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Unrestrained Women and Decadent Old Aristocrats: the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class Struggle for Cultural Hegemony.

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UNRESTRAINED WOMEN AND DECADENT OLD ARISTOCRATS:
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY MIDDLE CLASS
STRUGGLE FOR CULTURAL HEGEMONY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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in
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by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines three popular novels of the Victorian period: W. G. M. Reynolds's Wagner, the Wehr-wolf (1846-7), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1862), and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897). Each work was written during distinct decades of the nineteenth century when certain popular novels were under attack for rotting the minds of their readers, promoting vice, and subverting cultural standards. During the 1840s, when Reynolds's wrote Wagner, the Wehr-wolf, novels that were published in cheap penny weeklies created a sensation among mass readers. In the 1860s, when Braddon wrote Lady Audley's Secret, the sensation novel became popular with a middle-class reading audience. Stoker's Dracula was written during the 1890s, a time when popular decadent novels revealed a thirst for new passions and forbidden sensations.

In studying these novels, I have found that a pattern of anxieties about class dominance emerges among the upper class and factions of the middle class. A struggle for cultural hegemony develops out of the discords between competing groups within the middle class, who view their middle-class identity either with or against the aristocracy. The tensions resulting from those middle-class groups who resisted aristocratic...
control and those who wanted to appropriate it surface, in fiction, through a female figure, who is associated with the aristocracy and also coded as crossing gender boundaries. Explicitly sexualized, the female figure transgresses her passive feminine role and, in the process, is designated as masculine.

The importance of this study rests in the discovery that the popular novel under consideration in each of these three decades reveals a distinct struggle among middle-class factions for cultural hegemony. The widespread reaction to the sensation novels of the 1860s as stories about crime is a familiar, well-charted territory. Less familiar is how the sensation novel of the 1860s, its precursor—the serialized sensation novel of the 1840s—and its later forms written as decadent fiction represented an increasing struggle for cultural hegemony perpetuated by middle-class factions on the turf of gender transgression.
CHAPTER ONE
CLASS, CULTURE, AND TRANSGRESSIVE WOMEN

The class which was most successful in this educational and moral struggle, in uniting its own members and imposing its ideal upon others, would win the day and have most influence in determining the actual society in which all had to live and in approximating it more or less closely to its own ideal. The primary conflict in the newly born class society of the early nineteenth century was a struggle for the minds and hearts of men. It was a struggle between the ideals.¹

--Harold Perkin, The Origin of Modern English Society

Introduction

This dissertation examines three popular novels of the Victorian period: W. G. M. Reynolds's Wagner, the Wehr-wolf (1846-7), Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1862), and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897). Each writer was noted by his/her contemporary reviewers as having a propensity for creating sensational tales of horror. In studying these novels, I have found that a pattern of anxieties about class dominance emerges among the upper class and factions of the middle class. A struggle for cultural hegemony develops out of the discords between competing groups within the middle

class, who view their middle-class identity either with or against the aristocracy.

The tensions resulting from those middle-class groups who resisted aristocratic control and those who wanted to appropriate it surface, in fiction, through a female figure, who is associated with the aristocracy and also coded as crossing gender boundaries. Explicitly sexualized, the female figure transgresses her passive feminine role and, in the process, is designated as masculine. I use the term "transgressive woman" to describe the heroine who transgresses the passive female role that characterized bourgeois respectability. Such a heroine challenges masculine power through crime, adventure, and sexual promiscuity. In addition, some might surpass their expected passive role by indulging in extravagant fashion, excessive spending, and sophisticated conversation. In her aggressive nature and insatiable taste for aristocratic wealth and status, this

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2See Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, trans., Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971). The term *hegemony* comes from the well-known Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, who emphasizes the leadership of the bourgeoisie over other classes. Enforcing juridical and political dominance through the use of ideological state apparatuses (institutions such as the police and military), the middle class presents itself as the spokesman for the "universal" advancement of society.
unrestrained woman represents a romantic nostalgia for the "old aristocracy," or Regency.³

The Regency period (1810-30) is named after the Prince of Wales, who acted as regent and later became King George IV. This period is distinguished by "expensive flamboyance of costume and by endless sessions with one's tailor, barber, and valet preparatory to attending glittering salons, gambling hells, prize fights, modish brothels, and in extreme cases, early-morning duels."⁴ It is also characterized by a profligate aristocracy, which was considered by some to be influenced by transgressive females. According to K. D. Reynolds:

The immediate precedents at the time of Victoria's accession were not propitious for those who feared the influence of women over the sovereign. Whether for political monoeuvrings, sexual intrigue, or simple venality, female influence at the British court was regarded with deep suspicion.⁵

King George IV's extravagant debts, his alleged bigamous marriage to Caroline, and his rumored liaisons with

³I use the term "old aristocracy" interchangeably with the Regency, a time period prior to the "reformation of manners" or Victoria's reign.


countless other ladies of rank, cast a licentious shadow on the aristocracy. His ineptness to rule stemmed from his inability to make decisions without the influence of his mistress, Elizabeth Conyngham. George IV "could scarcely be prevailed upon to fulfil his most basic duties" without her. It was also known that William IV was constantly surrounded by his illegitimate children, on whom he "bestowed considerable patronage."

Furthermore, his wife was thought to have influenced his decision against the Reform Bill. Thus the British throne was "tinged with alarm born of the belief that it was the illegitimate influence of women at Louis XVI's court that had triggered the French Revolution in 1789."

While many "ladies" became the target for legal action, some were aggressive enough to take an active role against men. Lady Honyman, for example, brought Sir Richard Honyman to trial in an effort to prove they had been married in Scotland and that he was the father of her two children. Sir Richard's defense was that they were never married and his only wish was to seduce her. The couple had gone to Scotland and agreed to a "Scots marriage," basically a common-law marriage. Although Sir Richard denied the agreement and fought against it in a well publicized court battle, the penniless governess won

"Reynolds, Aristocratic 210."
out and retained the title of Lady Honyman, acquiring, too, some monetary restitution for the two legitimate children, both daughters. Since there was no son, at Sir Richard's death the baronetcy went to his brother. Much of the public aversion to men who were behaving badly, however, was diverted to females. Aristocratic women, like Lady Elgin, whose liaison led to a trial and the granting of an absolute divorce to Lord Elgin, and Lady Eldenburough, whose supposed affair with the young Austrian Prince Schwarzenberg led to a petition for divorce, were publicly chastised. Queen Caroline was even thought to have given birth to a child who had not been fathered by George IV, and the rumors were investigated by a special committee.

If middle-class moral spokesmen and writers needed proof of aristocratic corruption, they could find countless examples of transgressive aristocratic women with which to persuade the lower classes that the aristocracy lacked moral leadership. The image of the aristocratic woman was "that of the frivolous, selfish,

7See Horace Wyndham, Crimes in High Life (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1927) 27-53. For further discussion of Queen Caroline, see Flora Fraser, The Unruly Queen: The Life of Queen Caroline (New York: Knopf, 1996).

8Wyndham 201-218.
social butterfly, who might play the part of the Lady Bountiful.9 K. D. Reynolds notes of this image:

It is essentially the product of propaganda on the part of the middle classes, who were asserting their own claims to moral, social, and political leadership, on grounds very different from those of inherited land, rank, and tradition.10

The novels of this study invite us to become obsessed with this heroine, whom we are supposed to loathe. Ultimately, class anxiety is localized in this figure of the unrestrained woman and then defused by setting her against traditional male middle-class views of respectability. In other words, if the transgressive woman symbolizes the aristocracy, then the middle class is represented as gaining control over that woman. Therefore, the power of the middle-class patriarchy to contain the transgressive woman represents the triumph of the middle class over the aristocracy.

The conventions of respectability that came to be associated for the most part with the Victorian middle class largely developed out of a number of reform groups that had their beginnings prior to the reign of Queen Victoria. Furthermore, according to Ian Bradley, the reformation of manners was "to a large extent class-

9Reynolds, Aristocratic 13 (emphasis in original).
based. One of the more prominent groups of middle-class reformers, the Evangelicals, were accused by some of their contemporary critics "of showing a distinct class bias in their crusade against vice but also of being politically motivated." The Evangelicals were more successful with a "new morality" aimed at the aristocracy because of their inner connections with the upper class. Although they were considered by contemporaries to have made a "major contributory factor in producing the transformation of English manners," they were seen by others as "a powerful force of repression which had deprived the populace of their innocent pastimes." Sydney Smith, a Whig clergyman and one of

See Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians (New York: Macmillan, 1976) 100-11. The Clapham Sect succeeded in banning public activities on Sunday, one being the closing of the Crystal Palace. Also, Perkin argues that "the Evangelicals had far more effect on the rich than they did on the poor." Their pamphlets, sold in bulk, were bought by the upper class to "hand out" to the poor (Perkin, Origin 283). According to Perkin, the Evangelicals' "methods were so transparently propagandist and so socially condescending that they served rather to antagonize than to seduce the emergent working class" (283).

Bradley 110.

Bradley 108.
the strongest critics of the evangelical movement, claimed:

On bull-baiting and bear-baiting [the Evangelicals] waged full-scale war, yet did it once turn its attentions to hunting and shooting? Is there one single instance where they have directed the attention of the Society to this higher species of suppression, and sacrificed men of consideration to that zeal for virtue which watches so acutely over the vices of the poor?14

Hannah More explained that while "aristocratic sinners merely needed a well-aimed tract to be redeemed," the lower class required "prohibitory legislation and punishment."15 More, a poet and playwright, was one of five members of the Clapham Sect, an evangelical group of "wealthy and well-connected philanthropic activists," which also included four men: a banker, a vicar, a businessman, and one aristocrat, Wilberforce.16 Critics of the Evangelicals considered them paternalists, who sought to treat the lower class like children. From a different perspective, the Dissenters, the Methodists, the


15See Bradley 110.

16See Perkin, Origin 286 and Bradley 106. Bradley and Perkin both agree that it would be wrong to assume that the Evangelicals alone were responsible for reforming English manners. There were other reform groups who accomplished much the same, such as the Methodists, Benthamites, Owenites, and Dissenters. See Perkin, Origin 280-81.
and the Benthamites "worked mainly from the outside, bolstering the self-confidence of the middle-class morality and fostering emancipation and antagonism."\textsuperscript{17} The Benthamites "consciously put the revolution into the moral revolution, and turned the moral superiority of the Dissenting middle class into a deliberate attack on the 'immorality' of the aristocracy."\textsuperscript{18} Further, they believed in "the improvability of the working class by middle-class leadership and propaganda."\textsuperscript{19}

Another important political group and propagandist machine which created a climate of public opinion was the Anti-Corn-Law League, an organization of free traders and radicals. They strongly opposed "aristocratic misrule" and defined the upper class as: a "foot-pad aristocracy, power-proud plunderers, blood-sucking vampires," whose life was "a routine of oppression, extravagance and luxury."\textsuperscript{20} Nevertheless, the "Moral Revolution," as Perkin calls it, was basically in place by the time Victoria came to the throne:

\begin{quote}
By the time of Victoria's accession, scandalous sexual behaviour had not disappeared, but those
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17}Perkin, Origin 286.

\textsuperscript{18}Perkin, Origin 288.

\textsuperscript{19}Perkin, Origin 289.

who indulged in it were a good deal more discreet than they had been. On the eve of his accession to the throne in 1832, William IV was advised by the Marquess of Anglesey to keep quiet about his brood of illegitimate children.\(^{21}\)

The British aristocracy was, no doubt, the most powerful class in Europe. Yet, as Altick points out:

> The libertinism and extravagance traditionally attributed to aristocratic life [did not] wholly disappear in the Victorian period. There were still fast-living men (and not a few women) in the upper reaches of society. But it is significant that they never enjoyed the approval of the Queen, whose court was heavy with conventionality.\(^{22}\)

Middle-class ideas of respectability emerged as the dominant model of social importance. Thus the relationship between the aristocracy and the middle class can be compared to a painting on which dominant middle-class values of respectability were superimposed over a still strong and visible tradition of rule by the landed class.

After Victoria's accession to the throne, two Evangelical publishers were known for censoring any passages they considered immoral or illicit from the books they sold. In 1842, Charles Mudie, a strong Evangelical, established Mudie's Select Circulating

\(^{21}\)Perkin, *Origin* 106.

\(^{22}\)Altick, *Victorian* 180-183.
Library. With a subscription of over 25,000 by 1860, it was the largest and most popular circulating library during the Victorian period. Mudie made sure that there were no references to sexual activities in any of the works he made available to his readers. W. H. Smith, a "staunch" Methodist, also exercised a keen eye on the books that he published, as well as the books that "sold from the railway station bookstalls of which he had a monopoly through most of Victoria's reign." The evangelical movement, however, could do little during the Victorian period to stop the proliferation of the notorious penny dreadfuls and weekly periodicals where many popular sensation novels made their first appearance--with illustrations--to the lower class.

Popular novels that were published as serial installments in penny weeklies, some of which were later published as complete novels, quite frequently crossed class boundaries. Dalziel notes that in many Victorian homes, cheap sensation fiction made its way from the kitchen to the parlor. Some of the more subtle sensation works were published as "yellow back" novels for railway stalls before they became the more expensive

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21See Bradley 98.

24Margaret Dalziel, Popular Fiction 100 Years Ago: An Unexplored Tract of Literary History (London: Cohen and West, 1957) 117.
hardbacks. Moreover, these popular novels presented microcosmic panoramas of middle-class characters vying for cultural dominance and class hegemony. As Nancy Armstrong notes, nineteenth-century England was composed of class factions that allowed potentially permeable boundaries rather than distinct divisions into merely two, three, or five classes. Despite the fact that this dissertation focuses on contending divisions within the middle class, the basis for my argument is firmly grounded in the traditional three-class model. Rather than altering the outward structure of the traditional three-class model, then, this study locates permeable boundaries of competing factions that consistently attempted to define themselves as the bourgeois class. The often indisputable differences between these numerous middle-class factions resulted in a cultural dynamics that helped to shape the varied meanings of the term "bourgeois."  

Within these contending divisions of the middle class, there were those members who acted as moral

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26Class analysis has also been associated with collective action, both linked together by culture. See Klaus Eder, The New Politics of Class: Social Movements and Cultural Dynamics in Advanced Societies (London: Sage, 1993) 1-15.
spokesmen for the lower classes and some who, preoccupied with a moral reputation, repressed sexuality, extolled respectable manners, and exhibited anti-aristocratic attitudes. As Stedman Jones points out, between 1790 and 1850, extremes of this latter group believed that "the monarchy, the legislature, the Church, the bureaucracy, the army and the police had all been occupied by 'bloodsuckers', 'hypocrites', 'placemen', etc." Still, however, there existed another faction of the middle class who practiced an intemperance that had become associated by some middle-class writers with the aristocracy of the Regency.

Writers of Victorian popular novels consistently portrayed characters who represented middle-class factions which were either pro- or anti-aristocratic. The middle-class factions dealt with in this study are represented by figures of the bourgeois aristocrat, the transgressive bourgeois, and the middle-class professional. I define the bourgeois aristocrat as an aristocrat who has sided with typical bourgeois morals and values. In some cases, this figure originates from that class just below the aristocracy, for example the baronet, squire, and "younger sons of peers, whom the law

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of primogeniture barred from succeeding to the family fortune." The bourgeois aristocrat's coupling of bourgeois economic strength with the political power of the aristocracy fashioned a "bourgeois aristocracy," a new order that combined the power of aristocratic spectacle with bourgeois morals, the supreme example being Queen Victoria. The bourgeois aristocracy upheld a middle-class respectability that included restrained sexual activity, avoidance of scandal, respectable manners, and strong morals, all of which represented a striking departure from the immoral values exhibited by Queen Victoria's predecessors.

The transgressive bourgeoisie, in contrast, refers to a version of the middle class which, in essence, wanted to "become" the new aristocracy. Desiring status, they sought to appropriate rank and wealth as their banner of superiority. Frequently, the transgressive bourgeoisie, usually depicted as females, would align themselves with the old aristocracy through an opportune


29Elizabeth Langland refers to Victoria as the "Bourgeois Aristocrat" who transcended the immoral behaviors of her predecessors George IV, William IV, and her own father, the Duke of Kent, who were, according to Patricia Thompson's biography on Victoria, "bigamists and adulterers, exercising power irresponsibly, squandering public funds, and sponging on friends and subjects." See Nobody's Angels: Middle-class Women and Domestic Ideology in Victorian Culture (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) 64.
marriage. The bourgeois aristocrat and the professionals are fictionally portrayed by middle-class writers of popular novels as against the transgressive bourgeoisie. In actuality, many professionals were younger sons of aristocrats. However, these professionals are almost always lawyers who are characterized as bourgeois aristocrats. Physicians, businessmen, teachers, and other professional titles who established their own salaries are depicted in opposition to the aristocracy.

It is my contention that these different groups within the middle class were competing to establish a middle-class culture that would define the middle class. Like all class boundaries, however, the ones between middle-class factions were not always neatly delineated by strict divisions. These factions reflect the fluidity that existed between class boundaries, overlapping onto one another and forming gray areas of digression. Nevertheless, such categories of class function to map out middle-class factions by their relationships to lower and upper class divisions. Were they to become the "new" aristocrats, a respectable middle class, a professional one, or some combination?

The novels of this study represent three distinct periods of British Victorian popular culture: the 1840s, 1860s, and 1890s. Each period represents a surge in the
writing of popular fiction that vilified the aristocrat. These three periods are significant in the proximity each one has to the three Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and 1884, which represent the results of what has come to be known as "The Silent Social Revolution." In the first half of the nineteenth century, class consciousness was emerging, and, as John Scott points out, by the 1840s Britain had a well developed language of class. Class language developed alongside the Chartist movement, which had its last major expression in 1848 and faded away by 1851. During this time, popular novels written in weekly episodes began to appear in the penny newspapers, which were widely read by the lower class. One of the leading publishers of this period was W. G. M. Reynolds, whose Mysteries of London sold 40,000 copies per weekly issue. This "cheap literature" emerged at about the same time as the expensive three-decker novel, which was affordable to middle and upper-middle class readers. Reynolds's novels attacked aristocratic misgovernment and portrayed aristocrats as a scandalous class, causing

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30 See Altick, Victorian 96.


considerable alarm to the upper class about the moral conditioning of the lower class. As Patrick Brantlinger notes, "Penny dreadfuls, Newgate crime stories, sensation novels . . . and so on--came under attack for rotting the minds of their readers, promoting vice, and subverting cultural standards." What becomes apparent in this study is that many writers of cheap literature were acting as moral spokesmen to educate lower-class readers about the alleged immorality of the aristocracy.

In the 1860s, the upper class had even more reason to be alarmed over the publication of fiction that attacked the upper class. While the "three-decker" novel had come to be recognized as the respectable novel, Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Mrs. Henry Wood, and Charles Reade launched versions of what came to be known as the sensation novel, novels which sold in high numbers and bought by both the middle and upper class. As Patrick Brantlinger notes, "the sensation novel emerged in the context of the powerful influence of Dickens, of both Gothic and domestic realism in fiction, of stage melodrama, and of 'sensational' journalism,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{33}See Patrick Brantlinger,}\ \textit{The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction} \ (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 2.\]
bigamy trials, and divorce-law reform." Renowned reviewers of the time thought many of the sensation novels posed various moral and cultural dangers to readers because, once again, aristocrats were shown to be licentious and corrupt.

Popular novels of the 1890s even further reflected a decadent aristocracy. Decadent novels included the immensely popular *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), *The Yellow Book* (1894), H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *Dracula* (1897). The sexual decadence of writers like Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker, and others was combined with the supernatural and the realistic, creating a sense of gothic sexual horror that seemed to lurk just outside the doors of Londoners. Much of the shocking affect promulgated by these novelists originated from ongoing anxieties over "shilling shockers" or mysteries like Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Body Snatcher" (1884) or accounts of London's serial murderer, Jack the Ripper (1888), that had been sensationalized in newspapers. Dr.

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34Brantlinger, 226. The Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) established divorce courts.
Thomas Scott referred to this time as the "Shilling Shocker" period.\textsuperscript{35}

While this dissertation primarily focuses on the middle-class struggle for hegemony, it will more specifically address that subject in terms of gender, since in most of the texts used, the woman signifies cultural transgression, the socially symbolic acts which conventional cultural norms prohibit. I argue that implicit in the figure of the transgressive woman lies a subtext of fears about the return of intemperate behavior exhibited by many aristocrats during the Regency.

One of the reasons writers were dwelling on the figure of the transgressive woman was because of the changing status of women. Writers expressed class antagonism through the figure of the transgressive woman. During the 1830s, many female writers laid a groundwork of protests against the subordinate role of women in Victorian society, protests which ultimately linked class with gender through arguments about equality with men. While Anna Wheeler's essay "With the Emancipation of Women Will Come the Emancipation of the Useful Class" (1833) encouraged active roles for middle-class females, it also chastised the "young, beautiful, and rich" women

of the "privileged class" who mistakenly fancied themselves "queens." \(^{36}\) Here, the queenly woman is a member of the upper class, an "influential" female figure described by the unnamed French writer as "the woman of fashion, the youthful beauty, and the irreclaimably vicious, either in temper or morals." \(^{37}\) Thus, the venomous but fashionably pleasing Victorian female, who presented herself as a member of the upper class, is linked to the stereotype of a malevolent French \textit{femme fatale}. Such women were repeatedly depicted in sensation novels. As Cvetkovich notes:

Victorian critics were especially vehement about the sensation novel's dangerous portrayal of women whose sexuality and affects are uncontrolled. The figure of the criminal and sexualized woman, by violating the standards of feminine propriety, also threatened the social order. \(^{38}\)

Such rhetoric mirrors the anxieties over middle-class women who aspired to aristocratic status by imitating their French counterparts. An anonymously published


\(^{37}\) See Bauer 59 (emphasis added).

article thought to have been written by the "notorious" Caroline Norton, "An Outline of the Grievances of Women" (1838), proposed that "At a period . . . when the power of a dominant aristocracy totters to its foundation," women were already considered as being greatly influential in their positions "both at home and in society." While proponents of women's rights sought to expand the role of women beyond the sphere of domesticity, fictional allusions to the privileged class of females suggested a resentment towards or at least a deep concern over those who conspired to obtain the status of aristocratic wealth and privilege. These women symbolized an attraction for the aristocracy which the middle class felt but also deplored within itself. The novels in this study suggest that active female roles, which infringed on masculine roles, produced suspicion about upward class mobility.

W. G. M. Reynolds and the 1840s

During the 1840s, much of the popular fiction published in penny weeklies was directed against the old class enemy--the landowner. Raymond Williams maintains

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subordinate working-class fiction and that it specifically scandalized the aristocracy.40 Novels serialized in cheap periodicals such as Reynolds's Mysteries of the Court of London and Reed's History of a Royal Rake exposed the "highest people in society" as "behaving scandalously."41 Because they were affordable to the lower class and because they often sensationalized aristocratic scandal, these periodicals became immensely popular among lower-class readers. Cobbett's Political Register had, around 1840, at least a circulation of 70,000; Knight's Penny Magazine reached, it is estimated, over 200,000 readers.42 Reynolds's The Mysteries of London, which sold 40,000 copies per weekly issue, is said to have marketed over a million copies within ten years, and his Reynolds's Miscellany, which reached a

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41 Williams 5.

circulation of over 600,000 copies, survived until the 1950s.\footnote{See Sutherland, 41 and Altick, Common 392. Also see E. F. Bleiler, introduction, Wagner, the Wehr-wolf, by G. W. M. Reynolds (New York: Dover, 1975) viii.}

Since the number of lower-class readers had dramatically increased, it became evident to publishers of radical presses (William Cobbett's in particular) that cheap tracts and newspapers aimed against the aristocracy--such as Political Register, Cap of Liberty, the Black Dwarf, and the Republican--could help educate the working class on political and social issues.\footnote{In the aftermath of class anxiety produced by the French Revolution and the Peterloo Massacre, the radical press had slowly begun, around 1820, to encourage literacy among the working classes. Before long, the number of working-class people had doubled. For the impact of literacy on job opportunities, see David F. Mitch, The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England: The Influence of Private Choice and Public Policy (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1992). For literacy and cultural issues, see David Vincent, Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).} Much of this battle between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie for lower-class allegiance was manifested in literature. For example, when both the aristocracy and the middle class were vying for the allegiance of the proletariat, Marx and Engels published their Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848). In the third section, which addresses "Feudal Socialism," Marx depicts the
aristocracy as "half menace of the future," declaring that "at times, by its bitter, witty and incisive criticism, [it strikes] the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core."  

Marx goes on to say:

The aristocracy, in order to rally the people to them, waved the proletarian alms-bag in front for a banner. But the people, so often as it joined them, saw on their hindquarters the old feudal coats of arms, and deserted with loud irreverent laughter. One section of the French Legitimists and "Young England" exhibited this spectacle.

According to Marx, the aristocrats' primary complaint against the bourgeoisie amounted to the development of a "bourgeois régime . . . destined to cut up, root and branch the old order of society." Marx calls the attack a "literary battle" in which the aristocracy wrote "pamphlets against modern bourgeois society."

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46Marx 230. "Young England" refers to Disraeli, Thomas Carlyle, and others who in 1842 formed a group of British Conservatives--aristocrats and men of politics and literature.

47Marx 230.

48Marx 229. In my chapter on Wagner, I discuss the links between Marx and Reynolds. Marx cites critical-utopian socialism along with conservative, or bourgeois, socialism as reactionary movements against the aristocracy's literary attack.

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W. G. M. Reynolds exemplified one politician and writer who, in order to gain the allegiance of the lower class, played a strong part in these literary contentions between the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie. Reynolds used the Political Instructor to "educate" the working class through the lens of the Chartist movement. At a time when Chartist leaders J. R. Stephens, Thomas Cooper, John Frost, and Fergus O'Connor talked freely of violence but allowed their bluff to be called by police, Reynolds safely manoeuvered between vituperative and mitigated fictional attacks on the aristocracy. In 1848, he delivered a famous speech, sharp in its attack on the aristocracy, to a crowd of Chartists at Trafalgar Square. A number of significant literary and political events transpired around the same time of Reynolds's Trafalgar Square speech. While he was publishing installments of The Mysteries of London (2 vol., 1844-46) Engels, who had just met Marx in Paris during 1844, published "The Condition of the Working Class in England" (1845). The following year, Reynolds began publishing installments of Wagner, the Wehr-wolf, which carried over into 1847.

Although Reynolds's works broadly hinted at his politically radical inclinations, it was not until some few months after the final installment of Wagner, in 1847, that he became a public voice for the Chartist
movement, listing their objectives as: universal suffrage, equal electoral districts, ballot votes, annual Parliament, salaried representatives, and no property qualification for voting. Later, Reynolds added the rights of labor and abolition of the laws of primogeniture. In 1848, W. H. Smith and Son opened bookstalls on the British railroad system, providing affordable reading to the working class through its distribution of cheap popular novels. Marx and Engels published *The Communist Manifesto* during the same year in which Reynolds gave his speech at Trafalgar Square and in which Marx and Engels's close friend Ernest Jones, a left-wing radical, delivered a stirring speech at the Chartist meeting in Kennington Commons. A few years later, Reynolds was writing in *Reynolds Weekly Newspaper*, a rival to Ernest Jones's newspaper, the *People's Journal*, for which Marx also wrote.

During the period of the 1848 revolutionary outbreaks in France—which, as historians have noted, made the English aristocracy apprehensive about its own class

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49Bleiler ii.

50See Bleiler xiii. Bleiler states that no copies of *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* exist in the United States, which would provide more information on the differences and similarities between Marx and Reynolds's theses. I have been unable to locate this periodical either on microfilm or in hardcopy.
Reynolds won over a crowd of "anywhere from 20,000 to 200,00" Chartists at Trafalgar Square with his zealous political speech. Afraid of physical force, the government prohibited the meeting and called on 150,000 special police to keep peace. As the Chartists hesitated to proclaim public support for the French, Reynolds came forward and brought the mob under control. According to Bleiler:

[Reynolds] mounted the pillar, introduced himself as a publisher who had sympathy for the working man, and was declared chairman of the meeting. He urged the crowds to defy the government and not to yield. The Chartists paraded him home enthusiastically, and he had to give another speech from the balcony of his home. While the anticipated insurrection never took place, sporadic riots and/or police repressions continued for three or four days.

As a result of Trafalgar, Reynolds was accepted as a leading figure among the chartists, and soon became a member of the Executive. He took part in further meetings, including Kennington Common, [figure 1] where he urged the Chartists to declare themselves the government, if the Petition was rejected.51

Beyond advocating defiance against the ruling order with his fiery speech from a public platform, Reynolds also mapped out the objectives of the Chartist movement in his *Political Instructor*.

Much of the class politics Reynolds espoused can be seen in his two volumes of *The Mysteries of London*, where

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51Bleiler xii.
Figure 1  Daguerreotype of "The Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Common, April 10, 1848."
he underscores the extreme gap between the "wealthy" and the "poor" as a source of class turmoil that permeates London, "that city of fearful contrasts." His premise, stated clearly in the prologue to The Mysteries of London, contends: "The wealthy may commit all social offenses with impunity; while the poor are cast into dungeons and coerced with chains." Having reduced the diversity of social structure to two diametrically opposed and irreconcilable classes, Reynolds didactically proclaimed the importance of moral behavior. In volume one's epilogue, Reynolds writes:

We have a grand moral to work out--a great lesson to teach every class of society;--a moral and a lesson whose themes are

| WEALTH | POVERTY |

For we have constituted ourselves the scourge of the oppressor, and the champion of the oppressed: we have taken virtue by the hand to raise it, and we have seized upon vice to expose it; we have no fear of those who sit in high places; but we dwell as emphatically upon the failings of the educated and rich, as on the immorality of the ignorant and poor.

We invite all those who have been deceived to come around us, and we will unmask the deceiver;--we seek the company of them that drag the chains of tyranny along the rough thoroughfares of the world, that we may put the tyrant to shame;--we gather around us all those who suffer from vicious institutions, that we may expose the rottenness of the social heart.

Crime, oppression, and injustice prosper for a time; but, with nations as with

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individuals, the day of retribution must come. Such is the lesson we have yet to teach.\textsuperscript{51}

Reynolds sets up this polarization between upper and lower classes in a radical discourse that appeals to and is meant to educate an immoral Victorian populace.\textsuperscript{54}

The notion of immorality was, however, twofold. In the novel, Reynolds depicts aristocrats exhibiting scandalous behavior and portrays working class characters led astray and seduced into liaisons by unscrupulous aristocrats. His lower-class readers were infatuated with such stories because the aristocrats were seen as the perpetrators of the improprieties. In \textit{London Labour and the London Poor}, Henry Mayhew acknowledged Reynolds's popularity with the lower classes, stating: "It may appear anomalous to speak of the literature of an uneducated body, but even the costermongers have their tastes for books. They are very fond of hearing any one

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{53}Reynolds, \textit{Mysteries} 415-16.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{54}Two years later, in 1850, Reynolds published a new journal, \textit{Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper}, which boasted a circulation of over a half million readers and which was known as the "news organ" for the "radical working man." See Bleiler, xiii. I use the term "radical" in its precise nineteenth-century meaning of anti-privilege, anti-landed elite, anti-clericalism, and the joining of workers and middle-class reformers against traditional aristocratic power structures.
\end{quote}
read aloud to them, and listen very attentively." The lower class revelled in Reynolds's exposing the aristocracy as scandalous. To his readers, Reynolds denounces the impunity of a corrupted aristocracy who exploit the innocence of the poor. His attacks on the wealthy aristocrats in *The Mysteries of London*, *The Mysteries of the Court of London*, and Wagner presage his later involvement with Chartist work against the oppressiveness of the upper class.

In order to link the aristocracy with scandal, Reynolds uses the sexualized woman, an issue that received considerable attention during the 1830s and 1840s. The sexual discourse surrounding this transgressive woman, grounded in the movement for women's

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55Quoted in Bleiler x. Mayhew attempted a taxonomy of the labor and non-labor population of London. F. B. Smith argues that Mayhew's evidence cannot be considered accurate because his informants were unreliable. See "Mayhew's Convict," *Victorian Studies* 22 (Summer 1979): 431-448.

56Reynolds's use of "wealth" refers to unearned wealth. His characters of wealth are never the "self-made" wealthy. Reynolds' critique of the aristocracy becomes more blistering, more searing over time, even going so far as to encourage revolution. Some time after his public call to action to at Trafalgar Square, Reynolds, commandeering the images of imperialism/colonialism in *The Seamstress, or the White Slaves of England* (1850), writes: "The British aristocracy, male and female, is the most loathsomely corrupt, demoralized and profligate class of persons that ever scandalized a country."
emancipation and reflecting a rebellious French counterpart, is informed, too, by lingering anxieties over the promiscuous behavior exhibited by the ruling order of the Regency.

In linking the figure of an unrestrained woman with the old aristocracy, writers like W. G. M. Reynolds could depict the aristocracy not only as a feminine political structure but as a threat to the very stability and integrity of the nation, with patriarchal authority as a buttress. In this context, scandalous female figures became the perfect vehicles in fiction for the articulation of the anti-aristocratic sentiments that Reynolds had proclaimed in his diatribes.

The Sensation Novel and the 1860s

In its struggle to establish cultural hegemony, the middle class began to gain a sense of respect during the period from 1855 to 1865, as the aristocracy slowly accepted bourgeois influence. Perkin argues that the self-made section of the middle class--comprising those men he refers to as entrepreneurs--had won what Marx called the rule over other classes by "imposing[ing] its own ideology upon the rest of society."57 According to Perkin, "The entrepreneurial class ruled by remote

control, through the power of its ideal over the ostensible ruling class, the landed aristocracy, which continued to occupy the main positions of power down to the 1880s. Kucich posits "a general mid-Victorian phenomenon in which aristocrats continued to hold certain forms of power only by remodeling institutions and values on bourgeois terms." It would be safe to say, however, that not all aristocrats adopted those terms. Like the middle class, the aristocracy was divided by its appropriation of bourgeois values. Kucich refers to those aristocrats who began to adopt certain aspects of bourgeois respectability:

Aristocratic portraits of the period, for example, tend to represent family groups occupied in domestic activities, rather than solitary, formally dressed figures. The country houses built after mid-century organize domestic space around moral considerations--by providing architecturally for a newly efficient, nonsociable regimentation of the work space and a rigid separation, both in activities and living quarters, between male and female servants. In politics, the situation is even clearer. The failure of the middle class to form its own political party

58 Perkin, Origin 271.

59 As one factor of this shift, Kucich attributes the quasi-compatibility between the aristocracy and bourgeoisie to "the 'capture' of the church by middle-class interests," in part due to Palmerston's appointments of "nonactivist evangelical bishops" to the church. See John Kucich, The Power of Lies: Transgression in Victorian Fiction (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994) 52-3.
after the enfranchisement is attributable primarily to the gravitation of both the Liberal and Conservative parties toward middle-class stands.\(^6\)

While a sense of bourgeois respectability slowly developed during Queen Victoria's reign, Victoria herself was fully aware of the aristocratic corruption that still existed. In a letter to her daughter, she wrote:

The higher classes--especially the aristocracy (with of course exceptions and honourable ones) are so frivolous, pleasure-seeking, heartless, selfish, immoral and gambling that it makes one think . . . of the days before the French Revolution. The young men are so ignorant, luxurious and self-indulgent--and the young women so fast, frivolous, and imprudent that the danger really is very great . . . Bertie [her son, the Prince of Wales] ought to set a good example on these respect by not countenancing ever any one of these horrid people.\(^6\)

The exceptional aristocrats apparently consisted of those who exhibited explicit proper mannerisms, like Victoria, who has been considered the "bourgeois-aristocrat."\(^6\) The aristocracy still existed with its own upper-class rules. It was understood, for instance, that in an aristocratic marriage, the woman must have been initially

\(^{60}\)Kucich 53.


\(^{62}\)See Langland 62-79.

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a virgin and have had at least two heirs before she could consider any extra-marital affairs. After the heirs, she was fairly free to play around as long as she didn't cause a scandal outside of her circle.61

On the other hand, the middle class segregated into a number of factions. Between the 1860s and 1870s, classes were separating rather than merging. Thus, what happens during the 1860s is that the middle classes split, with some being pro-aristocracy and others being anti-aristocracy. Although the aristocracy was declining, its power still survived up to the First World War and even long after. The ideas and assumptions of the landed aristocracy were still somewhat generally accepted as the natural order of things because "land alone granted them their status."64 But to the working and middle-class radicals, it was not property as an institution but rather patronage that bred aristocratic misgovernment. It was the abuse of property "as idleness, as privilege, as monopoly, as undue political influence and corruption."65 The aristocracy's ability to remain an extraordinarily powerful class throughout the nineteenth century bears relevance on the advent of

61See Joan Perkin 90-1.

64Perkin, Origin 38.

65Perkin, Origin 312.
the sensation novel. Anti-aristocratic, middle-class writers sensationalized aristocratic scandals.

J. V. Beckett informs us that the aristocracy did not begin to be undermined until 1880 and not curtailed until 1914. Even though some critics point out that the middle class could obtain or combine wealth through intermarriage with aristocrats, "the aristocracy was able to maintain a high level of material prosperity and to assert its traditional role of ruling elite throughout most of the nineteenth century." Even in France, the old system was not really transformed until "the advent of railways, which broke down the old regional agricultural pattern, created a national market, and gave an enormous stimulus to heavy industry with demands for coal, iron and steel." William Doyle adds that throughout Europe, the "non-political ancien régime did not really die until the second half of the nineteenth century, and that if any political revolution stood at the crossroads, and even then coincidentally, it was that

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*Cannadine, Decline 98-9.*

of 1848 rather than 1789." Beckett argues that Salisbury's 1895 administration began "the last government in the western world to possess all the attributes of aristocracy in working condition." Moreover, Doyle goes on to conclude that "the ancien régime persisted, and its representatives were determined not to give up their power to new forces." If, in fact, the English ancien régime did continue to exercise its power into the second half of the nineteenth century, writers of sensational literature made it clear to their readers that many aristocrats were dangerous and corrupt. As a reaction against the persistence of aristocratic power structures, the figure of the evil aristocrat became an infamous symbol of the Regency. The popularity of cheap sensation literature expanded with the arrival of sensation novels, many of which further underscored aristocratic scandal.

Despite the fact that cheap tracts, newspapers, and journals were published illegitimately and succeeded in

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70 Beckett 464.

71 Doyle 17.
reaching a large portion of working class readers before the "penny stamp" was repealed in 1855, it was not until 1861 when the taxes on paper were removed that the penny press gained an extensive readership. Thus, cheaper forms of print established an ever-growing communication of class-consciousness between both working and middle classes. During the 1860s, the sensation novel reached its peak. In his novel *The Queen of Hearts* (1859), Wilkie Collins has one of his female characters, Jessie, perform what we might call a "sales-pitch" for the sensation novel. Jessie complains about the books that have been given her to read:

They might do for some people but not for me. I'm rather peculiar, perhaps, in my tastes. I'm sick to death of novels with an earnest purpose. I'm sick to death of outbursts of eloquence, and large-minded philanthropy, and graphic descriptions, and unsparing anatomy of the human heart, and all that sort of thing. Oh, dear me! what I want is something that seizes hold of my interest, and makes me forget when it is time to dress for dinner; something that keeps me reading, reading, reading, in a breathless state to find out the end.\(^{72}\)

For many critics, the dangers of sensation novels were linked to cultural anxiety. As Thomas observes, "This fictional form that caused such a popular sensation among the middle class worked directly on class anxiety and

instability, symptomatic perhaps of a widespread nervousness at the very center of the culture's sense of itself."\textsuperscript{73}

Margaret Oliphant outlines the anxiety evoked by the sensation novelists in her well-known 1862 review for Blackwood's. She notes that "simple physical affect" but "delicately powerful" and "tranquil" sensation-scenes constitute "higher requirements of art."\textsuperscript{74} To produce an effect of "pure" sensation, she admits, would be beyond genius; however, it would involve a mixture of both the "higher requirements of art" and the "snatches" of popular weekly periodicals.\textsuperscript{75} Here, we are presented with a conflict of class culture: higher art's attempt to appropriate popular art. But can Victorian popular culture blend with traditional Victorian high culture to produce an aesthetically pleasing commodity for all? According to Oliphant, Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White (1861) comes close to the moment of "pure" sensation by a careful balancing the "startling" literature as it appeals to a mass audience with the


\textsuperscript{74}See Margaret Oliphant, "Sensation Novels," \textit{Blackwood's} (1862): 571, 584.

\textsuperscript{75}Oliphant, "Sensation" 584.
"delicate" and traditional literature accepted by the upper class. She clearly objects to those sensation scenes that "shock" because they formulate a "hybrid between French excitement and New England homeliness" in which "we recognize the influence of a social system which has paralysed all the wholesome wonders of nobler mysteries of human existence." Oliphant goes on to privilege a discreet and virtuous sensation novel without the "shocks and wonders," "hectic rebellion against nature," and "black art or mad psychology." Sensation novels, she claimed, "represent the flames of vice as a purifying fiery ordeal."

That the sensation novel could be dangerous to a social system such as nineteenth-century England's framed Oliphant's review of the sensation novel. Oliphant warned her readers that in mimicking the French novel, British sensation writers would be providing readers with an opportunity for studying political unrest. Oliphant condemned overt sensation scenes which, following on the heels of French sensation, tended toward revolutionary discourse by creating class tension. In her denouncement of overt sensation, Oliphant revealed the latent fear of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{76}}\text{Oliphant, "Sensation" 565.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{77}}\text{Oliphant, "Sensation" 567.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{78}}\text{Oliphant, "Sensation" 564.} \]
revolution that occupied British thought. To be sure, she alluded to America's civil war as a sensational crisis that contributed to the political nervousness that pervaded England:

It is a changed world in which we are now standing. If no distant sound of guns echoes across seas and continents upon our ears as we wander the South Kensington domes, the lack of the familiar sound will be rather disappointing than satisfactory. That distant roar has come to form a thrilling accompaniment to the safe life we lead at home. On the other side of the Atlantic, a race blasé and lost in universal ennui has bethought itself of the grandest expedient for procuring a new sensation; and albeit we follow at a humble distance, we too begin to feel the need of a supply of new shocks and wonders. Those fell Merrimacs and Monitors, stealing forth with a certain devilish invulnerability and composure upon the human ships and men to be made fire and carnage of, are excitement too high pitched for comfort.79

Clearly, this passage indicates why Oliphant was concerned to advocate a model of more "comfortable" discourse for sensation novels: it would not kindle political or social discontent. Her position, however, contradicts the very meaning of sensation itself. For as Oliphant defined it, sensation emerged out of a situation that evoked both comfort (delicate) and, at the same time, discomfort (startling). This paradox goes beyond a mere tone of discourse. In lauding the "delicate"

79Oliphant, "Sensation" 564-5.
sensationalism of Collins's *The Woman in White*, Oliphant attempted to marginalize any literature of an extremely "startling" nature. This suggests that she feared sensation novels, like French novels, might rouse feelings of animosity towards the upper class, creating an environment conducive to class hostility. Oliphant suggests that much of France's "hectic rebellion" resulted from the reading of sensationalized literature that perpetuated alarm over political issues.

The unrest perpetuated by the sensation novel resided outside the realm of bourgeois conformity, therefore posing resistance to the ideal concept of moral and respectable behavior. According to Thomas, "the plots of sensation novels center around some menacing secret in which class boundaries have been ruthlessly transgressed for profit." Moreover, because sensation novels deal harshly with the transgression of class lines both upward and downward, they appear to be concerned with preserving the integrity of traditional class boundaries.

As sensational effect, middle-class writers articulated aristocratic class scandal in terms of gender. Because women were moving into new public roles, especially after 1870, the figure of the "dangerous

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80 Thomas 482.
woman" in fiction symbolizes prominent fears about ambitious women obtaining power through variable means of self-assertion, financial freedom, and the crossing of gender boundaries. Mary Elizabeth Braddon, one of the more popular writers of sensation novels, locates middle-class cultural hegemony within the division of the public and private sphere of women. That is to say that her heroines are villainesses who resist domesticity by transcending the passive role of the domestic "angels" who stay at home.

Women who asserted themselves by preferring looseness of family ties and by defying the patriarchal order were considered "social insurgents." A woman who transgressed feminine boundaries constituted what Auerbach refers to as a "sinister superior." The Desdomonas, Medusas, and Wild Women of sensation literature exert a strong-minded will in order to gain independence. In their disapproval of patriarchal authority, these females are characterized as vampire-like when they appropriate the masculine and overstep the social and class positions allotted to the female sex. Such a masculine position in the disguise of a woman

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defined her as a threat to bourgeois culture. As a critic for *The Living Age* writes in 1863:

> There is nothing more violently opposed to our moral sense, in all the contradictions to custom which they present us, than the utter unrestraint in which the heroines of this order are allowed to expatiate and develop their impulsive, stormy, passionate characters. We believe it is one chief among their many dangers to youthful readers that they open out a picture of life free from all the perhaps irksome checks that confine their own existence. ... The heroine of this class of novel is charming because she is undisciplined, and the victim of impulse; because she has never known restraint or has cast it aside, because in all these respects she is below the thoroughly trained and tried woman.

In their "imitating men's habits" and "emphasizing their demand for liberty," the unrestrained women in sensation novels are a threat to masculine dominance built upon feminine passivity. Exercising freedom of fashion, provocative conversation, control in matters of money, and the capacity to administer physical punishment to those who interfere with their goals, these women were the catalysts for anxiety in many a sensation novel. Writers like Collins, Woods, Braddon, and Reade employed figures of the dangerous woman in an effort to sustain thrills. The female protagonists developed by these writers convey a sense of the figurative vampire who

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"Our Female Sensation Novelists," *The Living Age* 78 (22 August 1863): 353-54.
appropriates masculine power by being aggressive or "active" rather than "passive" (symbolically, the penetrator). Frequently, in popular fiction, the figurative vampire is "sexualized" and comes to be associated with upper-class crime. In addition, when some of these characters are shown to indulge in extravagant fashion, excessive spending, and intelligent conversation, society labels them as "fast," anti-domestic women.

Aristocratic scandal is fairly prominent in sensation novels. In most cases, a middle-class character--usually a woman--is either seduced by a rotten aristocrat or else marries an aristocrat for his money and status and becomes the symbol of aristocratic corruption through crimes of bigamy, murder, or adultery. Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), for example, depicts the aristocratic poseur Sir Percival Glyde as a villain who puts his wife away in an asylum in order to acquire her family inheritance. In Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1860-61), the heroine, Lady Isabel Vane, deserts her husband and children and runs off with the upper class scoundrel, Sir Francis Levison. Similarly, in Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lucy, the wife of George Talbot, commits bigamy by marrying Sir Michael Audley and attempts to murder her first husband in order
to cover up her past. Many of the heroines of sensation novels are portrayed as aggressive females who, in order to attract a man with money, to make a "suitable match" and gain status, appear physically beautiful and seductive. She becomes a "prize" or "ornament" or even "trophy" that the aristocratic husband displays for his family and friends to see. Linton complained that the "Modern Woman" who relied on artificial beauty and sensual dress and who furthermore exhibited the ability to lead a conversation in the company of a man or even to spend money in intelligently decisive ways as a man might--in short, to imitate or defy a man--was appropriating a masculine position.

The Professionals in the 1890s

By the 1890s, middle-class professionals had assumed a role in establishing a cultural hegemony. A class-conscious society was "at its zenith between 1880 and 1914." Perkin observes the professional class as a fourth class that developed out of the three-class system:

Into this tripartite conflict came a maverick fourth class, which contributed both to the struggle and to the means of resolving it. This fourth class was less directly related to the struggle for a share of material

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production, and . . . depended on persuading the other classes to voluntarily part with a surplus to pay for the vital, non-material services which they claimed to provide. The professional class can only exist by persuading the rest of society to accept a distributive justice which recognizes and rewards expert service based on selection by merit and long, arduous training.85

Regarding themselves as qualified administrators of the new capitalist society, this social class considered the aristocracy corrupt. Professional men were the "theorists, apologists and propagandists" for the new industrial society. They "argued against idle wealth (instead of active capital) and patronage."86 Perkin explains:

Where pre-industrial society was based on passive property in land and industrial society on actively managed capital, professional society [whole armies of experts--scientists, technologists, industrial managers, highly skilled workers, medical researchers, artists, writers, teachers, administrators and politicians] is based on human capital created by education and enhanced by strategies of closure, that is, the exclusion of the unqualified.87

In this context, nineteenth-century professionalism was what Foucault refers to as the "new type of supervision" that was emerging all over Europe. This supervision, in

85 Perkin, Rise 116.
86 Perkin, Rise 318.
87 Perkin, Rise 2.
the positions of "teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social worker'-judge," incorporated "both knowledge and power over individuals who resisted disciplinary normalization."*

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, written between 1890 and 1896, represents a microcosm of the professional class in its establishment of authority over an old aristocracy. Stoker's professionals go against the old aristocracy, symbolized by the vampire, in order to destroy it or normalize it. As Stoker's novel shows, professionals obtained considerable power with the advent of technology. As Gagnier demonstrates, Stoker's novel can be read in terms of "evolution" and "information" through "the rise of systematic methods of intelligence."** In their battle against old aristocracy, the group of professionals--scientists, psychologists, medical doctors, scholars, and clerks--employ "an information industry, drawing upon institutional collaboration across public and private lines in business, family, law,

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government and modern technology [telegraph, typewriter, phonograph, cameras, and electric lamps]."\(^0\)

Despite the attempt to impart a story of professional authority over the old aristocracy, the novel plays out class conflict in terms of gender through the figure of an independent, unrestrained, and sexualized woman. Gender roles are at risk, males becoming feminine and females becoming masculine. Behind these fears lie the late-Victorian appearance of the New Woman, "a symptom or harbinger of social change, whose 'dominant note . . . [was] restlessness and discontent with the existing order of things."\(^1\) Pykett notes that the New Woman "was represented as simultaneously non-female, unfeminine and ultra-feminine" which was caused by "her resisting traditional womanly roles" and her undue interest in and familiarity with "sexual feeling."\(^2\) The anxieties about changing gender roles stem from the fin de siècle's concern over women who were becoming more socially active through such work as protesting the Contagious Diseases Act of the 1880s, which implied a double standard of sexual conduct, and

\(^0\)Gagnier 147.


the Labouchere Amendment of 1885, which banned homosexuality by defining acts of gross indecency between men in public or private as illegal.

Conclusion

The texts used for discussion in this study—Wagner, the Wehr-wolf, Lady Audley's Secret, and Dracula—represent early-, mid-, and late-nineteenth-century models of the popular novel that shocked Victorian readers. While I read these novels against a backdrop of feminist debates on women struggling for positions of authority during the nineteenth century, I incorporate modern critical debates on class and gender—such as those by Tom Nairn, Perry Anderson, Catherine Gallagher, and Elizabeth Langland—in order to show a connection between class and gender in these novels. The widespread reaction to the sensation novel is a familiar, well-charted territory. Less familiar is how the sensation novel of the 1860s, its precursor—the serialized sensation novel of the 1840s—and its later decadent forms written as Gothic horror or science fiction represented an increasing struggle for cultural hegemony perpetuated by middle-class factions on the turf of gender transgression.

In Chapter Two, I read G. W. M. Reynolds's Wagner the Wehr-wolf (1846-7), removed from nineteenth-century
time, as a historical and mythical narrative about how the middle class acts as spokesman for the lower class, interpreting lower-class and upper-class evils in terms of unrestrained women, who are severely punished by an exclusive patriarchal society for being dishonorable, unfaithful, and transgressive. I argue that although the narrative sensationalizes female figures who cross-dress, scheme, murder, and have illicit sexual encounters, the transgressive female personifies old aristocratic power in a state of disorder, beset by chaotic reproduction, the illegitimacy of property inheritance and consequent loss of self-representation. Eventually, the passive woman with moral and domestic values is elevated in class status, while the unrestrained aristocratic woman, lacking the discernment to use power wisely and threatening masculinity, self-destructs. In addition, women who are dishonorable or unfaithful to patriarchal law are tortured. Thus, Wagner shows how a middle-class novelist who wrote fiction that attacked the aristocracy attempted to do so in order to gain the allegiance of the lower class.

In Chapter Three, I propose that the middle class began to split into factions that exhibit opposing loyalties toward old aristocratic values. I read the "beautiful fiend" of Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret
(1863) within the context of mid-century debates about the "Modern" girl of the period who signified the dangers of feminine transgression. I argue that although Braddon's text seems to center on a dangerous female whose beautiful exterior and "masculine" interior enables her to transcend class boundaries, Lady Audley's transgressive behavior—including bigamy, attempted murder, and bribery—places her in opposition to the new order's bourgeois values of family, self-representation, and legitimate forms of property. Lucy Audley symbolizes the figurative vampire who proliferates aristocratic disorder and is eventually brought under control by the collaboration of the middle-class professional, Dr. Mosgrave, and the bourgeois aristocrat, Robert Audley.

In Chapter Four, rising professionals unite with entrepreneurs and bourgeois aristocrats against old aristocratic values. I read Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897) as a narrative about sexual deviance which persistently works to amplify anxieties about how unrestrained women are allied with Dracula, the epitome of the English ancien régime, and how the figure of the old aristocrat uses Lucy to regain authority. Arthur, representing the bourgeois aristocrat, and Quincey Morris, the American entrepreneur, join forces with the middle-class professionals to "normalize" these vampires. In this
text, the sexual body functions as an arena where the power of authority can be challenged. I argue that Lucy Westenra, a woman whose sexual appetite resembles masculine desire, symbolizes the sexuality of a woman who, in crossing the gender boundary, must be contained, normalized, or exterminated. In a shift of power, vampire as impaler becomes the impalee, representing a male view of middle-class aggressiveness still grounded in patriarchal law. Here, too, the woman who submits to patriarchal authority prevails, while the transgressive woman is associated with the old aristocratic disorder.

In all these texts, the aristocrat represents the locus where divisions of a diverse and complex middle class vie for cultural hegemony. The transgressive woman becomes the vehicle that links gender to that class structure. The link between gender and class is the transgressive woman who represents a threat to patriarchal order and who is always associated with the old aristocracy. Thus the aristocracy is clothed in the figure of a transgressive woman who symbolizes aristocratic scandal by way of illegitimate reproduction of family, name, property. The figure of the transgressive woman functions as a site where fears about the return of an intemperate aristocracy, impotent in its
power to rule in a respectable and effective manner, are displaced.
CHAPTER TWO
CLASS, MORALS, AND THE SEXUAL WOMAN IN
G. W. M. REYNOLDS'S WAGNER, THE WEHR-WOLF

The British aristocracy, male and female, is the most loathsome in corrupt, demoralized and profligate class of persons that ever scandalized a country.

--Reynolds--The Seamstress

There are but two words known in the moral alphabet of this great city; for all virtues are summed up in the one, and all vices in the other: and those words are WEALTH | POVERTY. The wealthy may commit all social offenses with impunity; while the poor are cast into dungeons and coerced with chains.

--Reynolds--The Mysteries of London

We have a grand moral to work out--a great lesson to teach every class of society;--a moral and a lesson whose themes are WEALTH | POVERTY.

--Reynolds--The Mysteries of London

If powers are put into the hands of a comparatively small number, called an Aristocracy, powers which make them stronger than the rest of the community, they will take from the rest of the community as much as they please of the objects of desire.

James Mill, Government

Neither before nor since George William MacArthur Reynolds published The Mysteries of London (1844-8) and The Mysteries of the Courts of London (1848-55) has the British aristocracy undergone a "more violent, more sustained and systematic fictional attack."¹ In part because Reynolds was known by the populace to "lash the

¹Bleiler xvi.

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aristocracy," these vituperative works, installments first published in penny weeklies, along with his journalism and over forty novels, made him one of the most popular writers of the early nineteenth century. He was so prolific that, as the Bookseller in 1868 noted: Reynolds "had written more and sold in far greater numbers than Dickens, and in an obituary notice after his death in 1879 the same journal described him as 'the most popular writer of our time.'"

Reynolds came from a prominent and wealthy family, his father being Captain George Reynolds, who was a flag officer in the Royal Navy and a recipient of knighthood and orders from the King. Upon his father's death, Reynolds inherited £12,000 and a guardianship. He attended the Royal Military Institute at Sandhurst and afterward moved to France, where he lived for about eight years and became a confirmed Francophile. Reynolds was in Paris during the Revolution of 1830. He formed a friendship with Beau Brummell and became an admirer of the principles of the revolution of 1789. In 1835,

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2As noted by James, "a Brighton bookseller told Thackeray that Reynolds was popular because 'he lashes the aristocracy.'" See W. M. Thackeray, "Charity and Humour," Collected Works (London: Smith, Elder, 1898) 2: 772. Also, see Louis James, Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850 (London: Oxford, 1963) 198.

3Dalziel 36.
Reynolds founded London and Paris Courier, for which W. M. Thackeray later stated that the first money he had ever earned from writing came from Reynolds. After quarreling with his associates, Reynolds quit the newspaper in France and moved back to London, where in 1844, he began to work on The Mysteries of London (1844-48), a work in which he began lambasting the aristocracy. As soon as he completed his series on Mysteries of London, he immediately began to write an even more abrasive attack on the aristocracy in The Mysteries of the Court of London (1848-55).

After completing The Mysteries of London and just prior to beginning The Mysteries of the Courts of London, Reynolds wrote and published Wagner, the Wehr-wolf (1846-7), a unique version of the werewolf myth. The novel came out in weekly penny installments for Reynolds's Miscellany of Romance, General Interest, Science and Art, which was selling at the time about "30,000 current numbers a week, and 10,000 in back numbers." Subtitled "A Romance," Wagner contrasted sharply with the two Mysteries because of its redemptive story line, supernatural effects, and dislocated setting, all of which define Wagner as a Gothic novel. But why would Reynolds resort to a Gothic form when he was already in

*James 41.*
the midst of writing a highly successful sensational novel about aristocratic scandal that was based on contemporary historical figures? After all, the Gothic novel, which had been written for a middle-class readership, peaked twenty years earlier between 1790 and 1830. By the mid-forties, the Gothic romance had become a residual form of writing. In contrast to the sensational *Mysteries*, Reynolds's *Wagner* removed readers from present-day London to the remote and dark setting of seventeenth-century Italy.⁵

Although it has received little critical attention other than to be recognized as a Gothic novel, *Wagner* reflects an important phase in the production of literature for lower-class readers. As popular fiction, it represents a work in transition that sensationalized the Gothic form, which had been associated with the Medieval aristocracy. For even though it contains characteristics of the Gothic, Reynolds chose an unusual format for the text, using "disjointed paragraphs" of

"spasmodic speech" that created the effect of sensation.⁶ In identifying with upper-class characters, Reynolds's lower-class readers vicariously experienced the privileged life of the aristocracy. The novel's romanticizing of the upper class is undercut, however, by the waves of suspense and shocking scandals that constantly pervade the story.

Although many Gothic romances are set in past time periods and places, it is significant that Reynolds chose to set Wagner at a distance from his present day London. It is a story of corrupt feudal power in seventeenth-century Italy.⁷ Thus his placing it beyond the realms of nineteenth-century England conveniently removes the middle class from the story of class oppression. Reynolds is thereby able to underscore, for his lower-class readers, the banal corruptness of aristocratic rule. In other words, Reynolds paints a picture of an oppressed lower class under the sway of feudal nobility. The position of the writer in this situation is none

⁶James 145. Reynolds imitated the French popular novelist, Eugène Sue, whose Mysteries of Paris created a sensation in France. See Dalziel 49.

other than that of a moral spokesman and educator for the lower class.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the aristocracy and the middle class were vying for the allegiance of the lower class. The production of literature by the upper class for the lower class primarily consisted of tracts. According to Louis James, however, the lower class was "angered by the way in which tracts were distributed to save souls to the neglect of the more pressing needs of food, clothing, and sanitation." James notes that the lower class was:

. . . often resentful and contemptuous of the efforts of the upper classes to improve those they considered their inferiors. This was particularly so during the Radical agitation, when tracts were patently used to uphold the established order in the name of Christian piety.  

In contrast to the tracts provided by the aristocrats, the middle class produced cheap penny newspapers, which not only contained sensational entertainment for the lower-class readers but also provided columns on political issues and etiquette. Moral issues were usually addressed within the storyline of novels, which were published in weekly installments. When Reynolds

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8James 115.
9James 115.
began his exceedingly popular Reynolds's Miscellany, which offered both fiction and educative commentaries, he introduced to his readers the first installment of Wagner. In it, as well as in his Mysteries, Reynolds denigrates the old aristocracy.

While most middle-class popular novels addressed middle-class readers, Wagner attempts to impose middle-class morality upon lower-class readers by portraying a sexually corrupted and demoralized aristocracy, whose perpetuation of scandal most often took as its victims lower-class members. Reynolds depicts a cast of lower-class characters whose interactions with aristocrats prove fatal. The aristocrat in Wagner is always the perpetrator of crime—a crime committed with impunity—while the uneducated lower class lacks the highly developed moral outlook necessary to avoid becoming the victim of that crime. From Reynolds's point of view, the aristocracy was innately profligate, scandalous, hypocritical, and untrustworthy, thus infecting the lower class with its own infamous reputation for crime and immorality.

Reynolds illustrates what happens in the crossing of boundaries between these two classes by inventing dramatic and at times seemingly implausible love attachments between lower-class characters and
aristocrats. To Reynolds's readers, Wagner presents lower-class characters as victims who are in most cases punished violently or even killed by a distrustful aristocracy. In all but one of the unions, the aristocrat deals a fatal blow to his/her lower-class partner on the grounds of alleged sexual infidelity. In the one union Reynolds offers as an ideal, a bourgeois-aristocrat—a member of the upper class who disdains the corruption of the old aristocracy and leans towards respectable bourgeois values—is shown to have a moral conscience all along.

Such an idealistic solution reflects Reynolds's early belief that the conflict between the working class and the upper class could be settled by eliminating evil. The evils that Reynolds eliminates in his story are the evil aristocrats. Wagner imparts a moral lesson to its readers, discouraging the lower class from allying itself with the alleged corruption of old aristocratic wealth and status. In this sense, Wagner encourages some of the conventional moral codes that shaped bourgeois respectability.

Although Chartism was largely a working-class movement, Reynolds became known as a middle-class radical

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10See Bleiler xii.
intellectual who supported Chartism. It might be argued that Reynolds championed the working-class movement because he depended on the working class to purchase his newspapers. Nevertheless, it is known that he was an avid reader of the English-born American writer and revolutionary leader Thomas Paine's radical works that were aimed against a hereditary monarchy and Christianity. Reynolds admitted at an early age that after perusing the *Age of Reason* his eyes had been opened "to the errors in which [he] had so lately trodden." Furthermore, when he drafted, in *Reynolds's Miscellany*, the platform of the Chartists, he added to it the demands to abolish peerage and the laws of primogeniture. A firm supporter of the French Revolution and a French correspondent for the London *Dispatch*, Reynolds exposed the allegedly corrupted power of the aristocracy.

11The term Radical has various meanings that depend on context. Philosophical Radicalism refers to Benthamites, as well as non-Benthamite businessmen and politicians, who supported those principles. The Benthamite platform was very similar to the six tenets of Chartism. Radicalism also refers to members of the working class who agitated for socio-politico-economic reform. I have found no concrete evidence that shows Reynolds was or was not a Benthamite.


13Bleiler xi.
in both series of *The Mysteries*. These works attacked prominent political figures, including the Prince Regent (for whom he had a pathological hatred) and Queen Victoria.\(^{14}\) In addition, as Bleiler notes, Reynolds "accused George IV of almost every crime, luridly described in full detail, from rape and swindling to seduction, subverting civil liberties, and procuring murder."\(^{15}\)

In *Wagner*, Reynolds presents a complex series of sensational episodes dramatizing aristocratic tyranny. Yet, while raising issues of class and the problems of class ambition in general, the novel tends to transfer its negative feelings about the upper class onto its female figures, whose transgressive behavior is then represented in sexual or gendered as well as class terms. In Reynolds's bipolarization of the upper and lower class, the figure of the transgressive woman serves as the site where aristocratic tyranny occurs. If lower-class, she falls victim to an aristocrat because of her inability to control her sexual desire. If aristocratic, she uses her wealth and status to obtain her object of desire.

\(^{14}\)Bleiler xv.

\(^{15}\)Bleiler xv.
Although the novel brims with a network of subplots that continue to illuminate scandals on behalf of upper-class characters, the dominant storyline of Wagner is based on the complications that ensue from a "mismatched" marriage between the aristocratic Count of Riverola and the lower-class Vitangela, daughter of Florence's executioner. Vitangela's lower-class background remains a secret until the end. The couple's son Francisco and daughter Nisida continue the pattern of choosing mates from the lower class. In each case, the pairing off of an aristocrat with a member of the lower class sets up the numerous conflicts that meander throughout Reynolds's supernatural yet less emphatic tale of the title character. Wagner, a German peasant deserted by his granddaughter Agnes, is offered wealth, position, and eternal youth in exchange for turning, monthly, into a werewolf that terrorizes the countryside. In regard to pairs, the plots of both Wagner and Agnes intersect and clash with members of the Riverola family. Thus, Vitangela's final advice to her daughter Nisida--that marrying someone outside your class proves fatal--provides the basis for each character's story.

As the lower-class protagonist, Wagner represents the lower-class fantasy of escaping poverty. He participates in this fantasy, however, by immoral means,
through bargaining with the demon for youth, wealth, and aristocratic position. Reynolds's decision to cast Wagner in a position where he has no choice except to die alone or choose a life of wealth, implies that Reynolds views the lower-class peasantry as living a hopeless existence. Wagner, a toothless, ninety-year-old peasant living in the Black Forest of Germany, is left alone in his tiny hut to die. Suddenly, a demon appears and offers Wagner a life of youth, wealth, and social advancement.

Aside from providing for his readers a vicarious means of escape from poverty, Reynolds uses Wagner, initially, to lead his readers astray. In allowing Wagner to dream of class advancement and aristocratic wealth, Reynolds is warning his readers against aspiring to be aristocrats, since, as the story progresses, the rich always get their comeuppance. Aristocratic life, however, suggests a civility disguised in barbarism, since it is based on the condition that Wagner agrees to the monthly transformation into a werewolf and terrorize the countryside. The brutality inflicted on the people of the countryside by the monster signifies the preying of the wealthy on the poor.16 In addition, the wolf

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16 Eventually, the bargain leads to a contract for Wagner's soul, typical of the Faustian legends.
imagery links the irresponsible aristocracy with the world of beasts—the world of barbarism. Thus, once readers identify with the title character, magically transcending the lower-class condition of work and poverty, they vicariously experience Wagner's dilemma of becoming the subject of aristocratic scandal. The consequences of Wagner's wish-fulfillment transform him into the oppressor of the lower class and make him an aristocratic nightmare to the lower class.

It would seem that Reynolds wants his readers to identify with Wagner's ultimate decision in order to learn a moral lesson. Like his sensational fiction, Wagner continues to associate the aristocracy with immorality. Faced with the choice between wealth and death (the latter in Reynolds's philosophy perhaps constitutes the correct moral choice), Wagner naturally opts for wealth. Moreover, the lure is not simply wealth, as in traditional Gothic tales, but rather explicitly that of social advancement. The temptation becomes Wagner's only solution to a lonely and drawn-out death which, despite whatever moral standards Wagner has based his life on, entails no dignity.

Aside from its display of aristocratic immorality and brutality, in a number of ways Wagner also addresses suffering the consequences of a barbaric upper class.
The dream of class elevation and rank that the demon depicts for Wagner, which includes knowledge, wealth, and aristocratic status, is indicative of a lower-class wish-fulfillment. The lower classes wish to experience aristocratic wealth and social position. Thus when Wagner realizes his only recourse is an immoral one, the temptation leads him to examine his deplorable condition:

A strong though indefinite dread assailed the old man as this astounding proffer was rapidly opened, in all its alluring details, to his mind;--and various images of terror presented themselves to his imagination;--but these feelings were almost immediately dominated by a wild and ardent hope, which became the more attractive and exciting in proportion as a rapid glance at his helpless, wretched, deserted condition led him to survey the contrast between what he then was, and what, if the stranger spoke truly, he might so soon become.17

Reynolds's extreme opposites of wealth and poverty offer his readers the realization that poverty offers no hope. Wealth is presented as more rewarding than the morals of poverty. Wagner at once begins to fantasize a wish-fulfillment of luxury:

Wagner sat bowed over his miserably scanty fire, dreaming of pleasure--youth--riches--and enjoyment;--converting, in imagination, the myriad sparks which shone upon the extinguishing embers into piles of gold,--and allowing his now uncurbed fancy to change the

17G. W. M. Reynolds, Wagner, the Wehr-wolf, ed. E. F. Blieler (New York: Dover, 1975) 6. All further references noted in the text are from this edition.
one single room of the wretched hovel into a splendid saloon, surrounded by resplendent mirrors and costly hangings.--while the untasted fare spread for the stranger on the rude fir-table, became transformed, in his idea, into a magnificent banquet laid out on a board glittering with plate, lustrous with enumerable lamps, and surrounded by an atmosphere fragrant with the most exquisite perfumes. (6)

In granting this wish, the demon does not immediately, however, ask for Wagner's soul. The actual moment when Wagner must choose between selling or saving his soul is delayed until later so that the reader must suffer along with Wagner the anticipation of a loophole in this bargain or his ultimate downfall. As he later informs his long lost granddaughter Agnes, "My fate is terrible indeed--but I am not beyond the pale of salvation" (16). However, Wagner's salvation hinges on whether or not he is willing to hand over his soul to the demon, who manifests this temptation through Wagner's love for the island-bound Nisida. In her concern over her brother's infatuation with the lower-class Flora, Nisida, too, makes a deal with the demon. If she can convince Wagner to promise his soul to the demon, she will be freed from the island. Her pleas are useless because Wagner, who finds them rather selfish, refuses to give over his soul.

Female figures dominate the novel's plots and succumb to temptation. Yet, the pattern of female
transgression throughout the work informs the larger issue of aristocratic scandal. While immoral behavior on the part of female characters appears to emphasize Reynolds's middle-class moral standards to his lower-class readers, female transgression is always determined on a moral level of choices directly influenced by aristocratic control and corruption.

Many of Reynolds's female characters are portrayed as physically strong yet morally weak. Throughout the novel, however, these morally weak women are usually exploited by aristocratic men. Wagner's granddaughter Agnes, who shares his peasant background, is exploited by the Count of Riverola, who is already married. The novel denies her redemption because she falls from virtue by succumbing to the aristocratic Count and becomes his mistress. It is the rich Count who engineers a liaison between himself and Agnes by seducing her with money and material possessions. While at first she expects marriage, Agnes settles for being the Count's mistress. Accepting his gifts and allowing herself to be set up in a luxurious apartment seems to be for her an advancement in class position. As the mistress of an aristocrat, Agnes represents the corrupt side of the aristocracy. In narrating the affair from Agnes's point of view, the novel suggests that her weakness for material things--for
the most part expensive jewelry--leads to her downfall. Thus, the guilt of aristocratic scandal is displaced onto the transgressive female figure who associates herself with an aristocrat. The position of aristocratic mistress, although it provides to a lesser degree an avenue for social degree, underscores an immoral choice in this novel. Agnes loses her pride, interrupts the funeral of the Count of Riverola, and makes known her liaison with Francisco's father.

Inasmuch as the Count's seduction of Agnes establishes her as a fallen woman, her fatal ending represents still another form of scandal in which unsubstantiated jealousy and suspicion lead to her death. Reynolds uses one of the major devices in popular fiction to create conflict between lovers: a "misunderstanding based on false information or mistaken suspicion."18 The mistake is almost always initiated by the woman who "lays herself open to suspicion."19 Agnes's life concludes abruptly when Francisco's jealous sister Nisida, who is in love with Wagner, stabs Agnes to death outside Wagner's estate, mistakenly thinking that she is having an affair with Wagner.

18Dalziel 138.
19Dalziel 110.
In order to illustrate the allegedly irrational behavior of corrupt aristocrats, Reynolds employs the theme of suspicion. The novel repeats the theme of mistaken identity in dealing a fatal blow to the Count's wife Vitangela, mother of both Francisco and Nisida. In this instance, the Count administers punishment based on groundless suspicion. She, too, becomes a female victim of aristocratic scandal. With the aid of Vitangela's maid Margaretha, the Count observes Vitangela in a darkly lit passageway as she embraces a stranger. The stranger is immediately apprehended and killed; the flesh is removed from his bones; and his skeleton is hung in Vitangela's closet. Vitangela never reveals to her husband, that the victim was her brother because, as she confesses to Nisida, the mistake would ruin him. As a sort of martyr, Vitangela dies shortly thereafter, confessing her secret only to her daughter Nisida. After her death, the Count removes the flesh from her bones and hangs her skeleton in the same closet alongside her supposed lover's. This whole matter of mistaking Vitangela's meeting with her brother as an illicit love affair leads the Count to believe that Francisco is his illegitimate heir.

One of the novel's major impetuses is the crossing of class boundaries between the lower class and the
aristocracy. Contrary to Dalziel's claim that in popular fiction extreme "difference of class between lovers is almost ignored as a possible theme, and such discrepancies are entirely unknown," Reynolds's romantic pairing of Vitangela with the Count of Riverola provides the basic foundation on which Wagner's main story plots are built. Vitangela is the daughter of Florence's public executioner. Vitangela abandons her family and her position as the executioner's daughter—a position which demands that whoever she marries carry on the job of executioner—in favor of status and wealth but also as a means of escape from her low social position. He demands that she never see her family again. But as we have seen, the Count does, himself, become an executioner of sorts, which presents a double standard in the sense that a public executioner would be considered a lower-class position. This ironic outcome and the gradual unfolding of this plot that reveals a mismatched marriage between the parents of Nisida and Francisco underscores the novel's critique on aristocratic corruption: "the sad and terrible lesson of the impropriety and folly of contracting an unequal marriage" (148). Realizing that happiness cannot result from a mismatched marriage, on her dying bed, Vitangela asks for Nisida's promise to

20Dalziel 138.
make sure that Francisco does not marry outside his class.

Wagner's movement from peasant to aristocrat constitutes another facet of the novel's preoccupation with the crossing of class boundaries. Wagner's condition of becoming a werewolf symbolizes the aristocrat as an animal who preys on the lower class. In a strange twist, Reynolds has the demon, Wagner's "master," die unexpectedly. It would seem that Wagner's werewolf curse should end. However, this is not the case. While his transformation from peasant to youthful aristocrat appears to fulfill the lower-class dream, Wagner remains, after the demon's death, cursed by the spell, still turning into a werewolf. As werewolf, he represents the lower class's eternal nightmare of aristocratic oppression. If the price to pay for wealth is the curse of violence in the dreadful form of the werewolf, then Wagner's fate signals the horror of aristocratic corruption. Consequently, in his ambition to become aristocratic and wealthy, Wagner cannot symbolize Reynolds's ideal character in this text. By choosing class advancement, he sacrifices dignity. In Reynolds's scheme, Wagner, in becoming a werewolf, becomes a metaphor for aristocratic corruption. Only when Wagner beholds the skeletons of Vitangela and her
brother in the closet is he removed from the spell of the werewolf. At that moment of revelation in which he views the truth, he falls to his knees in shock, is suddenly transformed from youth into his original, withered age, and dies.

While Reynolds does not value Wagner as an ideal character in this novel, Nisida is even less ideal and certainly more evil, even though in the end, she repents of all of her wrongdoings. Once again, however, eliminating a character's evil does not provide a new synthesis. Nisida is doomed to failure in her love for Wagner because Reynolds depicts her as an aristocratic female who uses money and physical force to manipulate others. Thus Nisida represents the corruption of aristocratic privilege. In order to stymie Francisco's interests in the lower-class Flora, Nisida pays the Carmelite Convent to imprison Flora in a dungeon of terror. She stabs and kills Agnes out of jealousy and avenges the reputation of her mother by stabbing her mother's maid Margaretha, whom she considers the cause of her mother's folly. Denying Nisida a happy future, Reynolds contrives her redemption, confession, and sudden death, all which take place quickly and without warning to the reader. The only happiness she achieves is that of a common-law marriage on the island with Wagner, which
is primitive and illicit in Reynolds's view. Moreover, Reynolds compares her affair with Wagner on the island to Adam and Eve in Paradise, indicating that woman is a temptress. Nisida pleads with Wagner to sell his soul to the demon so that she may return to Italy in order to prevent Francisco's marriage to the lower-class Flora. Thus the issue of class is what eventually divides her from Wagner.

Although both main characters, Wagner and Nisida, represent the power of the old aristocracy, Nisida comes to symbolize the corruptness of it by way of sexual transgression. She functions as the place where the crossing of class boundaries is represented in terms of sexual deviance. Her torturing of others reveals the way her power is represented in sexual terms. As Dalziel points out, the voluptuousness with which Reynolds describes Nisida is "startling." 21 The following passage illustrates the sensual nature of Reynolds's renderings of Nisida:

> With her splendid hair flowing upon her white shoulders--her proud forehead supported on her delicate hand--her lips apart, and revealing the pearly teeth--her lids with their long black fringes half-closed over the brilliant eyes--and her fine form cast in voluptuous abandonment upon the soft cushions of the chair,--she seemed a magnificent creature! But when, suddenly awaking from that profound

21Dalziel 37.
meditation, she started from her seat with flashing eyes—heaving bosom . . . when she drew her tall—her even majestic form up to its full height, the drapery shadowing forth every contour of undulating bust and exquisitely modelled limb,—. (9)

In many of his descriptions of Nisida, Reynolds emphasizes sexual provocativeness, paying particular attention to her bosom:

She was attired in deep black; her luxuriant raven hair, no longer depending in shining curls, was gathered up in many bands at the sides and in a knot behind, whence hung a rich veil that meandered over her body's splendidly symmetrical length of limb in such a manner as to aid her attire in shaping rather than hiding the contours of that matchless form. The voluptuous development of her bust was shrouded, not concealed, by the stomacher of black velvet which she wore, and which set off in strong relief the dazzling whiteness of her neck.\textsuperscript{22} (21)

Nisida is shown (figure 2) with her "voluptuous" breasts almost bared in an edenic scene where the familiar phallic snake (in this case a very long anaconda) entwines her body in a seductive manner. An illustration of Nisida standing alone on a deserted island shows her with a long slender "wand" in her hand, which appears to be a birch limb with innumerable little branches at the top. Similarly, she is shown (figure 3) standing with

\textsuperscript{22}The italics are in the original.
Figure 2  "Fernand! Save me--save me!" (81)
Figure 3 "And he bounded towards her with outstretched arms." (77)
her breasts bare, commanding in her right hand a sword, which she is about to plunge into the chest of Stephano.

Wagner's illustrations played a major role in the vast number of sales for Reynolds's Miscellany. While it is true that the populace was drawn to Reynolds's installments because of the sensational predicaments in which he placed his characters and because of the riveting sequences of events that left readers on the "edge-of-their-seats," it is obvious too that Reynolds's stories generated a high volume of sales as result of the overt sexual portraits of female characters. Bleiler, for example, has categorized Wagner as a subtle instance of nineteenth-century pornography. Each installment of Wagner was accompanied by one of Henry Anelay's sensational illustrations for the story, twenty-four in all. In fact, the illustrations helped to promote the sales of Reynolds's Miscellany to the lower class. In Henry Mayhew's interviews with lower-class people, one witness notes:

The costermongers are very fond of illustrations. I have known a man, what couldn't read, buy a periodical what had an illustration just that he might learn from some one, who could read, what it was all about. "Now here," proceeded my friend, "you sees an engraving of a man hung up, burning over a fire, and some costers would go mad if they
couldn't learn what he'd been doing, who he was, and all about him."23

A number of the illustrations that accompanied Wagner portray that pornographic style for which Reynolds was so popular. His seemingly favorite illustrations are of women with lavish breasts, sometimes almost bare and composed as a focal point of the illustration. The captions for each illustration amplify the immediacy of the event depicted.

In a somewhat stranger sexual tone, one illustration (figure 4) shows a group of five women in the dungeons of the Carmelite Convent, who are in the process of self-flagellation. The women are stripped naked to the waist and each holds a scourge. This confessional scene is provocative in its sexual implications. It is "the illusion that the women are not controlled by men but are acting freely."24 As Andrea Dworkin notes, "What women in private want to do just happens to be what men want

23Rpt. Bleiler x.

24See Andrea Dworkin, Pornography: Men Possessing Women, (New York: Penguin, 1989) 136. (emphasis mine). Dworkin's model is of a photograph through a keyhole of two women, one with a pair of scissors poised above the pubic area. According to Dworkin, "The absence of men from the photographs encourages the belief that men are seeing women as they really are, in private, with each other--a pure female sexuality, a basic carnality usually hidden by the dull conventions of civilization, that tamer of the female" (133).
Figure 4  "At the foot of the altar knelt five women."  (45)
them to do." In her example of two women photographed together, Dworkin argues that "the underlying message is that the female in her pure sexuality is sadistic, a conviction articulated not only by the pornographer but also by the enlightened philosophers of sex on all levels." 25

Although Steven Marcus observes that in Victorian pornography the woman who inflicts pain through flagellation is almost always a surrogate mother figure, he does not mention self-flagellation as in the case of Reynolds's illustration. What he does note is that the figure who holds the whip is always a "gigantic" sized, masculine-looking figure, "the terrible mother, the phallic mother of childhood." 26 In Reynolds's illustration, the only such figure is the cloaked Lady Abbess, who does in fact appear with a strong masculine face. Furthermore, the scourges represented in the illustration for Wagner symbolize phallic power and castration anxiety. In his study of "flagellation

25 Dworkin 132-3.

26 See Steven Marcus, The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967) 258. In contrast to Reynolds's Wagner, Marcus notes that flagellation literature was literature written for the aristocracy. Flagellation in this literature was usually performed by aristocrats. No recent study of flagellation in this context has been done.
literature," Marcus observes that women using a birch with innumerable branches are supplied with a "detachable appendage" that "calls to mind a more complex symbolic configuration, something on the order of Medusa's head."  

The sexuality and gender implied by the illustrations reflect the novel's treatment of Nisida as a transgressive female aristocrat who threatens patriarchal dominance. Nisida's story overshadows the narrative of the eponymous hero Wagner in that it sensationalizes concern over the fallen woman. As with other fictional examples of women who violate sexual boundaries, in Nisida one finds the paradox of physical beauty combined with evil flaws that are associated with masculine traits. Nisida's masculine characteristics include the description of her as an Amazon queen, an image colored with castration anxiety. Reynolds's description of Nisida's tall and ominous physique suggests a fear of female autonomy in the masculine warrior figure of the Amazon: "When she drew her tall form up to its full height, she appeared rather a heroine capable of leading an Amazonian army" (9). As Margaret Sullivan observes, the figure of the Amazon "inverts the dominance/submission polarities of gender formation in a

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2 Marcus 258.

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patriarchal culture." Reynolds not only characterizes Nisida as an Amazon, he amplifies her female aggressiveness by consistently casting her in the image of vampiress, highlighting her coarse gestures, which convey masculine intrepidity. Nisida's "haughty" and frequently curled lips, which are at times "compressed as tightly as if they were an iron vice!"; the "grinding [of] her teeth with demonic rage"; the "rapid and instantly recoiling" glance of her eyes, appearing as "large, black, burning orbs [shooting] forth lightnings" that "sear" and "scorch"; and the further description of her eyes as such that could hardly achieve less than the "appalling effect" of the "fascination of basilisk" in "paralyzing its victim," all impart demonic connotations to the transgressive woman. Even when Flora describes the figure of Nisida sneaking into her room to steal her jewels, her description conjures up a likeness of Nisida to a vampire, with a "high forehead--the proud lip, curled in scorn,--the brilliant teeth, glistening between the quivering vermilion,--and the swan-like arching of the dazzling neck"--there also was the dark

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glory of the luxuriant hair!" (19). Reynolds's image of Nisida's quivering lip, heaving bosom, and arching neck is repeated throughout the text. Both the characterization of Nisida as Amazon Queen and vampiress underscore the text's rendering of the aristocratic woman as the site where patriarchal order is threatened.

Not only is Nisida described with a masculine countenance throughout this novel, she literally performs as masculine through crossdressing. We first witness this when she outfits herself in the garb of a cavalier:

> She threw aside the garb belonging to her sex, and assumed that of a cavalier, which she took from a press opening with a secret spring. Then, having arranged her hair beneath a velvet tocque shaded with waving black plumes, in such a manner that the disguise was the complete as she could render it, she girt on a long rapier of finest Milan steel; and, throwing the short cloak edged with costly fur, gracefully over her left shoulder, she quitted her chamber by a private door opening behind the folds of the bed curtains. (24)

Once disguised as a male cavalier, Nisida performs two explicit sexually symbolic scenes. In the first, she poses as Wagner's German brother. With plans to help him escape, Nisida visits the dungeon cell where Wagner has been incarcerated. This visit is made possible by her assumed male role and further contrive with the help of a "faithful friend." In this striking scene of sexual
transgression, Nisida's appearance in drag excites Wagner:

Her presence caused Fernand [Wagner] to forget his sorrow --to forget that he was in a dungeon--to forget also the tremendous charge that hung over his head. For never had his Nisida appeared to him so marvelously beautiful as he now beheld her, disguised in the graceful garb of a cavalier of that age. Though tall, majestic, and of rich proportions for a woman, yet in the attire of the opposite sex, she seemed slight, short, and eminently graceful. The velvet cloak set so jauntily on her sloping shoulder, the doublet became her symmetry so well, and the rich lace-collar was so arranged as to disguise the prominence of the chest--that voluptuous fullness which could not be compressed! 29 (30)

Wagner's reaction to Nisida in drag suggests a homosexual desire, which as Sharon Weltman points out, "explodes" the world of "trans-gender" performativity. 30 Wagner's attraction to the "male" Nisida questions his own masculine gender. Consequently, Nisida's ability to attract Wagner in this manner weakens his masculine position.

In contrast to this scene, a second event takes place involving Nisida in drag. When she stops by Wagner's estate on the way home, we find her gazing through the window at Agnes, lounging on an elegant sofa. 31

29 Emphasis mine.


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Nisida, we are told, "lingered to gaze upon the sylph-like form that was stretched upon that ottoman" (24). Here, Nisida, still crossdressed as a cavalier and with a lengthy steel sword at her side, further transgresses sexual boundaries in performing, in drag, a male gaze upon the unsuspecting Agnes. Only minutes later, after Nisida changes back into her dress and veil, we see her perform a brutal murder in a graphic scene, where she is once again described by the narrator with a vampiric countenance:

For a few moments those basilisk-eyes darted forth shafts of fire and flame--and the red lips quivered violently--and the haughty brow contracted menacingly; and Agnes was stupefied--stunned--fascinated,--terribly fascinated by that tremendous rage, the vengeance of which seemed ready to explode against her. But only a few moments lasted that dreadful scene;--for the lady, whose entire appearance was that of an avenging fiend in the guise of a beauteous woman, suddenly drew a sharp poniard from its sheath in her bodice and plunged it into the bosom of the hapless Agnes. The poniard was sharp and went deep. (26)

Both cross-dressing scenes in this novel demonstrate the crossing of masculine gender boundaries, maintaining the female's identity as woman by describing her in male attire with magnificent breasts. This not only provides Reynolds's female readers an occasion for transgressing the lines of gender but positions the female reader as voyeur. Thus, when Nisida performs the role of a
sexually symbolic male cavalier, the novel places her in the position of male power. While sublimating the lesbian sexual encounter between Nisida and Agnes and the homoerotic scenario between Nisida (as cavalier) and Wagner, the novel privileges the masculine power of female sexual aggression. This means that the role of cavalier that Nisida assumes functions even more effectively by linking female transgression with patriarchal authority and aristocratic status.

It is not only Nisida's ability to navigate gender boundaries by way of cross-dressing that showcases her dauntless masculinity. Through her unmitigating and spiteful vengeance, the novel constructs her as a masculine, prominent, and forceful figure in the unfolding of the plot. Willful, threatening, and relentless, Nisida is "that woman of iron mind" (35). Even Agnes notes that while Nisida's beauty is powerful, it masks danger: "Perhaps the transcendent loveliness of that countenance was but a mask, and the wondrous symmetry of that form but a disguise, beneath which all the passions of hell were raging in the brain and in the heart of a fiend"(19). Additionally, the narrator vigorously underscores Nisida's masculine aggressiveness for readers:

Terrible was she in the decision of her masculine--oh! even more than masculine
character; for beneath that glorious beauty with which she was arrayed, beat a heart that scarcely knew compunction--or that, at all events, would hesitate at nothing calculated to advance her interests or projects. (50)

Nisida's actual physical capacity for pulling off her notorious projects represents an appropriation of the male position. As an avenger and manipulator, she presents the masculine will with as much or more gusto as the male characters. With the sharp and phallic-like poniard she seems to always have at her disposal, Nisida quickly terminates Agnes by plunging it, well-aimed, into her bosom. And without the least apprehension, she lies and purchases Flora's incarceration by the Carmelite nuns, thinking it will prove fatal. Finally, dressed in male attire once more, she avenges the wrong done to her mother by stabbing yet another victim, the Dame Margaretha:

Detestable woman! You are now about to pay the penalty of your complicity in the most odious crimes that ever made nights terrible in Florence! But I must torture, ere I slay ye! Yes--I must give thee a foretaste of that hell to which your soul is soon to plunge down! (132)

What Nisida means by "torture" refers to her informing Margaretha that her son Antonio is slain. After observing Margaretha's response to the news, Nisida's
"dagger, descending with lightning speed, sank deep into the bosom of the prostrate victim" (133).

With the exception of Nisida, other women in Wagner suffer cruel deaths for violating sexual boundaries. Because Reynolds subscribes to the prevailing moral code that a fallen woman is permanently ruined, Nisida may repent; yet, she does not prosper in any way because she dies alongside the body of Wagner. It is the married woman who must suffer extreme punishment. Giulia, the Countess of Arestino, forms a liaison with a lower-class spendthrift, Manuel d'Orsini, who convinces her to pawn the jewels given to her by her husband in order to pay off Orsini's gambling debts. Giulia fares worse than any of the other women in the novel because she commits adultery. Reynolds sensationalizes her torture in sexual terms that suggest a sadomasochistic punishment. Her husband, the Count of Arestino, stands by to watch her death, as she is tortured on the rack:

For, oh! upon that rack lay stretched the fair and half-naked form of Giulia of Arestino,—its symmetry convulsing in matchless tortures—the bosom palpitating awfully with the pangs of that earthly hell—and the exquisitely modelled limbs enduring all the hideous pains of dislocation, as if the fibres that held them in their sockets were drawn out to a tension at which they must inevitably snap in halves!

The rack gave the last shock of which its utmost power was capable—a scream more dreadful, more agonizing, more piercing than any of its predecessors, rent this time the
very walls of the Torture-Chamber; and with that last outburst of mortal agony, the spirit of the guilty Giulia fled for ever! (128-29)

The evocative and sadistic sexuality with which the narrator describes the graphic killing of Giulia suggests that her torture is meant to reflect her sin. Punishment for adultery is far worse than the fate of fallen women like Nisida and Agnes or even spies like Margaretha.

While the women in this novel suffer death and/or harsh punishment, men seldom encounter physical torture. Their punishment reflects a double standard. The Count of Riverola suffers mental anguish over the belief that Francisco is not his true son but still enjoys an affair with Agnes until his natural death. Likewise, Giulia's husband, the Count of Arestino, experiences no repentance for the murder of his wife. Wagner, on the other hand, suffers a number of setbacks, perhaps because he begins and ends as a lower-class character. His romanticizing about wealth and status in the beginning of the story leads to nothing less than a nightmare of humiliation. Thus, Reynolds would seem to be using Wagner to set an example for lower-class readers who romanticize about the wealth and status of the old aristocracy. As werewolf, then, Wagner is the novel's metaphor for a scandalous aristocrat who preys on the lower class and who is caught up in the web of scandal created by a woman (Nisida).
In contrast to the violent deaths of Agnes, Giulia and Margaretha, however, Wagner undergoes a quick and peaceful demise. His nightmare, which symbolizes aristocratic tyranny, ends when he refuses to sign his soul over to the demon in exchange for the eternal spell of the werewolf. The consequences of this moral choice, however, lead to a rather unexpected miraculous transformation from his supernatural youthfulness into a grotesque and hoary figure of a man who has lived well beyond his life expectancy. This moral choice to reject aristocratic corruption appears to reflect Reynolds' lesson to his lower-class readers who idealize the aristocracy. As middle-class spokesman, then, Reynolds's silently positions the bourgeoisie as the innocent bystander who narrates this story from a distance.

Apparently, Reynolds does not see all aristocrats as evil. Francisco serves as the bellwether for the reader's moral decisions. Although half aristocrat, he exhibits all of the good qualities that emanate from his mother's lower-class blood, characteristics which can be described as representative of bourgeois respectability. Francisco, then, represents the place where we see the novel's ideals about class relations most clearly displayed. In contrast to his mother, father, and sister, Francisco has no misgivings about marrying
outside his class. Nor does he display any concern over the inheritance that is rightfully his but that has been willed to Nisida. Mistakenly thought by the Count to be the offspring of an affair between Vitangela and the stranger he has murdered, Francisco grows up without the love of his father. The Count goes so far as to disinherit Francisco in his will, leaving the main portion of his property to Nisida with the provision that she be married by age 30. With reluctance and resentment, the Count wills Francisco part of the Riverola estate if Nisida is unable to find a husband, a condition that is based on his believing that she is deaf and dumb and may not be able to find a mate. Although the Count thinks Francisco is a bastard heir, he can at least carry on the name of Riverola.

Unaware of the reasons for his father's cold-heartedness, Francisco appears as a very moral character who loves his father and sister, having no qualms about the provisions of the will that virtually establishes Nisida as the conduit through which property flows. The novel portrays Francisco as the hero, the one exception in the case of an aristocrat who transcends corruption because he values love over material wealth and aristocratic status. Condemning marriage based on wealth or nobility, he tells Flora: "[Nisida's] strong mind will
know how to despise these conventional usages which require that high birth should mate with high birth, and wealth ally itself to wealth" (22). Choosing Nisida's virtuous attendant, Flora, for his wife, Francisco represents the romantic ideal for Reynolds's novel.

The class match between Francisco and Flora forms the moral and romantic nucleus of the whole story. Francisco's determined love for Flora eventually convinces Nisida that crossing class boundaries is not a folly if it is based on goodness and love. It is Francisco's refusal even to consider class that shows him to be moral. Flora's movement upward between classes is acceptable since it is based on true love and virtue. A rather innocent character, Flora, in the end, vows her love and forgiveness for all the torture that Nisida has imposed on her. Thus the marriage of Francisco and Flora, which leads to the happy romantic ending, signifies a transcending of class divisions. Neither Francisco nor Flora marries for status or money. Based on the elimination of evil, the union of the two proves that both classes can live together in perfect harmony.

As I have tried to show in this chapter, Reynolds's animosity towards the old aristocracy in Wagner is foregrounded in terms of sexuality and gender, yet grounded in his concern to act as a middle-class
spokesman for his lower-class readers. The novel’s tendency to focus on female sexual transgression not only implicates females as active agents of sexual misbehavior but links that behavior with the old aristocracy. The characters of both Nisida and Giulia look forward to the transgressive figures discussed in the next two chapters, Lady Audley in Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* and Lucy Westenra in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. While Reynolds writes from the perspective of a middle-class moralist who sensationalizes aristocratic scandal, Braddon and Stoker present contentions for middle-class cultural hegemony that become associated with gender anxieties and the figure of the middle-class transgressive woman who supports the Old Aristocracy. Lady Audley and Lucy Westenra are defeated by male figures representing bourgeois values. Lady Audley is opposed to, and eventually defeated by, the bourgeois-aristocrat, Robert Audley. Similarly, Lucy Westenra is foiled by a group of bourgeois professionals. Thus all of the male characters represent bourgeois respectability and are opposed to the old aristocracy. Francisco looks forward to the figure of Robert Audley, the bourgeois-aristocrat. Audley, in turn, anticipates the band of professionals in *Dracula* who defeat Lucy Westenra. In both *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Dracula*, transgressive females are punished for their
behavior, though in different degrees. My next chapter begins by looking at how issues of gender and sexuality in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* overshadow anxieties about class. I will examine the function of those matters in light of the class factions that developed around mid-century.
CHAPTER THREE
BRADDON'S FAIR-HAIRED DEMON: THE TRANSGRESSIVE BOURGEOISIE VERSUS THE BOURGEOIS ARISTOCRAT IN LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET

The perplexing fact is, that the subjects of this [sensational] slander make no objection to it. Is, then, the picture true?"
--Oliphant, Novels, 1867

When Richardson, the showman, went about with his menagerie he had a big black baboon, whose habits were so filthy, and whose behavior was so disgusting, that respectable people constantly remonstrated with him for exhibiting such an animal. Richardson's answer was, "Bless you, if it wasn't for that big black baboon I should be ruined; it attracts all the young girls in the country." Now bigamy has been Miss Braddon's big black baboon, with which she has attracted all the young girls in the country.
--"Belles Lettres," Westminster Review, 1866

The existence of an exceptional middle-class identity--what Nancy Armstrong has called a "middle-class aristocracy"--depends on the tensions between bourgeois norms and antibourgeois resistance to those norms.
--John Kucich, The Power of Lies

This chapter looks at the ways in which Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1861-2) uses gender and sexuality to frame middle-class struggles for cultural hegemony around the figure of the transgressive woman. I claim that the transgressive woman, almost always clothed in a waxed veneer of beauty, exhibits masculine aggressiveness and signifies a threat to patriarchal order, thus representing a symbolic locus where the struggle for cultural power between factions of
the middle class is displaced. I read *Lady Audley's Secret* as showing other groups within the middle class who were competing for the establishment of a cultural hegemony. As John Kucich points out, there were within the middle class a number of "competing middle-class elites" who were trying to establish moral authority.¹

The argument for class factions within the middle class, however, has generated a complex use of terms for identifying its divisions. In studying the contention between middle-class factions, I analyze the unrestrained woman against a background of early- and mid-nineteenth-century social debates on the emancipation of women. Some of these arguments echoed the struggle for women's liberties in France as well as in England. Social rhetoric raising the issues of women's rights fostered images of a profligate aristocratic woman whose sexual promiscuity came to be associated by Sensation Novelists with a new class of middle-class elites, whom I refer to as the "transgressive bourgeois," and who were defining bourgeois culture in terms of their appropriation of aristocratic status and privilege. Braddon's novel reveals conflicts between the bourgeois-aristocrat, who upholds bourgeois respectability, and the transgressive bourgeoisie, exemplified by the unrestrained woman. The

¹Kucich 4.
novel's male antagonist, Robert Audley, occupies an ambiguous class position. Being the nephew of Sir Michael Audley allows him some degree of aristocratic status, but Robert has neither a title nor an estate. Furthermore, having his name on the door of a law firm falls short of classifying him as a professional, since he has never actually practiced law. Throughout the novel, Robert upholds respectable bourgeois values. Thus, his actions, thoughts, and words characterize him as a bourgeois aristocrat.2 Robert acts as the foil for Lady Audley, who represents the transgressive bourgeois protagonist. Her alignment with the aristocracy is, in many senses, a maneuver to "ape" its status. Thus she comes to represent a member of the middle-class group who aspires to aristocratic status and wealth.

My terms "transgressive bourgeoisie" and "bourgeois aristocrat" depart from what Nancy Armstrong calls a "middle-class aristocracy." She describes an elite group of bourgeoisie who were part of a "privileged community"

2Langland 67. Although not royalty, the bourgeois aristocrat adheres to the respectable position exemplified by Queen Victoria, who was known as the bourgeois-aristocrat Queen. Langland has used "bourgeois-aristocrat" as a term to describe Queen Victoria, meaning that while Victoria was technically, of course, an aristocratic ruler, she "reigned" more than she "ruled." Her tempered politics and prudent appearance suggests an elite bourgeois respectability, which one could easily argue dictated the "official" values of the ruling order.
that "destablized the family life of the country home."
Armstrong demonstrates how Jane Austen's fiction—in particular *Mansfield Park*—reveals the fluidity of class mobility. She equates the permeability of Austen's communities with that which characterized the eighteenth-century's English country gentry, whose country "Hall" was beginning to be upstaged by "upwardly mobile purchasers" who preferred to change the estate name to "Park." Thus as Armstrong quotes Lawrence and Jeanne Fawtier Stone: "By the nineteenth century, the close identification of the *nouveau-riche* with his small villa was an aping, lower down the social scale, of this form of proprietorial imperialism."³ Although Lady Audley may, like the *nouveau riche*, "ape" aristocratic status, her means of acquiring wealth and title are based on scandal and female aggressiveness. In this sense, Armstrong's use of "middle-class aristocracy" fails to account for the transgressive bourgeois female who, like Lady Audley, symbolizes the corruptness.

In terms of sexuality and gender, the novel tends to underscore the battle for power between Lady Audley and her male adversaries. The characters in opposition to Lady Audley represent middle-class factions who struggle to define bourgeois norms. Lady Audley's deviant values

³See Armstrong 158-160.
are a large part of what constitutes *Lady Audley's Secret* as one of those Victorian fictions that "exploits an opposition between specifically bourgeois and specifically anti-bourgeois energies, between official and deviant values."⁴ In regard to bourgeois norms, Lady Audley represents an anti-bourgeois force. The numerous examples of writers attempting to establish one middle-class subgroup's hegemonic cultural preferences over another support the argument that a struggle for establishing a middle-class cultural identity existed. Braddon's novel exemplifies this by using the transgressive woman to generate "tensions between bourgeois norms and bourgeois resistance to those norms."⁵ Thus, *Lady Audley's Secret* stages a manifestation of the struggle for bourgeois cultural power between divisions that evolved within the middle class.

This "war" between the bourgeois aristocrat and transgressive bourgeois becomes embedded in Braddon's text through the figure of an unrestrained female, Lady Audley, who represents a deviant side of the bourgeoisie. Thus, when in *Lady Audley's Secret*, Helen Talboys (alias Lucy Graham) achieves upward mobility by marrying into

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⁴Kucich 81.
⁵Kucich 81.
the old aristocratic Audley family, she does so in order to attain wealth and status as "Lady" Audley. As a transgressive-bourgeois, she symbolizes the faction of the middle class that aligns itself with the old aristocracy, appropriating its values, status and wealth. The figure of the transgressive woman, who defied the patriarchal system, further acted as a scapegoat for middle-class writers to expose aristocratic scandal.

Transgressive-bourgeois women, especially those depicted as heroines in sensation fiction like Braddon's, were represented as spectacles of aristocratic pretentiousness, exhibiting the assertive and promiscuous behavior of the old aristocracy as well as adorning themselves with lavish face paint and luxurious and seductive clothing. As Oliphant noted in 1867:

One of our cleverest journals took occasion the other day to point out the resemblance of certain superficial fashions among ourselves to the fashions prevalent among Roman women at the time of Rome's downfall.6

This statement, suggesting that a nation's downfall is linked to women's frivolous dress, calls to mind Thomas Couture's well-known nineteenth-century painting Les Romains de la Décadence (figure 5). Couture's painting, which had received international acclaim, supported the

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Figure 5 Couture's painting.
view of contemporary writers who believed that Rome's downfall was caused by its individuals' immoral lust and greed for luxury. One must wonder if Oliphant was comparing the diaphanous clothing worn by many Roman women prior to Rome's downfall with the fashions of England in the decade of the 60s. Compared to the respectable Victorian style of clothes worn by a "respectable" Victorian woman, such as a whalebone corset, metal hoopskirt, and yards of thick material, the diaphanous clothing of the unrestrained woman suggests sexual desire. Oliphant's statement seems to equate female sexual desire with political weakness. It was in Blackwood's that she described sensation novelists as being agitators who might arouse the sexual appetite.

It was also in Blackwood's where Oliphant lambasted novelists who portrayed women as too sexual in their demeanor, fashions, and unrestrained hair. Thus Oliphant's comments about the downfall of Rome suggest that the British Empire could collapse if it continued to lean toward decadence. According to Freeman, "By the end of [Rome's] Republic fashionable women used cosmetics heavily." In addition, "'Galla', the poet Martial mocks


8 Freeman 47.
one of his woman friends, 'you are made up of lies. When you take off your silken robes at night, you put aside your teeth and two-thirds of your body is locked up in boxes.'9 All of this is to say that the figure of a sexualized woman arrayed in provocative clothing and wearing heavy makeup symbolizes the illicit behavior that echoes the illicit sexual behavior which nineteenth-century writers thought led to the decline of the Roman Empire. Oliphant's connection between sensation novelists' portrayal of unrestrained women and the debauchery of the final days of Rome suggests that transgressive women, like Braddon's Lady Audley, perpetuate immorality.

It is, indeed, Lady Audley's upper-class privilege and discretionary income that make it available for her to indulge in eccentric hair-style, showy dress, and heavy face-paint, all which help to create an image of her as an aristocratic woman of the Regency period. Such luxuries epitomize the aristocratic woman whom Lady Audley aspires to be. Lady Audley's attempts to destroy her class background are illustrated by the incidents leading up to her changes of identity from Helen Maldon to Helen Talboys to Lucy Graham and finally Lady Audley. In order to bury her past existence as a daughter of a

9Quoted in Freeman 47.
drunken pauper and the deserted wife of a poor aristocrat, she procures a body which she can substitute for her own as the dead Helen Talboys. She "purchases" the terminally ill young maiden Matilda from Matilda's mother, who desperately needs money.

The death of Matilda signifies the killing of Lady Audley's past. Symbolically, Lady Audley kills Helen Talboys and resumes life as the middle-class governess, Lucy Graham. Lucy Graham is able to come into contact with and accept a marriage offer from the aging aristocratic widower, Sir Michael Audley. Her upward mobility from the lower-class Helen Maldon, to the middle-class governess Lucy Graham, and finally to the wealthy aristocratic Lucy Audley is so cunningly accomplished and maintained by such an aggressive disposition and stunning sinister-like beauty that, as one contemporary reviewer observes, Lady Audley is at once the heroine and the monstrosity of the novel. In drawing her, the authoress may have intended to portray a female Mephistopheles; but, if so, she should have known that a woman cannot fill such a part. The nerves with which Lady Audley could meet unmoved the friend of the man she had murdered, are the nerves of a Lady Macbeth who is half unsexed, and not those
of the timid, gentle, innocent creature Lady Audley is represented as being.\textsuperscript{10}

This passage describes Lady Audley as an "unsexed" monstrous female, a Medusa who threatens patriarchal order. In early and mid-nineteenth-century debates on women's equality, the woman who did not conform to the feminine and passive "angel of the house" was considered a "dangerous" woman. Mid-nineteenth century writers attacked the "active" woman as a transgressive female figure feared by men. The image of an "active" woman increased anxieties about gender transgression. In her anonymous review "Novels" (1867), Margaret Oliphant lambastes sensation novels that portray women taking charge of male-female relationships, claiming that these books are the most in demand and the ones we should lock away from our young girls.\textsuperscript{11} In that review, Oliphant specifically attacks Mary Elizabeth Braddon's heroine in \textit{Aurora Floyd}, an unrestrained female figure who, much like Lady Audley, challenges the patriarchal authority and Victorian respectability that the middle class and bourgeois-aristocrat esteemed.

\textsuperscript{10}See "Sensation Novelists: Miss Braddon," \textit{North British Review} 43 (September 1865) 186-87.

\textsuperscript{11}See Oliphant, "Novels" 257-280.
Against the background of troubling arguments over women's rights, *Lady Audley's Secret* portrays a woman defying patriarchal order and resisting feminine passivity. Lady Audley's extraordinarily beautiful appearance kindles fears about a faction of the middle class whose cultural preferences were those that mimicked an immoral aristocracy. Braddon's exclusion of any overt sexual or love interest in her portrayal of Lady Audley magnifies the concern over transgressive, pretentious women, whose primary goal was class advancement. Lady Audley clearly takes advantage of cosmetics and fashion in order to procure a profitable marriage to an aristocrat, advancing herself in position to become a "Lady."

As an aristocratic-bourgeois woman, Lady Audley maintains an artificially produced exterior that includes cosmetically whitened teeth, false hair, painted complexion, and perfumed skin. The narrator's comments on a lady's beauty secrets—which are known only to her maid—expose the fact that Lady Audley's beautiful exterior is a facade. Phoebe, Lady Audley's maid is the "privileged spy" who knows

when [my lady's] ivory complexion is bought and paid for -- when the pearly teeth are foreign substances fashioned by the dentist -- when the glossy plaits are the relics of the dead, rather than the property of the living; and she knows other and more sacred secrets than these.
She knows when the sweet smile is more false than Madame Levison's enamel, and far less enduring--when the words that issue from between gates of borrowed pearl are more disguised and painted than the lips which help to shape them. When the lovely fairy of the ball-room re-enters her dressing-room after the night's long revelry, and throws aside her voluminous Burnous and her faded bouquet, and drops her mask; and like another Cinderella loses the glass-slipper, by whose glitter she has been distinguished, and falls back into her rags and dirt; the lady's-maid is by to see the transformation.\footnote{Mary Elizabeth Braddon, \textit{Lady Audley's Secret} (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987) 336-37. All further in-text citations are from this edition.}

The transformation from riches to rags is not only a comment on artificial beauty but, also a revelation of class background. In peeling off her aristocratic exterior, Lady Audley is transformed back to her less glamorous state. Thus the transformation that is largely achieved cosmetically permits Lady Audley to assume what she believes to be an aristocratic look. She even implies that cosmetics might improve Phoebe's chances at catching a man who would be better than her lower-class lover, Luke Marks: "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" (58). Lady Audley's concern with cosmetic beauty indicates that she bases status to a large degree on outward appearance.
gain and maintain her aristocratic position, Lady Audley invariably steals an arresting glance at her reflection in mirrors, reassuring herself that she looks the part. Her frequent glimpses in the mirror suggest that Braddon associates Lady Audley's status as a nouvelle riche with vanity. Furthermore, in her superficiality, her gentility is all appearance. Augustus Egg's late-1850s painting entitled *A Young Woman at Her Dressing Table with Her Maid* (figure 6), underscores vanity in the portrayal of a young aristocratic lady self-absorbed with her reflection in a looking-glass. Her vanity table, cluttered with cologne bottles and other paraphernalia for beautification, and the two lighted candles on each side of the mirror, which help to illuminate her reflection, are strikingly similar to a scene in Braddon's novel. During a lapse in self-contemplation, Lady Audley

... roused herself from that semi-lethargy, and walked rapidly to her dressing-table and seating herself before it, pushed away the litter of golden-stoppered bottles, and delicate china essence-boxes, and looked at her reflection in the large oval glass. (310-11)

Sitting at her vanity table with "lighted candles on each side of the glass," Lady Audley contemplates at her
Figure 6  A Young Woman at Her Dressing Table with Her Maid by Augustus Egg (late 1850s)

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reflection (57). Standing next to her, Phoebe combs the luxuriant glittering golden hair.

Lady Audley's mirrors reassure her of her status and wealth. Even after setting fire to Mount Stanning in order to destroy Robert Audley, she returns to the mirror the next morning to contemplate the effects of her mad deed:

She looked at herself in the cheval-glass before she left the room. A long night's rest had brought back the delicate tones of her complexion, and the natural lustre of her blue eyes. That unnatural light which had burned so fearfully the day before had gone, and my lady smiled triumphantly as she contemplated the reflection of her beauty. (373)

Beauty becomes Lady Audley's shield, screening her from any suspicion of crime and reassuring her of her sanity. When she anticipates news about the fire at Mount Stanning, Lady Audley takes special care to dress herself in an elegant outfit that reflects her wealth and fortifies her status as lady:

She felt that she had now double need to be well armed. She dressed herself in her most gorgeous silk; a voluminous robe of silvery, shimmering blue, that made her look as if she had been arrayed in moonbeams. She shook out her hair into feathery showers of glittering gold; and with a cloak of white cashmere about her shoulders, went down-stairs into the vestibule. (338)

The extravagance of this after-the-crime outfit works to dispel any notion, on the part of Robert Audley or anyone...
else, that Lady Audley could be associated with a lower-class criminal.

While her luxurious clothes and cosmetics represent a purchased upper-class identity, the objects in Lady Audley's chambers both magnify her beauty and symbolize wealth and aristocratic power. As Cvetkovich observes, Lady Audley "almost disappears beneath the catalogue of the objects that surround her, but in fact they are both figuratively, as metonyms, and literally, as the commodities purchased with her wealth, signs of her power."\(^{13}\) The narrator details these signs of wealth as they appear in Lady Audley's chambers:

Drinking-cups of gold and ivory, chiselled by Benvenuto Cellini; cabinets of buhl and porcelain, bearing the cipher of Austrian Maria Antoinette, amid devices of rosebuds and true lover's knots, birds and butterflies, cupidos and shepherdesses, goddesses, courtiers, cottagers and milkmaids; statuettes of Parisian marble and biscuit china; gilded baskets of hot-house flowers; fantastical caskets of India filigree work; fragile teacups of turquoise china, adorned by medallion miniatures of Louis the Great and Louis the Well-beloved, pictures and gilded mirrors, shimmering satin and diaphanous lace; all that gold can buy or art devise had been gathered together for the beautification of this quiet chamber in which my lady sat listening to the moaning of the shrill March wind and the flapping of the ivy

\(^{13}\)Cvetkovich 69.
leaves against the casements, and looking into the red chasms in the burning coals. (295)

She is "beautiful in herself, but made bewilderingly beautiful by the gorgeous surroundings which adorn the shrine of her loveliness" (284). Lady Audley's three-roomed chamber is her palace of art, where "images exist for the gratification of sight alone," signifying and reflecting her feminine beauty.14 Comparable to a museum, the private chamber attracts curious spectators like Robert Audley and George Talboys, who express their eagerness to view the rooms. All of the collected objects mirror Lady Audley's beauty and are multiplied by her many wall mirrors. As Smith points out, "And in putting you in front of a mirror like this you are given the possibility of merging with the world of objects in the mirror" (294). Reflecting not only the vast storage of riches in her boudoir, "... the looking-glasses, cunningly placed at angles and opposite corners by an artistic upholsterer, multiplied my lady's image, and in that image reflected the most beautiful object in the enchanted chamber" (294). As an object of art in her

chambers, Lady Audley merges with the objects around her, signifying the aristocrat's desire to be the object of attention, to become spectacle. It is clear, however, that her attempted transformation into an aristocratic ornament is not totally accepted by her step-daughter, who, in scrutinizing Lady Audley's synthetic pretense, perceives her to be an imitation. Alicia openly refers to her step-mother as a "wax-doll beauty," suggesting that her exterior loveliness is somehow contradicted by truth. This inconsistency of appearance and reality is repeated by the narrator's description of the portrait of Lady Audley.

The portrait of Lady Audley is the one object that stands out above all others in her room full of objects. Significantly, the painting reveals contradictory aspects of Lady Audley, who is represented as both beauty and fiend. Braddon's narrator describes the portrait of Lady Audley as a Pre-Raphaelite painting:

Yes; the painter must have been a pre-Raphaelite. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets with every glimmer of gold, and every shadow of pale brown. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes. 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. (70)
The description here is striking in its portrayal of the beautiful and the sinister, an expression of defiant and independent attitude yet sensuous beauty that duplicates the Pre-Raphaelite "stunners," as Rossetti called them.¹⁵

Many middle-class patrons of the arts viewed the Pre-Raphaelites as regressive in their flair for foregrounding single subjects. As Dianne Macleod points out, the term "Pre-Raphaelites" referred to their associations with the Renaissance and therefore expressed a resistance to progress.¹⁶ Thought to represent a pre-industrialist society, these painters refused to paint family domestic scenes that would depict modern middle-class life as progressing in a bourgeois respectable fashion. The women in these paintings are most frequently attired in a sumptuously fashioned dress and exhibit a strong-willed countenance that evokes a strictly independent if not rebellious mood. That combination of intimidating independence and fashionable


sensuality characterizes the attitude of the aristocratic-bourgeois female. The painting of Lady Audley as a "beautiful fiend" clearly conveys this mood and also recalls the "tainted beauty" of the femme fatale as represented by Rossetti and Burne-Jones in early paintings of Rosamond, wife of Henry II of England, as well as Swinburne's early play on Rosamond:

Yes, I am found the woman in all tales,  
The face caught always in the story's face:  
I Helen, holding Paris by the lips,  
Smote Hector through the head; I Cressida  
So kissed men's mouths that they went sick or mad,  
Stung right at brain with me; I Guenevere  
Made my queen's eyes so precious and my hair  
Delicate with such gold in its soft ways  
And my mouth honied so for Launcelot . . . .  
(Praz 219)

Swinburne's aristocratic femme fatale employs seductive measures as destructive weapons against epic heroes, her eyes and mouth both betraying her soul and suggesting feminine power and seduction.

Referring to the Pre-Raphaelite style of painting, Hunt notes that "brief and tantalizing glimpses of [mystery] are betrayed sometimes by the features of the ideal beauty." 17 When Lady Audley is described as "My

17William Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood vol. 1 (New York: Dutton, 1914) 183. The description of the painting as flawed in its attempt to convey beauty is similar to the flaw described by Browning's narrator in "My Last Duchess."
lady in that half-recumbent attitude, with her elbow resting on one knee, and her perfect chin supported by her hand, . . . and the luminous rose-coloured firelight enveloping her in a soft haze, only broken by the golden glitter of her yellow hair," (295) Braddon's narrator is no doubt making reference to the pre-Raphaelite ideal woman. Sir John Everett Millais's 1851 painting (figure 7) The Bridesmaid, for example, shows a young woman whose face is framed by a spectacular fiery mass of glittering reddish gold hair, her liquid golden colored eyes looking straight ahead at the viewer in a mesmerizing attitude, her chin tilted upward above a long curved neck; and her slightly parted full lips convey an attitude of independence that Pre-Raphaelite women were known to exhibit. Indeed, the narrator's description of Lady Audley duplicates the sensual attitudes exhibited by many of the female subjects of the Pre-Raphaelite painters. Braddon herself, however, denied the sensual effects of her own art. In a letter to Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Braddon refutes the accusation that she "dwelt on the physical--or raved about 'thrilling kisses--' and 'warm breath' and 'column like throats.'" As sensual looking as Lady Audley appears, Braddon insisted that "I defy any critic--however nice, or however nasty--to point to one page or one paragraph in that book--or in any
Figure 7  The Bridesmaid  Sir John Everett Millais (1851)
other book of mine--which contains the lurking poison of
sensuality." Despite Braddon's denial of sensual
imagery or scenes in her novels, the association of Lady
Audley with a Pre-Raphaelite "stunner" strongly suggests
the opposite.

Regardless of the sensuality conveyed in the
description of Lady Audley's portrait as a female
prototype of the Pre-Raphaelite woman, her face is
particularly disfigured by a distortion of her mouth,
violating the lovely countenance of her face and making
her appear that "beautiful fiend." Yet the flaw is part
of the mystery that makes her image more spellbinding, a
compelling loveliness disrupted by a conspicuous blemish.
This exhilarating yet fearsome combination of effects
associated with Lady Audley mesmerizes spectators of 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. The perfection of feature, the
brilliancy of colouring, were there; but I
suppose the painter had copied quaint mediæval
monstrosities until his brain had grown
bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of

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of Mary Elizabeth Braddon to Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton,
Braddon uses the masculine pronoun because she thought
her critic was a male. In actuality, it was Oliphant.
her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend. (70-1)

While the portrait itself reveals a diabolical defect,
Lady Audley's own physical appearance imparts a

discrepancy less obvious to others than to her own self:

She walked rapidly to her dressing-table, and
seating herself before it . . . looked at her
reflection in the large oval glass. The lines
of her exquisitely-moulded lips were so
beautiful, that it was only a very close
observer who could have perceived a certain
rigidity that was unusual to them. She saw
this herself, and tried to smile away that
statue-like immobility; but to-night the rosy
lips refused to obey her; they were firmly
locked, and were no longer the slaves of her
will and pleasure. All the latent forces of
her character concentrated themselves in this
one feature. She might command her eyes; but
she could not control the muscles of her mouth.
(310-11)

Described as like stone, Lady Audley's mouth, with its
hardened lips, signifies beauty's fracture, a harsh and
ominous fissure verging on disrupting the entire order of
her appearance. In recognizing that fiendish
disfigurement with a firmly set countenance, she is
reminiscent of the hard-faced, sinister-looking subject
in Sir Edward Burne-Jones's 1847 Pre-Raphaelite painting
(figure 8) "Sidonia, the Sorceress," which could have
easily been a model on which Braddon based the portrait of Lady Audley.19

Sidonia's rigid facial expression, her menacing look, her abundant reddish hair contained by a spider-like net, and the alarming yet alluring serpentine-like designs on her dress simulate a spiteful look of intimidation or threat. Interestingly, Oliphant labeled the type of liberated woman, who was found as a heroine in many sensation novels, the "golden-haired" sorceress. In describing Lady Audley's portrait, Braddon's narrator clearly invokes the image of the Medusa:

Her crimson dress, exaggerated like all the rest in this strange picture, hung about her in folds that looked like flames, her fair head peeping out of the lurid mass of colour, as if out of a raging furnace. Indeed, the crimson dress, the sunshine on the face, the red gold gleaming in the yellow hair, the ripe scarlet of the pouting lips, the glowing colours of each accessory of the minutely-painted background, all combined to render the first effect of the painting by no means an agreeable one. (71)

The spectacle of unrestrained hair, the vivid coloring of the face, and the seductive dress recall what Neil Hertz argues is the unrestrained and "monstrous" female, "a

Figure 8  *Sidonia von Bork*  Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1860)

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hideous and fierce but not exactly sexless woman"--who camouflages the sexual threat of the Medusa.²⁰

The frequent descriptions of Lady Audley as a Medusa figure, her defiant countenance and unrestrained hair represents sexual transgression. Her challenge to masculinity is an emphatic mimicking of the horror or power of the Medusa figure, as demonstrated by descriptive passages that disclose her dauntless attitude and accentuate her magnificent head of hair. Her hair seemingly acts as a source of power from which she derives her assertiveness and sexual power. Blaming her improprieties on the gods who govern the "dominion" of beauty, Lady Audley regrets that power only momentarily. She "twined her fingers in her loose amber curls, and made as if she would have torn them from her head" (297).

In another second, she is invigorated with confidence:

But even in that moment of mute despair the unyielding dominion of beauty asserted itself, and she released the poor tangle glitter of ringlets, leaving them to make a halo round her head in the dim firelight. (297) my emphasis

In her review "Novels," Oliphant dramatizes a concern over novels depicting women with free-flowing hair:

Hair has become one of the leading properties in fiction. The facility with which it flows over the shoulders and bosoms in its owner's vicinity is quite extraordinary. In every emergency it is ready for use.  

These remarks further implicate unrestrained hair as a defensive power, ready to activate as a protective mechanism. Oliphant associates free-flowing hair with active females who appropriate masculinity: "[The Sensation Novel] moulded its women on the model of men." In Braddon's next novel, *Aurora Floyd*, the male "victim," Talbot Bulstrode, becomes "entangled in the messy network of [Aurora's] blue-black hair." Oliphant specifically attacks Braddon's immoral female character, Aurora Floyd, as a figure of aggressive sexuality that men fear. Thus Oliphant invokes that image of the Medusa as a threat. The image is recalled in *Punch*'s caricature of Braddon as a sensation writer who modeled her heroines on the figure of a fiend (figure 9). The drawing shows Braddon holding what appears to be a mask of her heroine, which resembles the image of a Medusa, with its massive hair that falls downward in spirals.

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21 Oliphant, "Novels" 275.

22 Oliphant, "Novels" 275.

Figure 9  Punch's Mary Elizabeth Braddon "Just as I am!"  
March 5, 1881.
Unrestrained hair recalls the unrestrained sexuality of the old aristocracy. Cvetkovich remarks that "Lady Audley is transformed into Medusa, revealing the threatening power that her appearance normally hides. Her 'golden ringlets' are constantly used as a synecdoche for her beauty."24 Braddon's novel abounds with sexual images of Lady Audley's "gloriously glittering hair," "pale yellow shot with gold," and "pale golden ringlets, that fall in a feathery shower over her throat and shoulders." Her golden ringlets not only stand for the beauty and horror of the Medusa but emphasize the Audley wealth. Metaphorically, the novel's web of hair images symbolizes the sexualized aristocratic woman, whose snake-like tendrils ensnare the male victim. As T. J. Edlestein explains,

If someone "lets down her hair," it means that she has lost all inhibitions and so is like a character in a sensation novel who ignores the mores of her society. . . . According to Victorian custom, women wore their hair up during the day, letting it down only when they retired for the night, another origin for the sensual connotations of flowing hair.25

This passage suggests that both Robert and Luke experience a threat to their masculinity. A seemingly

24Cvetkovich 62.

perpetual source of energy, a woman's unrestrained hair signifies a warning to male virility. The emblem of a frenzied woman as a sign of castration anxiety is almost always emphatic in its representation of emancipation through images of unfastened hair, suggesting sexual power. At the same time, the obsession with witches and sorceresses, who were often depicted as devils with flaming hair, developed out of "the fear of woman's exerting male prerogatives, together with the fear of a woman's seduction."26

Criticizing the heroines of sensation novels, Oliphant named Braddon "the inventor of the fair-haired demon of modern fiction." Oliphant emphatically linked images of hair with sexuality, criticizing blonde, auburn, or red-haired heroines whose daring sexuality displaced masculinity, women "who give and receive burning kisses and frantic embraces, and live in a voluptuous dream."27 Eliza Lynn Linton, too, remarked

26 It is noteworthy, too, that the persecution of witches is further linked to the jealousy of masculine medical practice over feminine rivals, who were noted for potions and cures. See Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, A History of Women: Silences of the Middle Ages, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) 382.

27 Oliphant, "Novels" 259, 263.
upon the immoral image of unrestrained hair, commenting in "The Girl of the Period" (1868):

She dries and frizzes and sticks hers out on end like certain savages in Africa, or lets it wander down her back like Madge Wildfire's, and thinks herself all the more beautiful the nearer she approaches in look to a negress or a maniac.  

Linton's controversial essay sparked The Tomahawk to produce a cartoon, "The Girl of the Period" (figure 10), in which a beautiful woman is being painted as a monstress.

Lady Audley further achieves the look of Medusa when she defies Robert Audley:

She defied him with her blue eyes . . . She defied him with her quiet smile--a smile of fatal beauty, full of lurking significance and mysterious meaning--the smile which the artist had exaggerated in his portrait of Sir Michael's wife. Robert turned away from the lovely face, and shaded his eyes with his hand, putting a barrier between my lady and himself, a screen which baffled her penetration and provoked her curiosity. (217)

Shielding himself from her countenance, Robert shows that his fear of Lady Audley resembles the fear of the Medusa.

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Figure 10 "The Girl of the Period"
This threat is again re-enacted when Lady Audley turns on her blackmailer, Luke Marks:

Heaven knows how much more Luke Marks might have said, had not my lady turned upon him suddenly, and awed him into silence by the unearthly glitter of her beauty. Her hair had been blown away from her face, and, being of a light feathery quality, had spread itself into a tangled mass that surrounded her forehead like a yellow flame. There was another flame in her eyes—a greenish light, such as might flash from the changing hued orbs of an angry mermaid. (320-321)

Here, it is as if Luke is turned into stone by the Medusa-like gaze of Lady Audley.

The horror of the Medusa is an image that has historically always derived its power from the lower region of the body, the female genitalia, which are symbolized by writhing hair that frames a terror-stricken face. As Davis observes, during the sixteenth-century it was thought that woman's "womb was like a hungry animal; when not amply fed by sexual intercourse or reproduction, it was likely to wander about her body, overpowering the speech and senses." Furthermore, "the lower ruled the higher within the woman, then, and if she were given her way, she would want to rule over those above her
outside." Lady Audley also exhibits a fervor for controlling power, a strength likened to the power of the Medusa. Braddon's narrator offers a figurative analogy of how "looks can kill" when she describes the vivid portrait of Lady Audley as a painting that "kills" the works of fine art that surround it:

The picture was finished now, and hung in the post of honour opposite the window, amidst Clauses, Poussins, and Wouvermans, whose less brilliant hues were killed by the vivid colouring of the modern artist. The bright face looked out of that tangled glitter of golden hair, in which the Pre-Raphaelites delight, with a mocking smile, as Robert paused for a moment to glance at the well remembered picture. (215, Emphasis mine)

The painting personifies the "killing beauty" of Lady Audley, who had, as the narrator points out, "looked upon that beauty as a weapon" (337-38). Lady Audley's vexing countenance and massive golden hair assume, as does Burne-Jones's Sidonia, the beauty and danger of the Medusa, inviting yet threatening.

Braddon's characterization of Lady Audley as a woman desiring to be linked with the aristocracy is in direct contrast to the bourgeois aristocrat Robert Audley, who supports aristocratic status as long as it is modeled on respectable bourgeois values. An idle, non-practicing barrister who incorporates the scientific investigation

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30 Davis 125.
of Wilkie Collins's detectives in order to stop Lady Audley, he demonstrates a growing concern over his uncle, the waning aristocrat, Sir Michael Audley, but opposes the aristocratic scandal and corruption displayed by Lady Audley. While he could easily profit from his uncle's fortune if he would simply marry his cousin Alicia, the sole heiress to the Audley estate—who, incidently, tries her best to "catch" him—he remains content to be a "supposed" barrister, supposed in the sense that he does not—nor has he ever—"tried to get a brief." As Braddon's narrator notes,

I doubt if he even had any correct notion of the amount of his uncle's fortune and I am certain that he never for one moment calculated upon the chances of any part of that fortune ultimately coming to himself. (33)

Nor is Robert, as the narrator points out, interested in getting a brief. Living on the £400 a year left to him by his father, Robert, as is repeated throughout the text, is a lazy, "lymphatic" idler. According to the narrator:

As a barrister was his name inscribed in the law list; as a barrister, he had chambers in Fig-tree Court, Temple; as a barrister he had eaten the allotted numbers of dinners, which form the sublime ordeal through which the forensic aspirant wades on to fame and fortune. If these things can make a man a barrister, Robert Audley decidedly was one.
Robert merely, and "unblushingly," called himself a barrister, never attempting to apply himself in that discipline in which he could quite possibly attain genuine fame and fortune. His own chambers have been converted pretty much into a dog kennel, since he brings home stray dogs and "benighted curs." Robert Audley apes the leisured parasitic lifestyle of the aristocracy, spending his time in leisure, reading books, taking walks, and occasionally going on fox hunts but showing no interest in getting in on the "kill." At the same time, however, Robert lacks the land, wealth, and title of an aristocrat. Nor does he make any effort to marry legally. In considering whether to try Lady Audley in court--an option that does not gel--Robert wavers toward the role of a professional. In marrying for love rather than money or title, he further relegates himself to bourgeois values.

Robert Audley's fear of Lady Audley as an aristocratic poseur develops partly out of his associating her flowing hair with that of the sexually deviant women he reads about in French novels, such as Balzac's and the less circulated sexually explicit books by the French authors Paul de Kock and Dumas fils. These
French novels magnify his fear of assertive women.31

When Robert picks up an edition of Balzac, for example, we can see that he projects his fears of Lady Audley onto the pages:

The yellow-papered fictions on the shelves above his head seemed stale and profitless—he opened a volume of Balzac, but his uncle's wife's golden curls danced and trembled in a glittering haze, alike upon the metaphysical diablerie of the *Peau de Chagrin*, and the hideous social horrors of *Cousine Bette*. The volume dropped from his hand . . . (157)

Robert's ideas about unrestrained women, which are reinforced with his readings of Balzac, are significant within the context of the Medusa and castration anxiety. The novels represent, as Butler suggests, Balzac's earlier attitude of anti-revolution. As Butler points out, Balzac's novels reveal his nostalgic reference to the "*ancien régime* as an age of lost values and as a model of political wisdom."32 His characters are not revolutionary figures but figures, like Lady Audley, who want to become aristocrats. Lisbeth, the main character of *La Cousine Bette*, a not-so-pretty peasant girl,

31David Skilton, *The English Novel: Defoe to the Victorians* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1977) 214. According to Skilton, these authors "produced "sexually franker works than circulated openly in English in the mid-Victorian period."

becomes jealous of her cousin's advantageous marriage into the aristocratic Hulot family. In a series of events designed to bring the Hulot fortune to ruin, the ambitious and vengeful Lisbeth plots with the heartless and whorish Mme. Marneffe, who becomes the object of Baron Hulot's sexual passions. The point to be made here is that Robert Audley equates Lady Audley with Balzac's transgressive females, who destroy aristocrats.

Lady Audley's reading material also consists of racy French novels. From these readings, she equates her criminal actions to the beautiful aristocratic women of the French ancien régime. She asks Phoebe:

Do you remember that French story we read—the story of a beautiful woman who committed some crime—I forget what—in the zenith of her power and loveliness, when all Paris drank to her every night, and when the people ran away from the carriage of the king to flock about hers, and get a peep at her face? Do you remember how she kept the secret of what she had done for nearly half a century, spending her old age in her family château, beloved and honoured by all the province, as an uncanonised saint and benefactress to the poor; and how, when her hair was white, and her eyes almost blind with age, the secret was revealed through one of those strange accidents by which such secrets always are revealed in romances, and she was tried, found guilty, and condemned to be burned alive? The king who had worn her colours was dead and gone; the court of which she had been the star had passed away; powerful functionaries and great magistrates, who might perhaps have helped her, were mouldering in their graves; brave young cavaliers, who would have died for her, had fallen upon distant battle-fields; she had lived to see the age to which she had belonged fade like a dream; and
she went to the stake, followed only by a few ignorant country people, who forgot all her bounties, and hooted at her for a wicked sorceress. (105-106)

Lady Audley attributes "power" and honor to fictional aristocratic women whom she fantasizes about and identifies with; her deep-seated sympathy for aristocratic status reflects her nostalgia for a dying English ancien régime. Her romanticizing the martyrdom of a transgressive woman, which parallels her own "secret" concerning class, underscores her nostalgia for an old aristocracy. In Lady Audley's mind, she is forever linked to upper-class status, living out her days in her family chateau as a fading "star" of the king's court.

In addition, we are once again confronted in this passage with the image of Lady Audley as a "sorceress," here tried and burned at the stake for her secret crime. The image is still, however, suggestive in terms of woman as a symbol of class conflict. The point of intersection between the French and British versions of transgressive women is signified by Lady Audley's identifying with the heroine in the French story she recalls to Phoebe. The setting of the story is pre-eighteenth-century, a time when witch trials became "a way to rid society of women in particular who behaved in a socially or even
politically objectionable way." Thus innocent women who were considered rebellious and who exhibited any form of independence, strong will, or sexuality, were drowned or burned at the stake. As Kestner notes, images of women as sorceresses and sirens represent "male fears of female sexuality and female secret power." Furthermore, "during the years of the Contagious Diseases Acts, siren icons were political" in that "clergymen used the word 'siren' as a code term for prostitute, with the result that such images associated female sexuality with debasement, criminality, and animality."

In this novel, part of the struggle between the transgressive bourgeois female and the bourgeois aristocrat is displaced onto the battleground of gender transgression. Gender transgression expresses anxieties about women's influence over males who govern, that is to say the possibilities that if a transgressive bourgeoisie succeeded in establishing cultural power, it might repeat the scandals of a corrupt English ancien régime. Assertive women, like Lady Audley, represent gender

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33 Klapisch-Zuber 382.


35 Kestner 43.
transgression and a threat to patriarchal positions, including the turbulent administration of politics that is indicative of male anxiety over petticoat government. Connecting the transgressive woman with the Medusa image suggests not only a political threat but a threat to masculinity and, consequently, forms of property. Catherine Gallagher observes that the confluence of person, name, and property

is based on the assumption of legitimacy, biological descent organized within the boundaries of patriarchal property inheritance. The natural signs of inequality are natural only insofar as women's sexuality and reproductive capacities remain proper. 36

In her observation of the effects of French Revolution, Gallagher explains how the sexually unrestrained woman represents a threat to property:

From 1789 to 1870 French revolutionary violence repeatedly enacted an ambivalent attack on patriarchy. And the emblematic importance of the uncontrolled and luridly sexual woman cannot be separated from that attack. On the one hand the revolutionaries needed to undermine the patriarchal assumptions that buttressed monarchical and aristocratic power. Thus the symbol of liberty who leads the people is female. But liberty, in the iconography of the age, often turns into a whore when she threatens the patriarchal family as such. The sexually uncontrolled woman then becomes a threat to all forms of property and established

36Hertz 195.
power. Her fierce independence is viewed, even by revolutionaries, as an attack on the Rights of Man.\textsuperscript{37}

Whether it is the physical revolution in France or the silent revolution in England, unrestrained women are represented as a transgressive force that endangers the patriarchal inheritance of property. The fear of Lady Audley's connection with the aristocratic values of the Audley name, estate, and legitimate progeny arises from the sense of threat presented by the unrestrained woman. The entirety of aristocratic prestige to which Lady Audley becomes linked is based on the legitimacy of property through patriarchal lineage, which risks dissemination through non-aristocratic of blood, dispersion of property (land), and defamation of property.

In as much as the "ghosts" of Lady Audley's previous identities as Helen Maldon and Helen Talboys haunt the family name, Lady Audley's crimes of bigamy and attempted murder taint the Audley name. Thus her connection to the ancestral mansion and all the property that goes with it

\textsuperscript{37}See "Response From Catherine Gallagher" in Hertz 195.
represents a violation of that property. Robert Audley fears the future of his uncle's estate:

"What would become of this place if my uncle were to die?" he thought, as he drew nearer to the ivied archway, and the still waterpools, coldly grey in the twilight. "Would other people live in the old house, and stir under the low oak ceilings in the homely familiar rooms?" . . . with a prophetic pain . . . he remembered that the day must come on which the oaken shutters would be closed for a while. (214).

As a threat to masculinity, Lady Audley's Medusa-like defiance unnerves Robert Audley, making him anxious about his own male position. He would have us believe that all women are intimidating creatures, in effect beautiful fiends, who force men to submit to their authority, engineering and pushing them, steering them through a maze of female authority:

That's why incompetent men sometimes sit in high places, and interpose their poor muddled intellects between the thing to be done and the people that can do them, making universal confusion in the helpless innocence of well-placed incapacity. The square men in the round holes are pushed into them by their wives. [Women] are Semiramides, and Cleopatras, and Joan of Arcs, Queen Elizabeths, and Catharine the Seconds, and they riot in battle, and murder, and clamour, and desperation. . . . They are the stronger sex, the noisier, the more persevering, the most self-assertive sex. They're bold, brazen, abominable creatures, invented for the annoyance and destruction of their superiors. (207)

Self-assertive women, as Robert notes in this passage,
are bent on destroying men in "high places." Even the woman whom Robert has decided to invest his future in, Clara Talboys, is, as he admits, superior to him:

I recognize the power of a mind superior to my own, and I yield to it, and bow down to it. I am in [this galère] and I can't get out of it; so I'd better submit myself to the brown-eyed girl, and do what she tells me, patiently and faithfully. What a wonderful solution to life's enigma there is in petticoat government! (206)

Unlike Lady Audley, however, who openly transgresses gender and class boundaries, Clara can be tolerated by Robert Audley because she represents respectable Victorian values and remains passive. These traits, combined with her "superior" mind, define Clara as non-threatening. When Robert visits the Talboys' home, Clara, rather than being a "bold, brazen, abominable creature," sits quietly off to the side with her needlework. She is never described as a sexual creature, nor does she have any desire to display wealth. Later in the story, after she and Robert have become emotionally involved, Clara reassures Robert that she is not after money since she has her own monetary means, an inheritance from her aunt. Clara's passiveness is in sharp contrast to the "Cleopatras, Joan of Arcs, Queen Elizabeths, and Catharine the Seconds" who "riot in battle." In sharp contrast to the "beautiful fiend", she
more aptly represents the "angel" of domesticity, who stands behind rather than challenges the patriarchal role of Robert.

In this novel, female transgression is punished not through overt but through institutional violence. Lady Audley reassures herself that beauty is her triumph. It is a possession that "they" can not conquer or even burn away:

My lady smiled triumphantly as she contemplated the reflection of her beauty. The days were gone in which her enemies could have branded here with white-hot irons, and burned away the loveliness which had done such mischief. Whatever they did to her, they must leave her beauty, she thought. At the worst they were powerless to rob her of that. (373)

As this passage makes clear, Lady Audley knows she will not suffer any physical punishment for her transgression. By the nineteenth century, middle-class professionals, who were trying to establish their own cultural power, were turning towards means of correction rather than punishment. The patriarchal authority of the professional is played out, to a degree, in terms of gender. Near the end of the story, Doctor Mosgrave, the middle-class professional, designates Lady Audley as a "dangerous" woman and determines her punishment. Thus the proper punishment doled out by the middle-class professional demands that Lady Audley be locked away in
an institution. Symbolically, that institution turns out to be the gothic-like "living tomb" of a passing social order, the European ancien régime:

My lady stared dismally round at the range of rooms, which looked dreary enough in the wan light of a single wax candle. This solitary flame, pale and ghostlike in itself, was multiplied by paler phantoms of its ghostliness, which glimmered everywhere about the rooms; in the shadowy depths of the polished floors and wainscot, or the window panes, in the looking-glasses, or in those great expanses of glimmering something which adorned the rooms, and which my lady mistook for costly mirrors, but which were in reality wretched mockeries of burnished tin. (388-389)

Deemed mad by Doctor Mosgrave, Lady Audley imagines the rooms as if they were her own chambers back at Audley Court, where the mirrors multiplied her image. These gothic elements have also been reinforced all along by labels such as Oliphant's "fair-haired demon," the narrator's "monster," Dr. Mosgrave's "beautiful devil," Robert Audley's "mediaeval monstrosity" and "beautiful fiend." They enhance a gothic element to Lady Audley's description that links her to that old aristocracy which, as I have pointed out earlier, came to be distrusted because of its immoral reputation.

In my next chapter, I take a closer look at the middle-class professionals, like Doctor Mosgrave, who began later in the nineteenth century to establish their own cultural power. Robert Audley's character as a
bourgeois aristocrat anticipates Dracula's professionals, in particular Arthur, who, as an aristocrat, joins forces with the middle-class professionals in their "normalizing" of both Lucy Westenra, who symbolizes the transgressive bourgeois female, and Dracula, the "nightmare" of the old aristocracy. Chapter four will examine the ways in which the transgressive woman in Stoker's late nineteenth-century novel upstages the struggle for power by middle-class professionals.
CHAPTER FOUR
BLOOD, SEXUALITY, AND PROPERTY:
DRACULA AND MIDDLE-CLASS HEGEMONY

Not only did professionals participate in the larger movement for political and social change; they often acted as its spokesmen, on behalf of classes to which they did not themselves belong.

--Margali Larson, The Rise of Professionalism

If the British industrial revolution succeeded where the European political revolutions failed, it did so not by replacing the dictatorship of the aristocracy with the dictatorship of the proletariat but by investing a new kind of authority in a new class of professionals.

--Ronald Thomas

But surely this sensational business must soon come to an end, or be suspended for half a generation or so . . . there must surely come satiety at last.

--Blackwood's, 1890

In this chapter, I look at how Bram Stoker's Dracula continued to foreground middle-class anxieties about the transgressive woman only to screen a profound concern over the struggle for cultural power between class factions. While the previous chapter focused on mid-nineteenth-century antagonisms primarily between two sections of the middle class--one that sought to absorb aristocratic values and wealth as a means of defining cultural hegemony and another that leaned towards establishing an intellectual order and weaning themselves

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from a system of values linked with landed estates--this chapter analyzes a middle-class crusade against the old aristocracy (and thereby against the transgressive bourgeoisie who came to be associated with them) by professionals, whose effort to establish cultural hegemony through strict professionalism surfaced at the turn of the century. As Foucault remarks concerning nineteenth-century middle-class authority: "a whole army of technicians took over: warders, doctors, chaplains, psychiatrists, psychologists, educationalists."\(^1\) While it is true that the aristocracy remained a dominant class power throughout the Victorian period and even longer, the troubled decade of the 1880s took a tremendous toll on aristocrats, creating paranoia over the traditional dominance of landed status.\(^2\) The threat felt by aristocrats was real for a number of reasons. One was the passing of the Third Reform Act in 1884-5, which "tilted the balance of the constitution" away from "notables" to "numbers."\(^3\) Furthermore, in the 1880s, demands for changes in the distribution of property resulted from publication of "official inquiries"

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\(^1\)Foucault, *Discipline 11*.


\(^3\)Cannadine 27.
published during the 1880s, which revealed the astonishing expanse of "territorial monopoly and collective wealth" held by the aristocracy. Still, another reason for aristocratic discontent stemmed from assertive members of the middle class, as well as multi-millionaire outsiders from America and other countries, who bought their way into upper society, obtaining peerages without ever having been a part of a landed background. Two publications, The Directory of Directors and Who's Who, listed hundreds of titled names that came from non-landed backgrounds. Thus titled landowners' traditional canon of peerage became interspersed with names of the nouveau riche. For these reasons, many aristocrats were beginning to show signs of insecurity about their place at the head of society.

Some of this aristocratic pessimism that existed around the turn of the century can be seen, as Cannadine observes, in three texts published during the 1880s. In 1883, Lord Salisbury published "Disintegration," an essay in which he lamented the inferior position placed upon the patrician polity by an "unbridled democracy." He predicted that the aristocracy would not prevail in a war

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*Cannadine 36.

*Cannadine 28.

*Cannadine 28.
of the classes. In 1886, Alfred Lord Tennyson published "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After," a poem which further mourned the decaying of old aristocracy. According to Cannadine, William Gladstone responded to Tennyson's poem, admitting that in recent years, "all had not been well for the landlords."\(^7\) Thirdly, W. H. Mallock fictionalized aristocratic pessimism in *The Old Order Changes* (1886), a novel in which landowners are shown as having estates "so heavily mortgaged that they have become, essentially, the hangers-on of the bourgeoisie."\(^8\) In this novel, Mallock tries to show how the power of aristocracy was beginning to fade.\(^9\)

While these works seem to depict an old society that was tottering towards a quick death, the aristocracy remained quite powerful. As Martin Weiner argues, the rentier aristocracy actually absorbed the challenges of the middle class into its culture, "maintaining a cultural hegemony" and "reshaping the industrial bourgeoisie in its own image."\(^10\) Weiner sees this absorption of the bourgeoisie as the old aristocracy's

\(^7\) Cannadine 30.
\(^8\) Cannadine 30.
\(^9\) Cannadine 30.

"accommodation" of the new bourgeoisie. Other historians have proposed similar views. Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn have argued that the old aristocracy remained a "tight knit oligarchy" that became "still richer" and even "more self-confident." While these arguments that the aristocracy secured its position of power hold strength, this chapter uses Bram Stoker's Dracula to show how at least one fictionalized version of class struggle portrays an example of an assertive middle class faction that not only succeeded in putting an end to the old aristocracy's attempt to absorb, or rather sap, the bourgeoisie of its merging power but, moreover, ousted members of the middle class (namely, the transgressive bourgeoisie) who came to associate themselves with old aristocratic corruption.

The most apparent struggle for class power in the late nineteenth century, in Victorian England as well as in other parts of Europe, was that of the old aristocracy, relentlessly clinging to the idea that peerage and property would sustain political power. As

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Cannadine notes, the titled and genteel classes of Britain "took an unconscionable time a-dying. There was no single cause of death. But there was, at least, a turning point. For it is clear that the 1880s were the most troubled decade--for the nobles and notable of Britain, no less than for the titled and territorial classes of Europe." Until the decade of the 80s, wealthy landowners held considerable political power through parliament. But during that decade a number of middle-class politicians began an uncompromising and often vituperative campaign to eclipse aristocratic control of legislature. The stronghold of the aristocrats--the House of Lords--came under the severe attacks of pamphleteers and strong leaders--most notably David Lloyd George--in the House of Commons. Lloyd George depicted aristocrats as anachronisms and publicly insulted landowners as "idle, greedy, parasitical, self-interested profiteers, as men who enjoyed wealth they did not create, while begrudging help to those less fortunate

12 Cannadine 25.

13 Cannadine, Decline 183. In the half-century from the 1880s, this included "the new breed of full-time politicians like Asquith and Lloyd George, Simon and F. E. Smith, who proclaimed the arrival of self-made professional men in unprecedented numbers."
whose labors had helped to make them rich." Lloyd George complained:

Oh these dukes. How they oppress us. How could five hundred ordinary men, chosen accidentally from among the unemployed override the judgement of millions of people who are engaged in the industry which makes the wealth of the country?15

Popular agitation against the Lords resulted in "at least 1,500 public meetings" held to protest against them as well as a "monster gathering" in Hyde Park (1884).16 While the Third Reform Act in 1884-5 did much to alter the traditional aristocratic constitution, Britain still remained an "essentially patrician polity" with the vote "firmly attached to property."17 It was not until

14Cannadine, Decline 49.


16For example, one pamphleteer, J. E. Rogers, compared lordships to "Sodom and Gomorrah, and to the collective abominate of an Egyptian temple." Cannadine also notes that between 1886 and 1890, a large number of supporters who made up the Commons franchise "pledged to abolish the upper house all together." See Cannadine, Decline 43.

17See Cannadine, Decline 37. Also, according to Lacey, "The dawning of mass democracy [in 1884-5] brought into being a new sort of popular power which could, if it wished, make the possession of title, money, and even land quite irrelevant." See Robert Lacey, Aristocrats (Boston: Little, Brown, 1983) 133. Thus landowners became aware in the late 1880s that their political power was disintegrating.
1910-11 with the passing of the Parliament Act that the political power of the landed society really began to suffer.  

*Dracula* was produced at a time when the middle class was launching an attack on the House of Lords. At the same time, middle-class professionals were trying to cultivate their own system of authority through the development of themselves as specialists in professional roles. Socio-political control shifted to the technical authority of professionals; however, there still existed that section of the middle class, the transgressive bourgeoisie, which prolonged and extolled the values, wealth, status, and peerage of the old aristocracy. In effect, a struggle was still taking place between class sections to define a middle-class cultural hegemony. In *Dracula*, Stoker fictionalizes this struggle by underscoring anxieties over transgressive women. While Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, a novel that Stoker was acquainted with, pits the bourgeois aristocrats against the transgressive bourgeoisie, *Dracula* emphasizes a "technical knowledge" of authority assembled by middle-class professionals, who band together against both the 

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18 The Parliament Act, which kept the Lords from amending or rejecting money bills and reduced the lifetime of a full Parliament from seven to five years, signalled the "emasculcation of the House of Lords." See Cannadine, *Decline* 36-38.
aristocrat and the transgressive bourgeoisie. It is, in addition, a text that embraces versions of dominance which are reiterated in terms of sexuality.

Dracula, originally entitled The Un-Dead, was published in 1897 by Archibald Constable at a price of six shillings. The book received considerable press coverage. Reviewers, who warned that it should be kept "out of the way of nervous children" and not be read except between the hours of "dawn and sunset" by "persons of small courage and weak nerves," saw Dracula as a "highly sensational" novel, a "tour de force," and a "tale of mystery so liberal in manner" but "wanting in the higher literary sense." Although the first edition amounted to "at least 3000 copies,"--very possibly more since the book is by no means uncommon in the antiquarian book trade--Constable was printing an eighth edition in June 1904. These steadily growing, if modest, sales led to a "Popular Edition" of Dracula, which was


20 See The Daily Mail, Review, June 1, 1897; Athenaeum, Review, June 26, 1897; Spectator, Review, July 31, 1897; Bookman, Review, August 1897; and "New Novels and Holiday Books," San Francisco Chronicle, December 17, 1899.

published by W. Rider in April 1912 at a price of one shilling. In 1924, Hamilton Deane secured the stage rights to the novel and began a highly successful run for three years. Dean's adaptation drew large audiences, particularly during its run at London's Little Theatre, where "lobby nurses and fainting patrons were both provided by the management" as "attention-getting promotions." An abundance of Dracula scholarship has been published over the last three decades. While the bulk of this scholarship examines Dracula in light of psychoanalytic and feminist methodologies, Franco Moretti sees Dracula as a metaphor for capital, as representing modern monopoly. He argues that Dracula's adversaries resist him because they see him as representing the tyranny of feudal monopoly. It is they, he claims, who cannot understand the potential of modern monopoly to develop as a new way of competition. Whereas they

24 Franco Moretti's Marxist dialectics constitute the monster as a synthesis of modern monopoly: "the negation of feudal monopoly insofar as it implies the system of competition, and the negation of competition insofar as it is monopoly." See Moretti, Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literary Forms, (New York: Verso, 1988) 90-104.
ashamedly hide their capitalism behind "Gothic superstructures," Dracula unashamedly reveals his capital as accumulation. While Moretti's reading of Dracula offers an understanding of the novel in economic terms, he has less to say about the specifics of class. Moretti labels Dracula an aristocrat "only in a manner of speaking" and the group of antagonists as the true "relics of the middle ages" because of their fear of modern monopoly. My own argument integrates the sexual and economic aspects of Dracula into a premise that focuses on class aggression.

Other scholars have examined the sexual aspects of Dracula, an issue that the text works most to foreground. Some have identified the characters of Mina and Lucy with the apprehensions that surrounded the New Woman, who was frank and open about sex, wanted to be free to initiate sexual relationships, and chose financial freedom as an

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25 The professionals' shame over the accumulation of capital is explained by Mina's statement that money must not be an end in itself but rather used to some moral end. Moretti points out that "Money must not have its end in itself, in its continuous accumulation. It must have, rather, a moral, anti-economic end. The idea of money is, for the capitalist, something inadmissible. But it is also the great ideological lie of Victorian capitalism, a capitalism which is ashamed of itself." See Moretti Signs 91. In contrast to Moretti's view, the architecture of Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester represent a triumphant celebration of money-making.
alternative to marriage and children. Senf, for example, demonstrates how Stoker's characterization of these two women represents a celebration of "traditional femininity," as depicted by Mina in the role of a nurturing mother, and an ambivalence towards the sexually aggressive and devouring nature of the New Woman--her tendency to "reverse traditional sexual roles"--as portrayed by Lucy. From another point of view, Brennan argues that Mina's knowledge or psyche defines her as a New Woman who "chooses her fate, heroically and singularly integrating the dark and light contents of the psyche into a unified Self." And, while Roth reads Dracula as a misogynist text that exhibits hostility towards the sexually aggressive New Woman, Weissman sees the novel as underscoring the "extreme version of the myth that there are two types of women, devils and angels." Taking yet another view, Stevenson approaches

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26 For more on the New Woman, see Sally Ledger, *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siecle* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).


the novel with the perception that Dracula is a foreigner who, unlike the band of men against him, has the ability to awaken the sexuality of the women. Thus, women succumbing to foreignness or interracial competition comprise the overall fear that permeates the text. Stevenson sees the central paradox of Dracula as the "representation of foreignness" in its bi-sexuality that is "not only monstrously strange" but a "very human impulse."\(^{30}\) One of the most informative arguments on the sexuality of Dracula is put forth by Craft, who insists on the text's rendering a fear of women who have the "power to penetrate."\(^{31}\)

My own argument demonstrates how sexuality in Dracula function to disguise a profound concern over middle-class hegemony. Although Stoker's female characters may admire and even to some degree mimic characteristics associated with the New Woman, both Mina and Lucy represent separate and distinct class divisions. Mina is characterized as a respectable Victorian middle-

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class wife who aspires to work at a career and so that she may be "useful" to her husband. Lucy, on the other hand, has no concerns for a career and exhibits signs of sexual desire.

At the end of what Cannadine refers to as the troubled decade of the 1880s in which the aristocracy felt at least some challenge to their dominant position in society, Stoker began writing Dracula. In his 1886 novel *The Old Order Changes*, W. H. Mallock summarizes the prevailing view on aristocratic decline: "Aristocracy, as a genuine power, as a visible fact in the world, may not yet be buried perhaps; but it is dead."\(^{32}\) By the spring of 1890, Stoker had already composed a working cast list for the novel.\(^{33}\) It seems appropriate, then, that Stoker not only characterized Dracula as a waning aristocrat whose servants have all disappeared but that he originally entitled the novel *The Un-Dead*, which suggests the ambiguous state of the aristocracy. To a great extent, Dracula relates the story of a late nineteenth-century bourgeois assault on the aristocracy. On the other hand, the struggle within *Dracula* between the vampire Lucy and the group of men who

\(^{32}\)Cannadine 30.

bring her under control (by killing her) represents a battle between two factions of the middle class: Lucy, as a transgressive bourgeois woman, and the entire band of men, who represent the professional middle class.

In Dracula, both class conflicts--the one between the transgressive bourgeoisie and the professionals and the other all-out effort by professionals to terminate the aristocrat--are rewritten in terms of sexual threats. The words and deeds of the Count provide the immediate threat in Stoker's text. Through a system of sexually symbolic signs, Stoker projects the conflict between the aristocrat and the middle class onto a screen where women as property substitute for landownership and patriarchal lineage. Michel Foucault makes a similar connection between blood, sexuality, and politics in The History of Sexuality when he remarks that, "beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the thematic of blood was sometimes called on to lend its entire historical weight toward revitalizing the type of political power that was exercised through the devices of sexuality." Thus the aristocrat Dracula, who attempts to "own" middle-class women, threatens the middle-class band of men by declaring that the women are his property: "Your girls

that you all love are mine already; and through others shall yet be mine—my creatures to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed. Bah!"\(^{35}\)

A primary example of sexual symbolism in *Dracula* that illustrates this theme of blood, sex, and property is the scene staged in the privacy of Mina's bedroom. When the men force their way into her chambers, they find themselves observing Mina and Dracula engaged in a lurid act that strongly suggests oral copulation:

The moonlight was so bright that through the thick yellow blind the room was light enough to see. 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 was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast, which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. (247)

Seward later calls this event the "Vampire's baptism of blood" (280). Referring to this passage, Stevenson directly addresses the sexual aspects of the exchange of fluid and asks, "What is going on? Fellatio?"

Lactation?" The scene offers a multiplicity of readings based in terms of sexual deviancy: fellatio, lactation, copulation, cunnilingus, and menstruation. Dracula represents, in all of these, a form of deviant behavior. In terms of property, Dracula's initiation of Mina goes far beyond what can be interpreted as a deviant sexual act. Symbolically, we could read Mina's being forced to taste blood from the open wound in Dracula's breast as her being initiated into an act of consumption that represents, in psychological terms, control and possession of property and money. For as Freud points out:

Among the majority even of what are called 'respectable' people, traces of divided behaviour can easily be observed where money and property are concerned. It may perhaps be generally true that the primitive greed of the suckling, who wants to take possession of every object (in order to put it into his mouth), has only been incompletely overcome by civilization and upbringing.37

The context in which Freud validates property and money as desirable object echoes his discussion of autoeroticism, where consuming objects is linked to the

36Stevenson 146. Stevenson observes that Dracula is both father and mother.

sensual action of sucking the mother's breast.38 The point to be taken here is that once Mina's autoerotic desire for pleasure is stimulated by Dracula's force-feeding actions, she is sexually awakened. For Dracula to sexually awaken a victim is to "train" that victim in the art of consuming property and money, albeit in the long run property and money that Dracula could be said to drain from the women. Mina, the traditional Victorian middle-class wife, participates in, even if, as she says, by being forced, an improper sexual act, a spectacle witnessed by her "men." In her own words:

[The Count] pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nails opened a vein in his breast. When the blood began to spurt out, he took my hands in one of his, holding them tight, and with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow some of the--Oh, my God, my God! what have I done? (emphasis mine, 252)

In recounting the event, Mina is shocked over what she has allowed herself to do. The band of men realizes that she is "stained" with impurity, which is later symbolized by the mark on her forehead. Mina's participation

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38 For example, Freud determines that once the child is introduced to breast sucking, the nourishment obtained from receiving milk satiates hunger; however, the continued breast sucking after satiation denotes "sensual" sucking. Sensual sucking provides a pleasure that is followed by sleep. See Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1966) 387-89.
equates her with a "whore" because she threatens the patriarchal family with the possible tainting of what Gallagher calls the "biological descent organized within the boundaries of patriarchal property inheritance"--person, name, and property. Yet Stoker does not place her beyond redemption. Mina tries to explain her behavior, instigating further the anger of the professionals, who accept her explanation of being forced.

If blood symbolizes property, then the only access to that property is through the female. But in a remarkable twist on impalement, Dracula uses his own sharp fingernail to pierce his breast, an act of self-impalement that, symbolically, feminizes Dracula. Besides the act of phallic self-penetration, Dracula's sharp nail creates a "little" vagina. Furthermore, Mina's swallowing the discharge of blood from a wound symbolizing a tiny vagina re-enacts the acquisition of

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39See Gallagher 195.

property through a union with the old aristocracy. Simultaneously, the scene's tendency to evoke the image of fellatio (with the vagina representing the place where the regeneration of property through inheritance occurs) suggests chaotic forms of property exchange. Not only does it suggest the exchange of property between women, but the partaking of Dracula's blood by Mina makes her his property. Forced participation only underscores the idea that men control that area of exchange.

The novel's tendency to display the graphic depiction of improper sexual relations and forms of reproduction in this manner are reminiscent of the decadent old aristocracy, for whom Dracula serves as the premier manifestation. In effect, "his women" become agents for the exchange of property. The aristocrat's use of the transgressive woman as a means for the exchange of property implicates her in the role of sexual deviance and therefore what Gallagher refers to as the proliferation of unnatural and completely chaotic forms of "property based on the assumption of legitimacy, biological descent organized within the boundaries of patriarchal property inheritance."^41 Improper sexuality on the part of women contaminates patriarchal inheritance. Dracula's "women" represent chaotic forms

^41Hertz 194-97.
of property because they do not remain proper. As "his women," they absorb property (symbolically, blood) that he, in turn, will absorb from them.

If Dracula represents the invasion of a land-based feudal system of power into the city, where he can continue to make his money off the labor of others—even bringing his own "land" into the city as a symbol—he does so by using the transgressive woman—his most logical victim and almost always seen as an exchange commodity for men—as an entryway. An abundance of patrician urban landholding, great aristocratic estates in London and provincial towns, roused considerable uneasiness with democratic leaders over territorial monopoly in the 1880s.42 Lloyd George, in particular, voiced his concern over the vast profits to be earned by aristocratic landlords from urban holdings, which they let "degenerate into squalid and appalling slums."43 The novel insinuates this aristocratic neglect by portraying


43Cannadine, Lords 49.
Dracula as the feudal aristocrat who attempts to monopolize urban soil by buying up tracts of property in and about London, properties which appear in the novel as decaying residences. Carfax, his estate at Purfleet, is a place of gloom that dates many "periods back to mediaeval times, with only a few windows high up and heavily barred with iron" (29). At first, Jonathan gives us the impression that Dracula has bought only two other estates (at Exeter and Whitby) but Van Helsing later informs us that "the Count may have many houses which he has bought" (255). We learn that he has property at Walworth and Mile End. His house at Green Park "looms up grim and silent in its deserted condition amongst it more lively and spruce-looking neighbours" (261). And at Bermondsey, the Crew find a "little heap of keys of all sorts and sizes, probably those belonging to the other houses" (262). Dracula's monopoly of property is mirrored by his monopoly of women as property.

As a prime example of the class medium most conducive to Dracula's intentions, Lucy functions as a catalyst for the perpetuation of aristocratic absorption of property. In the beginning of the novel, she begins as an upper middle class female with three potential prospects for an advantageous marriage. While all three of her potential husbands are wealthy and will provide
Lucy with a life free from work, she chooses Arthur, who is the son of Lord Godalming and who will inherit his father's title. Lucy will inherit, too, the urban property on which she and her mother live, land and a house that requires two servants. But Lucy's transgression not only separates her from her original middle-class status but also the bourgeois aristocrat she might become in her marriage to Arthur, whose close bourgeois affinities with the professionals establish him as a bourgeois aristocrat. Once seduced by Dracula, Lucy progressively becomes an agent for Old Corruption (Dracula) and thereby a transgressive bourgeois. Lucy's place in Stoker's novel supports Foucault's principle that the nineteenth century produced discourses confronting sex rather than silencing it.

At the same time, Dracula incorporates prohibition as one of its primary strategies of power. Lucy comes to represent an unrestrained sexual woman who aligns herself with a decadent old aristocracy. Because she is sexual and therefore transgressive, Lucy figures into this novel as a version of all middle-class women who extol the decadent values of the aristocrat. But the sexual innuendo that she relates to Mina about her desire for polygamy and her later actions as vampire place her

"Foucault, History 69."
beyond the boundaries of what is expected of her as a woman. In effect, Lucy not only figures as a class threat by aligning herself with the decadent aristocrat but as a sexual threat by challenging patriarchal authority. Together with her comments in a letter to Mina on the advantages of polygamy, Lucy expressly notes her desire to propose matrimony. Thus she exceeds the boundaries of a respectable middle-class woman, becoming sexual and therefore masculine. This is why Lucy appears as the most obvious target of vampirism. But as Stoker's story shows, the sexual body functions as a stage where the power of authority can be challenged.

Foucault notes that in order "to deal with sex, power employs nothing more than a law of prohibition" which asserts: "thou shalt not go near, thou shalt not touch, thou shalt not consume, thou shalt not experience pleasure, thou shalt not speak, thou shalt not show thyself; ultimately thou shalt not exist, except in darkness and secrecy." These became the characteristic features of Victorian bourgeoisie. For the respectable bourgeoisie, sexuality must be kept in private, in the dark; otherwise, it represents transgression. In order

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45 Foucault, History 84.
46 Foucault, History 4.
to deal with sex, Foucault notes, "power employs nothing more than a law of prohibition" with the objective:

That sex renounce itself. Its instrument: the threat of a punishment that is nothing other than the suppression of sex. Renounce yourself or suffer the penalty of being suppressed; do not appear if you do not want to disappear. Your existence will be maintained only at the cost of your nullification.47

If the sexual body becomes public, it must be contained, normalized or exterminated. Because Lucy trespasses into the prohibited spotlight of the sexual, she must be normalized. The professional class during late nineteenth-century England gained considerable class power and respect by establishing firm resolutions as to the acceptable norms of society. The group of professionals who exercised this economics of power, as Foucault observes, consisted of "the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the "social-worker"-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements."48 Thus the professionals' control and management over the body through correctional institutions became a means of

47 Foucault, History 84.
48 Foucault, Discipline 304.
normalizing deviant behavior. But in Dracula, normalization of both Lucy and Dracula can only be accomplished by terminating them.

As a vampire, Lucy symbolizes masculine aggression and a "lust to kill." In arguing that sexual killing is always coded as masculine, Cameron and Frazer note that "the individual who transgresses is a rebel, in search of a freedom and pleasure--a 'transcendence'--which society, in its ignorance and repressiveness, denies him." Lucy's desire for freedom and pleasure (for example, her desire for more than one man) can only be realized through becoming masculine. In losing her original identity and becoming a potential killer, Lucy not only transgresses the boundaries of gender but also socialization, "ceasing to be the social being [she] was brought up to be" and is therefore free. Her voluptuous pleas that Arthur kiss her as she dies signal masculine transgressive behavior. Lucy is described by Seward on her death bed as changed: "Her breathing grew stertorous, the mouth opened, and the pale gums, drawn back, made the teeth look longer and sharper than ever." Seward's diary further notes Lucy pleading, "Arthur! Oh,

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50Cameron and Frazer 60.
my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me!" (146). Once Lucy is in the position of being male, of being aggressive, her violent behavior begins to manifest itself through what the Westminster Gazette refers to as the "bloofier lady," who abducts infants during the late evenings and leaves marks on their necks. Later, when the men accost her in front of the tomb, Lucy pleads with Arthur: "Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!" (188). These scenes of female aggression signify Lucy's "male" transgression. Her male desire is symbolized by her desire to "penetrate" with her now functional vampire teeth. Suspecting that Lucy exhibits masculine desire, Van Helsing stages her appearance in order to execute her disappearance.

As vampire, Lucy sheds the female role of penetratee and becomes the penetrator. What happens when women cross the gender boundary? Respectable society does not condone women who transgress their expected

51 Auerbach Our Vampires, 79-80. Auerbach points out that Lucy remains monogamous after turning vampire, directing her "wantonness" only towards her fiancé, Arthur.
passive, feminine behavior.⁵² When women stage violence, society perceives it as a masculine act, an act of power that challenges masculinity itself.⁵³ This challenge to masculinity becomes a sexual threat and, therefore, a danger to patriarchal dominance. Neil Hertz, for example, has demonstrated that women who display sexual aggression symbolically give rise to male castration anxiety.⁵⁴ The woman being looked at has the power to paralyze through looking back at the male spectator. In Dracula, Seward acknowledges this display of female sexual power when describing Lucy as Medusa:

Never did I see such baffled malice on a face; and never, I trust shall such ever be seen again by mortal eyes. The beautiful color became livid, the eyes seemed to throw out sparks of hell-fire, the brows were wrinkled as though the folds of the flesh were the coils of Medusa's snakes, and the lovely, blood-stained

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⁵³Elaine Showalter, Speaking of Gender (New York: Routledge, 1989) 4. Showalter stresses that "gender is not only a question of difference, which assumes that the sexes are separate and equal; but of power, since in looking at the history of gender relations, we find sexual asymmetry, inequality, and male dominance in every known society."

⁵⁴Hertz 163-4. Referring to an account of the 1848 Revolutions recorded by Victor Hugo, Hertz argues, "What the revolution is said to be doing figuratively is precisely what—in a moment—each of the women will be represented as doing literally, suddenly displaying monstrous and unknown forms to a horrified society."
mouth grew to an open square, as in the passion masks of the Greeks and Japanese. If ever a face meant death—if looks could kill—we saw it at that moment. (188)

According to Hertz, "the strength contained in a woman's weakness is the power to frighten man by revealing to him the possibility of his castration." The "snakes" of Lucy's brows symbolize little penises, recalling Freud's apotropaic notion of the ability to castrate: "To display the penis (or any of its surrogates) is to say: 'I am not afraid of you. I defy you. I have a penis.' Here then, is another way of intimidating the Evil Spirit." The woman as monstrous or demon becomes a threat in that she appropriates male desire, or, as Leonard Tennenhouse has noted, "In desiring a male, she embodies male desire. Thus the female becomes monstrous by virtue of containing male parts; she may be described as a 'Gorgon' or 'Medusa.'

55Hertz 165. Also refer to a discussion of oral obsession and the vampire's mouth as vagina dentata in Roth 113-121.


57The Gorgon/Medusa can be compared to the "sexually monstrous" woman who as "a member of the aristocracy embodies the illicit desire for access to that political body." See Leonard Tennenhouse, Power on Display, (New York: Methuen, 1986) 120. On Medusa see Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," Signs 1:4 (1975): 363-379.
Stoker's portrayal of Lucy as a sexually transgressive woman acting as a threshold for Dracula's access to property is counteracted by Mina, who ultimately proves resistant to sexual promiscuity. Mina is the traditional middle-class wife whose one extreme transgression involving the Count's forcing her into submission is viewed by her cronies as a forgivable act. As Brennan notes, she is perceived as the victim in that act.\(^5\) In all, Mina remains a staunch supporter of her husband and the group of men who go up against Dracula. She leans towards professionalism and exhibits independence in that she "supports herself, before marriage, by working as an assistant schoolmistress; knows stenography and can type, modern skills that help her complement her husband's career, as does her memorizing train schedules, choose[s] to marry, unlike Lucy whose marriage is basically arranged for her; and marries someone she can help intellectually and professionally."\(^5^n\) Mina's resistance to vampirism is most evident in her persistent efforts to transcribe and edit all of the materials that comprise the knowledge which eventually defeats Dracula.\(^6\) In other words, she

\(^5\)Brennan 2.  
\(^5^n\)Brennan 4.  
\(^6^n\)Brennan 4.
is redeemed because she remains, as Brennan points out, "a proper-enough lady." In contrast to Lucy's "masculine" aggressiveness, Mina's use of knowledge and technical expertise is not coded as masculine in the text. She is always considered feminine by the band of men who surround her because she contributes to their technologies of power.

It is through technologies of power, of invention and "scientific management" that the professionals in Dracula defeat the attempted revival of a deteriorating aristocracy. Gagnier demonstrates how the inventions and management that permeate Stoker's text are employed by the professionals of the middle class in order to disempower the foreign aristocratic. Thus Stoker's use of technology leads to a carefully engineered victory over the Count. The characters display various machines in order to conquer the antiquated world of Dracula. Not only are foreigners and tourists fascinated by "Mina's travelling typewriter, Dr Seward's phonograph,"

61 Brennan 5.


63 Gagnier 140.
the telegraph, and English electric lamps," they are mesmerized by the British steamships, Jonathan Harker's Kodak camera.\textsuperscript{64} It is, in fact, a group of technicians who take control in Stoker's novel. Dracula represents the struggle to establish technical authority propagated by late nineteenth-century middle-class professionals.

As Thomas comments,

\begin{quote}
If the British industrial revolution succeeded where the European political revolutions failed, it did so not by replacing the dictatorship of the aristocracy with the dictatorship of the proletariat but by investing a new kind of authority in a new class of 'professionals.'\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

In this context, as Dracula relates the story of "England . . . defeat[ing] the forces of myth and superstition by enlisting an international network of scientists and scholars, reflecting contemporary methods of 'research' and the progress of professionalisation."\textsuperscript{66}

Still, a significant portion of the story derives its sensation from the fictionalized title character, whose presence brings to light those issues about gender and patriarchy that the professionals fear. That is to say, a major part of Dracula's notorious mythical

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{64}Gagnier 149.
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\textsuperscript{65}Thomas 507. According to Thomas, "The sensation novel tells the story of that political displacement" (485).
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\textsuperscript{66}Gagnier 149.
\end{flushright}
presence pivots on his mysterious sexuality, an element that pervades the entire work. Throughout this novel, impalement pivots on the power of authority invested in sexual violence. Yet the novel's sexual violence is not torture in the sense of pain but rather the transgressive woman's sexual pleasure that is associated by the professionals with deviant behavior.

According to Foucault, "At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared; the tortured body was avoided; the theatrical representation of pain was excluded from punishment. The age of sobriety in punishment had begun." As Foucault has shown, the power held by the aristocrat during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries slowly began to shift into the hands of middle-class professionals through various technologies of power, in part due to the enforcement of correctional training, mental conditioning, and constraints of the "inapt body" or machine. Professionals controlled the body "by a set of regulations and by empirical methods relating to the army, the school, and the hospital." These "disciplines became general formulas of

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67 Foucault, Discipline 14.

68 Foucault, Discipline 136.
Thus the political anatomy of the body came under the jurisdiction of technicians, whose association of the body with a mechanics of power shifted correctional duties from the public eye to the private arena of middle-class professionals:

It was the emergence . . . of a new type of supervision--both knowledge and power--over individuals who resisted disciplinary normalization. The supervision of normality was firmly encased in a medicine or a psychiatry that provided it with a sort of "scientificity."  

The entire band of men who perform the nullification of Lucy and Dracula are defined by professionalism. Jonathan Harker, who starts out as an agent for the solicitor Peter Hawkins, is elevated from clerk to lawyer and inherits Hawkins's business. Jack Seward, a psychologist, is "handsome, well off, and of good birth," and also a scientist and practitioner of forensic medicine. Abraham Van Helsing's credentials are numerous. He is a philosopher, a metaphysician, and a lawyer. Furthermore, as Renfield points out, Van Helsing has discovered the continuous evolution of brain-matter. While most critics exclude Quincey Morris and Arthur Holmwood from this group, they are both strong supporters

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69 Foucault, Discipline 137.

70 Foucault, Discipline 296.
of these professionals. Arthur's actions are truly those of a respectable bourgeois-aristocrat. He is the one who drives the stake through Lucy's heart. Finally, Quincey P. Morris, an adventurer from America--a country without the history of an old aristocracy, is just as much a part of the group by way of his participation as is Arthur.

As Jack Seward notes in his letter to Arthur, the three of them have spent the night by campfires "in the prairies," risked a landing at the Marquesas Islands in the Pacific, and drunk together on the shores of Titicaca. Thus all three are adventurers who ally themselves with Jonathan and Van Helsing. Linked to Seward by these previous bonding experiences, Quincey and Arthur become just as much a part of the professionals' attack on Dracula and Lucy as do Van Helsing and Jonathan.

As a group of professionals, these men and Mina orchestrate an all-out effort to destroy both the transgressive bourgeois woman and the decadent old aristocrat. The decapitation of Lucy represents a "normalizing" or the counter-castration of the power staged by Medusa's head. The middle-class professionals counteract woman's "power to frighten man by revealing to him the possibility of his castration."\textsuperscript{71} The threat of

\textsuperscript{71}Hertz 165.
castration is nullified by the men "raping" and decapitating the vampire. Lucy's threat to masculinity is registered directly when the professionals confront her as she returns to her tomb with an infant clutched in her arms. Lucy retaliates with a mesmerizing gaze. But the group of men later reclaim their masculine power by staging a complete extermination of Lucy the vamp. The symbolic rape that takes place suggests the nullification of Lucy's "masculine" sexual desire. Lucy's aggressiveness is eradicated in a startling scene. The middle-class men stage the killing of Lucy in order to reclaim violence as a privileged act for males. As Lucy lies in her coffin, center stage, the professionals perform a kind of "twist" on impalement. Lucy the impaler becomes the impaled while the group of technicians reaffirm their role as impalers:

Arthur placed the point over the heart, and as I looked I could see its dent in the white flesh. Then he struck with all his might. 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 chimped together till the lips were cut and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untremling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. (192)
Leonard Tennenhouse observes that "by forcible rape, by seduction, or by merely representing her as the desiring subject, Lucy's body is understood as taking in an extra member." Furthermore, the act of depriving the woman of her sexual desire emasculates her power, or as Tennenhouse explains: "Purifying the female body of its male sexuality resolves this dilemma symbolically in that it violently subordinates the female body to male authority, for this renews the symbolic power of the sexual body to authorize patriarchy." 

While Lucy is "normalized" through death (her body does not disintegrate), the similar symbolic rape performed on Dracula totally exterminates him. Not only does Quincey's bowie knife symbolize forced penetration, but Jonathan's knife ripping across Dracula's neck suggests castration. In the final scene of the novel, the deteriorating aristocrat Dracula is "impaled" by Jonathan Harker and Quincey Morris. Mina observes:

I saw the Count lying within the box upon the earth, some of which the rude falling from the cart had scattered over him. He was deathly pale, just like a waxen image, and the red eyes glared with the horrible vindictive look which I knew too well. As I looked, the eyes saw the

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Tennenhouse 120.

Tennenhouse 120

Roth 116. Roth suggests that Dracula's final exit in a mist points to his triumph over the group.
sinking sun, and the look of hate in them turned to triumph. But, on the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan's great knife. I shrieked as I saw it shear through the throat; whilst at the same moment Mr. Morris' bowie knife plunged in the heart. I shall be glad as long as I live that even in that moment of final dissolution there was in the face a look of peace, such as I never could have imagined might have rested there. (325, Emphasis mine)

In a far less grim act than that of Lucy's demise, Dracula the impaler becomes the impaled and, therefore, demasculinized. As impalee, his power is reversed. But here, again, we witness the victim looking back at the spectator. Furthermore, Mina notes that Dracula's "vindictive look" has changed into a look of "triumph." This image could easily be regarded as a victory for the aristocrat if one has considered all along that Dracula's ultimate goal was his own death. In terms of class, death would alleviate the undeadness of old corruption. In this sense, Dracula's preoccupation with gazing at the setting of the sun would represent the event he hopes will not occur before he can be "cured" of his condition. Moreover, in the "final dissolution" brought about by the penetration of Jonathan and Quincey's knives, Mina makes it clear that a "look of peace" rests on Dracula's face, a sign that the vampire has been normalized. Of course all of these looks depend on Mina's interpretation. As the narrator of the final scene, Mina leaves the reader
without any sense of closure. Unlike Seward's conclusive narration of Lucy's demise, Mina's narration lacks the certainty of fixed power. The position of power remains ambivalent and almost verges on collapse.

The only position of authority that the middle-class characters in this novel can truly stake a claim to is the text itself. The middle-class professionals who produce the text derive both a power and pleasure through the collective documenting of evidence that supports their position. Their scientific strategies of investigation facilitate a form of power. As Foucault notes, the exercising of these strategies empowers those professional positions:

The medical examination, the psychiatric investigation, the pedagogical report, and family controls may have the over-all and apparent objective of saying no to all wayward or unproductive sexualities, but the fact is that they function as mechanisms with a double impetus; pleasure and power. The pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light; and on the other hand, the pleasure that kindles at having to evade this power, flee from it, fool it, or travesty it. . . . These attractions, these evasions, these circular incitements have traced around bodies and sexes, not boundaries not to be crossed, but perpetual spirals of power and pleasure.75

75Foucault, History 45.
Resigned to the fact that they are not going to be believed, Jonathan Harker composes the novel's afterword, conferring a triumph that is based on all of the evidence presented throughout the story, namely a collection of documents that informs the reader through technological means of evidence. That is to say that the text consists of newspaper clippings, telegrams, letters, diary and journal entries, ship logs, phonograph recordings, and personal memorandums. As Auerbach points out, Dracula's story is marginalized, revealed only minimally through Harker's journal and what other characters say about him.\textsuperscript{76} Stoker's privileging of middle-class discourse in Dracula aptly invests the middle-class professionals with power of authority.

What I have tried to show in this chapter is that Dracula represents a text that foregrounds a sexual explicitness that violated Victorian respectability. The forbidden expressions for new passions and undiscovered sins are manifested in the prototype of the dangerous, aggressive woman, who is coded as being masculine and symbolizes the sexual corruption of an old aristocracy. However, the novel's tendency to focus on the

\textsuperscript{76}Auerbach, Our Vampires 82. On the suppression of Dracula's voice, see Carol A. Senf, "Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror," The Journal of Narrative Technique, 9 (1979): 160-70.
transgressing of sexuality and gender upstages the less dramatic middle-class struggle for cultural hegemony that forms the story's core. The heroes and heroine that comprise the novel's "Crew of Light," as Van Helsing calls the group, conquer not only the transgressive-bourgeois woman but the aristocratic Dracula. In the battle to establish a middle-class cultural hegemony, the transgressive bourgeoisie represents freedom of sexual expression. On the other hand, the middle-class professionals represent bourgeois respectability. Like Wagner, the Wehr-wolf and Lady Audley's Secret, Dracula represents a novel that uses the struggle for middle-class hegemony to frame the image of a sexualized woman who, in her association with the old aristocracy, transgresses bourgeois respectability.
Culture appears as a struggle among various political factions to possess its most valued signs and symbols. The internal composition of a given text is nothing more or less than the history of its struggle with contrary forms of representation for the authority to control semiosis. Cultural functions, which we automatically attribute to and embody as women--those, for example, of mother, nurse, teacher, social worker, and general overseer of service institutions--have been just as instrumental in bringing the new middle classes into power and maintaining their dominance as all the economic take-offs and political break-throughs we automatically attribute to men.¹

Each of the nineteenth-century authors I have considered contributes to the history of the Victorian bourgeois struggle to establish cultural authority. Yet in their effort to establish a middle-class cultural authority, these authors have imagined the aristocrat as a locus from which middle-class culture must be defined. As a sequence, Reynolds, Braddon, and Stoker's novels chart the development of an increasingly identified, increasingly self-conscious, and increasingly diversified middle class.

In Wagner, there is no middle class. Reynolds pits the class struggle between the lower classes and the aristocracy. By leaving the middle class completely out

¹Armstrong, Desire 25-6.
of the picture, he places his lower-class readers in a position to distrust the aristocracy. In other words, the absence of the middle class in Wagner posits Reynolds as the middle-class spokesman for moral authority. The real middle-class character begins to emerge through Francisco, who is a "good" aristocrat with respectable bourgeois values. Only the transgressive aristocrats and lower-class members are punished. But Reynolds's designation of punishment for both classes of immoral characters is always associated with the transgressive woman, who affiliates herself with old aristocratic values of wealth and status.

Braddon's mid-century novel represents the middle class as divided into factions that become either pro- or anti-aristocratic. The struggle between the pro-aristocrat bourgeoisie (transgressive bourgeoisie) and the anti-aristocrat bourgeoisie (bourgeois aristocrat) represents a contest between the values of an allegedly old corrupt aristocracy and a new respectable middle class. As bigamist and attempted murderess, Lady Audley epitomizes the transgressive bourgeoisie, who desires the aristocratic values of the old aristocracy. Robert Audley, like Reynolds's Francisco, acts as the bourgeois aristocrat. Like Wagner, Braddon's novel locates
aristocratic transgression in the figure of an unrestrained woman.

Dracula demonstrates that a new faction of the middle class, the professionals, evolves as a unit that works to overcome an old aristocracy that still persists in the late-nineteenth century. As an anachronistic and supernatural monster of the past feudal society, Dracula does not represent the aristocracy as void of political power, but rather he is invested with the power of the old aristocracy that preys on the middle-class imagination. The aristocrat as monster is, therefore, a figment of the middle-class imagination. Stoker portrays middle-class anxieties about aristocratic power through both Lucy Westenra's and Dracula's crossing of gender boundaries.

These novels reveal how the middle classes were fascinated with the figure of the aristocrat. All three texts invite the readers to become intrigued with the figure of the aristocrat and the aristocracy, but the novels dissuade their readers from romanticizing about aristocratic wealth and status. Thus these novels are less about the destruction and punishment of the aristocracy than they are about the institution of the aristocrat as a figure in the middle-class imagination.
With this in mind, I have tried to show how within these Victorian novels, middle-class tensions erupt through the image of the transgressive female, who is connected with an aristocrat but coded by the author as crossing gender boundaries. Then, writers show this female figure as blatantly sexualized and therefore coded as masculine. She is fascinated with the values of the old aristocracy and desires to become an aristocrat of the past. In all of the novels, this female figure, who represents the aristocracy, is set against a male character who upholds respectable bourgeois values. Thus the middle-class male figure always conquers the unrestrained aristocracy. The patriarchal bourgeoisie's attempt to control the power of the aristocracy involves controlling the transgressive woman, therefore representing the triumph of the middle classes.
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