fade away from George's memory. Therefore, the Christian message that God rewards the "righteous" and will not forsake them, which the novel ends on, is at the same time an English message. Dominant women who try to get ahead, take matters into their own hands, and upset the patriarchal order are eventually caught and taken care of. When read beside the fate of Hetty and Tess, the message at the end of *Lady Audley's Secret* is clearly that with enough money, these female criminals can simply disappear, instead of the entire family being subjected to the public gaze.

II. *ARMADALE*

I will now turn to Wilkie Collins's novel *Armadale*, where maintaining peace and upholding homosocial bonds becomes increasingly difficult. The disruptive and deviant female, Lydia Gwilt, is

even harder to detect because of her ability to appropriate traditional masculine qualities given. In the prelude to *Armadale*, Collins warns his readers saying that they will be "here and there disturbed—perhaps even offended—by finding that 'Armadale' oversteps, in more than one direction, the narrow limits within which they are disposed to restrict the development of modern fiction—if they can" (4). He goes on to say that, "estimated by the Clap-trap morality of the present day, this may be a very daring book. Judged by the Christian morality which is of all time, it is only a book that is daring enough to speak the truth" (4). Collins's statement suggest that the English society he was writing for, was *not* a "true" Christian society, but rather hypocritical; and that the reasons for the readers' disgust is based on "Clap-trap morality" or simply societal norms of propriety which change and evolve over time. Collins claims that if his "modern fiction" were judged by Christian standards, then society would realize that he is only portraying the truth. But Collins's statement only begs the question—what truth is he daring enough to speak? I will argue in the second half of this chapter that Collins is daring enough to speak the truth that, like in *Lady Audley's Secret*, appearances are not always what they seem and that masculine and feminine are not strictly tied to males and females respectively. Without a doubt this is depicted in Collins's female criminal, Lydia Gwilt.

Armadale, serialized in the *Cornhill Magazine* between 1864 and 1866, features an even more complicated plot than *Lady Audley's Secret*. The novel, unlike any of the other novels discussed above, begins in a foreign setting with an Englishman, Allan Armadale, on his deathbed and with a dark secret to tell before he dies. In a letter to be given to his infant son when he comes of age, Armadale relates his past crime of murdering a distant cousin who also bears the name of Allan Armadale. This other Allan Armadale changed his name in order to steal the real Armadale's soon-to-be inheritance by marrying the wealthy woman the original Armadale was meant to marry. In the letter to his son, who is also his namesake Allan Armadale, the guilty man finally warns his

son to stay away from the son of the man he killed who is also named Allan Armadale. The dying father also warns his son to stay away from the maid, who as a young girl forged his mother's signature, which resulted in the loss of his marriage claim. This maid is later found out to be Lydia Gwilt, a social climber with her own mysterious past. After the confession of the dying Allan Armadale the narrative shifts to focus on the next generation of Armadales. Allan, the son of the murdered Armadale, comes in contact with Midwinter, the son of the dying Armadale. The two become dear friends, and Midwinter after reading his father's letter, becomes paranoid about his father's past and is afraid that he may turn out to be Allan's enemy. Lydia comes into contact with the two Armadales and with the help of her mentor, Mrs. Oldershaw, Lydia marries Midwinter in an attempt to gain access and control over Allan's estate and wealth. Lydia despises Midwinter's friend, Allan, not only because of who his mother was, but also because of what he stands for—the English, bourgeois and privileged society. Lydia eventually fails in her plot to kill Allan, which would have allowed her to become Mrs. Armadale and the inheritor of Armadale's estate. Lydia ends her criminal career by committing the final criminal act of suicide.

DON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES

Caroline Reitz reads *Armadale* in a historical context by looking at the other types of articles and essays being written in *Cornhill Magazine* at the same time as *Armadale*. She finds a series of essays with titles such as "'Revelations of Prison Life,' 'Notes of the Late Campaign on the Punjab Frontier,' 'A Day's Pleasure with the Criminal Classes,' 'A Visit to a Convict Lunatic Asylum,' 'Colonel Gordon's Exploits in China,' 'A Convict's View of Penal Discipline,' 'Recollections of Crime and Criminals in China,' 'French Felons,' and 'A Letter from a Convict in Australia to a Brother in England.' (Reitz 95-6). Reitz uses these titles to suggest that England was suffering under the recognition that it was vulnerable to foreign influences and that its place as a world empire was in

danger. However, I argue that these titles show an England obsessed and absorbed with the categorization of those who deviate from English norms, such as criminals, lunatics and foreigners and the places that Victorians confined these persons to, such as prisons, asylums, and the colonies. Reading about these people and places allowed the Victorian population to experience and learn about these outsiders, while also keeping them at a safe distance. These texts also gave the Victorians a sense that they *know* something about these dangerous outcasts of society and that they would be able to recognize one if brought face to face with one. However, as I will show, *Armadale* is a novel that works to debunk this myth of the power of observation and labeling and instead speaks the truth of a more complex society. In this section, I will first show how Lydia Gwilt, through her use of deceptive femininity and her ability to reverse the gaze, becomes a serious threat to the homosocial bond between Allan and Midwinter. I will then discuss how Lydia Gwilt disrupts Victorian ideologies about good and evil and masculine and feminine. Finally, I will show how Lydia's presence in the countryside also disrupts the idea that the English countryside is a safe place, free from crime and dangerous threats.

Lydia's presence at Allan's recently inherited estate, Thorpe-Ambrose, threatens to separate the bond between Allan and Midwinter. Like in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lydia's ability to deceive and manipulate the people around her by performing a certain kind of femininity is a threat to patriarchal authority. And although she is suspected by Midwinter and Mr. Brook of being the evil maid from Midwinter's father's past, she is able to mislead these men and appear to be innocent and someone else entirely. In the following section, I will demonstrate the following: 1) In the same way that Lady Audley comes between the effeminate Robert and his love interest George, so too does Lydia threaten to come between the weaker, effeminate friends, Allan and Midwinter. 2) In many ways Lydia is more masculine than the two male heroes, with the qualities of strength and fearlessness, making her even more dangerous. 3) However, Lydia, even more so than the

previous female criminals, is able to perform and fascinate the men around her with her acts of femininity. 4) Although Lydia is extremely beautiful and feminine, appearing to be innocent, she is still in fact watched and scrutinized by both men in order to determine *who* she really is. 5) Finally, unlike the previous female criminals, Lydia has the ability to hide from the male gaze and in fact reverse the male gaze and appropriate it to her advantage. Lydia's ability to reverse the gaze and control her own fate is ultimately what sets her apart from the previous female deviants.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out that homosocial bonds, whether they be between men or women, exist on a continuum and "the structure of homosocial continuums is culturally contingent, not an innate feature of either 'maleness' or 'femaleness'" (5). Sedgwick goes on to say that these "historically differential shapes of male and female homosociality […] will always be articulations and mechanisms of the enduring inequality of power between women and men" (5). Therefore, within the English patriarchal system male homosocial bonds must be protected from the threat of not only deviant females, but also from female homosocial bonds. This trend has been noted in *Adam Bede*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Lady Audley's Secret*, culminating with the female criminal as deviant, being repeatedly punished and pushed outside of the important male homosocial bonds. In *Armadale,* this same trend continues with Lydia, the female transgressor, being punished; however, one of the reasons Lydia is so dangerous is because of the female homosocial bond between her and her older mentor, Mrs. Oldershaw.

Since masculinity and femininity become such ambiguous and contested categories in *Armadale*, Sedgwick's claim of culturally contingency and homosocial bonds becomes even clearer. Both of the male heroes, Allan and Midwinter, are described as having feminine characteristics and therefore as being weak: Allan is feminine in his distaste for hunting and killing and his mental simplicity. Midwinter is said to have a weak and fragile constitution because of his small frame and frequent illness. In fact, the reason Allan becomes so fond of Midwinter is because he is quite

different from the typical, masculine Englishman. The narrator explains that within the neighborhood Allan lives in "every man of them was equally healthy, muscular, loud, hard-hearted, clean-skinned, and rough; every man of them drank the same draughts of beer, smoked the same short pipes all day long, rode the best horse, shot over the best dog" (Collins 76). Allan is attracted to Midwinter precisely because he is not this typical manly Englishman. Instead, he is more like himself and they both share a love for boats and the sea. Natalie B. Cole notes that Midwinter's masculinity "might therefore be read as *unhealthy*, *soft*, *dirty*, and *smooth*, qualities that place him in an ambiguous, effeminized category" (115). Because Allan and Midwinter are so similar in their "*unhealthy*" masculinity they become inseparable after Allan helps the wanderer and pauper, Midwinter, who is found to be ill and in need of medical attention. Midwinter, who has lived a life of poverty and has been mistreated repeatedly, comes to consider himself indebted to Allan, the first person to offer him kindness.

Allan, too, is described as effeminate and the only masculine advantage he has over Midwinter is the fact that he has money and comes from a good family. Although Allan is described physically as a typical English boy with fair hair and complexion and a "thoroughly English love of the sea and all that belongs to it," his character stands out as being more feminine (Collins 62). The narrator explains that "his temperament, it could not be denied, was heedless to the last degree: he acted recklessly on his first impulses, and rushed blindfold at all his conclusions" (62). Also, Allan's "disposition was open as the day; a more generous, affectionate, sweet-tempered lad it would have been hard to find anywhere" (62). The fact that he acts on impulse and is "heedless to the last degree" reflects what the Victorians thought to be the natural disposition of women. Allan is driven by emotions and acts without thinking. When Allan becomes the inheritor of Thorpe-Ambrose estate and therefore a country squire, it is obvious that he is anything but the typical country squire that the neighborhood was expecting. Allan tells his friend Midwinter, "I don't care

two straws about hunting or shooting, either. When I meet with a bird in my walk, I can't for the life of me feel eager to kill it—I rather like to see the bird flying about and enjoying itself" (241). Because Allan does not like to engage in the typical male, country activities, he thinks that his new neighbors think he is "mad" (241). Unlike Lydia who enjoys watching insects die, Allan cannot make himself to "feel eager to kill." Instead of performing the typical male role as hunter, Allan prefers to watch birds, a more passive and therefore more feminine activity.

Despite his feminine characteristics, Allan, like Robert in *Lady Audley's Secret*, still represents the male, English bourgeois who is closely aligned with Christianity. Mr. Brock, his tutor, is a rector and is Allan's closest advisor, suggesting England's close proximity with Christian values. Because of Allan's weaker disposition and his vulnerable position as inheritor of Thorpe-Ambrose and a future patriarch of England, his friends such as Mr. Brock and Midwinter make it their duty to protect Allan. In fact, Allan needs the homosocial bonds between the men in his life in order to protect him from the beautiful and yet masculine female criminal Lydia and her female accomplice Mrs. Oldershaw.

"ONE OF THE MOST HARDENED FEMALE VILLIANS"

Despite Collins's popularity as a novelist, he received a great deal of criticism for his famous female criminal. *The Athenaeum* in 1866 wrote that Lydia Gwilt is "one of the most hardened female villains whose devices and desires have ever blackened fiction" (qtd. in Hedgecock 146). Lydia's reputation of being deceitful and wicked is seen before the reader ever meets Lydia Gwilt. As the lady's maid of Miss Blanchard, the woman whom the first Allan Armadale was intended to marry, Lydia forged his mother's handwriting causing him to lose the woman he was meant to marry. Mr. Armadale says that, "I saw the girl afterwards—and my blood curdled at the sight of her. If she is alive now, woe to the people who trust her! No creature more innately deceitful and more

innately pitiless ever walked this earth" (Collins 39). This is a remarkable statement given that Lydia was only 12 years old at this time. The sight of the "creature" has such an impact that his "blood curdled," meaning he was filled with horror at this child. Also, Mr. Armadale states that Lydia is "innately" wicked and cunning, suggesting that she was born evil and therefore undeserving of sympathy. Ultimately, at the end of the letter Mr. Armadale is dictating he warns his son to "avoid the maid whose wicked hand smoothed the way to the marriage—if the maid is still in her service" (55-6). Mr. Armadale does not want his son to become mixed up with such a horrifying "creature" who is capable of almost anything.

As in *Lady Audley's Secret*, one of the common themes running throughout *Armadale* is how appearances cannot always be trusted. In the Victorian era, beauty was often seen as a mark of innocence and ugliness as a sign of mischief, particularly in terms of women. However, Lydia defies this stereotype in that, like Lady Audley, she is a beautiful woman who is anything but innocent. Also, Mrs. Oldershaw tries to convince Lydia to do everything she can to stay young-looking, showing the Victorian bias for youthful appearance and the great lengths they would go to in order to appear young-looking. Mrs. Oldershaw writes to Lydia telling her she can make her look younger and more appealing to Allan, whom she is trying to seduce. The older woman states that, "if you will follow my advice about dressing, and use one or two of my applications privately, I guarantee to put you back three years more" (Collins 191). However, Lydia knows she is beautiful and refuses to take Mrs. Oldershaw's advice and beauty products. More importantly, like Hetty and Lady Audley, she has the ability to charm men and bend them to her will. Also, from the beginning of the novel Lydia displays cruel and sadistic behavior. In writing to Mrs. Oldershaw she states, "I had better not write any more, or I shall say something savage that you won't like. I am in one of my tempers to-night. I want a husband to vex, or a child to beat, or something of that sort. Do you ever like to see the summer insects kill themselves in the candle? I do, sometimes. Good-night, Mrs.

Jezebel" (198). Lydia is apparently prone to violent fits, where she becomes "savage" or uncivilized in that she wants a "husband to vex, or a child to beat," both acts that were seen as unbecoming of a proper lady. Plus, Lydia is clearly fascinated with death since she likes to watch "insects kill themselves." This passage becomes even more significant given that Lydia eventually meets her death at her own hand. Also, Lydia's reference to Mrs. Oldershaw as "Mrs. Jezebel" suggests that her mentor is shameless and immoral and that she is part of the reason Lydia is so violent and bent on getting revenge. Lydia seems to be calling Mrs. Oldershaw Jezebel with a sense of endearment, almost as if she's proud of the fact that she is such an evil influence. This female bond is particularly a threat to Allan, since Mrs. Oldershaw helps Lydia reverse the male gaze and deceive those at Thorpe-Ambrose.

THE MALE GAZE REVERSED

Although underneath the surface Lydia is "savage" and unfeminine, on the outside she appears to be everything a proper woman should be: beautiful and charming (Collins 198). This feminine façade and ability to fascinate makes her dangerous despite the fact that her beauty makes her an object to be stared and gazed at throughout the novel. The first instance of Lydia's ability to fascinate is when Allan meets her for the first time at the Broads. When Allan first lays eyes on Miss Gwilt he is taken aback by her beauty: "as he came within sight of her face, he stopped in ungovernable astonishment. The sudden revelation of her beauty, as she smiled and looked at him, inquiringly, suspended the movement in his limbs and the words on his lips. A vague doubt beset him whether it was the governess, after all" (322). Allan literally becomes immovable and "ungovernable" through "astonishment" and the "sudden revelation of her beauty." So much so that Allan begins to wonder if Miss Gwilt really could occupy such a low position as a governess, since women with such beauty were meant to be ladies of the upper class who had no need to

work. What stands out in this passage is the similarity in word choice between Allan who loses control over himself and becomes “ungovernable” and his doubt that Lydia is a governess. This similarity is ironic given that Lydia is in fact a governess by occupation and she is the governess of Allan’s will at this moment. However, Allan, who was brought up quite sheltered, is unable to discern anything amiss with Miss Gwilt’s power over him and therefore simply questions her position as a governess. Allan’s inability to see below the surface of events and circumstances makes him more of a feminized character and in danger of the deceptive outsider, Lydia Gwilt.

First however, because of Miss Gwilt’s strange appearance that coincides with Allan’s dream, Midwinter is put on his guard against her. Once Midwinter suspects Miss Gwilt of being the former maid of Mrs. Armadale and therefore a danger to Allan, he also finds himself staring at Lydia. With the description from Mr. Brock of the Miss Gwilt he saw in London in hand, Midwinter hides in the Milroy’s garden in order to get a look at the new governess and determine whether she is the same Miss Gwilt. In order to accomplish this he hides behind a summer-house where instead of looking at Miss Milroy “his eyes were riveted on the other figure; the figure that moved over the garden walk with the long lightly-falling dress, and the easy seductive grace” (Collins 333). Midwinter is stunned by the fact that she looks nothing like the description that Mr. Brock gave him and in fact she is “the most startling, the most unanswerable contradiction that eye could see, or mind conceive” (335). The statement that Miss Gwilt is a “contradiction” has two different meanings: the obvious one being she is completely different from the description that Mr. Brock gives him and therefore not what Midwinter is expecting. But Miss Gwilt is also a contradiction in that she is beautiful and a governess, as noted above by Allan. Furthermore, she is cunning and intelligent, which is contrary to what is expected of beautiful and feminine women. Along with the second contradiction, Lydia, unlike the typical female, is able to return Midwinter’s gaze. After Midwinter continues to stare at Miss Gwilt “she return[s] Midwinter’s look, still steadily fixed on

her, with equal steadiness on her side" (335). When Midwinter persists in staring at Miss Gwilt, "she paused—showed, for an instant only, her surprise at Midwinter's strange silence and strange persistency in keeping his eyes still fixed on her—then set herself, with a charming grace and readiness, to help him out of the false position in which he stood" (336). Lydia is able to stay calm and composed and meet Midwinter's gaze without flinching and showing "for an instant only, her surprise." The ability to meet someone's stare without flinching or showing emotion, especially a scrutinizing look as Midwinter's, is traditionally thought by the Victorians to be a masculine characteristic, showing courage and temerity. Staring back at someone who is also staring at you is an active action and expresses resistance instead of feminine passiveness. Jonathan Craig Tutor also points out that in this scene Midwinter is compared to a lost man in Lydia's presence and when he "sees her in an Edenic garden where she, serpentlike, suns herself and virtually hypnotizes him" (41). Therefore, Lydia is able to reverse the male gaze and use it as a weapon against Midwinter. The gaze of Allan and Midwinter can be compared to the gaze of Robert and George as they look at Lady Audley's portrait. Like Lydia, who is anything but a passive object of the male gaze, Lady Audley's portrait reveals a fascinating woman with the ability to charm. However, unlike Lydia, who is able to hide her dangerous and manipulative powers, Lady Audley's portrait reveals her evil and demonic side. Lydia's ability to hide by reversing the patriarchal and oppressive gaze is also seen through her use of the veil.

Because Lydia continues to be haunted by her past and is often afraid of meeting people who could do her harm, including her former lover and partner in crime Captain Manuel, she often wears a veil when in populated and public places. Pal-Lapinski argues that, "for Lydia, the veil signifies the freedom to conceal and manipulate her identity, to block the detective's gaze" (107). Pal-Lapinski bases his argument on the fact that British women recognized that the veil, worn by Eastern women associated with the harem, could be a "simultaneous marker of captivity and

freedom. The veil provided an inner space, a vantage point from which the 'obliterated' female body could observe without being observed" (108). Eastern women to the English were thought of as foreign and therefore completely "Other." Because of their status as the "Other" these women were thought of as dangerous. Therefore, Lydia's use of the veil to become in a sense invisible, while at the same time maintaining a "vantage point" of vision, causes her to become even more of a threat in the minds of English readers. The veil is ultimately a source of power for Lydia and she uses it to mislead and elude detection.

Another source of power is seen at the end of the novel when Lydia makes an attempt to kill Allan while he and Midwinter are staying at Dr. Downward's sanatorium. At Dr. Downward's makeshift "sanatorium," which in reality is set up like an insane asylum, Lydia has them right where she wants them. Pal-Lapinski points out that "for Lydia, this is the Panopticon perfected, where she can flood the room with poisonous carbonic acid and observe Allan Armadale without herself being seen. The ingeniously constructed madhouse gas chamber allows her to envision regaining control of the gaze and compelling Armadale to experience profound alienation" (117-18). Like the veil, Dr. Downward's institution allows Lydia to take control of the situation and of her own financial destiny. By being able to see and monitor Allan's actions she can manipulate and ultimately kill him. With Allan out of the way, she would have the freedom to claim the title of Mrs. Armadale and therefore inherit his estate. However, because Lydia relies on the elder Mr. Bashwood, her plan fails when the suspicious Midwinter changes rooms with Allan without Mr. Bashwood realizing. Because Lydia is thrown off her guard she makes a mistake and loses the power of the gaze. Another example of Lydia letting down her guard is when she is detected and gazed at by her female enemy, Mrs. Milroy.

Upon arriving at the Milroy household, Lydia quickly discovers the mistress of the house is extremely jealous of Lydia's presence and wishes to get rid of her. Lydia explains that the sick and

bedridden Mrs. Milroy is a "really horrible object to look at—but with all her wits about her; and, if I am greatly mistaken, as deceitful a woman, with as vile a temper, as you could find anywhere" (Collins 344). Lydia has met her match, and she knows that something is suspicious about Mrs. Milroy because of "her excessive politeness, and her keeping her own face in the shade of the bed-curtains while she contrived to keep mine in the light, put me on my guard the moment I entered the room" (345). Lydia figures out the reason for Mrs. Milroy's behavior is that the jealous woman wishes to scrutinize Lydia's appearance, as Lydia explains, "there is hardly an attractive light in which my face and figure can be seen, in which that woman's jealous eyes have not studied them already" (345). Mrs. Milroy, like Midwinter, wants to size Lydia up and make sure she is not a threat to herself or her position as lady of the house. Mrs. Milroy in particular, out of female jealousy, puts Lydia in the spotlight while keeping herself in the "shade." Here we see that Mrs. Milroy, like Mrs. Poyser in *Adam Bede,* is complicit with the patriarchal order. While it may appear that Mrs. Milroy is trying to protect her position as the wife of Major Milroy, her jealousy in fact divides Lydia and herself, disallowing any sort of female bonding. As Sedgwick notes, because women are most often closely aligned with men and depend on men, they are suspicious of other women who may be competition. Therefore, the patriarchal order not only upholds male bonding, as has been seen in the previous novels, but it also keeps women from forming meaningful relationships. And this in turn makes Lydia more susceptible to the patriarchal gaze. This becomes particularly evident when, partly through Mrs. Milroy's suspicions, Lydia leaves her position as governess at the Milroy household.

Once Miss Gwilt leaves the Milroy household and she is suspected of not being who she says she is, Allan's lawyer convinces him to have a spy watch Miss Gwilt. However, the spy is no match for Miss Gwilt, since when the two meet face-to-face the spy is "thrown off his guard by the daring plainness of the language in which she had spoken. Miss Gwilt's eyes measured him

contemptuously from head to foot. He was a weakly, undersized man. She was the taller, and (quite possibly) the stronger of the two" (Collins 458). Once Lydia realizes she is at an advantage she throws the spy's hat into a pool of water. While this incident might suggest that Lydia is much more masculine and therefore monstrous and unattractive to the Victorians, in fact the opposite is true. Soon after this exchange Lydia sees another man coming towards her. The narrator explains that, "some women would have noticed the approach of a stranger at that hour in that lonely place with a certain anxiety. Miss Gwilt was too confident in her own powers of persuasion not to count on the man's assistance beforehand, whoever he might be, because he was a man" (459). Miss Gwilt is certain that she can use her good looks, which is part of her "powers of persuasion" in order to solicit this strange man's help. The strange man approaching ends up being Midwinter, the object of Lydia's affection, which in turn causes her to change in his presence. The narrator explains that, "the woman who had tyrannized over Mr. Bashwood was gone, and the woman who had tossed the spy's hat into the pool was gone. A timid, shrinking, interesting creature filled the fair skin, and trembled on the symmetrical limbs of Miss Gwilt" (460). Lydia knows that as a woman acting scared and innocent, she can manipulate Midwinter, or any man, to do as she pleases, and she does in fact convince Midwinter to sympathize with her and dismiss the annoying spy.

When the two return to her house, Lydia continues to act out the part of an innocent female and uses this act as a means to control Midwinter. Lydia ironically remarks that, "women are not all coquettes," when in fact her intentions in bringing Midwinter to her house is to flirt with him and use him to get at Allan (Collins 462). Therefore, she really is a coquette in that she is being flirtatious in order to arouse and manipulate Midwinter's feelings. This is clearly seen as she sets the table and prepares for tea: "her hands moved among the tea-things with a smooth noiseless activity. Her magnificent hair flashed crimson in the candle-light, as she turned her head hither and thither, searching, with easy grace, for the things she wanted in the tray" (462). Lydia is most

certainly in control and command of the tea table and "tea-things," moving with "smooth noiseless" motions and "searching, with easy grace." Lydia is also in control of Midwinter himself. The reference to her "magnificent hair," which "flashed crimson" could be seen as a warning to Midwinter and others who find themselves under her influence. However, Midwinter does not heed this warning and he falls prey to Lydia's will and "the things she wanted." Her control over Midwinter is seen further in the scene when the narrator explains that,

> in the lightest word she said, in the least thing she did, there was something that gently solicited the heart of the man who sat with her. Perfectly modest in her manner, possessed to perfection of the graceful restraints and refinements of a lady, she had all the allurements that feast the eye, all the Siren-invitations that seduce the sense—a subtle suggestiveness in her silence, and a sexual sorcery in her smile. (462)

This passage stands out because it shows the contradictions embodied by Lydia. Instead of overtly tyrannizing Midwinter, as she does with the spy, Lydia "gently solicited" Midwinter's affections. Lydia is "perfectly modest" and "possessed to perfection" all the qualities of a lady. The emphasis on perfection shows that Lydia is acting out a part, which she plays and conforms to perfectly. However, the next line shows that Lydia is not passively performing but using her femininity to attract and deceive. Lydia is said to possess "allurements" and "Siren-invitations" which give her the ability to "seduce." The structure of the sentence demonstrates that Lydia has or owns these characteristics and is not simply innately alluring or inviting. And, notably, the reference to the sirens is similar to the mermaid image of Lady Audley. Both women possess the talent of deception and hold the power to influence and dominate over the men in their lives. Finally, the phrase "sexual sorcery" is a clear indication of Lydia's charms and ability to use her beauty to her own advantage. Indeed Midwinter is said to have "struggled against the fascination of looking at her and

listening to her" (462). Again, like Lady Audley, Lydia possesses the ability to fascinate and control the men around her, making her particularly dangerous to the feminine men, Midwinter and Allan. Lydia's masculine characteristics become even more obvious when she is compared to her student, Miss Milroy.

Philip O'Neill brings attention to the contrast between Miss Gwilt and Miss Milroy. In contrast to Miss Milroy who is "still the object of male attention and still satisfies male desire, Lydia Gwilt is a free subject who is in control of her sexuality and can use it as a power source and work with it to gain her own ends" (O'Neill 197-8). O'Neill also brings attention to Miss Gwilt's "aquiline nose" which is contrasted with Miss Milroy's short and insignificant nose. O'Neill writes that "if the significance of the nose is foregrounded and if the nose is a signifier for the phallus, it may be seen that Lydia Gwilt has phallic power which allows her to operate as a man. Miss Milroy is without the power of the phallus and so remains the object of phallic power" (198). While some might think this argument based on these two women's noses may be a bit farfetched, O'Neill's idea that Lydia does indeed have "phallic power" is evident in the passages noted above. Lydia, who possesses feminine characteristics, uses these traits to oppress and dominate, which are strictly thought to be masculine characteristics. Lydia's ability to reverse the gaze, as seen with Midwinter and Allan's spy, shows her power to defend herself. This ability, which is most certainly an asset to anybody, marks Lydia because she is female, as dangerous and even demonic.

WATCH YOUR STEP

Lydia's possession of both masculine and feminine characteristics makes her particularly unpredictable. And her presence in the country, a supposedly peaceful and restful place, makes her even more of a threat to the homosocial bond between Allan and Midwinter and to England itself. While *Armadale*, more than the other novels, shifts setting quite often, it is predominately set in

the country at Allan's estate, Thorpe-Ambrose. Like the description of Audley Court, Thorpe-Ambrose is a well-preserved and well-taken care of beautiful, country manor house. The view from the house takes in a "broad sweep" of a "well-timbered park" (Collins 201). The first images of the estate are of the "morning mist nestled lightly about the distant trees; and the cows were feeding sociably, close to the iron fence which railed off the park from the drive in front of the house" (201). Like Audley Court, Thorpe-Ambrose has fences in order to distinguish clear boundaries between the "park" and the "drive." And like in Audley Court, Thorpe-Ambrose features cows, one of the most domesticated animals, which are completely used for human consumption. Thorpe-Ambrose is an idyllic setting, which Allan discovers as he explores the grounds. He finds that "the shrubbery opened on the broad expanse of a flower-garden, flooded bright in its summer glory by the light of the morning sun" (205). Allan found himself "wandering past the fountains and statues" of the "fruit-garden" which was "laid out as an Italian garden" (205). Thorpe-Ambrose, as is expected of an upper class house, is strictly regulated to look a certain way; instead of the more natural beauty of the countryside found in *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Thorpe-Ambrose, like Audley Court, is manipulated by human hands who have created a tame and predicable beauty. The description of Thorpe-Ambrose contrasts with that of the more wild Broads where Allan hosts a picnic and where the country setting shifts to display a more mysterious and uncontrollable element.

The Broads are described as "one of the strangest and loveliest aspects of Nature, which the inland landscape, not of Norfolk only, but of all England, can show" (Collins 294). The place is also said to be beautiful: "spreading its great sheet of water, far and bright and smooth […] there, as pure in its spotless clue, as still in its heavenly peacefulness as the summer sky above it, was the first of the Norfolk Broads" (295). Although the place is beautiful and a popular destination for English tourists, the Broads are also a place of mystery with highly deceptive shores, especially for

unfamiliar visitors. The deceptive nature of the Broads is most clearly seen in the description of the shoreline:

> The shore in these wild regions was not like the shore elsewhere. Firm as it looked, the garden-ground in front of the reed-cutter's cottage was floating ground, that rose and fell and oozed into puddles under the pressure of the foot. The boatmen who guided the visitors warned them to keep to the path, and pointed through gaps in the reeds and pollards to grassy places, on which strangers would have walked confidently, where the crust of earth was not strong enough to bear the weight of a child over the unfathomed depths of slime and water beneath. (308)

The above description of the Broads is an important passage when read in tandem with the rest of the novel. The Broads is said to be one of the "wild regions" of England and because of this the seemingly "firm" ground is in fact "floating ground" that cannot support even the "weight of a child." The ground instead is said to vacillate in that it "rose and fell and oozed" as one tries to walk on it. Because of this, the visitors are "warned" by the natives who are familiar with this deceitful ground to "keep to the path." As strangers to this strange and dangerous land, Allan and his party would "have walked confidently" over places that would crumble beneath them to the "unfathomed depths of slime and water beneath." This description of the Broads can be used as a metaphor of Lydia Gwilt, the devious female criminal who despite her wicked and spiteful intentions is outwardly beautiful and admired. Likewise, the Broads are described as beautiful, despite their deceptive nature.

Also adding to the mystery, The Broads is the place where Allan and Midwinter encounter the first vision in Allan's ominous dream, which he dreamt while onboard the wrecked ship where his father was killed by Midwinter's father. The two men look on as "the sun was sinking in the

cloudless westward heaven. The waters of the Mere lay beneath, tinged red by the dying light. The open country stretched away, darkening drearily already on the right hand and the left. And on the near margin of the pool, where all had been solitude before, there now stood, fronting the sunset, the figure of a woman" (Collins 320). While the image of a setting sun would appear to be an image of peace associated with feelings of contentment and calm, the setting sun that Allan and Midwinter see is anything but peaceful. Phrases such as "tinged red," "dying light" and "darkening drearily" suggest images of death and turmoil. The reason for this eerie mood is because the "figure of a woman" that the two men see is Lydia Gwilt herself. Lydia's arrival and increasingly suspicious behavior in the theoretically peaceful countryside makes it necessary for Allan to call on the expertise of his lawyer Mr. Pedgift.

THE PROFESSIONAL AND CHRISTIAN GAZE

Allan's lawyer Mr. Pedgift becomes convinced that Lydia is not the woman who she says she is and is in fact a danger to Allan. Mr. Pedgift declares that Lydia is an "adventuress of the worst class; an undeniably worthless and dangerous woman" (Collins 435). The lawyer also believes that Lydia is simply an "object for the inside of a prison," and he declares his intentions of saving Allan from this woman saying that, "the claws of that she-devil shan't scratch you if I can help it" (439-40). For his authority on deducing the real Lydia Gwilt, Mr. Pedgift refers to his years of experience as a professional lawyer. He states, "I am an old man—I know that circumstances are not always to be taken as they appear on the surface—and I possess the great advantage, in the present case, of having had years of professional experience among some of the wickedest women who ever walked the earth" (441). Mr. Pedgift goes into considerable detail about his experience of working with female criminals and his comments are particularly enlightening of his and other "professionals'" like him, attitudes towards these women. He explains that his job was to write

down the accused female criminal's testimony and through this job he came to notice patterns. He says that "among those who were particularly wicked and unquestionably guilty, [there was] one point in which they all resembled each other" (443). He goes on to explain that despite their individual physical and behavioral differences once you "put your finger suddenly on the weak point in the story told by any one of them, […] there was an end to her rage, or her tears, or her piety, or her despair—and out came the genuine woman, in full possession of all her resources, with a neat little lie that exactly suited the circumstances of the case" (443). The fact that Mr. Pedgift says that the "genuine woman" appears once backed into a corner in "full possession of all her resources" shows that the lawyer thinks that women are inherently deceitful. Mr. Pedgift's attitude demonstrates the contradictory beliefs about women and their nature. Middle and upper class women, or those assuming this position like Lydia, were supposed to be innocent. However, as Mr. Pedgift's statement shows, the deviant and criminal women are "genuine" liars and therefore especially dangerous.

Despite his harsh judgment and criticism of Lydia, Pedgift also has respect for her and her power. When Pedgift reads a letter written by Miss Gwilt in which she tries to persuade Allan to speak with her, he is filled with admiration and says she would have made a good lawyer if she had only been a man (Collins 436). Mr. Pedgift's statement on one level shows the fact that professions such as law were impossible for women to enter. And while Mr. Pedgift's remark is perhaps a compliment to Lydia, it is also more of an indictment against himself. What his statement implies is that it is acceptable for men to use powers of persuasion, but for a woman to do so automatically makes her "dangerous," "worthless" and only fit for prison. Therefore, if Lydia were a man it would be normal for her to display masculine qualities of intelligence and wit. But since she is denied the position of being a professional, Mr. Pedgift can only view her as a criminal and a threat to Allan.

Mr. Pedgift's attitude of entitlement because of his status as an Englishman and professional is a recurring theme throughout *Armadale* and also extends to Pedgift's belief in himself as a Christian. The narrator comments that, "popular prejudice may deny it—but the profession of the law is a practically Christian profession in one respect at least. Of all the large collection of ready answers lying in wait for mankind on a lawyer's lips, none is kept in better working order than 'the soft answer which turneth away wrath'" (Collins 452). The reason for the narrator's statement is that Mr. Pedgift quieted Allan's anger and keeps him from acting rashly. While perhaps Collins is being ironic in calling law a "Christian profession," Mr. Pedgift most certainly sees himself as an agent of good and a defender of a Christian society grounded in Christian principles. Mr. Pedgift's attitude towards women and himself is finally seen in the way he addresses his horse. The professional and Christian man "got gaily into his gig. 'Hie away, old girl!' cried Pedgift Senior, patting the fast trotting mare with the end of his whip. 'I never keep a lady waiting—and I've got business to-night with one of your own sex!'" (452). Pedgift's possession and command of his horse shows his attitude not only toward his horse but also toward the female "sex." Gentlemanly, Pedgift proclaims that he never keeps a "lady waiting," but the fact that he whips his female horse even though she is already moving fast, shows that he expects to be the one in control at all times. This same attitude of self-entitlement is seen in other male characters in the novel.

For instance, although Midwinter is described as a meek and even weak character he still shows an attitude of male privilege. When spying on Miss Gwilt and her pupil, Midwinter has "no consciousness of the intrusion that he was committing […] the dogged resolution to do what he had come to do, was the one animating influence left alive in him" (Collins 334). Despite the fact that Midwinter is spying and intruding on Miss Gwilt and Miss Milroy's privacy, he still sees it as his "resolution" and privilege to meddle in the women's personal space. Also, the rector Mr. Brock,

while he regrets spying on Miss Gwilt, ultimately sees it as a necessity. He says, “all my feelings, as a gentleman and a clergyman, revolt from such an occupation as I am now engaged in; but there is no other choice” (286). He goes on to say that he is doing “violence to [his] own self-respect” and because of this it is a great “sacrifice” on his part (286-7). However, despite his reservations Mr. Brock still spies and intrudes on Lydia Gwilt in order to save Allan from a “wretch who is prepared, I firmly believe, to take the most unscrupulous advantage of his weakness and his youth” (286-7). Because of the threat that Lydia poses to the innocent and vulnerable male patriarch Allan, Mr. Brock and Midwinter see it as their right to gaze at and invade Lydia’s privacy. The male privilege to intrude in order to protect is most evident in the professional spy, Bashwood the younger.

The description of Mr. Bashwood’s son shows that although his profession is most certainly crooked and dishonest it is necessary given the present state of English society. The man is said to be a

> Confidential Spy of modern times, whose business is steadily on the increase. There he sat—the necessary Detective attendant on the progress of our national civilization; a man who was, in this instance at least, the legitimate and intelligible product of the vocation that employed him; a man professionally ready on the merest suspicion (if the merest suspicion paid him) to get under beds, and to look through gimlet-holes in our doors. (Collins 627)

The narrator is sure to point out that the younger Bashwood is a “Confidential Spy” suggesting that he is discreet in his profession. Also, as a spy, Bashwood is a product of “modern times” whose services are needed more and more given the increase in crime. He is said to be a “necessary Detective” whose purpose is to preserve “national civilization.” The detective is “necessary” in modern England because criminals like Lydia Gwilt are becoming harder to detect; therefore, in order to feel secure, the middle and upper class must call upon the detective to perform the tasks

they themselves as respectable members of society are unable to do. And this spy and detective is most certainly at the service of the upper classes, since he is only ready to investigate "if the merest suspicion paid him." Of this class he is the "legitimate and intelligible product," paid to snoop and probe into the personal lives of those suspected. In other words, Bashwood's profession as a detective is a result of the corruption of society. As a result, those with money are the one's who can afford and require investigations of criminals or suspicious behavior.

The narrator also points out that this man would "have been useless to his employers if he could have felt a touch of human sympathy […] if under any circumstances whatever, he had been personally accessible to a sense of pity or a sense of shame" (Collins 627). This description is a harsh criticism against the profession of detectives and spies. The worst indictment against these professionals is not *what* they do, prod about, but rather *how* they go about their business—that is, they have no human feeling. As part of their profession, they are not allowed to take into account the personal and individual circumstances of each case. The spy, as an unfeeling agent, bent on one goal, can be compared to Lydia's desire to deceive and destroy Allan by gaining access to his wealth and status.

LYDIA AS REPENTANT CRIMINAL

While on the surface Lydia may seem to be wicked, evil and unattached, she does in fact show emotion and human sympathy for at least Midwinter, whom she inadvertently falls in love with. Lydia marries Midwinter, whose name is also Allan Armadale, at first in order to gain the name Mrs. Armadale, but she ends up falling in love with him and regrets her wicked past. When the two are separated after their marriage, she says "I could bear it, if I loved him less dearly than I do" (Collins 659). And she despairs in knowing "how hopelessly I am losing the love he once felt for me" (659). Also, Lydia regrets her past life and reflects how Midwinter

> has been noble and good in his past life, and I have been wicked and disgraced. Who can tell what a gap that dreadful difference may make between us, unknown to him and unknown to me? It is folly, it is madness—but when I lie awake by him in the darkness, I ask myself whether any unconscious disclosure of the truth escapes me in the close intimacy that now unites us? (660)

Lydia goes on to ask in despair, "is there no purifying power in such love as mine? Are there plague-spots of past wickedness on my heart which no after-repentance can wash out?" (661). Despite Lydia's deep feelings for Midwinter and the guilt she feels, she is still condemned for *what* she does and not for her affection for Midwinter. Unlike the "Confidential Spy" who is seen as a necessity, Lydia's actions, which are as deceptive and under hand as the spy's, condemn her to a tragic fate.

Lydia's tragedy occurs when she thinks she is in control and about to poison her enemy, Allan. Instead, she begins to poison the wrong man, Midwinter, and half way through the process of releasing four different gases, Lydia realizes her mistake and instead decides to kill herself out of her love for Midwinter. She whispers to Midwinter as he lays unconscious, saying, "live, my angel, live! […] All your life is before you—a happy life, and an honoured life, if you are freed from me!" (Collins 806). After saying goodbye to Midwinter, she proceeds to drink the last of the deadly poison that was first intended for Allan. Her dying last words are "Oh God, forgive me! […] Oh, Christ, bear witness that I have suffered!" (807). Lydia's suicidal act is seen as the only way for her to make up for the wrongs of her past. As a repentant woman she believes Midwinter's only chance at happiness is if she is out of his life permanently. Jenny Bourne Taylor argues that the character of Lydia ""Gwilt' is emblematically set up as a study of 'guilt' in the dual sense of both wickedness and conscience; but she also operates as a study of the limitations of conventions of feminine transgression and remorse—the repellent fallen woman" (166). Victorian convention could not

allow for Lydia, although repentant, to live beside the good and noble Midwinter. Therefore, Lydia's suicide is only expected given her many transgressions.

As discussed in the introduction, Cesare Lombroso is known for his extensive study of female criminals. In *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, Lombroso dedicates a section specifically to analyzing female suicide. Lombroso makes the claim that women are more likely to commit suicide as a result of love. He goes on to state that, "the predominance among women of suicide over homicide for love meshes perfectly with my view of the nature of womanly love. For women, love is a form of slavery, a willing sacrifice of their entire personality" (210). Therefore, as Taylor points out, Lydia's suicide out of love for a man demonstrates her limits as a transgressive female. Although Collins breaks gender norms through his characterization of Lydia as a "repellent fallen woman" and one of the most masculine acting females in Victorian fiction, Collins still retreats to the traditional convention that women are ruled by "nature" and their "womanly love." However, despite his use of this feminine trope, Lydia's exit from society is done under her command unlike the previously discussed female criminals. And by taking her own life, "the repellent fallen woman" brings down even more criticism onto herself as a deviant female.

"THAT ONE DEED FOR WHICH THERE IS NO REPENTANCE"

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, after George's disappearance, his dear friend Robert fears that he has done "something rash," which the narrator explains was "that one deed for which there is no repentance"—suicide (Braddon 88). Barbara Gates, in her extensive study of suicide in the Victorian era, describes how the rise of the concept of "moral insanity" shifted the burden of criminal acts like suicide from law enforcement to the medical and religious professions. Gates writes that because of this concept, "crime, then could be directly linked to mental illness, and the acceptance of moral insanity as a legal category threatened to shift the burden of judicial responsibility from

legal to medical practitioners" (13). In other words, Lydia's suicide brings her from under the scrutiny of Mr. Pedgift and the law and allows a moral judgment to be brought against her. Like Lady Audley who is deemed to be mad, Lydia too, through the judgment that suicide is equal to "moral insanity," allows the patriarchal order to appear sympathetic. Instead of having to prosecute and execute the female criminals, the claim of madness allows for sympathy and for authorities to operate as agents of moral reform.

However, in Lydia's case, despite the judgment of "moral insanity" for those who committed suicide, Gates points out that the Victorians still considered these deviants as "the most miserable of sinners" (13). Therefore, although it is possible to consider those who commit suicide as insane and in turn unaccountable for their crime, this did not change the belief that suicide was a moral crime and a sin. Consequently, Lydia, although in her perhaps deranged mind is committing an act of love for Midwinter, is denounced by her culture as insane and unchristian. In *The Female Malady*, Elaine Showalter writes specifically about how madness in the Victorian era was considered "moral insanity" (29). She writes that, "'moral insanity' redefined madness, not as a loss of reason, but as deviance from socially accepted behavior" (29). Showalter goes on to point out that this new definition of madness was so broad that anyone behaving abnormally could be considered insane and therefore in need of the paternalistic help of the medical system. All of the female criminals discussed here could be said to suffer from moral insanity, since all of them deviate from acceptable female behavior. George Eliot notes this explicitly in her novel *Middlemarch*, where the narrator states ironically that, "sane people did what their neighbors did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them" (7). Because women were considered more prone to madness and the symptoms for madness were so numerous, they had to be more socially aware and conform more readily to "what their neighbors did" or else they may be

deemed insane.[7] Therefore, unlike the Christian and morally superior Englishmen throughout the novel such as Allan, Midwinter, Mr. Brock and Mr. Pedgift, Lydia with her position as a deviant and transgressive female is deemed by Victorian society as unworthy and only fit to die. Although Lydia, as a threat to society, needs to be taken care of, I will show that by taking her own life, Lydia not only deviates from Christian morality but also from feminine norms.

The medical and legal discourse surrounding women, crime and suicide was often contradictory. In her study of suicide, Gates also points out that despite the fact that women committed suicide less often and in less violent ways than men, "most Victorians believed what they wished to believe about the frequency of female suicide. In the main they did so because they wanted and expected suicide, like madness, to be a 'female malady'" (125). Gates explains the Victorian reasoning to be that because women were confined for insanity more often than men, and suicide is a consequent of madness, women should then commit suicide more often. Also, because women were thought to be lesser than men, physically and mentally, and "resisting suicide takes willpower and courage; therefore women should fall victim to suicidal impulses far more readily than should men" (Gates 125). Therefore, Lydia as a woman who commits suicide is judged by her society to be usurping her role as a weak, passive and submissive female. Lashing out and punishing herself, although ultimately a destructive act and one for which there is no repentance, is also an act of independence and power. Instead of wasting away in an insane asylum like Lady Audley, Lydia takes control of her life by ending it and permanently cutting off male power and influence. With Lydia out of the way and the female homosocial bond permanently ended, the two male heroes, like Robert and George in Lady *Audley's Secret*, are able to remain together and are in fact drawn closer.

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[7] Also see Licia Carlson's "Cognitive Ableism and Disability Studies: Feminist Reflections of the History of Mental Retardation." *Hypatia* 16.4 (2001): 124-46.

PATRIARCHY AND CHRISTIANITY PREVAIL

At the end of the novel, Midwinter and Allan are undeniably brought closer and their homosocial bond reinforced through their ordeal with Lydia Gwilt. Midwinter emotionally says to Allan that, "while we live, brother, your love and mine will never be divided again" (Collins 815). Like the homosocial bond seen in the previous novels discussed, the two male friends remain "brothers" and declare that their love will "never be divided again." Also, like the previous novels, *Armadale* ends with a Christian moral and happy prospects for the English gentlemen. The novel ends with Midwinter declaring, "happen what may, God is all-merciful, God is all-wise. […] In that faith, I can look back without murmuring at the years that are past, and can look on without doubting to the years that are to come" (816). Like the narrator at the end of *Lady Audley's Secret*, Midwinter's statement reiterates the justness and righteousness of God and the belief that what has happened or what will happen should be accepted "without doubting." With this Christian message upholding the patriarchal, English bourgeois society, the fate of Lydia and the other female criminals is understandable and necessary for England's success. All four female deviants, in some way or another, try to usurp or rebel against the English class system, which is also founded on male privilege. Therefore, these female characters have to be contained and put back in the boxes that English society has created for them. Jennifer Hedgecock argues that,

> Collins' characterization of Lydia enables the reader to identify the function, though often hypocritical, of the class system—its corruptive nature. Resistance against the class system, however, is always futile because conclusively patriarchal order is restored and dangerous characters, like the femme fatale, are punished. Rebellion therefore empowers patriarchal order because the boundaries become more sophisticated and more resilient to their influence. (166)

I agree with Hedgecock in that resistance to the class and patriarchal system ultimately for these characters in these novels upholds homosocial bonds and class boundaries making them more "resilient." However, these texts, especially the sensation novels, highlight for the reader the "corruptive nature" of the class system and in turn patriarchy. As was shown in the beginning of this chapter, women who read these novels about female criminals or who followed real life trials of female offenders could sympathize with these outcasts of society. And these female criminals, because of their often oppressed position as wives and mothers confined to the household and to their inherited class position were, if not an inspiration, at least a way for women to recognize their second class citizenship within English society. Finally, the more women who recognized their subjected position the more resistance could be generated against in Irigaray's words the "exclusive valorization of men's needs/desires" (171).

However, not only do these novels and the way female criminals are treated or contained highlight the homosocial bonds, but they also allow for the *illusion* that these bonds *are* simply homosocial. The male bonds in the sensation novels especially blur the lines between homosocial, homoerotic and homosexual. Several scholars such as Richard Nemesvari and Jennifer S. Kushnier have convincingly argued that the relationship between Robert and George in *Lady Audley's Secret* could easily be read as a homoerotic and even homosexual bond.[8] Also, Allan and Midwinter, the overly effeminate friends in *Armadale,* could easily be read as male homosexuals fashioned after Oscar Wilde. However, given Victorian attitudes towards homosexuality, the authors of these novels conventionally end their novels with a heterosexual marriage. With the dangerous female out of the picture and taken care of, there is no longer a need for male bonds and the audience can rest assured that the male hero is truly the English Christian they expect him to be. The concluding

[8] See Nemesvari, "Robert Audley's Secret: Male Homosocial Desire in *Lady Audley's Secret,*" *Straight with a Twist: Queer Theory and the Subject of Heterosexuality*. Ed. Calvin Thomas. Urbana: U. of Illinois P., 2000. 109-21; and Kushnier, "Educating Boys to be Queer: Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret.*" *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2002) 61-75.

section will elaborate on the female criminal's role in covering up male homoerotic and homosexual bonds and demonstrate how the process of neutralizing the female threat allows patriarchy to appear a benevolent wielder of power.

CONCLUSION: QUEERING PATRIARCHY

As this thesis has shown, female criminals in Victorian literature are necessary to the continuance of male homosocial bonds and patriarchy in general. Also, as I have shown, female criminals function differently in the sensational novels, *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Armadale*, than the novels based on realism, *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles,* in the way they uphold male bonds. The men in these novels represent inappropriate or 'unhealthy' masculine characteristics. Therefore, the 'bad' and misbehaving females, Lady Audley and Lydia Gwilt, serve as decoys to redirect the readers' attention from inappropriate male behavior. Out of necessity for a diversion from these inappropriate masculinities, the middle class female criminals, Lady Audley and Lydia Gwilt, are more appalling in terms of their misbehavior. These female criminals are more violent, more capable of manipulating the people around them and consequently deviate from gender norms to a greater extent than the working class females, Hetty and Tess.

This thesis has also shown how, depending on their class, the punishment of these female criminals may vary; however, regardless of the type of punishment, patriarchal authority still appears to be sympathetic. Through the confessions of Hetty and Tess, these working class females demonstrate their willingness to acquiesce to patriarchy, whether it's represented through the Law or religion. Also, by declaring Lady Audley and Lydia Gwilt mad, patriarchy can appear to be benevolent by doing away with the need for legal and public punishment. Plus, at the end of all these novels, the female criminal is not only put away or properly punished, but also, each novel

ends in a traditional heterosexual marriage. Even though the authors of these novels most likely had no choice but to end their novels in this way, the heterosexual marriages still function to highlight male authority by upholding the heterosexual norm, which for Victorian England is predicated on men-as husband-being the head of the household. Ultimately, in these nineteenth-century novels, with the female criminals defeated, the heterosexual norm sustained and male homosocial bonds bolstered, English society, with its English values of patriarchal authority and gender norms, can continue in peace. However, the peace achieved in these novels is tenuous, at best. Although the threat of female criminality is contained, what goes left unsaid and unaddressed in these novels illuminates deep-seated Victorian anxieties that are still present even after the happy-ever-after endings.

First, the mere fact that these female criminals are present in the peaceful and supposedly 'safe' countryside, and given that all act out or signify outwardly appropriate feminine characteristics, demonstrates patriarchy's increasingly difficult job of detecting female deviance. It is clear that mechanisms of control and detection are weakening despite the various systems set in place in Victorian society, such as medical, legal, psychological, religious, and nationalistic structures. Because of this, the female criminals in these novels not only destabilize the dichotomy between male/female but also between city/country. If the city is not the only place where dangerous criminals reside, then the police force created specifically for cities will need to be expanded. Also, simply by being present outside of their 'natural' environment of the city slums, these female deviants with their unruly sexuality and violent behavior are cause for concern. The middle and upper class's use of the countryside as a refuge from the disorderly city is called into question by the presence of these female deviants not only within their space of safety but also within their own ranks. If the enemy is not 'out there' or an 'Other,' how can respectable families safeguard their homes and secure their wealth and position in society? These questions and fears

are not properly addressed at the end of the novels studied here, and further study is needed to properly answer these questions. Also, closely related, additional study could focus on the way the middle and upper class's ideology of control over their environments and importance of appearance makes them vulnerable to the threat that female criminals, like the ones here, pose.

Furthermore, the female criminals in these novels do more than destabilize dichotomies. The fact that the readers' attention is drawn to these female criminals, who to patriarchal authority represent an ever-looming threat, brings into view what is *not* being looked at. Society's work of containing female criminals, either by convicting and punishing them through the Law, or by medical and psychological professionals, takes away interest and focus on the 'inappropriate' male gender behavior. Therefore, although the threat of female criminals or masculine females is contained in these novels, what is not dealt with is male gender deviance. If the Victorian's were strictly following Lombroso's ideas about criminals, then as the quote I started this thesis shows, "femininism in men" is cause for alarm as well (xvi). But since men are the ones protecting their own authority and right to rule, they, obviously, are the ones who choose what or who is dangerous. Of course in order to maintain their superior status then, men are going to focus on female deviance and not their own queerness. As demonstrated in this thesis, the upper and middle class men in the sensation novels and the bonds they form with each other are particularly suspect. Many writers at the end of the nineteenth century, most notably Max Nordau, vocalize their fear that these powerful men are leading the country down a road of immorality.

Nordau in *Degeneration* (1895) writes about how the upper class in England was becoming too extravagant in its tastes, decadent, immoral, and the men in particular, too effeminate. Nordau sees the foreign influences of the French as especially detrimental to men's masculinity and Englishness. A perfect example of the type of man that Nordau fears is Robert Audley with his lazy disposition and hobby of reading French novels. Nordau writes that, "books treating of the relations

between the sexes, with no matter how little reserve, seem too dully moral. Elegant titillation only begins where normal sexual relations leave off. Priapus has become a symbol of virtue. Vice looks to Sodom and Lesbos, to Bluebeard's castle" (13). The subtext of Nordau's comment is that not only are the sexual relations between men and women becoming increasingly loose and corrupt, but also same-sex erotica is being used as "titillation," suggesting that homosexuality was becoming more common and in turn corrupting society. Drawing on Lombroso's idea that criminals have particular physical markers or deformities, Nordau believed that the degenerate, in general, show outwardly their moral failings. Nordau's writings and ideas show that there existed in English society anxiety about "femininism in men," and what this means for England as a whole. This is important given that within the Victorian literature studied here, female degeneracy and female masculinity is the major focus of attention. Therefore, further analysis of male degeneracy in Victorian literature, in light of female criminals and female masculinities, is a promising area of study.

Within queer and feminist studies there is often debate about which form of gender deviance is more disruptive to societies or cultures. Some argue that, a man taking on feminine characteristics is more destabilizing since men, in order to have power and respect, must exert their masculinity. However, as this thesis has shown, within Victorian England, at least, women taking on masculine attributes and exerting control over men, is in fact more disruptive to society's power structure, since men are the one's doing the investigating and punishing. Further study in this area could look more deeply into how men get away with gender misbehavior in Victorian society. Does the rural setting of these novels, and other similar novels, have anything to do with how effeminate men or male homoerotic bonds go undetected? What implications does male gender deviance have on society as a whole? In other words, what does it mean that the economic, legal and moral authorities of society are working to hide their own queerness? What implications does English

male queerness have in thinking about Victorian colonialism and the expansion of the English empire? How does homophobia contribute to the othering of the foreigner, the savage and the criminal? Given the above thesis, these types of questions, I believe, are particularly pertinent to the study of Victorian literature in regards to queer and feminist theories.

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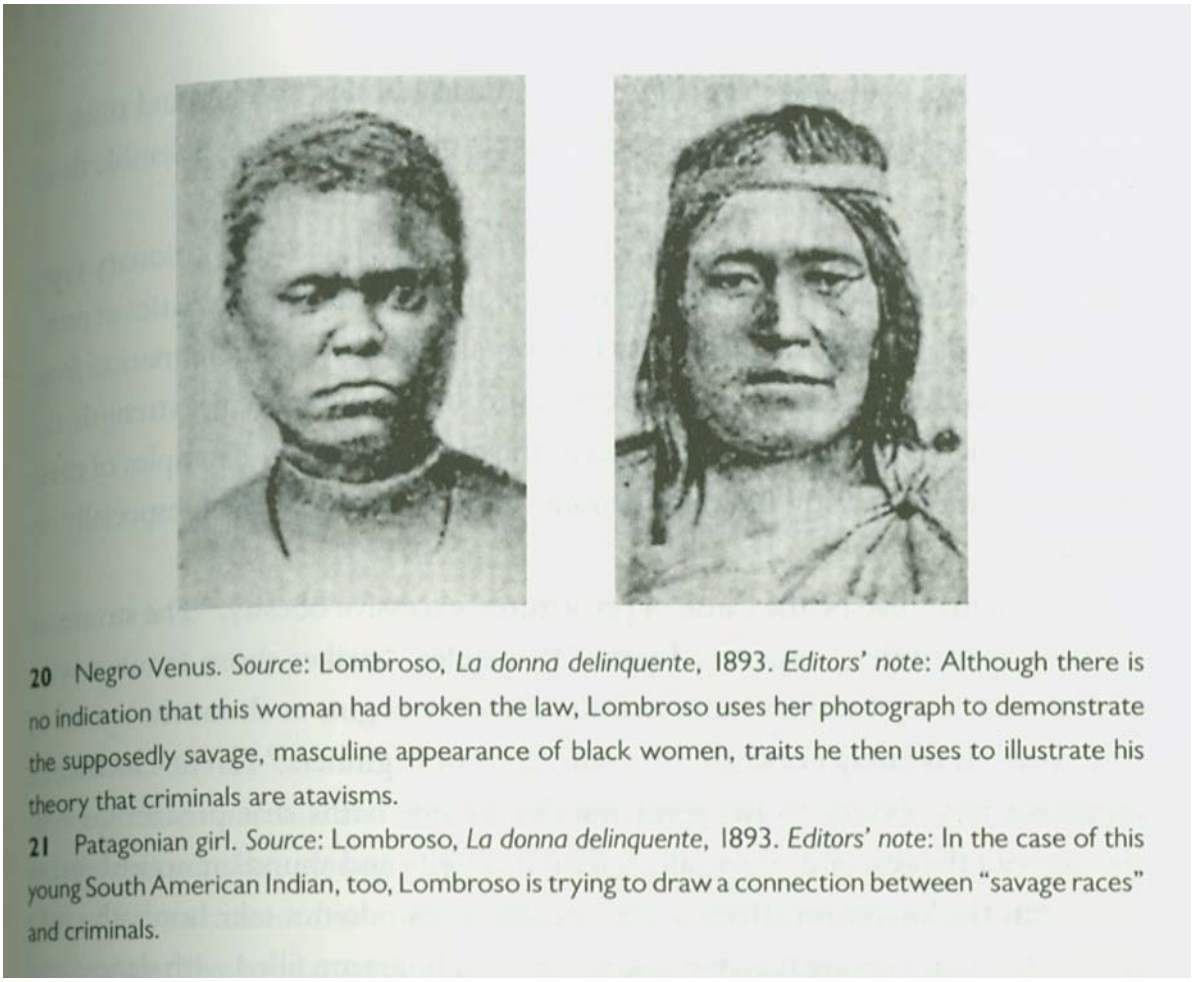
APPENDIX A

Figures 1-4



20 Negro Venus. *Source*: Lombroso, *La donna delinquente*, 1893. *Editors' note*: Although there is no indication that this woman had broken the law, Lombroso uses her photograph to demonstrate the supposedly savage, masculine appearance of black women, traits he then uses to illustrate his theory that criminals are atavisms.

21 Patagonian girl. *Source*: Lombroso, *La donna delinquente*, 1893. *Editors' note*: In the case of this young South American Indian, too, Lombroso is trying to draw a connection between "savage races" and criminals.

Figure 1

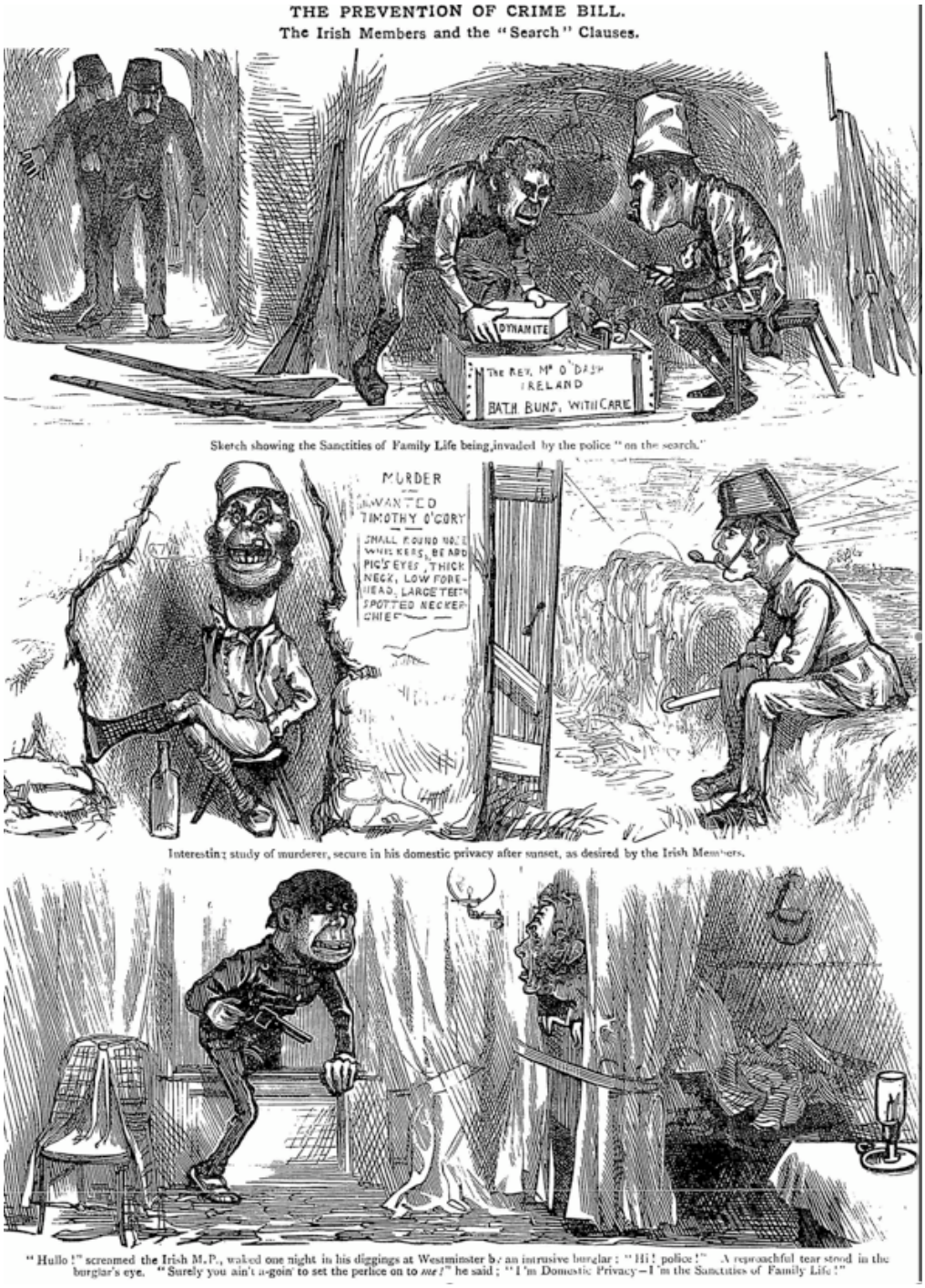

THE PREVENTION OF CRIME BILL.
The Irish Members and the "Search" Clauses.
DYNAMITE
THE REV. Mr O'DASH
IRELAND
BATH BUNS, WITH CARE
Sketch showing the Sanctities of Family Life being invaded by the police "on the search."
MURDER
WANTED
TIMOTHY O'CORY
SMALL ROUND HEAD, WHISKERS, BEARD, PIG'S EYES, THICK NECK, LOW FOREHEAD, LARGE TEETH, SPOTTED NECKERCHIEF
Interesting study of murderer, secure in his domestic privacy after sunset, as desired by the Irish Members.
"Hullo!" screamed the Irish M.P., waked one night in his diggings at Westminster by an intrusive burglar: "Hi! police!" A reproachful tear stood in the burglar's eye. "Surely you ain't a-goin' to set the perlice on to *me!*" he said; "I'm Domestic Privacy—I'm the Sanctities of Family Life!"

Figure 2

Figure 3

SENSATION NOVELS.

Mary. "PLEASE, SIR, I 'VE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE FOR THE THIRD 'OLUME OF THAT BOOK YOU WAS READING."

Lodger. "OH, I TOOK IT BACK TO THE LIBRARY THIS MORNING, I——"

Mary. "OH! THEN WILL YOU TELL ME, SIR, IF AS HOW THE 'MARKIS' OUND OUT AS SHE 'D PISONED 'ER TWO FUST 'USBANDS?!"

Figure 4

VITA

Megan Deann Lease was born in Elizabeth City, North Carolina on March 14, 1984. She attended high school at Camden County High School and graduated in May of 2002. In August of the same year, she entered Milligan College in Elizabethton, Tennessee and graduated in May of 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. In the fall of 2007 she entered Appalachian State University and began study towards a Master of Arts degree. The M.A. was awarded in May of 2010.

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