SUBVERSIVE SEXUALITY AND THE DECLINE OF BRITISH SOCIETY:

THE DEMONIZATION OF THE VICTORIAN NEW WOMAN IN *LADY AUDLEY'S*

SECRET, SHE, AND *DRACULA*

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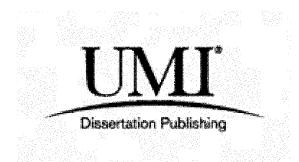
Sara Louise Fatemi Cristin

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ABSTRACT

This study uses degeneration theory to examine the demonization of the sexuality in New Woman characters in two interconnected representations of social decline, national and biological. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1862 sensation novel *Lady Audley's Secret*, Henry Rider Haggard's 1887 imperial romance novel *She*, and Bram Stoker's 1897 gothic horror novel *Dracula* each portray a female character whose sexuality plays a key role in her New Woman status. Despite their differences, the overt sexuality in all the novel's female characters can be read as the New Woman's attack on the social and domestic constructs of marriage and family, creating a subversion of the male power-base so fundamental as to produce texts that punish or "correct" their New Woman characters, therefore diminishing any threat to the existing social order. However, rather than portray the New Woman as either monolithically monstrous or liberating, all the novels contain elements of promise mixed with anxiety, signaling an ambivalence towards the New Woman that is clearly displayed in the fiction of the *fin-de-siècle*.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: LITERARY RESPONSE TO THE
NEW WOMAN AT THE FN-DE-SIÈCLE

> *As a vibrant metaphor of transition,*
> *the New Woman stood at once for the*
> *degeneration of society and for that*
> *society's moral regeneration.*
> *-Ann Heilmann*

It has been widely recognized that British culture in the late 1800s was marked by

a sense of "irretrievable decline." [1] Numerous critics have explored the ways in which

that perception of loss was refracted into literary culture, and into stories which sought to

account for the nineteenth century's troubles and to alleviate perceived anxieties such as

the retrenchment of the empire, the growth of criminality, deviant sexual behavior, and

changing gender roles. In the foreword to *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-*

de-siècle Feminisms, Lyn Pykett asserts that these anxieties are particularly navigable

through the lens of gender, as the final two decades of the Victorian era witnessed "a shift

in social attitudes regarding gender relations," a shift that was marked by a steady move

away from the pattern of patriarchal male supremacy and female dependence towards a

more modern pattern of gender equality (Pykett ix). One manifestation of this movement

is the emergence of the "New Woman," a figure who has come to represent a profound

socio-cultural anxiety surrounding changing gender roles at the *fin-de-siècle.*

The term "New Woman" was coined by writer Sarah Grand in 1894, and it soon

became a popular catch-phrase, making the New Woman a significant cultural icon of the

fin-de-siècle, one English writers began to use to advocate the woman's cause. Many

authors began challenging, more radically than ever before, the traditional Victorian concepts of femininity, which often stereotyped women as "acquiescent, passive, unintellectual creature[s], whose life revolved entirely around social engagements, domestic management, and religion" (Peterson 678). This common socio-psychological profile is contained in one phrase, the "angel in the house."[i] In both Victorian and current usage, that term covers widely disparate and even contradictory notions. On the one hand, it was a term of praise; in the narrowest sense the "angel" was one near God, a pious woman who kept the family on the Christian path. M. Jeanne Peterson has noted the "angel's" significance in regards to Victorian notions of morality:

> In secular terms the angel provided the home environment that promoted
> her husband's and children's well- being in the world; she also provided a
> haven from its worst pressures through her sound household management
> and sweetness of temperament. The latter meaning suggests the angel's
> domesticity, unworldliness, asexuality, innocence, even helplessness in
> matters outside the domestic sphere. (677)

For some, "the angel in the house" was evidence of a golden age of family life, an era when men and women had separate roles in the social hierarchy. On the other hand, relegated to the home in this way, "the angel" became a symbol of oppressed women trapped in the gilded cage of Victorian male domination. According to A.R. Cunningham, New Women novelists wanted to show how "the female character could be made into something more vital than the insipid and sexually unaware heroine traditionally favoured by the Victorian reader" (178). The heroines depicted by many

popular novelists at the end of the century were New Women in the sense that rejected features of the traditional, Victorian female, the "angel in the house."

Pykett has observed some representations of the New Woman in late-Victorian discourse, examining the multiple, and sometimes conflicting, ways she was portrayed:

> [The] New Woman was by turns: a mannish Amazon and a Womanly woman; she was oversexed, undersexed, or same sex identified; she was anti-maternal, or a racial supermother; she was male-identified, or manhating and/or man-eating or self-appointed saviour of benighted masculinity; she was anti-domestic or she sought to make domestic values prevail; she was radical, socialist or revolutionary, or she was reactionary and conservative; she was the agent of social and/or racial regeneration, or symptom and agent of decline. (Foreword xii)

However, despite the differences between each heroine, Cunningham states that one commonality exists in all novelists' representations of New Woman: all wrote "of sexual behavior with a frankness which had previously been unthinkable; all employed as mouthpieces women unusually independent, intelligent, and free from convention" (14).

In many ways, then, the New Woman represented immense potential for Victorians in terms of modernizing the English notion of womanhood. However, the New Woman was not a universally embraced icon of positive change. For many late Victorian writers, the New Woman represented a cultural apocalypse, and they began to utilize the New Woman to showcase the destructive potential she embodied in terms of a revolutionizing of cultural, racial, and social order. This ambivalence can be seen in the

New Woman's evolution throughout Victorian literature. The latent power of the New Woman figure is initially harnessed by sensationalist novelists such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon as inspiration for subversion and strength. This potentially feminist use, however, eventually gives way to the very masculine-centered genres of the *fin-de-siècle*, whose male authors appropriate the New Woman to create more damning portrayals specific to the climate of and anxieties present at the turn of the century, such as those concerning degeneration, decline, decadence, and decay. These portrayals signal a transformation in the New Woman figure. What once was an emblem for female potential is distorted into a marker of corruption. To suggest that the English culture as a whole rejected the idea of a new and evolving womanhood would perhaps be too simplistic. It is possible to argue that these later depictions emerged as a response to the fear generated by female activists' insistence on entering the public arena. While the reasons may never be fully explained, it remains clear that the patriarchal powers of tradition exercised themselves in the name of feminist suppression in an effort to counter a perceived decline of English culture they believed the New Woman presented.

The New Woman, whose sexuality directly subverted traditional notions of femininity, was therefore often perceived as a profound threat to established culture. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, many theorists and scientists, influenced by developments in medical, biological, and psychiatric sciences, became convinced that insanity, criminality, sexuality, and hysteria were symptoms of the degeneration of the human race. Degeneration theory provided explanations for disturbing social changes, and new insights into human character and morality. Within Victorian literature, multiple

genres grappled with the same anxieties concerning the collapse of culture, the weakening or morality, and the possibility of decay that changing gender roles presented. The tendency of Victorians to equate moral values pre-eminently with codes of sexual behavior hints the central areas of fear and concern within Victorian society. Victorian perceptions of sexuality, the subject of vast literature ranging from medical textbooks to religious tracts, were built around a fundamental belief in sexual difference. Women and men were categorized by their biology, and that biology was seen as central in determining their social roles. [3]

Degeneration theory therefore, became, among other things, an effective way of "Othering" large groups of people by labeling them as deviant, primitive, regressive, and dangerous. As argued by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*, "Othering" is imperative to national identities, where practices of admittance and segregation can form and sustain boundaries and character. While "Othering" helps distinguish the uncertain or certain, it also often involves the demonization and dehumanization of groups, which further justifies attempts to civilize and exploit these "inferior" others. As William Greenslade argues, degeneration naturalizes social and class fears "into biological fact;" the fear of the "Other," and their potential to poison the English domestic sphere, was transformed into the fear of an irreversible social decline (23). Grant Allen, a member of the Aldeburgh circle, a group of literary and scientific friends who periodically met in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, put forth the idea of a "responsibility in parentage," which asserted that there was a "moral obligation to fatherhood and motherhood [by] the noblest, the purest, the sanest, the healthiest, the most sable among us" (qtd. in Greenslade 145). This

signaled a redefinition of the role of motherhood in a national movement for regeneration of racial and national vigor. As women were "abstracted and positioned within a grand process of reproduction," they were deemed essential to the "evolutionary struggle of the race" (Greenslade 136). Victorian women, therefore, became doubly bound to this evolutionary view as agents for both reproduction and the degeneration that stems from it.

The pervasiveness of degeneration theory in the late nineteenth century is visible in the works of male authors who incorporated it into reactive forms of discourse against the New Woman and the "inevitable threat" she posed to English society. Writers such as H. Rider Haggard often achieved this by allying the New Woman with the forces of danger and degeneration, connecting sexual freedom with the degeneration of English society into a primitive and atavistic state, creating a logic which argued for the return to a more structurally and morally conservative domestic sphere. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar call these male-driven novels a response to the "crisis of masculinity."[4] This crisis, they argue, is responsible for the *fin-de-siècle* texts that demonize their female figures. These texts can be considered a male attempt to warn readers of the possible evolutionary dangers the New Woman posed to Victorian civilization. Oftentimes, these writers sought to neutralize the threat of the enigmatic female, and used their fictions to enact the New Woman's ultimate exile from masculine spaces, dramatizing both the threat and the solution to the problem.

However true this was of many male authors, it would be too simplistic to divide the treatment of the New Woman figure so neatly into male and female categories. Other

male authors were much more complex in their treatment of the New Woman. While these novelists also aligned the New Woman with degeneration and decline, they also produced texts, such as Bertha Thomas' 1882 novel *In a Cathedral City* and Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, which were multi-layered complexity in their telling of power relations between men and women. While many feminist critics such as Ann Ardis, Margaret Beetham, Ann Heilmann, and Gilbert and Gubar have frequently interpreted these multifaceted texts as "masculinist revenge" on the New Woman figure, others find their treatment of her to be less overtly subversive than perhaps is visible in a writer like Braddon. These writers, unlike their female counterparts who could be much more blatant in their departures from the traditional female, created characters who embodied the characteristics of both New Women and traditional Victorian women, demonstrating the complicated nature of the New Woman discourse to late Victorian culture, and the centrality of questions of gendered identity to a modernizing Britain.

Degeneration theory can be used to explore the demonization of the sexuality in New Woman characters in two distinct yet interconnected representations of social decline- national and biological. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1862 sensation novel *Lady Audley's Secret*, H. Rider Haggard's 1887 imperial romance novel *She*, and Bram Stoker's 1897 gothic horror novel *Dracula* each portray a female character whose sexuality plays a key role in her New Woman status. Despite their differences, the overt sexuality in all the novel's female characters can be read as the New Woman's attack on the social and domestic constructs of marriage and family, creating a subversion of the male power-base so fundamental as to produce texts which punish or "correct" their New

Woman characters, therefore diminishing any threat to the existing social order. However, rather than portray the New Woman as either monolithically monstrous or liberating, all the novels contain elements of promise mixed with anxiety, signaling the liminal nature of the New Woman figure, and illuminating the mixed feelings with which these authors used her to raise questions concerning the future of civil structure.

CHAPTER 2

UNMASKING LADY AUDLEY'S EROTICISM

> *Lady Audley's Secret is a virtual*
> *manifesto of female sensationalism,*
> *but also a witty inversion of Victorian*
> *sentimental and domestic conventions.*
> *-Elaine Showalter*

Despite initially being classified as a minor subgenre of British fiction by critics, sensation novels flourished in the 1860s and became immensely popular amongst women readers. As noted Victorian scholar Patrick Brantlinger suggests, sensation novels were and are sensational partly because of content: "[they] deal with crime, often murder as an outcome of adultery and sometimes of bigamy, in apparently proper, bourgeois, domestic settings," and this preoccupation with domestic crimes can be seen as a focal point for the range of anxieties about the nature and structure of family ("Sensation" 1). While some contemporary reviewers of sensation fiction, like Henry James, were content to analyze the clever artistry by which authors of sensation fiction produced best sellers, other critics saw something much more disturbing in these popular texts. To these more modest reviewers, sensation fiction's generally exploitative approach to controversial issues like bigamy and adultery marked their novels as "disreputable." Sensation novels, such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1862 novel *Lady Audley's Secret*, were condemned as both cause and evidence of a widespread moral degeneration. In a much quoted review of twenty-four sensation novels in the *Quarterly Review*, Henry Mansel, a Victorian philosopher, states:

Works of this class manifest themselves as belonging... to some extent, to

the morbid phenomenon of literature- indications of widespread

corruption, of which they are in part both the cause and effect; called into

existence to supply the cravings of a diseased appetite, and contributing

themselves to foster the disease, and to stimulate the want they supply.

(481)

Like many contemporary critics, Mansel regarded sensation fiction as both agent and

symptom of cultural and moral decline. Negative responses to the sensation novel often

echoed these sentiments, criticizing authors such as Wilkie Collins, Ouida, and Braddon

for their romanticized crime and fascination with sordid and "extravagant" aspects of life,

which they viewed as having a potentially corrupting influence on British culture

(Brantlinger, "Sensation" 3).

Current critics, however, have recently affirmed the historical, social, and literary

importance of sensation novels. According to Natalie Schroeder, they are particularly

significant for what they reveal about Victorian women's resistance to conventionally

prescribed social roles. She argues that "by rejecting the prudish moral tone that

characterized popular fiction of the 1850s and by devouring novels filled with crime,

passion, and sensuality, Victorian women readers began in the 1860s to rebel against the

establishment" (87). Gilbert and Gubar have also seen a dramatization of wider truths

about the experience of women and their struggle for self-expression in episodes of

sensation fiction. They argue that sensation novels are a form of transitional literature

that explores "genuinely radical female protest against marriage and women's economic

oppression" (Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman* 29). Indeed, many feminist critics have

found representations of class struggle, inevitably structured around sexual hierarchy, in

Braddon's sensation novel. Eve Lynch claims that Braddon "agitated to experiment with

fiction that considered more pressing social issues, issues which arose out of Victorian

social reform policies which allowed the repression of lower classes and women of all

classes" (194). Victorianist critics seem to agree that Braddon's success at capturing and

holding her reader's interest lay in her awareness of the issues that concerned her

audience, including the emerging idea of the New Woman and of the malleable

boundaries between the classes. [5]

As Kathleen Tillotson points out, "the purest type of sensation novel is the novel-

with-a-secret" (qtd. in Brantlinger 1). Indeed, *Lady Audley's Secret* is structured around

a woman with a secret, a concealed past. Lady Audley is presented as a duplicitous

woman, one who hides her real identity and past marriage as a way of securing her social

status. The story follows Robert Audley, nephew to Sir Michael Audley and step-

nephew to Sir Audley's new bride Lucy Graham, as he investigates the mysterious

disappearance of his friend George Talboys from Audley Court. As Robert's

investigation progresses, he begins to suspect the new Lady Audley, and attempts to

uncover her secret connection to Talboys. Through a gradual reveal, the reader learns that

"Lady Audley" and "Lucy Graham" and are in fact both roles played by Helen Maldon,

the allegedly dead wife of Talboys, who has repeatedly remade her identity with each rise

of social status.

As Gilbert and Gubar note, it is the duty of female authors to "examine, assimilate, and transcend the extreme images of 'angel' and 'monster' which male authors have generated for her" (*Madwoman* 17). While *Lady Audley's Secret* is certainly entertaining, beneath the façade of a "female novel" lies a harsh critique of the Victorian ideals of femininity. Braddon's title character, Lady Audley, captivated Victorian readers, either by thrilling or disgusting them, precisely because she "looked the part" of the Victorian "angel in the house" but refused to "act" like it. Indeed, the initial description of Lady Audley shows her seeming conformity to the "angel in the house" ideal:

> Wherever she went she seemed to take joy and brightness with her...
> Everyone loved, admired, and praised her. The boy who opened the five-barred gate that stood in her pathway, ran home to his mother to tell of her pretty looks, and the sweet voice in which she thanked him... The verger at the church... saw the soft blue eyes uplifted to his face as he preached his simple sermon... everybody, high and low, united in declaring that Lucy Graham was the sweetest girl that ever lived. (Braddon 11)

However, as Elizabeth Lee argues, this "golden-haired, doll-like [paradigm] of womanhood" mocks contemporary expectations of "the angel in the house" by turning out to be "a mad bigamist and would-be murderess" (Lee). As Elaine Showalter suggests, Braddon's subversion of the Victorian "angel" adds a level of complexity to the novel:

> [The] brilliance of *Lady Audley's Secret* is that Braddon makes her would-be murderess the fragile blond angel of domestic realism... the dangerous

woman is not the rebel or the bluestocking, but the "pretty little girl"

whose indoctrination in the female role has taught her secrecy and

deceitfulness, almost as secondary sex characteristics. (*A Literature* 164)

This subversion of traditional notions of femininity has led to recent analyses of Lady

Audley's character as a New Woman figure. Winifred Hughes states that Lady Audley's

lack of passion and childishness is a "brilliant parody of the Victorian ideal of marriage"

(125).[6] Showalter has mentioned Lady Audley's assertiveness, aggressiveness, and cold,

calculating behavior, which Gilbert and Gubar claim are "characteristics of a male life"

and markedly "unfeminine" (*Madwoman* 163). Despite acknowledging these "male"

characteristics, however, both Hughes and Showalter have failed to make note of Lady

Audley's veiled sexuality, which takes form in her self-love, her vanity.

Sexuality, Schroeder argues, becomes a key element in determining feminine

power and self-assertion. However, throughout the novel, Lady Audley hides her

sexuality behind a mask of femininity, a mask of demure purity and childlike innocence.

As Gilbert and Gubar note, this duplicity, Lady Audley's veiled status, becomes a

strategy for survival in a hostile, male-dominated world (*Madwoman* 473). However, far

from being merely innocent, this vanity, a form of feminine self-love, emerges as an

outgrowth of an age that "encouraged women to worship their youthful beauty and to

become passive, angelic child-wives, perfectly innocent and sexless" (Schroeder 90).

Ironically, this vanity actually increases self- confidence, becoming a way for Lady

Audley to assert power in her limited social sphere, and Braddon's predominantly female

audience would have delighted in Lady Audley's potential for sexual power, a power that

flourishes in a patriarchal society. In this sense, Lady Audley's pure demeanor becomes her greatest sexual weapon because it allows her to become the ultimate object of sexual desire.

Although *Lady Audley's Secret* begins after Lucy Graham has become "My Lady," Braddon offers a retrospective view of the Victorian rise from poverty, or "Bootstraps" tale. The narrator states that Lucy had, in becoming the wife of Sir Michael, made a very advantageous match, one "which [was] apt to draw upon a woman the envy and hatred of her sex" (Braddon 10). Despite being the wife of Sir Michael, Lady Audley is frequently described in childlike terms, terms that solidify her "angel" status. While courting Lucy, Sir Michael asserts that he had hoped to remind her of "a love which should recall to her the father she had lost" (Braddon 12). By marrying the fifty-six-year-old Sir Michael, Lady Audley becomes a child again, one who replaces Sir Michael's own daughter, Alicia, who had once "reigned supreme in her father's house" (Braddon 10). Remarking on her loveliness, the narrator asserts that Lady Audley's beauty has created a reverence of sorts:

> That very childishness had a charm which few could resist. The innocence and candor 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. (Braddon 50)

Indeed, all of Lady Audley's descriptions can be seen as an affirmation of this child-like beauty and charm. She "looks like a child tricked out for a masquerade," and "all her

amusements were childish" (Braddon 50). However, this childlike and innocent demeanor allows Lady Audley to manipulate those around her, suggesting that "innocent appearances cloak evil intentions" (Brantlinger, "Sensation" 14). Indeed, Lady Audley's outward beauty, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed, childlike ideal of Victorian female purity, allows her to mask her bigamy and homicidal tendencies.

Through the portrayal of her New Woman character, Braddon examines the imperfect structure of the Victorian ideals of femininity, turning her readers against their predisposed preference for angelic, childlike heroines by unveiling Lady Audley's duplicitous mask of idyllic femininity. This pervasive duplicity, common to women, is examined in a passage early in the novel when Lady Audley tells her maid, Phoebe Marks, that she too can act the part of a gentlewoman. Lady Audley draws parallels between herself and her young maid, stating:

> You are like me, and your features are very nice; it is only colour that you want. My hair is pale yellow shot with gold, and yours is drab; my eyebrows and eyelashes are dark brown, and yours are almost-I scarcely like to say it, but they're almost white, my dear Phoebe; your complexion is sallow, and mine is pink and rosy. Why, with a bottle of hair dye, such as we see advertised in the papers, and a pot of rouge, you'd be as good-looking as I any day, Phoebe. (Braddon 54-55)

The likeness Lady Audley references suggests that any woman can convincingly act the "female" part while hiding her true appearance and nature. By presenting Lady Audley as a chameleon and an actress, the novel does more than focus on female duplicity, it

explores and exploits fears that the respectable ideal, the proper feminine persona, may simply be a form of acting.

Throughout the novel, Braddon indicates that Lady Audley's sexuality, and the vanity that stems from it, are the sources of her "unfeminine" strength. This vanity appears most clearly in the pre-Raphaelite portrait and the multiple mirrors hanging in her boudoir. In her article "The Literary Portrait as Centerfold: Fetishism in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 'Lady Audley's Secret,'" Lynette Felber argues that literary portraits provide a verbal representation of physical appearance which establishes character and provides clues about hidden identity (471). [7] According to Felber, Lady Audley's portrait reveals the secret of Lady Audley's identity to her first husband, while simultaneously exposing a the ways in which "women's identities were formulated by Victorian society" (Felber 472). Pykett claims that Braddon "both satirizes Pre-Raphaelitism and appropriates its sensuous and sensual gaze" (*Improper* 92), while Felber argues that Braddon's presentation of the portrait comprises a "multivalent" critique:

> [The portrait] protests the power and authority of the male gaze; it anatomizes fetishistic desire; and it raises questions about the construction of women and their sexuality in Victorian society. While titillating, and perhaps even satisfying, male gazers, Braddon's portrait also functions to screen a more profound feminist statement about Victorian patriarchy's relation to women and heterosexuality. (473)

Braddon introduces the portrait of Lady Audley as the fetishized object of the male gaze in a highly sexualized context, as Robert Audley and George Talboys enter a "secret

passage" to gain access to Lady Audley's boudoir, where her unfinished portrait is

displayed on an easel. When George and Robert sneak into Lady Audley's boudoir, they,

and the reader, are given a glimpse of her conniving and wretched nature in the guise of a

painting. The narrator explains that Lady Audley's duplicitous nature, which is masked

by her innocent appearance, can be seen through her portrait:

> 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. It was so like and
>
> yet so unlike; it was as if you had burned strange-coloured fires before my
>
> lady's face, and by their influence brought out new lines and new
>
> expressions never seen in it before.... my lady, in his portrait of her, had
>
> something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend. (Braddon 65)

Thus Lady Audley's portrait serves to reveal the duplicitous nature of her innocent

beauty, for it masks a much more sinister sexuality that Lady Audley exploits for her

advantage. Alicia, too, has found something ominous lurking in Lady Audley's portrait.

She states, "I think that sometimes a painter is in a manner inspired, and is able to see,

through the normal expression of the face, another expression that is equally a part of it,

though not to be perceived by common eyes" (Braddon 66). While Robert cannot

possibly see past Lady Audley's angelic appearance in person, the painting, a supposed

testament to her beauty, allows him a glimpse at something hidden behind her composed

exterior, a suggestion of the evil lurking behind Lady Audley's fair appearance. Lady

Audley's portrait, therefore, becomes highly significant in regards to exposing the

falsified female virtue common to Victorian constructions of femininity.

The mirrors in Lady Audley's boudoir reinforce the idea that "[a] woman's significance is constructed in the process of reflection or being looked upon" (Felber 482). In an early passage from the novel, Phoebe describes Lucy's room as "all pictures and gilding, and great looking-glasses that stretch from the ceiling to the floor" (Braddon 31). Lady Audley recalls, while in a "retrospective reverie," an early time in which she peered into a looking-glass and discovered that she was beautiful:

> That fatal early time in which she had first begun to look upon her
> loveliness as a right divine, a boundless possession which was to be a set-
> off against all girlish shortcomings, a counterbalance of every youthful
> sin. Did she remember the day in which that fairy dower of beauty had
> first taught her to be selfish and cruel, indifferent to the joys and sorrows
> of others, cold-hearted and capricious, greedy of admiration, exacting and
> tyrannical with that petty woman's tyranny which is the worst of
> despotism? (Braddon 252)

In recognizing the power of her beauty, Lady Audley also recognizes the potential that beauty contains for exploiting the sexualized male gaze. Lady Audley questions whether she can trace the sins of her life back to this beauty, and remembers the day when "three master passions" began to rule her life, a day in which three demons, vanity, selfishness, and ambition "joined hands and said, 'This woman is our slave; let us see what she will become under our guidance'" (Braddon 253). As traditional ideals of Victorian femininity emphasize modesty and selflessness, the passage suggests that Lady Audley's beauty has been fatal to her morality.

Lady Audley's confrontation of her image in the mirror may also indicate a process akin to that described by Gilbert and Gubar:

> Before the woman [artist] can journey through the looking glass to
> [artistic] autonomy... she must come to terms with the images on the
> surface of the glass, with, that is, those mythic masks male artists have
> fastened over her human face both to lessen the dread of her "inconstancy"
> and by—identifying her with eternal types they have themselves
> invented—to possess her more thoroughly. (*Madwoman* 16-17)

If vanity is indeed a source of Lady Audley's strength, then through her self-gazing in the privacy of her boudoir, "Lucy attempts to refuse the male gaze and to replace the image of herself imposed by gazer in the portrait" (Felber 481). Because Lady Audley's power lies in English society, which both grants and limits women's power in exchange for the desire their beauty elicits, her gaze subverts the male construction of her appearance, allowing her to utilize that beauty for her own, distinctly female benefit.

Intriguingly, Lady Audley's more masculine traits merely enhance her beauty, as evidenced in the description of Lady Audley setting fire to the Castle Inn. When she travels to the Castle Inn to pay Phoebe and Luke Marks' rent, Lady Audley, who to this point has only been described in childlike terms, transforms into a frighteningly sensual woman. The narrator describes her windblown hair, which surrounds her forehead "like a yellow flame" (Braddon 271). Her eyes, too, "flash from the changing-hued orbs of an angry mermaid" (Braddon 273). Even Luke Marks, a man whose secret knowledge has the power to destroy Lady Audley, is awed to silence by "the unearthly glitter of her

beauty" (Braddon 273). Lady Audley's innocent beauty, thus, allows her to utilize the latent power of sexuality that seethes just below the surface, and her chief talent lies in her awareness of how to use that sexuality as a means of controlling others.

In acknowledging this sexualized beauty, and the power it yields over men, Lady Audley is able to assert her feminine power, and through individual episodes, Braddon suggests that Lady Audley's sexuality is integrally connected to her cunning, intelligence, and aggression. When Robert questions Miss Tonks, a worker at the boarding house Lady Audley's worked at during her days as "Lucy Graham," Miss Tonks asserts that Lucy Graham "was too clever" to divulge any personal information about her life. She states that Lucy "knew how to keep her own secrets, in spite of her innocent ways and her curly hair" (Braddon 201). When Robert Audley comes closer to the truth of her identity, Lady Audley devises a plan to convince Sir Michael that Robert is insane, acknowledging that "[Sir Michael] will believe anything that I tell him" (Braddon 238). She states: "I can twist him which way I like. I can put black before him, and if I say it is white, he will believe me" (Braddon 240). These lines clearly show that Lady Audley recognizes that her sexuality allows her complete control over her husband.

However, despite Lady Audley's criminal acts of bigamy and murder, and the threat she poses to Robert Audley's well-being, the greatest threat Braddon's New Woman presents is to Audley Court itself, a representation of the British Empire. Ancient, aristocratic estates like Audley Court were seen as paragons of established domestic sanctity, a sanctity which Lady Audley threatens to topple with her corrupt morals and rampant sexuality. The opening pages of *Lady Audley's Secret* are devoted to

a description of the "noble" house and gardens of Audley Court, and foreshadow the events that will soon taint its noble depiction:

> 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 every shadow promised-peace.... [but] no species of crime has ever been committed in the worst rookeries about Seven Dials that has not been also done in the face of that rustic calm which still, in spite of all, we look on with a tender, half-mournful yearning, and associate with- peace. (Braddon 51)

Despite the apparently peaceful appearance of Audley Court, the setting becomes the scene of "disruption, violence, and intrigue," which "[challenges] deeply held beliefs about the English country house, the sanctity of the home, and domestic peace" (Pykett, Introduction xvi). Robert Audley visually articulates the fear of this threat to Audley court, and the sanctity of the English home by extension, in a highly symbolic dream. He imagines Lady Audley as a mermaid, the same dangerous siren of female sexuality Lady Audley resembled as she set fire to the Castle Inn. In this "troublesome" dream, Robert sees Audley Court standing bare and unprotected:

> [Threatened] by the rapid rising of a boisterous sea, whose waves seemed gathering upward to descend and crush the house he loved. As the hurrying waves rolled nearer and nearer to the stately mansion, the sleeper saw 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. (Braddon 210)

Indeed, when Robert Audley confronts his aunt with the proof of her guilt, his first

concern is for his uncle's reputation and the Audley family name. Robert claims that it is

his duty to "spare others who must suffer by [her] shame" (Braddon 293). Robert tells his

aunt:

> If there were any secret tribunal before which you might be made to
>
> answer for your crimes, I would have little scrupple in being your accuser:
>
> but I would spare that generous and high-born gentleman upon whose
>
> name your infamy would be reflected. (Braddon 293)

While Lady Audley does not deny her crimes, she does offer an explanation of sorts to

Robert and Sir Michael. Through a retrospective telling of her childhood, Lady Audley

relates her intertwined difficulties of poverty, womanhood, and hereditary madness.

When confessing this sordid past to Sir Michael, Lady Audley claims that her devious

nature and violent acts are rooted in the insanity she has inherited from her mother, a

childlike woman who ended her days in an asylum. She also tells Sir Michael, "you and

your nephew... have been rich all your lives, and can very well afford to despise me; but

I knew how far poverty can affect a life, and I looked forward with a sick terror to a life

so affected" (Braddon 297). While some Victorian readers might very well recognize the

complex economic motivations for Helen Maldon's deception, they would nevertheless

be horrified by her criminal acts, which suggest a moral decline of British society. The

sympathy evoked by Lady Audley's circumstances, therefore, are undermined by

discourses specific to the Victorian era, those dealing specifically with the degeneration of the English family.

In his book *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, William Greenslade discusses the Victorian fear of degeneration as it pertains to British family lines. The nineteenth-century interest in the survival of the family, and the quality of its "stock," has also been observed by Michael Foucault, who argues that the aristocratic obsession with caste took the form of biological, medical, or eugenic precepts in the nineteenth century:

> The concern with genealogy became a preoccupation with heredity; but
>
> included in bourgeois marriages were not only economic imperatives...
>
> but the menaces of heredity; families wore and concealed a sort of
>
> reversed and somber escutcheon whose defamatory quarters were the
>
> disease or defects of a group of relatives. These could include paralysis,
>
> neurasthenia, phthisis, and a decay of morality. (qtd. in Greenslade 152)

In this passage, Foucault touches on familial involvement in hereditary degeneration, which is highly relevant to Braddon's treatment of pedigree and heredity in *Lady Audley's Secret*. Unwilling to subject his uncle to a public trial, Robert Audley must find an alternative punishment for Lady Audley, and he incarcerates his aunt in a Belgian lunatic asylum, where, in the words of the psychiatrist Dr. Mosgrave, "if you were to dig a grave for her in the nearest churchyard and bury her alive in it, you could not more safely shut her from the world and all worldly associations" (Braddon 373). Thus, Robert Audley successfully prevents both the public disclosure of Lady Audley's crimes, and the

degeneration of the Audley family line, and Audley Court, the epitome of traditional, British, patriarchal domesticity, is preserved by extension.

Much has been written in the last fifteen years about the ways in which women writers of the Victorian period were often condemned as immoral, unfeminine, mad, monstrous, or even criminal. Elaine Showalter has argued that during the Victorian period, female novelists used their writing as a means of consciously working against this understanding of what a woman "should be" and against their own internalized anxiety as female authors. This anxiety, Showalter argues, often finds expression in female authors' treatment of female characters that are ambitious, independent, and sexual. Showalter also suggests that female authors habitually undermine or punish their female characters as an effort to resolve their own anxiety, thus restoring the power structure between men and women. Critics have largely read the ending of *Lady Audley's Secret* in accordance with Showalter's idea of punishment. However "unprotected" and vulnerable Audley Court is to Lady Audley's sexuality, the tradition of male England's patriarchal society is stronger than any threat posed by female sexuality, and the "mad" Lady Audley is sent away to a foreign asylum to pay for her crimes. I would argue, however, that Braddon does not so decisively condemn her New Woman in subservience to Victorian norms; rather, the ending of *Lady Audley's Secret* is deliberately vague, suggesting that the reader should question Lady Audley's supposed "madness."

When Robert Audley initially confronts his aunt, Lady Audley confesses her madness in a spectacular display befitting the theater. The narrator states that Lady Audley "rose suddenly and stood before [Robert] erect and resolute; with her hair dashed

away from her face and her eyes glittering" (Braddon 297). Lady Audley goes on to

admit that she is indeed mad:

> Yes, a madwoman. When you say that I killed George Talboys, you say
>
> the truth. When you say that I murdered him treacherously and foully, you
>
> lie. I killed him because I AM MAD! because my intellect is a little way
>
> upon the wrong side of that narrow boundary-line between sanity and
>
> insanity. (Braddon 297)

However, Robert Audley himself acknowledges that his aunt "would be capable of any

new crime to shield her from the consequences of the old one" (Braddon 225). Despite

faulting a "hereditary" madness for her crimes, Lady Audley also acknowledges that

when she met her mother, she "saw no raving, strait-waist-coated maniac, guarded by

zealous jailors; but a golden-haired, blue-eyed, girlish creature who seemed as frivolous

as a butterfly" (Braddon 298). It would appear that Lady Audley, like her mother, fits the

stereotype of the gentle and lovely "madwoman," which dates back to William

Shakespeare's Ophelia in *Hamlet.* [8] However, in Lady Audley, Braddon creates a woman

who combines both the looks of the gentle and lovely victim of madness with the desires

and impulses of a more monstrous, "Victorian" madwoman, a creation which critiques

the way in which women are stereotyped by societal stigmas.

In *Madness, Morality, and Medicine* Anne Digby asserts that "perceptions of

madness are culturally responsive: definitions of what constitutes insanity are a reflection

of ideas and values current at a particular time in society" (1). In an effort to save her

life, Lady Audley manipulates these culture notions of Victorian madness as easily as she

manipulated social and class restrictions though her sexuality. This manipulation is
explained when Dr. Mosgrave arrives to provide a consultation on Lady Audley's
"disease:"

> There is no evidence of madness in anything she has done. She ran away
> from her home... in hope of finding a better [one.] There is n madness in
> that. She committed the crime of bigamy, because by that crime she
> obtained fortune and position. There is no madness there. When she
> found herself in a desperate position... she employed intelligent means,
> and she carried out a conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation
> in its execution. There is no madness in that. (Braddon 321)

However, after spending a mere ten minutes with Lady Audley in the privacy of her
boudoir, Dr. Mosgrave recants his earlier diagnosis, claiming that Lady Audley's "latent
madness" is indeed "dangerous" (Braddon 323). It is clear to the reader that Lady Audley
has once again used her sexuality and feminine charms to avoid the repercussions of her
criminal acts. By feigning madness, Lady Audley not only protects herself from a
criminal trial, she also secures a life away from Audley Court, a life where she can safely
live out her days as Madame Taylor.

As suggested by Showalter, sensation novels did more than shock, titillate, and
surprise their readers, they provided an outlet for female authors to voice their dislike of
their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers (*A Literature* 158). In their writing, these
women sensation novelists made a powerful appeal to their female audience by
subverting the traditional feminine ideal and expressing a wide range of suppressed

female emotions, providing "fantasies of protest and escape" (*A Literature* 159). Within

Lady Audley's Secret, Braddon harnesses and explores the latent power of the New

Woman figure, allowing her readers to view Lady Audley as a source of inspiration for

subversion and strength. Thus, Lady Audley can be seen as a representation of the

potential the New Woman embodied in regards to modernizing the Victorian notion of

womanhood.

CHAPTER 3

UNVEILING AYESHA'S SEXUALITY

>*"She" is the veiled woman, that*
>*ubiquitous nineteenth-century figure*
>*of male desire and anxiety, whose body*
>*is Truth but a Truth that blasts.*
>*-Stephen Arata*

Braddon, and many other female authors' use of the New Woman was markedly feminist, however, that use changed drastically as male writers began to appropriate the New Woman for their own purposes. These male authors created damning portrayals of their New Woman characters, portrayals that functioned to illuminate key aspects of the historical moments in which they were produced. Recent scholars, such as Laura Chrisman, have paired adventure fiction and New Woman fiction to note how some imperial romance heroines incorporate characteristics of powerful, self-possessed New Women. However, adventure fiction and New Women novels are part of a cultural history in which more than shifting gender boundaries are at stake. Contemporary debates such as Irish Home Rule, women's suffrage, and the expanding empire, brought matters of autonomous self-rule to the forefront, and the way in which these two genres intersect displays the specific ways they concurrently register pressing cultural debates, exploring the dynamics of personal power and re-imagining social relations.

As the pervasiveness of degeneration theory was at its height during the *fin-de-siècle*, male authors of adventure fiction frequently aligned their New Woman characters with these ideas of the dangers of degeneration in reactive forms of discourse against the New Woman. In her article "The Dark Continent: Africa as Female Body in Haggard's

Adventure Fiction," Rebecca Stott argues that while adventure fiction is "pure male

fantasy," filled with adventure, tests of strength, morality and decency, it is clear that the

more serious purpose is to revitalize men, whose virility has been threatened by the

usurpation of the New Woman (70). Gilbert and Gubar address adventure fiction and the

New Woman in their book *No Man's Land Vol. 2: Sexchanges*. According to Gilbert and

Gubar, the New Woman created "male fears of a debilitating no man's land," and authors

of adventure fiction often sought to neutralize the threat of the enigmatic female, with

their stories enacting the ultimate exile of the New Woman from masculine spaces

(*Sexchanges* xii). Therefore, the function of these novels was to restore the man to his

rightful position of power, thus alleviating the threat to the existing social order.

In her book *New Woman and Colonial Adventure Fiction in Victorian Britain:*

Gender, Genre, and Empire, LeeAnn Richardson asserts that late nineteenth-century

gender trouble, which is most clearly embodied in New Woman novels, profoundly

influenced both concepts of imperialism and the novels that most fully represent them.

Written from the perspective of the authoritarian and culturally dominant male, adventure

novels often justify the "Other's" subordinate status by displaying the superiority of the

British man through his victories over savage landscapes and people. New Women

novels, in contrast, interrogate the inequities of a system that asserts the very things

adventure novels champion: "male superiority, the right to dominate and rule others, and

paternalistic ideology" (Richardson 1). At first glance, these subgenres of Victorian

literature appear to be antithetical in both purpose and interest; however, as indicated by

Richardson, "the women who imaginatively ventured into the territory of feminine

emancipation cannot be studied separately from the men who imaginatively adventured into the outreaches of the empire" (3-4). Despite the differences between these two genres, both were responding to complex forces typically identified as "cultural decline" or "cultural evolution." Therefore the juxtaposition of adventure novels and New Woman novels allows the reader to see the degree to which attitudes about empire are also gendered cultural debates.

Anne McClintock has contended that "[although] women and men did not experience imperialism in the same way . . . white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting" (6). Vron Ware, who has noted that the rise of British feminism coincided with the height of popular imperialism, argues that "feminist ideology and practice were shaped by the social, economic, and political forces of imperialism to a greater extent than has been acknowledged" (119). Opponents of the New Woman blamed her for the spread of socialism and nihilism and rebuked her determination to redefine gender roles as undermining the long-term interests of the English nation (Jusova 4). These opponents also pronounced the goals of *fin-de-siècle* New Woman as dangerous to the integrity of the English "imperial race," and to the institution of the British Empire. The perceived connection between the New Woman's gender transgressions and the state of the British Empire is discussed by Elizabeth Lynn Linton, one of the most ardent advocates of patriarchy at the *fin de siècle*, in her article "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents." In "The Wild Women," Linton not only portrays the New Woman as "absolutely unwomanly," she also maligns her for

presumably introducing "into the cultured classes of certain qualities and practices hitherto confined to the uncultured and—savages" ("Wild Women" 598). The New Woman thus emerged as a chief cause of cultural and racial degeneration of the English "imperial race," and as a badly formed colonialist who threatened the fate of the entire empire by presumably disseminating social unrest among the British colonial subjects.

Henry Rider Haggard, a pioneer of the male adventure novel genre, often wrote plots infected with anxieties peculiar to the *fin-de-siècle*, including anxieties about race, gender, and imperial decline. Haggard's 1887 novel *She* follows the journey of Horace Holly and his ward Leo Vincey as they travel from England to a lost kingdom, Kôr, hidden deep in the African interior. While on this journey, Holly and Vincey encounter a primitive race of natives, the Amahagger, and a mysterious white queen, Ayesha, who reigns over the Amahagger as the all-powerful "She," or "She-who-must-be-obeyed." In *She*, Haggard displays a clear anxiety over the racial degeneration of the British Empire, which is evident in his treatment of the Amahagger, whose depiction as a "mixed" race shows a lack of racial purity that could potentially lead to evolutionary degeneration and national decline. The question of female authority and feminine behavior is realized to the extreme in the figure of She-who-must-be-obeyed, a woman who both inspires male desire and dominates male sovereignty.[9]

In *She*, the evolutionary notion of degeneration appears most clearly in Haggard's portrayal of the Amahagger. During the *fin de siècle*, Victorians were increasingly concerned about cultural and national decline resulting from racial decay (Stepan 98). In *Rider Haggard and the Fiction of Empire*, Wendy R. Katz argues that racism, "the most

insidious aspect of British imperialism," provided support for imperialist policies and functioned as an essential element of British imperial organization, making racism "essential to imperialism's relative stability" (Katz 131). In the introduction to *She*, Daniel Karlin argues that Haggard, like many of his Victorian contemporaries, "proceeds on the assumption that whites are naturally superior to blacks, and that Britain's imperial extensions into Africa are a noble, civilising enterprise" (Karlin xii). While Ayesha and the English travelers are the embodiment of white civilization, the darker Amahagger illustrate notions of savagery, barbarity, and superstition. However, as Andrew Stauffer asserts, "the novel suggests deeper connections among the races, an ancient genealogy of ethnicities and civilizations in which every character is a hybrid" (20).

The "hybrid" status of these characters introduces a strong Darwinian undercurrent that frames the representation of race in *She*, making the theme of evolutionary racial degeneration an especially prominent aspect in the novel. Karlin argues that the Amahagger, "a demonic cannibalistic matriarchy squatting in the ruins of a lost civilization," are depicted as England's racial nightmare (xv). While the idea of a land ruled by ferocious women is as old as and enduring as the legend of the Amazons, Haggard's appropriation of contemporary scientific discourse to degrade the Amahagger makes them especially relevant in regards to *fin-de-siècle* anxieties. Haggard represents the Amahagger as a debased mixture of ethnicities, and, as the "editor" of the novel asserts, the name Amahagger itself "[indicates] a curious mingling of race" (Haggard 165). The editor explains that while originally descendents of the inhabitants of Kôr, the Amahagger have since intermarried with Arabs and Africans, creating a hotpot of racial

hybridization. The men, "all tall and handsome," are "varied in their degree of darkness of skin," while the women, who are also "exceedingly good-looking," are described having "large, dark eyes, well-cut features, and a thick bush of curling hair" (Haggard 78). Like Lady Audley, the Amahagger's attractive appearance is undercut by their savage and ferocious nature, suggesting that Haggard uses them to comment on the duplicitous nature of the "Other." Brantlinger suggests that this hybridization signifies a kind of "entailed degeneration" to Victorians, a decline from the pure blood of the initial races, and thus "an aspect of their degeneration is the idea that the Amahagger have lost whatever elements of civilization their Kôr ancestors may have imparted to them" (Notes 323).

Even more frightening than the Amahagger's mixed origins, however, is their related subversion of traditional Victorian gender relations. As Holly notes, the Amahagger lie "in direct opposition to the habits of almost every other... race in the world," as women amongst the Amahagger are "upon perfect terms of equality with the men" (Haggard 79). As the sexual aggressors of their tribe, the Amahagger women are extremely frightening to the English travelers. While at times they appear gentle and attractive to Holly and Leo, the Amahagger also display a brutish form of aggression. The Amahagger are thus presented in the same fashion as Lady Audley, whose duality of aggression and physical beauty mark her as a force to be reckoned with. As Robert Audley acknowledges, "we may look into the smiling face of a murderer, and admire its tranquil beauty" (Braddon 124).

The aggressive nature of the Amahagger is most clearly evident in the "hot-potting" episode. Gilbert and Gubar have noted that hot-potting, a torturous form of murder wherein the victim's head is devoured by a "fiery female symbol," a red earthen pot that signifies both nature and female genitalia, is a "vivid enactment of both castration fears and birth anxieties" (*Sexchanges* 14). For Holly and his English companions, hot-potting is seen as a warning to the ways in which "female misrule can cause a vessel associated with domesticity to become as deadly as woman's anatomy" (*Sexchanges* 14). The Amahagger's interest in role-reversal, and the murderous female sexuality which pervades their tribe, prepares the reader for the sexual assertiveness of Ayesha herself.

To Nina Auerbach, Ayesha conveys anxieties about "national and domestic reality," including "the learned and crusading 'new woman'" (37). Eliza Linton argues that Ayesha's "autonomous will seemingly embodies Victorian anti-feminist fears of New Women desiring absolute personal independence coupled with supreme power over men" ("Wild Women" 596). Gilbert and Gubar argue that "the all-knowing, all-powerful" She is "in certain ways an entirely New Woman" (7). Arata argues that "the presence and the pressure" of the New Woman makes itself known in Ayesha's "confident forays into intellectual disciplines usually barred to women" (98). Indeed, Ayesha's familiarity with theology, chemistry, eugenics, and philosophy display how education has allotted her a certain amount of power. Although agreeing with the tenor of these critics, I depart from them in contending that the driving force behind Ayesha's New Woman status is her sexuality. Sexuality permeates *She* from beginning to end, and

Ayesha's sexuality is portrayed as the driving force behind her power. In a fashion similar to Lady Audley's remembrance of the first time she looked in the mirror and recognized the power of her beauty, Ayesha describes a time when she used her sexuality to obtain power over Noot, a philosopher skilled in the secrets of Nature. Ayesha tells Holly and Leo, "then I did beguile him with my beauty and my wit, and flatter him with my tongue, so that he led me down and showed me the Fire, and told me the secrets of the Fire" (Haggard 246). Thus, Ayesha's intellect and assertiveness are seen as powers that were only attainable through her sexuality.

Brantlinger has identified the theme of the white queen ruling a savage race as "a powerfully erotic one," directly connecting sexual degeneration to its primitive and atavistic climate (Introduction xix). However, accompanying this sexuality is an air of savagery and cruelty, a savagery that directly aligns Ayesha with "the horror at the centre of Africa" (Stott 74). As Stott asserts, this anxiety "about the release of primitive (sexual) energies lying dormant beneath the façade of civilization," an idea fuelled by Darwinian theory, is clearly evidenced in the unveiling of Ayesha. Ayesha claims she is so lovely to look upon she must be veiled at al times or else men would go mad; to unveil her is therefore to release her sexuality and her supreme power over men, displaying "an anxiety about the release of primitive, sexual energy lying dormant beneath the façade of femininity" (Stott 73). Initially described clothed in "soft, white, gauzy material" which reminds Holly of "a corpse in its grave clothes" (Haggard 132), once unveiled, Ayesha transforms into the incarnation of "lovely tempting womanhood" (Haggard 142). Holly, using the traditional male identifications for women, describes Ayesha's unveiling:

Perfect and imperial shape, instinct with a life that was more than life, and

with a certain serpent-like grace that was more than human. On her little

feet were sandals, fastened with studs of gold. Then came ankles more

perfect than ever sculptor dreamed of. About the waist her white kirtle

was fastened by a double-headed snake of solid gold, above which her

gracious form swelled up in lines as pure as they were lovely, till the kirtle

ended on a snowy argent of her breast, whereon her arms were folded.

(Haggard 143)

Haggard's representation of the snake motif aligns Ayesha with the traditional male

identification of beautiful women with demons and monsters. The snake, a symbol of

Ayesha's "tempting womanhood," links Ayesha with Eve, another primeval temptress.

Holly also describes Ayesha as "Venus Victrix," and as Venus, she commands absolute

devotion of any man who looks upon her unveiled. Even Holly, a self-proclaimed

misogynist who "has put his heart away from such vanity as woman's loveliness," fell to

his knees and "worshipped her as never woman was worshipped"(Haggard 172). As

Holly later acknowledges, Ayesha's beauty is so overwhelming that it has the ability to

take away his "manhood."

As in the discovery of Lady Audley's portrait, despite acknowledging the

loveliness and purity of Ayesha's beauty, Holly also recognizes that there is something

"evil" in her appearance (Haggard 143). Holly's fear of the "evil" lurking behind

Ayesha's beauty is similar to Victorian fears of barbarism lurking beneath the façade of

civilization. This barbarism, as Stott notes, "constitutes the primitive impulses and

primitive sexuality" of the "Other" (75). As women, by virtue of their subordinate position to men in evolutionary development, were traditionally seen as the weak spot in the veneer of civilization, they were especially subject to this notion of hidden savagery; their sexuality was understood as being just under control, ready to be unleashed and wreak havoc at any moment.[10] Ayesha, although white, is therefore equated with evolutionary blackness, specifically with the black female as a primitively sexual being. Thus, the fear over Ayesha's sexuality directly correlates to the fear that "beneath the thin veneer of white civilized womanhood lies the black woman always ready to reassert herself" (Stott 75).

However, as Gilbert and Gubar note, "Haggard's semidivine femme fatale and the compulsiveness with which he and his contemporaries made Her 'the mainspring of works of imagination' were symptoms of late Victorian anxieties that were exacerbated not just by the battle of the sexes... but also by a series of other key cultural changes, including the fear 'recessional' of the British empire" (*Sexchanges* 7). In another parallel to Lady Audley, the dangers Ayesha's sexuality presents to Holly and Vincey as individuals pales in comparison to the dangers she represents to England more broadly. While the men can be seen as synechdocic representations of England, Ayesha's plans to invade England suggest repercussions for the empire as well as the domestic home. The process of imperialism is thus embodied in the figure of She, who is herself portrayed as a foreign colonizing force. Holly briefly describes Ayesha's plans to go to England, and musing that she would likely take control of both the British dominions and, eventually, the whole earth:

> [It] made me absolutely shudder to think what would be the result of her
>
> arrival there... She would, if necessary, and if the unaided power of her
>
> beauty did not prove equal to the occasion, blast her way to an end she set
>
> before he, and, as she could not die... what was there to stop her?
>
> (Haggard 226)

Ann Ardis claims "the fears Holly harbours over Ayesha's plan to return to England" are "exactly those voiced about the New Woman's entrance in the public arena" (140). As Richardson suggests, while empire builders enlarge their territory and create a wider sphere of action, New Women employ the same metaphor for their excursions out of the domestic realm (Richardson 3). Therefore, the fears voiced about empire are also applicable to the fears voiced about the New Woman, and the intricate link between gender and empire is revealed. Ayesha's sexual power is therefore seen as a danger to both man and the British race, a danger that must be eliminated.

Ayesha's primitive nature is revealed in its purest form in her final moments, as Ayesha guides Holly and Vincey deep into the caves of Kôr so they too can be made immortal. The flame of life, she says, will give "life and youth that shall endure... and with it pomp, and power, and wealth" (Haggard 212). However, when Ayesha steps into the flame, the power she anticipates becomes a mockery of the progress of the New Woman. As Henry Miller notes, Ayesha's demise is not simply a death, but a "devolution" of sorts, and She is reduced into a primitive being before the men's eyes. Therefore, in Ayesha's death, Haggard portrays the devolutionary horror lurking beneath the advanced woman's assured exterior.

Gilbert and Gubar note that Ayesha's final moments constitute "a sexual climax" of sorts, in an "apocalyptic primal scene" that highlights her primitive sexuality once more (*Sexchanges* 18). Therefore, the pillar of fire, a "perpetually erect symbol of masculinity... whose eternal thundering return speaks to the inexorability of the patriarchal law," is a fitting medium for Ayesha's death (*Sexchanges* 20). Engaging in a sexual encounter of sorts, Ayesha willingly steps into the fire and fully unveils her primitive sexuality:

> The mysterious fire played up and down her dark and rolling locks... it
>
> gleamed upon her ivory breast and shoulder, from which the hair had
>
> slipped aside; it slid along her pillared throat and delicate features... Oh,
>
> how beautiful she looked there in the flame! (Haggard 256)

For a short time Ayesha seems to find pleasure in the fire, as the flames runs up and down her form, caressing her naked body. However, quite suddenly, "a change came over her face... the smile vanished, and in its place there came a dry, hard look; the rounded face seemed to grow pinched.. The glorious eyes, too, lost their light" (Haggard 256). Holly notes the change to Ayesha's form:

> She was shriveling up; the golden snake that had encircled her gracious
>
> form slipped over her hips and to the ground; smaller and smaller she
>
> grew; her skin changed colour, and in place of the perfect whiteness of its
>
> luster it turned dirty brown and yellow, like an old piece of withered
>
> parchment. She felt at her head: the delicate hand was nothing more than
>
> a claw now, a human talon like that of a badly-preserved Egyptian

mummy, and then she seem to realize what kind of change was passing

over her, and she shrieked- ah, she shrieked!- she rolled upon the floor and

shrieked. (Haggard 257)

As Ayesha passes though the stages of her life, aging two thousand years in mere

minutes, her beauty flakes away, her power wrinkles, and her magic dries up. Ayesha is

reduced to a bald, naked, shapeless, wrinkled animal "no larger than an ape," who raises

herself "upon bony hands... swaying her head slowly from side to side as does a tortoise"

(Haggard 257). This "devolution" can therefore be seen as the ultimate unveiling, one

that reduces Ayesha to her the savage, and primitive form her sexuality suggests.

Pamela Murphy calls Ayesha's ultimate annihilation a "thinly disguised

allegorical admonition to recognize and dispel the threat that the New Woman posed to

late-Victorian society." (84) According to Ardis, Ayesha's death is comparable to a

"witch-burning" (104). For Haggard, however, Ayesha's death is not merely masculine

wish-fulfillment, it is a blessing in disguise. Holly writes, "it requires no great stretch of

imagination to see the finger of Providence in the matter" (Haggard 258). A strong and

healthy Ayesha "would have revolutionized society, and even perchance changed the

destinies of Mankind. She opposed herself against the eternal law, and... was swept back

into nothingness... with shame and hideous mockery" (Haggard 285). Ayesha's death,

therefore, serves as a kind of teleological judgment, a punishment for her transgressions

against the Victorian gender boundaries.

A time of imperial expansion and unrest, the *fin-de-siècle* also saw women's

issues come to the forefront of the national consciousness. Thus, changing ideas about

sex and gender are implicated in imperial discourse. As Richardson describes the relationship, imperial discourse and the New Woman revolve around one another like twin stars subject to mutual gravitational pull and influenced by a larger constellation of forces "from governmental action on emigration policy and property rights to personal attitudes toward race, nation, and motherhood" (4). The male fantasy Haggard presents in *She* is deeply determined by private and public anxieties about race, gender, and imperial decline. Like the strong but barbarous primitive, Ayesha, a woman with authority, menaces masculinity and imperils imperialism. The persistent feminization of Ayesha and the Amahagger in Haggard's novel indicates a sexual desire that constitutes much of the narrative, and Haggard's eventual treatment of these female characters is deeply suggestive in regards to male authors' use of the New Woman. Haggard appropriates the New Woman, converting Ayesha's character for his own use before eliminating her and all that she represents. In Ayesha's death, Haggard colonizes the New Woman in order to conquer her savage nature, thus restoring the power balance between the sexes.

CHAPTER 4

SUBVERSIVE SEXUALITY IN THE NEW WOMAN VAMPIRE

> *Stoker's treatment of women in*
> *Dracula does not stem from his hatred*
> *of women in general but ... from his*
> *ambivalent reaction to a topical*
> *phenomenon - the New Woman.*
> *Carol Senf*

As displayed in Henry Rider Haggard's imperial romance *She*, late-Victorian

male adventure fiction often attacks feminist ideologies, and anxieties about the New

Woman appear in the form of demonized female sexuality and intensified misogyny.

However, while the empire in the works of imperial romances provide a stage on which

fantasies of a revived masculinity are played out at the expense of female agency, it also

brings to a head problems of its own, problems having to do with racial integrity and

national decline; problems that are themselves gendered, implicitly and explicitly. In

narratives such as these, what has been presented as the "civilized" world is consistently

on the point of being overrun by "primitive" races. According to Arata, "these forces can

originate outside the civilized world, as in *She*, or they can inhere in the civilized itself"

(108). In these reverse colonization novels, "the colonizer finds himself in the position of

the colonized, the exploiter is exploited, the victimizer victimized"(108). Reverse

colonization narratives are, according to Arata, "obsessed with the spectacle of the

primitive and the atavistic" (111). Patrick Brantlinger has linked this obsession with the

primitive to a late-Victorian fascination with the occult, and the modernization of Gothic

literature reveals this obsession.[11] The "atavistic descent into the primitive" characteristic

of Gothic fiction "seem often to be allegories of the larger regressive movement of

civilization" and the ease with which it could be overcome by the forces of barbarism

(Brantlinger, *Darkness* 229). However, as Arata notes, Gothic fiction addresses "the issue

of British imperial decline while also chartering a variety of paths by which... that

decline may be reversed or transcended" (4). In Bram Stoker's 1897 Gothic horror novel

Dracula, vampirism designates a kind of colonization of the body, and the vanquishing of

that threat rides on the control of female sexuality, as female bodies, made into "Othered"

entities, are demonstrably more susceptible to such colonization.

As John Allen Stevenson argues, "blood" is a sign of racial identity, and Dracula

effectively "Others" his victims by mixing their races with his infectious bite. Given the

widespread fears over the degeneration of English "stock," the threat of Dracula, as a

disseminator of "bad blood," would inevitably be perceived in racial terms. Dracula's

plans to visit London, however, represent another fear specific to the anxieties present

during the *fin-de-siècle*, fears over a national decline which stemmed from mixing

English blood with the blood of the "Other." These fears over a national decline are

voiced within Harker's panic over Dracula's planned excursion to London. "This was the

being I was helping to transfer to London," Harker writes, "where, perhaps for centuries

to come, he might amongst it's teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a

new and ever widening circle of semi-demons" (Stoker 60). Carol Senf suggests that

Dracula's planned excursion manifests "the threat of the primitive trying to colonize the

civilized world" ("Unseen Face" 97). Halten Burton argues that the count "represents a

dark, primitive strata of civilization" come to disrupt an already besieged Victorian

culture (84). These accounts stress the archaic forces unleashed by the Count, forces that threaten to overturn the progressive, scientific world of contemporary England. As Van Helsing states late in the novel, vampires follow "in [the] wake of" imperial decay" (286). They are produced, in other words, by the very conditions many perceived as characterizing late-Victorian England. Arata asserts that Dracula's move to London indicates that England, like many other fallen empires, is now a scene of decline; the Count's very presence seems to suggest its doom. However, despite the vast amount of criticism presented by the above-mentioned scholars, who focus solely on the threat Dracula poses in terms of both racial and national decline, there is another related yet distinct threat that has been overlooked, the threat of monstrous vampiric sexuality. In the section entitled "The Vampire" in his monograph *On the Nightmare*, Ernest Jones states that the vampire superstition "yields plain indications of most kinds of sexual perversions" (98). However, as *Dracula* is a Victorian novel, the vampire's sexuality is embodied in a particular form, and Victorian attitudes towards subversive sexual roles permeate the novel on every level.

Many critics have wondered why Count Dracula is the single male vampire in the novel while Stoker portrays four of the five female characters as vampires who are aggressive, inhuman, and wildly erotic. As noted by Gail Griffin, "Dracula is more dangerous when incorporeal than while visible" (137). It is his embrace, his fatal bite, which releases the restrained sexual energies and prompts Van Helsing and his band of men to "restore the hegemonic order between the sexes disturbed by her libidinal deviance from the Victorian ideal of the chaste female" (Armstrong 174). Active

vampirism, with its sexual dimensions, is disassociated with Dracula and instead associated with the four female vampires seeking male victims, and while these women are Dracula's victims, they are also his tools for acquiring new victims.

That Dracula propagates his race solely through the bodies of women suggests an affinity, perhaps even an identity, between vampiric sexuality and female sexuality. As noted by Arata, vampiric sexuality and female sexuality are both "represented as primitive and voracious, and both threaten the patriarchal hegemony" (118). Dracula's kiss, his fatal infection, "deracinates" the woman, unleashing what the male characters consider monstrous sexuality. In her article, "'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman," Carol Senf argues that Stoker's use of female vampires is a response to the "sexual freedom and reversal of roles" which were often associated with the New Woman (39). These vampires, who although dead remain intensely sexual, defy both the laws of nature and society's restrictions. In Victorian England's sexual economy, female sexuality's only legitimate function was propagation within marriage. Once separated form that function, female sexuality becomes monstrous. However, unlike the sexuality displayed in Haggard's New Woman, Ayesha, the sexuality of Stoker's female vampires is depicted as an infection, an invasion by an outside source that can potentially be reversed. If in this novel, blood stands for race, as suggested by Stevenson, Lucy and Mina become embodiments of the threat of racial degeneration and the sexuality of the New Woman. It cannot be ignored, however, that Lucy and Mina suffer different fates; while one must be eliminated, the other is allowed to live and thrive.

Indeed, Stoker's treatment of women in the novel has resulted in a myriad of criticism, some aligning Stoker with the feminist cause, and some naming him as a "woman hater." In her article, "Feminism, Sex Role Exchanges, and Other Subliminal Fantasies in Bram Stoker's 'Dracula,'" Stephanie Demetrakopoulos argues that Stoker's self-professed feminism "influences the bipartite structure of the novel.... [with] each half centered around a different type of woman" (104). At the other end of the spectrum is Judith Roth, who argues that "hostility toward female sexuality," which is most vividly rendered in the staking of Lucy, contributed to the novel's popularity (Roth 113). Another critic of Stoker, Judith Weissman, argues that the fight to destroy Dracula and to restore Mina's humanity is really a fight for control over women. According to Weissman, "a man's vision of a noble band of men restoring a woman to purity and passivity, saving them from the horror of vampirism, is an extreme version of the stereotypically Victorian attitudes towards sexual roles" (69). Despite their differences, all three critics agree that Stoker seems to be commenting on the significance of the New Woman's sexuality and how that sexuality subverts traditionally held beliefs of a patriarchal ruled Victorian society. Indeed, by taking focus away from the Count and placing it on the female vampires, Stoker suggests that the New Woman's sexuality was particularly disconcerting to Victorians. However, the complex nature of Stoker's treatment of the monstrous sexuality within his two English heroines suggests an ambivalence toward the New Woman, one which stems from her multiple representations in literature.

Stoker focuses in on the aggressive sexuality of the female vampires quite early in the novel. Jonathan Harker, who seems to both fear and lust after the female vampires, describes them in a journal entry. Harker first perceives them as "ladies by their dress and manner," but soon becomes acutely aware of the dangers they present:

> There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips... I lay quiet, looking out under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation... till I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense, honey sweet . . . but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive... I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited - waited with beating heart. (Stoker 45-46)

The vampires' aggressive behavior and attempt to reverse traditional sexual roles show them to be stereotypical representations of the New Woman as a sexual predator, and Harker appears to be openly ambivalent about this role reversal. In Harker's mind, the voluptuous women transform into carnivorous animals, carnivorous animals Harker is entranced by. Judith Roth explains that Stoker consciously made the female vampires overtly sexual, arguing that "only relations with vampires are sexualized in this novel" in order to "make sexuality seem unthinkable in 'normal relations' between the sexes" (117). Viewed through Roth's lens, Harker's simultaneous longing and fear in the above

passage is revelatory, as he embodies Stoker's own feelings over the New Woman, a figure he both desires and admonishes. These vampire women offer an immediate sexual gratification, though an illicit and dangerous one, which is a far reach from Harker's relationship with the chaste Mina, whom he argues shares no commonalities with these "devils of the Pit" (Stoker 60). However, as suggested by Weissman, "the whole book reveals the fear that they do indeed have something in common" (75). There is always the possibility that the chaste Victorian wife will become a sexualized being, one whom, like the female vampires, their husbands will both desire and fear.

The closeness of the boundaries that seem to separate the chaste woman from primitive sexual monster is reaffirmed as a threat in the character Lucy Westenra, Dracula's first English conquest, after she has completed her transformation to vampire. The change most noted in Lucy during her transformation is a remarkable heightening of sexuality in which she begins to mirror the vampire wives' voluptuous and animalistic qualities. Lucy's letters to Mina, however, display a sexual aggressiveness in her human stage. Her first letter to Mina seems to be a of a typical Victorian lady's fashion, recounting the romantic feelings Lucy feels for one Arthur Holmwood. Her second letter, however, explains how she has received not one, but three marriage proposals from various men. This letter concludes with a rather strange wish, one that begins to show Lucy's departure from the traditional Victorian "angel." She asks, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (Stoker 67). According to Senf, this desire for three husbands suggests a degree of latent sexuality, a sexuality directly tied to the fears of hidden barbarism, which directly connects her to

male fears over the New Woman's potential for primitive degeneration ("Stoker's Response" 42). Lucy's rebellious nature, which is only hinted at in her human state, is heightened the moment Dracula's bite infects her.

Mina's journal and its revelation of Lucy's sleepwalking confirm this division, according to Demetrakopoulos. By day, Lucy remains an acquiescent and loving Victorian angel, but by night, the other side of her character gains control. Lucy, therefore, is represented in the same fashion as Lady Audley, a woman whose duplicitous nature is hidden by her angelic appearance. Mina describes Lucy as restless and impatient to get out whilst sleepwalkng. Mina writes, "She seemed, even in her sleep, to be a little impatient at finding the door shut, and went back to bed under a sort of protest" (Stoker 104). This restlessness ultimately leads her to Dracula, and to emancipation from her society's restraints. However, it would seem as if the duty of women permeates the waking conscience of Lucy, and by the next morning, "all her old gaiety of manner seemed to have come back" (Stoker 104). Therefore, it becomes clear that Lucy does indeed contain a degree of latent sexuality, a sexuality that is only surfaced by Dracula's bite.

As Lucy's rebellious nature gains in strength, the change is mirrored by an alteration in her physical condition. Mina notes after Lucy's first encounter with Dracula that "the adventure of the night had not seemed to have harmed her" (Stoker). Instead, Lucy's body seems stronger, her eyes brighter, her cheeks rosier. As Dracula's visits to Lucy increase, this initial "healthy" appearance gives way to a "ghastly, chalkily pale" appearance, which Dr. Van Helsing's suggests requires "immediate transfusion of blood"

(Stoker 131). According to Van Helsing, these transfusions will provide Lucy with the blood she has lost, and may potentially reverse the effects of Dracula's infection, thus enabling Lucy to return to her female position of regenerator of the English nation. Many contemporary critics, like Arata, have analyzed this exchange of blood in terms of racial decline. He suggests that "the only way to counter this process is to 're-racinate' [Lucy] by reinfusing her with 'proper' blood" (Arata 118). However, these blood transfusions also contain strong sexual undertones, even potentially symbolizing sexual intercourse.[12] The sexual nature of these transfusions is made clear as Van Helsing warns Seward not to tell Holmwood that he has given Lucy blood: "Mind nothing be said of this. If our young lover should turn up unexpected, as before, no word to him. It would only... enjealous him" (Stoker 139). It would appear that Van Helsing is aware that Lucy's fiancé would object to the sexual nature of the transfusions. However, despite the multiple transfusions Lucy receives, they do not cure her ailment, and the changes to her body and countenance become even more apparent. Dr. Seward notes the changes in a journal entry:

> Whilst asleep she looked stronger... her breathing was softer; her open mouth showed the pale gums drawn back from the teeth, which thus looked positively longer and sharper than usual; when she woke the softness of her eyes evidently changed the expression, for she looked her own self, although a dying one. (Stoker 164)

Dr. Seward's analysis of the change in Lucy "reveals certain preconceptions about women's nature" (Senf, "Stoker's Response" 35). Believing that the true Lucy is

characterized by her soft eyes, docile nature, and tenderness, Seward cannot recognize

the increased strength or Lucy's sharp white teeth, which Senf argues presents a potential

for aggression and sexuality. Stoker's use of monstrous sexuality in his female vampires,

a characteristic frequently aligned with the New Woman by male authors, suggests that

he, like many of his contemporaries, aligned this sexuality with the dangers of

degeneration of British society, specifically those dealing with morality.

This potential for sexuality and demoralization is realized after Lucy completes

her transformation to vampire, after which she begins being described as "languorous"

and "voluptuous," terms only used to describe Lucy in her fully vampirized form. This

sexualization is highlighted as Lucy's original "sweetness [is] turned to adamantine,

heartless cruelty" and her purity to "voluptuous wantonness" (Stoker 225). This change

terrifies Lucy's past suitors because it entails a reversal or inversion of a woman's sexual

identity. While Lucy's eyes maintain their form and color, they become "unclean and full

of hell-fire" (Stoker 225). She speaks with a "soft, voluptuous voice, such as [the men]

had never heard from her lips" (Stoker 226). These descriptions should remind readers of

Jonathan Harker's initial encounter with three female vampires in Transylvania, who are

also described as having "voluptuous" features Harker fears and desires simultaneously.

These "voluptuous" women violate another preconception about women in the

Victorian era by displaying a lack of maternal feelings. One component of late Victorian

ideology of woman's "nature" is motherhood, or maternalism. In the face of the

challenges presented by the New Woman, motherhood was perceived as a test of

normality, and the New Woman's departure from this "natural" role was perceived as a

concern for the future of the nation and the nation's stock.[13] In an article published in the 1894 *Quarterly Review*, William Barry established the primacy of motherhood, pronouncing the imminent demise of the New Woman whose liberty "will be fatal to her," for she contains a "human nature predestined to Motherhood" (Barry 317). Paradoxically, not only were there fears that New Women would bear children and produce a degenerate species of English children, there were also recriminations against the New Woman for refusing motherhood entirely and failing to propagate the species and repopulate the nation.

The three women in Dracula's castle are decidedly non-maternal. Instead of nourishing children, they choose to prey on them. After Count Dracula stops the three vampires from feeding on Harker, he throws a bag down at their feet. As noted by Harker, "the bag... moved as though there were some living thing within it.... There was a gasp and a low wail, as of a half-smothered child. The women closed round, whilst I was aghast with horror" (Stoker 47). This idea is further ratified in Lucy, as she exhibits the same behavior as Dracula's vampire wives after her transformation. In her vampire state, Lucy rises from her tomb and attacks small children, which Craft argues "emphasizes the monstrosity implicit in such abrogation of gender codes by inverting a favorite Victorian maternal function" (Craft 121). As the men approach the vampire Lucy, she shows the lack of maternal instinct: "With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. The child gave a sharp cry, and lay there moaning" (Stoker 226). Dr. Seward proclaims that there was "a cold-bloodedness"

in the act he had never seen in Lucy, a cold-bloodedness that directly aligns her with fears over the New Woman's subversion of the "natural" role of women.

As the men move closer, the vampire Lucy begins to crave the blood of fully-grown men, highlighting her monstrous sexuality once more. Griffin argues that the change in Lucy's character is a change that "hints broadly at the future," a time where women could potentially assert themselves as the sexual equals to their male counterparts (140). Lucy approaches Arthur and nearly seduces him into her arms "with outstretched arms and a wanton smile, he fell back and hid his face in his hands. She still advanced, however, and with a languorous, voluptuous grace" and calls to him. "Come to me Arthur. Leave those others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!" (Stoker 226). Arthur, as if under a spell, advances towards Lucy, ready to submit to her new, aggressive and sexual nature. Herein lies the ultimate horror of *Dracula* for the male consciousness: women are turned into the sexual predators, an idea reminiscent of Haggard's representation of the Amahagger, and like the Amahagger, this subversion of traditional gender roles must be dealt with directly by a brotherhood of men. Described by Demetrakopoulos as "an excellent scientist, with Vatican connections - and thus, emblematic of the two chief patriarchal and dominant institutions of Western culture," Van Helsing, pictured holding a crucifix to protect the men from Lucy, is the obvious person to fight for the traditional Victorian ideals of femininity (104). Only Van Helsing, who recognizes Lucy's aggression and sexuality, is able to pull Arthur from her, and he and the men band together to destroy Lucy,

showcasing a homosocial act which not only defeats the perceived threat of the New Woman, but solidifies the bonds between upholders of the patriarchal system.

The monstrous sexuality evident in Stoker's female vampires requires a violent correction, one that inspires a defensive reinscription of the stabilizing distinctions of gender. Ironically, the method used to destroy female vampires also contains strong sexual implications. While many critics have called Lucy's staking a "vicious attack against a helpless woman," (Senf, "Stoker's Response" 111), Craft argues that it is a "corrective penetration," an act that has the ability to suppress Lucy's uncontrollable female sexuality and to restore the traditional Victorian gender roles. In an effort to encourage this staking, Van Helsing tells the men that to stake Lucy will allow "the soul of the poor lady whom we all love" to again be free (Stoker 229). With these words of encouragement, Arthur plunges a hardened and sharply pointed wooden stake into Lucy's breast. Thus, the threat of monstrous female sexuality is contained and nullified as Lucy is "corrected" by a band of men, aligning her with other representations of the "punished" New Woman, a stereotyped version of the New Woman figure frequently found in masculine adventure fiction. [14]

While the phallic symbolism in the staking process is evident, Christopher Bentley has noted that Lucy's reaction to the staking also radiates sexuality (30). According to Bentley, Lucy's staking is described in terms reminiscent of sexual intercourse and orgasm:

> The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech
>
> came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted

in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth clamped together till the lips were cut, and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam... And then the writhing and quivering of the body became less, and the teeth ceased to clamp, and the face to quiver. Finally it lay still. (Stoker 229)

After the staking, Lucy transforms once again, returning to her former state of desexualization. Dr. Seward describes the change: "There in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that we had so dreaded and grown to hate that the work of her destruction was yielded to the one best entitled to it, but Lucy as we had seen her in her life, with her face of unequalled sweetness" (Stoker 231). While in death, Lucy appears to have reverted back to her "pure" and "sweet" human form, the reader should not forget the active sexuality she displayed earlier in the novel. It would appear that even speaking her desire to marry three men was enough to make Lucy vulnerable to Dracula's attack, and eventually she is punished for that desire. Lucy, therefore, is represented as a woman who transgressed the socially dictated norms of sexual behavior, a transgression that necessitated punishment.

If read as the sole representations of femininity in the novel, Lucy and the female vampires would indeed seem emblematic of the stereotypical, monstrous New Woman. However, Stoker's characterization of Mina Harker provides readers with an alternative New Woman figure, a hybrid who embodies both characteristics of both the New Woman and the traditional Victorian "angel." As suggested by Griffin, "[Mina] is bright and talented enough to be an acceptable heroine from the 1890s and to distinguish herself from Lucy as the woman of the future" (145). In claiming Mina's hybridity as a positive

and potentially creative identity, Stoker seeks to reverse the discourse that had stigmatized those who transgressed the boundaries dictating gender roles. Attacks on the New Woman often mobilized this stigmatizing discourse and invoked ideals of pure identity that had to be defended. New Women were seen as departing from the national character of their country's womanhood, however, Stoker's hybrid "New Woman" defends herself by bringing together the best of the national character with the modern. Thus, Stoker rewrites stereotypical representations of the New Woman from one-dimensional, "monstrous" depictions, to complex, more realistic ones.

Unlike the typical Victorian "angel," Stoker's initial characterization of Mina does not center on her domesticity, but on her "intelligence and strength," two traits which align her with the New Woman (Stoker 111). However, Stoker is also quick to name Mina as one of "God's good women," suggesting a morality and chastity that also identifies her with the more traditional Victorian ideal of femininity. Demetrakopoulos argues that Mina's financial independence makes her representative of the New Woman. As a schoolteacher, Mina is able to financially support herself before her marriage to Jonathan. Mina's narrative, however, reflects the gender restrictions of her time. Despite having her own career, Mina states that she also "want[s] to keep up with Jonathan's studies" in an attempt to be useful to her future husband (Stoker 62). These gender restrictions are explored again in a passage in which Mina directly voices her opinion on the New Woman. Mina states that Lucy, who is lying fast sleep, has more color in her cheeks and looks "oh, so sweet" (Stoker 99). She remarks:

> If Mr. Holmwood fell in love with her seeing her only in the drawing-
>
> room, I wonder what he would say if he saw her now. Some of the 'New
>
> Women' writers will some day start an idea that men and women should
>
> be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I
>
> suppose the New Woman won't condescend in future to accept; she will
>
> do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it too! There's
>
> some consolation in that. (Stoker 99)

Mina displays a reluctance to embrace certain aspects the New Woman's perceived character traits, specifically, the traits dealing with sexuality and romantic relationships. It would appear that Mina, like Stoker, displays a degree of ambivalence towards the forwardness and the overt sexuality of the New Woman, an ambivalence that solidifies her differences from both Lucy and the female vampires.

Mina also conforms quite strictly to the Victorian ideal of the nurturing mother. Just after meeting Arthur Holmwood, she lets him cry on her shoulder, mourning the loss of his fiancé. She states, as tears fell from Arthur's face, "I felt an infinite pity for him, and opened my arms unthinkingly. With a sob he laid his head on my shoulder, and cried like a wearied child, whilst he shook with emotion" (Stoker 245). Mina attributes her actions to the natural nurturing women have engrained in their nature:

> We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above
>
> smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked; I felt this big,
>
> sorrowing man's head resting on me, as though it were that of the baby

that some day may lie on my bosom, and I stroked his hair as though he

were my own child. (Stoker 245)

In fact, Mina can be seen as mother figure to all the men in the novel. She allows

Quincey Morris to cry on her shoulder in the same fashion as Arthur. Mina's acceptance

of the role of mother and nurturer distinguishes her from the other women in the novel,

and aligns Mina with the more traditional Victorian female.

However, Mina's angelic status is corrupted as Dracula marks her as one of his

vampire brides in a scene filled with sexual symbolism. Dracula invades Mina's

bedroom, forcing the young bride to drink his blood, in what Bentley calls "a strange

reversal of the usual relationship between vampire and victim" (29). The attack is told in

a journal entry from Dr. Seward as he recounts breaking in to the Harker's bedroom to

find Dracula mid-attack:

Kneeling on the near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad

figure of his wife. By her stood a tall, thin man clad in black... With his

left hand he held both Mrs Harker's hands, keeping them away with her

arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck,

forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress smeared with

blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast. (Stoker 300)

Many critics liken this attack on Mina to a rape of sorts, and even Dr. Seward claims that

the scene "had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of

milks to compel it to drink" (Stoker 300). Griffin, however, sees Dracula's attack as a

signifier of the overt sexuality the New Woman potentially represents. Dracula's attack

on Mina is not seen as a threat to her life, but as a source for the evolving sexuality of the Victorian New Woman. Griffin notes that Mina's purity "is befouled as she crosses the border into sexuality" (146). However, Griffin fails to make notice of the racial and national degeneration present in the scene. When Mina sees the bite mark Dracula left on her neck she exclaims: "Unclean, unclean! I must touch him [Harker] or kiss him no more. Oh, that it should be that it is I who am now his worst enemy, and whom he may have most cause to fear" (Stoker 303). Mina's immediate fears and horrors are realized not in the dangers that lie ahead for her, but for the consequences the "uncleanliness" will have for her husband and their future family, the future stock of English blood.

As Mina recounts the attack for the men, she highlights this connection to racial degeneration through her exchange of blood with Dracula: "Then he spoke to me mockingly... you, their best beloved one, are now to me... flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin... and shall later on be my companion and helper... now you shall come to my call" (Stoker 306-307). These verses, spoken by Adam about Eve's creation, are taken directly from Genesis, and Stoker's use of the biblical phrasing suggests that Dracula is making a new, dark genesis, emphasizing the comprehensive threat he poses. This bond Mina shares with Dracula, a bond that was only made possible through an exchange of blood, has marked Mina as a source of degeneration for English society, both racially and nationally.   Mina is, therefore, a paradoxical figure: she is both Dracula's bride, whom he refers to as "flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood," and the cause the men, upholders of the patriarchal system, fight so earnestly for. Mina's contradictory nature, in some ways, can be seen as Stoker's critique of traditionally

structured gender roles. As men, Van Helsing and his brotherhood are unable, or unwilling, to see the duality of Mina's character, just as the Victorian male was unable to see the potential duality of the Victorian female. Therefore, the Victorian female was often placed into one of two drastically different categories, and her character traits were seen as either adhering to, or rebelling against traditional femininity. Stoker's characterization of Mina can therefore be seen as a prototype of the hybrid female, one that paved the way for more realistic portrayals of women in twentieth-century fiction.

Despite being repeatedly characterized by her intelligence and strength, Van Helsing and his brotherhood of men show a reluctance to allow Mina entry into their confidences, suggesting that they, like many males, fear the New Woman's usurpation of their "masculine" territory of education. As the group bands together to seek and destroy Dracula, Van Helsing urges the men to shield Mina from the more dangerous aspects of the hunt:

> We men are determined- nay, are we not pledged?- to destroy this
> monster; but it is no part for a woman. Even if she be not harmed, her
> heart may fail her in so much and so many horrors; and hereafter she may
> suffer- both in waking from her nerves, and in sleep, from her dreams.
> (Stoker 250)

This passage employs spatial signifiers used to keep women in their rightful domestic sphere. [15] On one level, these men are conforming to a notion of the chivalric code. Women must be kept out of "it" for their own protection. However, as noted by Richardson, the passage also contains "an aggressive and defensive edge… that belies its

chivalric emphasis" (56). "It," therefore, comes to represent a masculine social and psychic territory the New Woman is perceived to have invaded. So Mina is allowed into the fraternity of men, but is also kept at a distance. Mina, with her "man's brain... and woman's heart," exemplifies this dangerous colonization of masculinity (Stoker 250). Her writing, decisiveness, and powers of analysis help to defeat the monster, but they also endanger the English men around her by usurping their roles and their supposed masculine abilities. If the New Woman's intelligence challenged patriarchal ideology, then the basis of men's cultural and imperial power is also called into question, suggesting that Mina need to be kept out of "it" because her autonomy allies her with the degeneration of British society.

However, while the men are reluctant to admit Mina into their masculine psychic territory, they do take advantage of Mina's new connection to Dracula in an attempt to capture the Count. Van Helsing taps into this mental link through a form of hypnosis, which Senf argues, is "associated with male sexual authority and demonic force of will" ("Stoker's Response" 36). Instead of showing fear at the thought of having a male control her mind, Mina obliges, dutifully transforming herself into the submissive "angel," and is easily swayed by the male hypnotist's will. However, this "demonic force of will" yields nothing but the same information at every attempt: the sound of waves, masts, and the movement of a ship at sea. As the submissive "angel," Mina is of no use to the men. However, when Mina uses her analytical skills, taking all the maps and all of the facts at her disposal, she is able to discern the most likely route for the Count's escape, allowing for his eventual capture. Therefore, it is Mina who, without any aid from the men, finds a

solution. As Van Helsing proclaims, "Our dear Madam Mina is once more our teacher…

her eyes have been where we were blinded. Now we are on the track once again, and this

time we may succeed" (Stoker 376). Indeed, it was the men's patronizing desire to

protect Mina from any involvement with the creature that left her isolated and vulnerable

to Dracula's attack, and Van Helsing is left to remark on his own unfortunate choice at

leaving Mina out of "it."

While in her mixed and shifting nature, Mina is described as both pure and

contaminated. Despite Jonathan's earlier claim that "there in naught in common"

between Mina and the vampire wives, the men's worst fears are realized as Van Helsing

places a consecrated wafer on her forehead, which as Jonathan tells the reader, "burned

into the flesh as though it had been a piece of white-hot metal" (Stoker 316). Mina

responds by "pulling her beautiful hair over her face, as the leper of old his mantle,

wailing out 'Unclean! Unclean! Even the Almighty shuns my polluted flesh! I must bear

this mark of shame until the Judgment Day'" (Stoker 316). Van Helsing notices a visible

change that has come over Mina as well. He remarks: "She has been so heavy of head all

day that she was not like herself. She sleeps, and sleeps, ands sleeps! She, who is

usually so alert, have done literally nothing all day; she even has lost her appetite…

something whispers to me that she is not well" (Stoker 386). In addition to these physical

changes, Van Helsing realizes he can no longer hypnotize her, signifying that Mina's

"Vampire baptism" has begun to take hold, and she will no longer succumb to traditional

male authority. This reluctance to adhere to the patriarchal rule British culture dictates

shows that Mina, like Lucy before her, has come one step closer to the becoming a "monstrous" New Woman.

This gradual decline into monstrous New Womanhood is also displayed in Mina's temporary alliance with Dracula's vampire brides. The three vampiresses materialize out of Dracula's storm and call to Mina: "Come, sister. Come to us. Come! Come!" (Stoker 391). Richardson argues that Mina's temporary alliance with the vampire wives "reveals the dangers lurking in the independent woman" (57). However, despite any physical commonalities Mina shares with the "lady" vampiresses, Mina still feels "horror" and "repulsion" for the vampire women and all the wantonness they represent. Despite Mina's claim that there is "none safer in all in the world from them," Van Helsingis overjoyed to see "terror in [Mina's] sweet eyes" (Stoker 391). It would appear that while Dracula's infection had begun to take hold of Mina's body, it had not yet taken over her soul, and as Van Helsing remarks, "her eyes were pure" (Stoker 395). This purity never leaves Mina, and she is able to walk away from her encounter with Dracula unscathed. Dracula's bite infects his female victims with a type of overt sexuality, however, unlike the New Woman's perceived loss of purity, this sexuality is reversible.

Unlike Lucy, who subversive sexuality in life demanded her death, Mina's morality and chastity allows for her survival, once again highlighting Stoker's ambivalence towards subversive female sexuality. Once Dracula is destroyed, the burn mark on Mina's forehead, caused by the touch of the wafer when she was "unclean," disappears. Bentley suggests this implies that falling victim to a vampire attack, and succumbing to the New Woman's sexuality does not necessarily involve social

degradation (31). Indeed, Mina's sexual energy is reversed and harnessed for purely domestic use. The arrival of Quincey Harker, son to Jonathan and Mina, has largely been read as a triumph over Dracula and the female vampire's monstrous sexuality. Arata suggests that the arrival of the Harker son reflects a "primacy of motherhood and the healthy family," one that "reconstitutes the late Victorian ideal of motherhood" (118). Richardson, too, finds that Quincey's arrival signifies that Mina, like many other representations of New Women in literature, has been "domesticated and returned to her proper feminine activities of child-bearing" (57). I would argue, however, that Mina's mother status does not detract from her more progressive qualities. In fact, Stoker's characterization of Mina relies heavily on her more "masculine" traits. Indeed, Mina's strength and intelligence in no way negate her femininity. Instead, they add to the complexity of her character. Not only is Mina moral and pure, she is also intelligent and assertive, two characteristics typically deemed masculine. Stoker's characterization of Mina suggests that these more masculine traits do not pose a threat to British society. In fact, they enable her to aid in the capture and killing of a racial threat to England.

As Nancy Armstrong has asserted, in Mina, Stoker created a female character with an "irrepressible urge for blurring and exploding the boundaries between public and private, masculine and feminine, sex and gender" (Armstrong 122). Van Helsing exclaims: "Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has a man's brains- a brain that a man should have were he much gifted- and a woman's heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when he mad that so good combination" (Stoker 250). Mina has a central role in the Count's destruction, but also submits to Van Helsing's masculine will

as he places her under hypnosis. Mina is the intellectual equal to the men around her, but remains the dutiful wife and mother. For Demetrakopoulos, the most important aspect of Mina's character is that she survives her encounter with Dracula, resisting the Count and his three "sister-wives" as they call to her to join them in the night. She never succumbs to hysteria; instead, she rallies her strength to defeat her oppressor, thereby consciously choosing virtue over vice.

The bipartite structure of *Dracula* reveals deeply held beliefs over traditional gender roles for women in Victorian England, and the novel can be seen as a complex commentary on the stereotypical representations of the New Woman and Victorian "angel." In fact, it would appear that Stoker's characterization of women in *Dracula* stems from an kind of ambivalence he felt towards the New Woman, although an ambivalence drastically different from that displayed by Braddon and Haggard. Like early nineteenth-century authors who employed the New Woman in their fictions, Stoker suggests that the New Woman is a figure to look up to, one women could use as a source of inspiration. However, Stoker also aligns the rampant sexuality of his female vampires, a more stereotypical representation of the New Women, with the dangers of a moral degeneration. By emphasizing Mina's intelligence, her strength, and her financial independence, Stoker stresses certain aspects of the New Woman he finds admirable; however, by negating Mina's sexuality and having her adopt a more traditional feminine role, he also reveals that she is a Victorian "angel." By demonstrating the differences between the traditional, stereotypical New Woman, and newer, hybrid New Woman, Stoker paves the way for more realistic portrayals of women in twentieth-century fiction.

In this sense, Stoker tries to show that modern women can combine the best of the

traditional and the new when he created the heroine of *Dracula,* Mina Harker.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Like the New Woman, the dandy
contests gender roles and definitions
-LeeAnn Richardson

The New Woman emerged during a time of great social change, when notions about sexuality and gender had become complicated through increased visibility of homosexuality and the rising number of women who were finally making their voices heard. Debates on New Woman literature and the phenomenon that inspired it were "pervasive, heated, and fully cognizant of the radical challenge posed by the new Woman: she denaturalized normative sex roles" (Richardson 13). The New Woman became linked to the projected degeneration of Victorian society and, simultaneously, was named a regenerative force for women who had spent their lives following patriarchal rule. Indeed, the New Woman's fierce insistence on a renovation of the sexual relationship between men and women became the very epitome of the *fin-de-siècle* desire to live beyond culture, a desire that can be traced in not only the reading presented in this thesis, but in nuanced ideas about other Victorian figures as well.

Antagonistic literary critics identified the New Woman with the decadent and the dandy, perceiving the ambitions of both to be a profound threat to established culture (Dowling 435). Decadence, a word whose original meaning was "decline," suggests a perceived decay in standards, morals, and dignity among the members of a social structure. For those who resisted the New Woman movement, she too represented laxity,

immorality, overreaching ambition, and a number of other "unnatural" activities. Linton

has suggested that the New Woman's "manly ambitions" would lead to the downfall of

the British Empire. True women, she argued, engender the empire by rearing boys who

would become imperialists (Linton, "Nearing the Rapids" 235). By wanting the same

education, the same employment opportunities, and the same access to sexual expression,

women challenged the basis of patriarchal power, a power structure rooted in the belief

that women were fundamentally different than men. Therefore, when women take over

the active role, men are necessarily rendered passive and are displaced form their

masculine responsibilities, responsibilities that dictated a life of action.

This displacement resulted in a new and revived kind of masculinity. In "Making

and Remaking History," Judith Newton describes the culture of manliness that developed

in the later part of the nineteenth century as a counterpoint to the New Woman. From the

1860s on, when women became more vocal and visible in public life, masculine ideals

constituted themselves in opposition to female culture. Thus, a new male elite

emphasized separation form women rather than appropriation of their virtues (133-14).

One such development was the theory of "Muscular Christianity," which can be defined

as a Christian commitment to health and manliness.

While its origins can be traced to the New Testament, the phrase "Masculine

Christianity" only emerged in an 1857 English review of Charles Kingsley's novel *Two*

Years Ago. One year later, the same phrase was used to describe *Tom Brown's Book*, a

novel by Thomas Hughes about life at Rugby. Hughes argued:

[The] least of the muscular Christians has hold of the old chivalrous and

Christian belief, that a man's body is given him to be trained and brought

into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, the

advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth which

God has given to the children of men. (qtd. in Ladd and Mathisen 13)

Soon, the press began calling both authors Muscular Christians, and also applied the label

to the genre they inspired: adventure novels replete with high principles and manly

Christian heroes. According to Kimmel and Aronson, Hughes and Kingsley found that

"asceticism and effeminacy had gravely weakened the Anglican Church," and to make

the church a suitable handmaiden for British imperialism, Hughes and Kingsley "sought

to equip it with rugged and manly qualities" (557). The movement came into vogue

during the Victorian era and stressed the need for energetic Christian evangelism in

combination with an ideal of vigorous masculinity. Indeed, imperial romances, such as

She, are often understood as *fin-de-siècle* extensions of the Muscular Christianity ethos.

However, as noted by Richardson, "this binary view of male and female

characteristics is so firmly embedded that challenging it often caused a reversal rather

than a reconsideration of ascribed traits" (14). Therefore, it is no coincidence that the

New Woman materialized alongside other sexually subversive figures like the "decadent

dandy." In literature, the Decadent movement was first given its name by hostile critics of

late nineteenth century *fin-de-siècle* writers who were associated with the Aesthetic

movement. These decadent writers praised artifice over nature and sophistication over

simplicity, defying contemporary discourses of decline by embracing subjects and styles

that their critics considered morbid and over-refined. Linda Dowling has argued that the dandy and the New Woman were allied in the minds of their contemporaries because "both inspired reactions ranging from hilarity to disgust and outrage, and both raised as well profound fears for the future of sex, class, and race... [They] were widely felt to oppose not each other but the values considered essential to the survival of established culture" (436). Although contemporary criticism views the New Woman and the dandy in opposition to one another, the Victorians persistently associated the two figures, as both were perceived as a sexual threat to society. The dandy, a feminized male, undermined the Victorian's valorization of robust masculinity, the kind of masculinity Hughes and Kingsley deemed crucial to the maintenance of the British Empire.
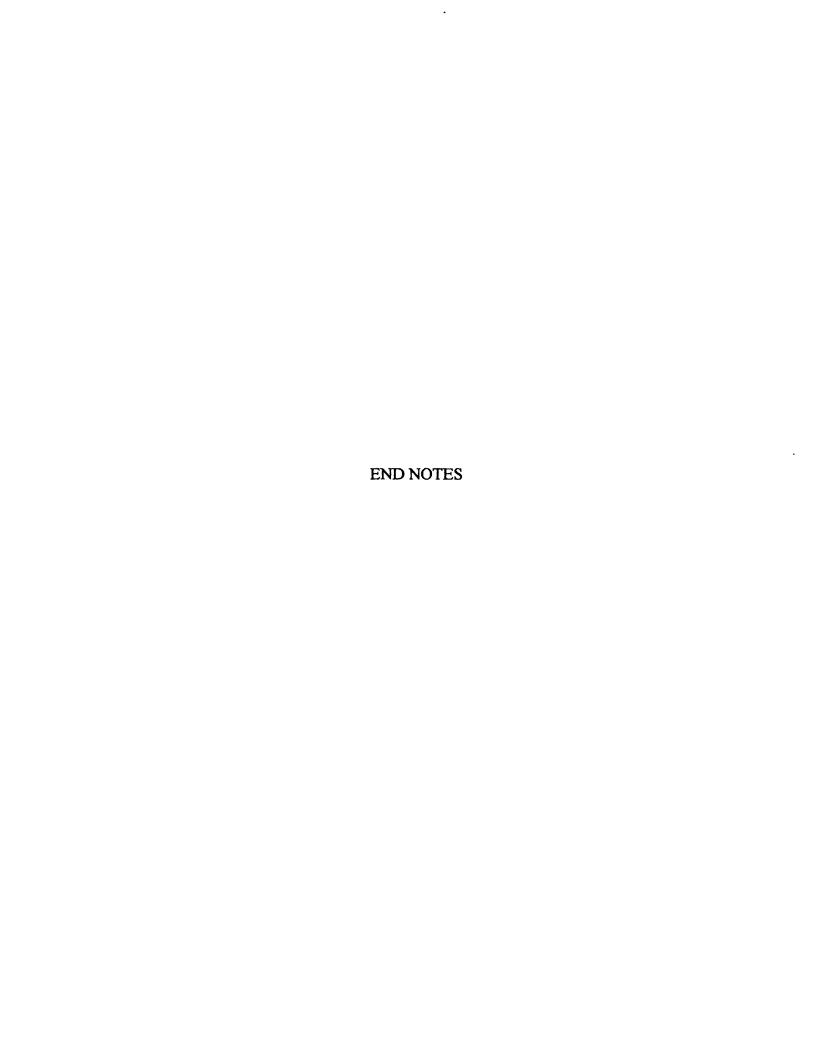
This perceived connection between the New Woman and decadence had very real effects on literary ad public culture; for example, it helped to create an inextricable link between the fate of the New Woman and the public disgracing of Oscar Wilde, the leading male figure associated with the Decadent movement in England. Nordau discussed the deviant nature of Wilde in his book *Degeneration.* This discussion is guided by Nordau's notion that deviance is a form of character rather than a mode of behavior, and the idea that individual characters express themselves most coherently through the medium of literary writing. For Nordau, Wilde was a "degenerate" not because of specific acts, but because of specific character traits, such as his "outlandish dress, overweening vanity, perverse taste, and a 'megalomaniacal contempt for men'" (Greenslade 55). While homosexuality was implied in some of Wild's writings, it was also a part of his public persona.

In February of 1895, the Marquess of Queensbury left a card for Oscar Wilde featuring one crucial, albeit misspelled word- "somdomite." Wilde, in response, brought a libel suit against his accuser. The ensuing trial resulted in Wilde's arrest and conviction for "acts of gross indecency" under the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, which prohibited sexual relations among men (Arata 54). However, despite the enormous amount of publicity surrounding the trials, press accounts never named the sexual acts Wilde was charged with. Instead, attention was directed as Wilde's writing, which were taken as indicative of his perverse character and symptomatic of the cultural crisis of the *fin-de-siècle*. Dorian Gray, the title character in Wilde's 1890 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is womanlike in both his beauty and grace. Moreover, the dandy's interest in clothing and appearance allied him with characteristics conventionally associated with women. Ed Cohen contends that because of Wilde's public persona, and characters like Dorian, Wilde became "the paradigmatic example for an emerging public definition of a new 'type' of deviant individual, the male homosexual" (qtd. in Greenslade 55). Indeed, Wilde's trial certainly illuminated the complex and interwoven anxieties inhering the social construction of deviance, a deviance echoed by the New Woman.

On May 25, 1895, Wilde was sentenced to two years of hard labor for committing acts of "gross indecency." In December of the same year, *Punch* announced "The End of the New Woman." As argued by Sally Ledger, "the New Woman was almost certainly a victim of the moral rearguard action which followed the Wilde trials" (94). As Showalter has stated, "to many outraged male reviewers, the New Woman writers were threatening daughters of decadence. They saw connections between the New Woman and decadent

men, as members of an avant-garde attacking marriage and reproduction" (qtd. in Ledger 95). The most obvious link between the New Woman and Wildean decadents of the 1890s lies in the fact that they both overtly challenged Victorian sexual codes.

While my study has offered a broader, albeit more nuanced, lens through which to understand the centrality of the New Woman to larger conversations appearing during the *fin-de-siècle*, as evidenced by the introduction of figures like the dandy, gender cannot, and should not, be understood solely as an argument about women. Instead, gender debates are a political, economic, moral, and cultural argument about the entirety of social organization. Thus, the appearance of the New Woman did more than introduce readers to a feminist figure, it also allowed for future considerations and arguments about the Victorian construction of gender.

END NOTES

ENDNOTES

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[1] See Stephen Arata's book *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin-De-Siecle,* which explores the ways in which the idea of an "irretrievable decline" was cast into the narratives of English stories. Within his study, Arata uses degenerative theory to focus on three types of decline: national, biological, and aesthetic.

[2] The phrase "Angel in the House" comes from the title of an immensely popular poem by Coventry Patmore, in which he holds his angel-wife up as a model for all women. Believing that his wife Emily was the perfect Victorian wife, he wrote "The Angel in the House" about her in 1854. Though it did not receive much attention when it was first published, it became increasingly popular through the rest of the nineteenth century and continued to be influential into the twentieth century. For Virginia Woolf, the repressive ideal of women represented by the Angel in the House was still so potent that she wrote, in 1931 that, "killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer."

[3] Herbert Spencer defines and limits women according to their function to bear and nurture children. See Herbert Spencer's *Education* (1861).

[4] Gilbert Gubar discuss the relationship between female dreams of a powerful "Herland" and male fears of a debilitating no man's land. They argue that the rise of the New Woman was not matched by the rise of a New Man, but instead was identified with a crisis of masculinity that is imagined through the figure of the no-man. See *Sexchanges.*

[5] Showalter has argued that representations of class struggle are thinly veiled representations of gender conflict. Many of the fantasies in feminine novels are related to money, mobility, and power. Although female novelists punished assertive heroines, they dealt with personal ambition by projecting the ideology of success onto male characters. See Francis O'Gorman's *The Victorian Novel*, page 78.

[6] The passive angelic child-wife was subject to parody, long before *Lady Audley's Secret*. Other instances include William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847), Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850).

[7] Lady Audley's portait showcases the Victorian belief that art was capable of revealing that which the naked eye could not. See Elaine Showalter's *A Literature*, page 9.

[8] There is a long tradition of beautiful madwoman going back further than Ophelia. Other instances include Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), and William Cowper's "The Task" (1785).

[9] Because white women are of the powerful and "superior race, they share certain assumptions and privileges of authority. However, because women are not fully empowered, they share certain hallmarks of subjection." See Richardson page 6.

[10] The projection of everything suppressed in civilized western culture onto the figure of the black man as other (as the antithesis of European values and morality) is matched by the projection of these similar fears (barbarism within civilization) onto the figure of the white woman. See Stott page 76. Carl Vogt, a Victorian craniologist concluded: "The skulls of man and woman are to be separated as if they belonged to two

different species... we may, therefore, say that the type of the female skull approaches, in many respects, that of the infant, and in a still greater degree that of the lower races" (81). See *Lectures On Man: His Place in Creation, and in the History of the Earth* (1864).

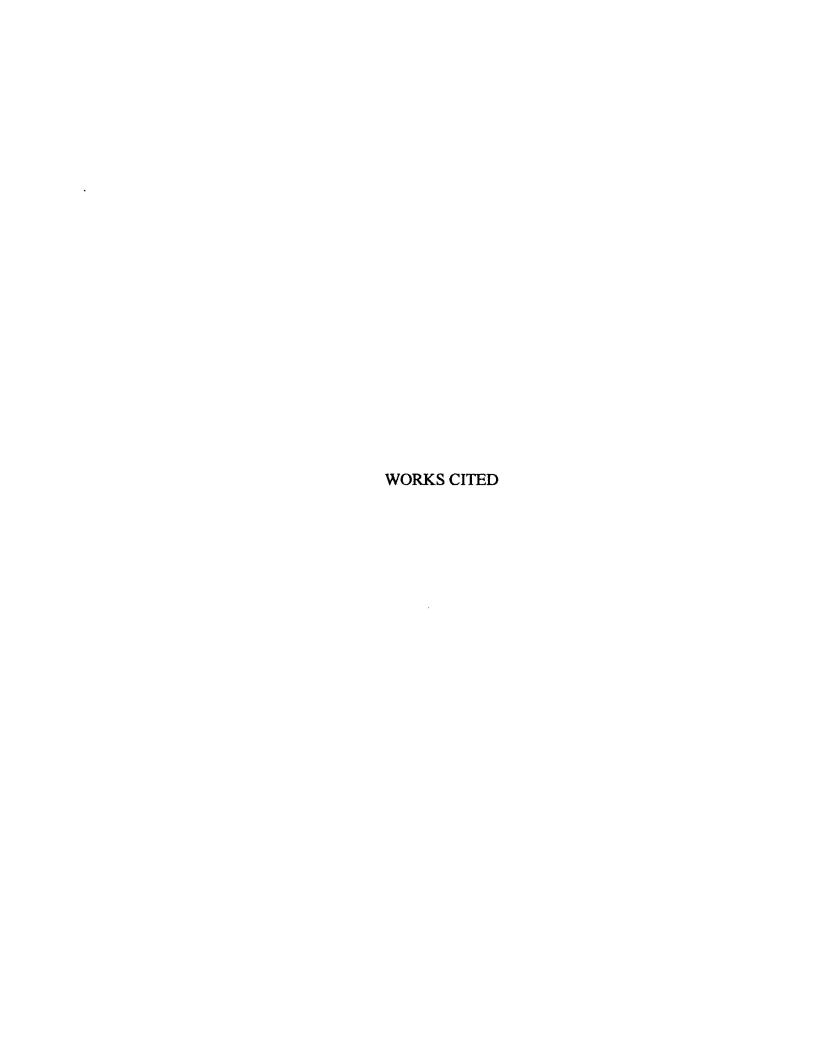[11] Dracula participates in a modernization of the Gothic which occurs at the close of the nineteenth century. Like Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Stoker's novel achieves its effects by bringing the terror of the Gothic home, whereas earlier Gothic novelists often displaced their stories in time or locale, these later writers root their fiction in the modern world.

[12] Ernest Jones equates the blood taken by the vampire with semen in *On the Nightmare* (1931). Christopher Bentley suggests blood loss is reminiscent of fellatio, page 30. Gail Griffin Bentley sees the blood as symbolic of the menstrual cycle, highlighting the prominence of the moon and moonlight in Dracula's seduction scenes, page 142.

[13] Karl Pearson made the connection between women's role as mother and child-bearer and the destiny of the state: "the race must degenerate if greater and greater stress be brought to fore woman during he years of child-bearing into active and unlimited competition with men." See Ardis, *New Woman, New Novel* page 91-99. See also Anna Davin's "Imperialism and Motherhood" *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978) pages 9-65.

[14] One the other hand, when Dracula himself is to be destroyed, the emphasis is shifted to decapitation of the vampire. This decapitation has been read largely in terms of Freudian castration fears. See Bentley, page 30.

[15] By the end of the nineteenth century, women were assuming men's vocations and providing for themselves; in doing so, they threatened to abandon their supposed social and biological functions. See Richardson, page 56.

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