1

100% COPY QUALITY
MICRO
100% COPY QUALITY

National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, tests publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30.

PATRIARCHY MOCKED:
THE SENSATION NOVELS OF MARY ELIZABETH BRADDON

by

SUSAN HILLABOLD, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

August 15, 1988

© copyright
1988, Susan Hillabold

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-46292-2

The Undersigned recommend to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
acceptance of the thesis
PATRIARCHY MOCKED:
THE SENSATION NOVELS OF MARY ELIZABETH BRADDON
submitted by Susan Hillabold, B.A.
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

Chairman, Department of English

Carleton University

August 15, 1988

ABSTRACT

In two of her novels, both written in the 1860s, Mary Elizabeth Braddon inverts the social codes to mock patriarchy. Lady Audley's Secret appears to support the patriarchal system when in fact it exposes its hypocrisy. Lady Audley is considered dangerous because she masks her intelligence with angelic beauty. I show why women would identify with the villainess instead of sympathising with her self-centered but patriarchally correct rival. The Doctor's Wife equally inverts our expectations. Isabel Sleaford to all appearances is a romantic fool. Two men attempt to educate her to see the world as they do. I show that Isabel's romanticized view of the world is the 'reality' of the text and that offered by the men is false.

TO JIM ZALESCHUK,
MY FRIEND AND ROCK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. B. Rutland who initially introduced me to Lady Audley's Secret. From there, he allowed me freedom to explore her novels and gave me guidance when the path was lost. Most importantly, I want to thank him for his belief that Braddon has something to say. Without that belief, this thesis on Braddon would not have been written.

I also want to thank Debra Wills, who, at the eleventh hour, was called upon to scrutinize my next to last draft. Thanks also go to Jim Zaleschuk who read the novels and my text, and who patiently acted the wall against which I threw my ideas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: Mary Elizabeth Braddon.	1
Chapter One: <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u> : The Dangerous Woman	12
Chapter Two: <u>The Doctor's Wife</u> : The Foolish Woman	51
Conclusion.	83
Appendix One: A Note on the Text <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u>	85
Appendix Two: Pre-Raphaelite Paintings	92
List of Works Cited	104

INTRODUCTION

MARY ELIZABETH BRADDON

"Who is Mary Elizabeth Braddon?" This is not a surprising question today; but seventy-three years ago when she was still alive, everyone had heard of Mary Elizabeth Braddon. This petite Victorian woman was an expert in the literature of murder, conspiracy, and bigamy; today, she is relegated to footnotes in articles on other novelists. Although she wrote more than eighty books, she is remembered only as 'the author of' Lady Audley's Secret, rarely read, surviving as a synonym for the nineteenth-century sensational school of fiction. Modern criticism is meagre and insufficient. Braddon, in the footnotes where she dwells today, is mistakenly coupled with the moralistic sensationalist Mrs. Henry Wood or the patriarchal Wilkie Collins (see Henry James in The Nation). Modern criticism has little in common with the nineteenth-century reception of her novels, but both are confused. They are either unaware of what she implies but nervous that there is something more than appears on the surface, or partially aware of her message and (especially in the case of the Victorians) hostile.

From 1862 to 1915, the year of her death, Mary Elizabeth Braddon was enormously popular. She wanted to make money, and she was quite successful. At the same time, she wanted to comment on the patriarchal conventions in which she, as a writer and a woman, was trapped.⁴ This is apparent in her heroines or anti-heroines, who were neither simpering Florence Dombey's nor revengeful Estellas; they were not simply angels or demons. Her heroines were constructed as critically as the sensation format permitted, which allowed women readers to recognize and sympathize with the social limitations imposed upon them. Braddon was well-known and established enough to afford many writers the opportunity to parody her. According to Robert Lee Wolff, these often humourless squibs came from men,

because her novels "loaned themselves readily to the private phobias of her male readers" (Wolff 194). Thomas Hood, in Beecham's Christmas Annual for 1864, poked fun at Braddon's two bigamy novels with cartoon-strips entitled "Quintilia the Quadrigamist; or, the Heir and the Hounds," and "Maurora Maudely; or, Bigamy and Buttons" (Wolff 194). In the satirical periodical, The Mask, she was also caricatured as leaping through hoops, a title of one of her novels on each hoop, to land on Pegasus' back. The ringleader of this circus scene is her husband, John Maxwell, holding in readiness another hoop with yet another Braddon novel (Wolff 219 and photo-reproduction # 25). Perhaps the wittiest parody of Braddon's novels belongs to Bret Harte, who wrote "Selina Sedilia By Miss M.E. Braddon" (Helsing, The Woman Question: Literary Issues 132 to 135), first published in Punch (44 [1863], 183 and 53 [1867], 17). Despite her detractors' efforts, however, Braddon's novels became an institution for many women.

During her lifetime, Braddon gained respect and admiration from fellow writers. In his biography, Wolff mentions that Dickens' daughter, Kate Perugini, "remembered that her father's favorite Braddon novel had been The Doctor's Wife (1864)," and that Thackeray's daughter, Lady Ritchie, "wrote that her father especially admired Lady Audley's Secret" (Wolff 9). Thackeray also said "if I could plot like Miss Braddon, I should be the greatest novelist that ever lived" (Turner 382). Charles Reade praised her continually: "Her fertility of invention is boundless, her industry phenomenal, her style sound and vigorous, and she has rare dramatic instincts" (Wolff 9). Reade also dedicated his book, The Wandering Heir (1875), "to my friend M.E. Braddon, as a slight mark of respect for her private virtues and public talents" (Wolff 250).

A young Henry James (1843 - 1916) reviewed Aurora Floyd, a Braddon bigamy novel, in The Nation: "Miss Braddon . . . goes to work like an artist" (James 594).

Later, an older Henry James would send her a book with a note: "It was delightful to me, at the end of so much time, to have the occasion to make you a small definite sign in respect to all the fond beguilement of other days that your gallant literary name calls up for me the memory of" (Wolff 10). Robert Louis Stevenson, before he died, wrote to Braddon, "I remember reading Lady Audley's Secret when I was fifteen, and I wish my days to be bound each to each, by Miss Braddon's novels. . . . It is something to be out and away greater than Scott, Shakespeare, Homer, in the South Seas, and to that you have attained" (Wolff 9). In his Confessions of a Young Man (1886), George Moore recalls being intrigued with the character of the pale, slender, fairy-like woman who killed her husband. He "took the first opportunity of stealing the novel [because of its popularity or its contraband nature?]. . . . I read it eagerly, passionately, vehemently. I read its successor, and its successor. . . . until I came to a book called The Doctor's Wife -- a lady who loved Shelley and Byron" (Wolff 10). Ford Madox Hueffer (later changed to Ford), in It Was the Nightingale, "admiringly remembered [Braddon] as a writer 'who took her work more seriously than herself'" (Wolff 11). "Few novelists of her day," he continues, "had her workmanlike knowledge or could write such good English, like Cobbett's" (Wolff 418).

In addition to her popularity at home, she was also read abroad. From early as 1864, many of her novels were translated into other languages, including Russian, which boasted of five of her novels (Turner 381). Tolstoy appears to have been familiar with Braddon's novels (both in English and in Russian translations) and may have been intending to use one of her novels for his "future Cossacks," which never materialized (Turner 380). Altogether, these remarks constitute strong positive testimonials from some of the leading novelists from the early Victorian (Dickens, Thackeray) to the early modern era (Ford, Moore). Clearly, Braddon was a

novelist's novelist.

Before reading Lady Audley's Secret, Arnold Bennett, influenced by hostile reviewers, expected trash, but was surprised after reading it to find "its level [of] excellence, its honesty, its fine disdain of trade tricks . . . the sound vigour of the writing. . . . Not infrequently she strikes the true lyric note." Commenting on a quotation from Lady Audley's Secret, Bennett compares her to other practitioners of the sensation genre: "Wilkie Collins could not have done it . . . nor, I dare to say, sundry greater men whom to name in this connection would be to call forth a protest; nor any other living sensational writer" (Wolff 13). He found the ending of Lady Audley's Secret "not entirely happy, and such happiness as occurs is by no means insisted upon" (Bennett 26). Bennett, like so many other readers of Lady Audley's Secret, is on the verge of understanding this sensational novel, but he never takes the dangerous plunge to question why he is uncomfortable with the novel's resolution. Instead, he quietly accepts the contradiction that, "while the reader is ultimately compelled to pity Lady Audley, she is not spared from a horrible fate" (Bennett 27). Despite the inability of many to grasp the seriousness of Braddon's novels, Bennett, like others, enjoyed her plots and admired her style. He wrote about Miss Braddon in the ironically named Fame and Fiction: An Enquiry into Certain Popularities, in which he discusses her immense success:

It is a fact that there are thousands of tolerably educated English people who have never heard of Meredith, Hardy, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Kipling, Barrie, Crockett; but you would travel far before you reached the zone where the name of Braddon failed of its recognition. (Bennett 24 - 25)

Braddon's own story seems to mimic those of her heroines, in that there are two versions, one properly domestic and the other sensationally scandalous.¹ According

¹ With modern biographical tools at our disposal, we can excavate the puritan Victorian exterior to find another, more interesting life. The Victorians are not masters of morality but masters of disguise. Charles Dickens left his wife in 1858 to set up home with the much younger, eighteen year old actress Ellen Ternan,

5

to the first, Braddon's surface life was a model of Victorian propriety. Mary Elizabeth, the last of three children to Fanny White and Henry Braddon, was born in 1837, the year of Victoria's accession to the throne. Her father moved his family from Cornwall to London where he practised as a solicitor. She attended some day schools for girls, but her mother supplied most of her education. Her propensity for writing appeared when she was young, and by the late 1850s she had completed a comedietta, Loves of Arcadia, and a novel, Three Times Dead. She had six children by her husband, John Maxwell, who also published some of her eighty-plus novels.² When she died in 1915, she was mourned by many and was hailed as a writer never to be forgotten. Charles Reade wrote in a diary entry of 1874 what was to become a common tribute to Braddon:

I don't know where to find a better woman. Industrious, self-denying, gentle, affectionate, talented, and utterly unassuming, a devoted daughter, faithful wife, loving mother, and kindly step-mother. (Wolff 250)

This unassuming and unexceptionable daughter-wife-matron, however, is not the whole woman. As with her novels, there is a sub-text to the life. Robert Lee Wolff has scraped away the Victorian veneer to uncover another Mary Elizabeth

who, many have conjectured, bore a child by him (Mankowitz 221). Wilkie Collins never married but lived twenty-five years with a woman whom he briefly left to live with another mistress and the mother of his children. Both women and his children were recognized in his will (Peterson, Victorian Masters of Mystery 17).

² The number of novels she wrote varies depending upon what is counted. For instance, her shorter novels were often combined to make a larger book. Does one count the book or the novellas? Another problem arises regarding the authenticity of novels attributed to her. Because she was immensely popular, publishers would put her name to books written by unknowns in order to sell more copies. I am a victim to this unscrupulous practice: I bought Barbara, a novel credited to M.E. Braddon, but have since learned that it is spurious. Benjamin Nyberg lists Barbara as a fake Braddon novel (182), but the National Union Catalogue credits it to her. A third problem is that a novel may be published under two different titles. For instance, Three Times Dead (1860) was later republished as The Trail of the Serpent (Wolff 113). In addition, she also wrote anonymously. Wolff suggests that a novel of Restoration England, called Woman's Revenge; or, The Captain of the Guard, may be attributed to Braddon (Wolff 119).

Braddon. First, she was not born in 1837, as she claimed, but in 1835. When Braddon was four years old, her mother took the three children to Camberwell, London, and left the solicitor husband, who was unfaithful and incapable of staying out of debt or supporting a family. Later, to support herself and her mother, Braddon became an actress under the pseudonym of Mary Seyton (Wolff 46). This caused quite a sensation among her family because it was tantamount to becoming a loose woman. Despite the negative reaction of family and friends to her stage career, Braddon continued to pursue financial independence. At times, she attempted to reconcile her arrangements to Victorian propriety, but more often than not, she would ignore entreaties or advice to return to respectability in order to maintain her independence.

This independent spirit was inherited from both her grandmother and her mother. Grandmother Anne Babington raised her daughter, Fanny, alone, after leaving her husband, Patrick White (Wolff 20). With strong female examples before her, Braddon refused to make the same mistake as her maternal predecessors. Like Isabel Sleaford in The Doctor's Wife, Braddon would sweetly defer to the blustering, paternalistic men in her life, and then, with quiet aplomb, follow her own instincts and opinions. John Gilby, a Yorkshireman, was one such man. He apparently supported her and her mother after Braddon quitted the stage and while she was writing Garibaldi and Three Times Dead (Wolff 83). He considered himself Braddon's tutor and business manager, with hopes of becoming her husband once she was raised to his intellectual level (Wolff 94). In a letter to Braddon, he reproaches her for not following his advice minutely:

What a task shall I have if I try to guide your studies. You know best whether you will be guided or not, but it is the only thing that gives me misgivings and pain. Will you . . . see these objects of history & creation . . . I don't want you until you go to the gardens & to the Museum. (Wolff 84)

When he found out that Braddon was seeing Maxwell (he had London friends keeping an eye on her), Gilby vainly tried to assert his control. His anger at being thwarted in his designs is apparent in his last letter to her:

My enquiries respecting Mr. Maxwell were conducted in a strictly business manner, and so given to you -- and it was natural for me to infer, from your having so frequently consulted me on your literary affairs, that you would thank me for making them -- I need therefore scarcely notice the sneering language in which you tell me that my information is "vague and undefined, not to say absurd." A contrast no doubt it is to the hundred fulsome and varied expressions of gratitude in the letters which I have in my desk from you (continued as long as you imagined I could be of any service to you) and to your "promise on your honour" to consult me in seeking literary employment, and to take none without my permission!

But my mistake in taking you from your legitimate profession may afford me a not unprofitable lesson -- gratitude! why you hardly know the meaning of the word. Honour! Your code of Honour? You have become such an actress that you cannot speak without acting -- I have worked as hard and done as much for you as it was possible for a gentleman to do for a woman in your position. (Wolff 95 - 96)

Instead of contradicting him, she merely moved to London permanently, ignored his entreaties, and pursued her own affairs.

In 1860, she had met the proprietor of the periodical The Welcome Guest. John Maxwell was forty, married, and the father of five children; Braddon was twenty-five. If her novels scandalized her Victorian readers, her living arrangements with John Maxwell were no less sensational. Within eight years, she had six children by Maxwell (five of whom survived infancy), but could not legally marry him because his wife was still alive.

As in Jane Eyre (1847), the legal Mrs. Maxwell was confined to a lunatic asylum in Dublin (Mary Anne Crowley Maxwell went mad after the birth of her seventh child). But unlike Jane Eyre, Braddon chose to live with the husband. The tension over their living arrangements mounted, and in 1864 Maxwell let word get into the newspapers that he and Braddon had been married. However, Mary Anne's brother-in-law, the journalist Richard Brinsley Knowles, apparently read the wedding announcement. With energetic zeal, he contradicted the Braddon-Maxwell marriage

in every newspaper that had carried word of it (Wolff 104).³ Braddon and Maxwell were legally married in 1874 after Mary Anne died.

Throughout Braddon's long relationship with Maxwell, she was the main financial support of the large Maxwell clan. For example, in 1865 she bought Lichfield House, an early Georgian mansion in Richmond, in which she and Maxwell lived for the rest of their lives (Wolff 138, 139). Maxwell's fledgling publishing company published her books and she edited various Maxwell periodicals. Maxwell could barely stay solvent. In one case, Richard Bentley and Son held a note for money lent to him for the magazine, Temple Bar. When Maxwell could not pay, Bentley impounded money owed to Braddon on the novel Sir Jasper's Tenant. She eventually received the sum after appealing to the Court of Chancery. Bentley later acquired the magazine in 1866 (Wolff 138 - 139). In essence, John Maxwell, a business man, saw in Braddon a good deal and in return he was a devoted husband. After his death she would fondly say that he had "never shirked a domestic duty" and had always been "so good to" her. Despite these sentimental memories, the children showed impatience and even unkindness towards their blustery and emotionally explosive father (Wolff 358).

Edward George Bulwer-Lytton corresponded regularly with Braddon, who frequently referred to him as her mentor. She wrote to him as a fellow writer who needed to support herself, and requested his artistic advice (she often received it unrequested, but as always, followed her own inclinations). She never mentioned her unusual living arrangements, but after 1866, signed her letters "Mary Maxwell" and briefly said that she now had a large family.⁴ One can only speculate as to

³ For Knowles, see the Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XI. His role in this real-life pretended bigamy is comparable to that of Richard Mason in the fictional attempted bigamy of Jane Eyre.

⁴ This relationship is discussed briefly in the chapter on The Doctor's Wife, below.

how Bulwer-Lytton reacted to this sudden alteration in the script of his correspondent's life story.

No writer operates in a vacuum, and it is apparent that Braddon borrowed from life for her fiction. A devoted 'wife' and mother, she nevertheless was considered an immoral, loose woman;⁵ and, as with most women writers in the Victorian period, she had to convince her detractors that she fulfilled her duties as wife, mother, and daughter before attempting to be a writer. Her heroines were equally misunderstood by the society, particularly the men, around them.

In this thesis, I discuss the perceptions of two misunderstood heroines (or anti-heroines). Golden-haired Lady Audley pretends to be innocent and naive but is experienced in manipulating the men who have created her. A figment of men's 'reality,' she emasculates two men and moves from the lower-middle to the upper class. Her story begins, not ends, with her marriage, and leads to her death and freedom from a duplicitous life. In contrast, the black-haired Isabel Sleaford believes herself to be worldly because of her extensive reading of romance novels, but is perceived by some to be naïve while others see her as immoral and lazy. Both perceptions are wrong. Unlike Lady Audley, who is herself a creation, Isabel is a creator. Her fictional creations become the reality of the novel; her own life begins to resemble one of her romances. Isabel survives the controlling influence of two men, and it is their deaths and not her own which give her freedom.

Both women are neither entirely good nor entirely bad, white nor black, Amelia Osbornes nor Becky Sharps. Braddon did not want her heroines to be like

⁵ This harsh attitude towards Braddon is evident in Gilby's reference to her low and immoral occupation of actress and newspaper criticisms not of her novels but of her lifestyle (see Oliphant 260). Braddon's desire to dissolve such criticism no doubt led to her pretended marriage to Maxwell. Unlike other female writers who also had unusual domestic arrangements, Braddon did not come directly from a secure middle-class home but from a provincial travelling theatrical troupe.

the simplistic, cut-out dolls of some of her contemporaries, such as Laura Fairlie in The Woman in White or Florence Dombey in Dombey and Son. She created one heroine, a product of her patriarchal society, who broke the moral codes of conduct in order to survive her pitiable circumstances. Lady Audley was created to need men, and without them she dies. Perhaps from just such a negative feminine situation was born the imaginative Isabel Sleaford, the doctor's wife. Just as Lady Audley needs men, Isabel believes she needs a hero to be a heroine. By the end of The Doctor's Wife, Isabel is the surviving heroine; she is not a creation to be disposed of, like Lady Audley, but a creator of her own world. Isabel learns that she can be a heroine even without a hero.

Braddon wanted to portray woman in all her complexity and social limitations. A sensational writer could say more to her readers than just recite a catalogue of horrors. In Lady Audley's Secret, Alicia Audley describes what Braddon, as an artist, hoped to reveal in her novel:

I think that sometimes a painter is in a manner inspired, and is able to see, through the normal expression of the face, another expression that is equally a part of it, though not to be perceived by common eyes. (Lady Audley's Secret 71)

In a sensational format, Braddon painted a picture, perhaps more real than in other sensational novels, of a morality that allowed a husband to desert his wife but condemned the wife because she too wants to exchange poverty for a more comfortable life. In The Doctor's Wife, Braddon's second self, the sensational writer Sigismund Smith, reflects upon the writer's goal:

There's a kind of righteous indignation, and a frantic desire to do something splendid for his fellow-creatures which a man feels when he's writing -- that seems to ooze away somehow when his copy has gone to the printers. (The Doctor's Wife 171 - 172)

Our generation will be able to see her indignation at, and her desire to expose, the patriarchal system of male authority and privilege.

In writing this thesis, I have approached Braddon's novels from various perspectives. I do not subscribe to any one critical doctrine because I have found tenets applicable from many schools. I cannot ignore the more traditional methods I have been taught, nor the new ones being developed today. I have read feminist criticism eliciting, for me, the female voice in the patriarchal order. To that end, I hope that I have followed the pioneering footsteps of such women rediscoverers as Elaine Showalter, Rachel Brownstein, Nina Auerbach, Kate Millet, Winifred Hughes, and Sally Mitchell. Feminism has changed the shape of critical theory. We now have a grid onto which we can place Victorian texts, especially those written by women. Elaine Showalter exposed a feminine subculture when she said that sensationalists supplied excitement by inverting stereotypes and parodying the conventions of male contemporaries (A Literature of Their Own 160). Sally Mitchell and Winifred Hughes continue along this angle of analysis to discuss the nature of sensationalism and the feminine text. In particular, Hughes notes that Lucy Audley threatens respectable classes because she identifies with them (Hughes 127), and Mitchell carries this idea a step further to argue that the reader sympathizes with Lady Audley (Mitchell 82). Auerbach studies the woman and her relation to the Victorian myths surrounding her. In the following pages, I am indebted to all of these predecessors, and to others. During her life, contemporary authors clearly recognized Mary Elizabeth Braddon's artistry and craftsmanship. Using modern critical theories, I hope to show why this queen of sensational fiction is worth reading today.

CHAPTER 1

LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET: THE DANGEROUS WOMAN

The sensational Lady Audley's Secret (1862) was Mary Elizabeth Braddon's first successful novel. This three-volume novel of murder, bigamy, and deception went through several printings within its first three months (see Appendix 1 for a brief discussion of its publishing history). This popularity for a female novelist also produced negative reviews, often showing a lack of comprehension of her novel. For instance, the Spectator commented that "beyond incident it contains nothing" (October 1862, p. 1196). Employing a metaphor appropriate to the domestic sphere that Victorian women occupied, the Spectator claimed that artists who cater to the "classes who love the horrible and the grotesque" should be "content with their true place in literature, which is not above the basement" (1197). Despite devoting an entire article to Lady Audley's Secret, Temple Bar also situated Braddon's novel with "kitchen literature" and bemoaned the fact that her popularity had now invaded the upper classes above stairs: "Unhappily, the sensational novel is that one touch of anything but nature that makes the kitchen and the drawing-room kin" (June 1870, 424).

A few reviewers, however, had a vague grasp of Braddon's radical intention. The Contemporary Review published H.A. Page's article provocatively titled "The Morality of Literary Art." Page, although he refrained from praising her novel, did notice Braddon's reversal of roles:

And this naturally leads us to say a single word of Miss Braddon and her class, who studiously, and of set purpose, seek to awaken our sympathies for certain types of character by involving us in such circumstances as tend to set us in active opposition to some conventional moral regards. With them spirit is opposed to form Those very elements of culture which should teach on every side the sacredness of law . . . are made the mediums for transporting such weak characters as may be influenced by pictures of this kind into a new world, where savage gratification of sense and of personal desire is the supreme good. Practically, the result of such books is to reverse the grand old idea of what constitutes heroic behaviour, by cunningly eliciting

our sympathy for individuals placed in doubtful circumstances. (Contemporary Review 178)

Another insightful reviewer, Fraser Rae, found it confusing that morally-righteous journalists would praise Miss Braddon's works when "it is not said that Robert Audley ever repented of having been the means of causing his aunt to end her days prematurely in a mad-house, charged with a crime of which she was innocent." (North British Review 96).

But it is through a detractor, another female novelist, that we can best understand what Braddon was condemning. In Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Margaret Oliphant observed that women in novels display too much unwomanliness and that novels should end in either a "wholesome wedding" or a "violet-covered grave" (259). Both female authors and characters must follow the dictates of nature: "... a woman has one duty of invaluable importance to her country and her race which cannot be over-estimated -- and that is the duty of being pure" (275). Braddon's novel revolted against this typical Victorian attitude towards women and also towards contemporary moral novels. Braddon's female protagonist is certainly not pure; and the ending of the novel reverses Victorian expectations: the "wedding" rewards the cunning, morally questionable Robert Audley, and the "grave" is the punishment for Lady Audley, although innocent of murder. Sally Mitchell in The Fallen Angel comments on conclusions to Victorian novels in which the reader is frustrated: "Yet it is a first tenet among propagandists that the reader must feel dissatisfied by a story's ending, so that the remaining tension will be carried over into an effort to change society" (118). Lady Audley's Secret produced confusion regarding its intent. Many readers loved to hate Lady Audley while a few others were not sure why they sympathized with the wax-doll protagonist. This confusion is the result of a calculated duplicity: the text both supports and condemns the ruling patriarchal system.

The surface design of Lady Audley's Secret works as a traditional text in a genre created and manipulated by male authors. A beautiful but wicked woman has exchanged her married name, Helen Talboys, for the fictitious identity of governess Lucy Graham. Once married to the wealthy baronet, Sir Michael, Lady Audley (alias Lucy Graham) avoids discovery and keeps her secrets until Robert Audley, her nephew by marriage and enemy, forces her hand. Following the expected formula, Lady Audley is caught and duly punished. Wicked women, the plot implies, can never escape punishment. Simultaneously with Lady Audley's decline, Robert Audley, a young barrister, matures and takes on responsibilities, such as detecting Lady Audley's schemes and bringing her to justice, demonstrating that he can be a contributing member of the patriarchal order. He is then rewarded with a marriage to the right type of woman, Clara Talboys.

The text is more than the record of the fall of an immoral woman and the rise of a righteous man; it is a duel for survival and supremacy. Robert Audley's success depends upon Lady Audley's failure. But beneath this traditional text is inscribed another, a text that mocks the victor, Robert, and the patriarchal values he upholds. At the end of the novel, the reader sympathizes with the woman who overcame poverty only to be condemned to a lunatic asylum for a crime she did not commit, and a sin sanctioned by society, marriage for money rather than love.

Lady Audley's Secret is a palimpsestic text; that is, once the traditional surface is peeled away, another, perhaps dangerous, text emerges. Lady Audley herself wears a wax-doll, angelic veneer which, when removed, reveals a determined and dangerous woman capable of murder to avoid discovery and eventual death. At this submerged level, Lady Audley's Secret shows a woman determined to survive and succeed despite the weak men in her life. Helen Maldon, the beautiful daughter of a "shabby" half-pay naval officer, seizes her chance for advancement by marrying

George Talboys, a cornet in a cavalry regiment (18). Within a year, Helen Talboys, daughter of a drunk, is also the wife of a man unable to support his family and the mother of a son. George escapes poverty (and condemnation by society) by deserting his family and sailing to Australia, to mine for gold. Left by an ineffectual husband who will only return years later as a wealthy man, Helen Talboys earns a meagre living by giving piano lessons. Her father drinks away what money she earns and the village community pities her. Helen escapes poverty by changing her identity. She becomes Lucy Graham and procures a job as governess to Dr. Dawson, in the village of Audley in Essex. Sir Michael Audley, the rich landowner, smitten with the angelic governess, proposes to and is accepted by Lucy Graham, who has no idea what has become of her first husband (12). For the third time, Helen Maldon changes her name and identity and becomes Lady Audley of Audley Court. Of course, her marriage to the wealthy baronet is bigamous and illegal. Her legal husband, George, returns after making his fortune to reclaim his deserted wife. Lady Audley wants to avoid detection, which would throw her back into poverty (assuming that both George and Sir Michael would reject her). With the help of her father, she plans her own death. As coincidence would have it, the heart-broken George Talboys is an old school chum of Sir Michael's nephew, Robert Audley. When George confronts his wife, she reacts with desperation and violence. George's disappearance prompts Robert to pursue Lady Audley. Again, Lady Audley is forced to act violently.

Virtually all novels written in the nineteenth century support the reigning ideology. For example, Dickens' novels express the fears and anxieties of the dominant middle class; they do not suggest that society should change, except for greater compassion and understanding for the less fortunate. Although Dickens attempts to raise the social consciousness of Victorian England, his emphasis rests

on morality and stability. His female characters, such as Esther Summerson (Bleak House) and Florence Dombey (Dombey and Son), are eventually rewarded with husbands, money, and babies for their subservience, obedience, and patience. Even little Nell (The Old Curiosity Shop) lives and dies an angel, not a fleshly girl or woman.¹

Lady Audley, however angelic she appears on the surface, is a dangerous woman, translated, in the terms of Robert and the patriarchy he represents, as monster, because she is a bigamist who threatens the institution of marriage and the integrity of the patriarchal social order. But bigamy alone does not make a woman dangerous in Braddon's works. Another Braddon novel, the second of her bigamy novels written at the same time as Lady Audley's Secret, rewards the culprit. Aurora Floyd, in the novel of the same name, marries first her groom and then a wealthy Yorkshire farmer. Like Lady Audley, Aurora is not in fact the murderer of her legal husband, but she is observed in a compromising situation. Unlike Lady Audley, Aurora is rewarded (for what, is not made clear) with a legal marriage to the immature farmer and a healthy baby boy (born a convenient year after the legal wedding). Aurora is not locked away in a lunatic asylum because she is not dangerous, as is Lady Audley, to the dominant order. Lady Audley is dangerous because she emasculates men. George, her first husband, is feminized (see below), and Sir Michael, her second husband, is "impotent" (347). Although she emasculates men, she embodies the Victorian ideal of the intoxicating, fair-haired angel who is all beauty and no brain. The men who respond positively to her

¹ See Kate Millet, "The Debate Over Women: Ruskin vs. Mill." She argues that Dickens was in the forefront of social criticism without altering his traditional view of women:

"Dickens . . . achieved a nearly perfect indictment of both patriarchy and capitalism in Dombey and Son . . . without ever relinquishing the sentimental version of women . . . nearly all the "serious" women in Dicken's [sic] fiction, with the exception of Nancy and a handful of her criminal sisters, are insipid goodies" (122).

charms create their own monster, their own pretty snake. Lady Audley is dangerous because she embodies both masculine desire and the desperation of the Victorian woman.

The traditional novel of the deceptive, dangerous woman who is finally caught and punished is one of the inversions and discrepancies which play on the reader's expectations. The reader brings to the text pre-conceived ideas based on the traditional, avowed values of society and of the genre. The reader, therefore, has certain expectations which the text fulfills, such as Lady Audley's punishment through eventual death in a Belgian asylum for the insane. At the same time, however, the text also produces its own system of beliefs. In other words, the text creates a pattern to which the reader becomes accustomed. The reader enters the text and adopts the regulations and rules produced by it. For instance, Lady Audley has a secret; indeed, she has many secrets. The title says so and the text produces many hints of secret crimes. Robert Audley is determined to expose her secrets through inductive reasoning, which, the text suggests, will lead to the "truth." By the novel's close, the reader realizes the text's deception. After exhausting all her secrets -- her earlier marriage to George Talboys, her supposed murder of George, the madness inherited from her mother -- and finding them less hideous than expected, the reader realizes that Robert's reasoning did not lead to the "truth" and that Lady Audley is not a murderess.

In the first chapter of Lady Audley's Secret, the text, in describing Audley Court, anticipates the inversions, deceptions, and games that will be played on the reader:

A noble place; inside as well as out, a noble place -- a house in which you incontinently lost yourself if ever you were so rash as to go about it alone; a house in which no one room had any sympathy with another, every chamber running off at a tangent into an inner chamber, and through that down some narrow staircase leading to a door which, in its

turn, led back into that very part of the house from which you thought yourself the farthest (Lady Audley's Secret 2)

Braddon's text is like a gothic house, where the reader must expect surprises and roam a labyrinth the author sets out for her.² This deceptive, gothicised Audley Court is also associated with the equally deceptive Lady Audley. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in The Madwoman in the Attic point out that the house, to which the woman is relegated, embodies her spatial constrictions. The woman is not only house-bound but also duty-bound (Gilbert and Gubar 83). Audley Court, in three prominent instances, emphasizes its identification with and betrayal of Lady Audley. First, Lady Audley's boudoir is her signature. Her femininely-decorated rooms are identified with her, just as the modern breakfast-room is identified with Alicia Audley, Sir Michael's daughter (315). When Lady Audley and her husband leave on their pointless journey to London, she deliberately locks the doors to her rooms for fear that George Talboys, whom she is avoiding, will be able to identify his wife. Since gothic houses such as Audley Court usually come equipped with secret passages, George and Robert find their way to her rooms, where a portrait betrays her (71). Lady Audley, herself an artistic creation, is revealed by an artistic interpretation of who she is.

Audley Court had been at one time a convent, where "the quiet nuns had walked hand in hand" (1). By the end of the novel, Lady Audley figuratively joins those quiet nuns. After Audley Court has witnessed the mock trial of Lady Audley,

² I am using the term 'author' to represent the omniscient voice of an implied author of the text. The 'narrator' represents an uninformed voice and often agrees or supports Robert's view. The 'narrator,' therefore, almost becomes another character, unaware of its fictional existence in the text. For example, the narrator misreads George Talboys's silence when he views the pre-Raphaelite painting of Lady Audley: "But strange as the picture was, it could not have made any great impression on George Talboys, for he sat before it for about a quarter of an hour without uttering a word" (71). Of course, he is affected by the sight of his wife; but like the voiceless women, he cannot express himself at a critical point when he needs to.

Robert delivers her, renamed Mrs. Taylor, to the lunatic asylum, in Belgium where she "will be kindly treated by people who have no knowledge of your story" and where, he tells her, she "will lead a quiet and peaceful life . . . such a life as many a good and holy woman in this Catholic country freely takes upon herself, and happily endures unto the end." Ironically, Lady Audley neither freely enters the asylum nor does she happily endure to the end. Robert himself incapable of repentance, further encourages her to "live here and repent" (391) -- a pious and terminal incarceration. Finally, Audley Court is abandoned because of the strong connection to Lady Audley:

Audley Court is shut up, and a grim old housekeeper reigns paramount in the mansion which my lady's ringing laughter once made musical. A curtain hangs before the pre-Raphaelite portrait: and the blue mould which artists dread gathers upon the Wouvermans and Poussins, the Cuyps and Tintoretis. (446)

Now that the gothic house and the novel have reached their closure, the reader sees the larger deception. Robert Audley, a character the reader initially trusts, admits that appearances may be deceiving. For example, he mentions that Lady Audley, hardly the embodiment of power, reminds him of "how very powerless" he is when searching for his lost friend who could be the victim of violence in a peaceful setting. He adds that "I believe rather that we may walk unconsciously in an atmosphere of crime, and breathe none the less freely. I believe that we may look into the smiling face of a murderer, and admire its tranquil beauty" (140 - 141). The reader, trusting Robert's analysis, assumes that she (the reader), like Robert, is facing "the smiling face of a murderer" in Lady Audley. Later when Lady Audley is exonerated of murder but is herself dead, the reader realizes that the positions have changed: she was standing next to Lady Audley facing Robert's "smiling face."

Lady Audley, however, is the enigma in the novel. The interpretation of her by the reader positions the latter with respect to patriarchy, as represented by the

Talboys and the Audleys. If Lady Audley is viewed as evil, her antagonist Robert is viewed as good. This binary opposition can be expanded to include the other characters and their functions within the novel.

Algirdas Julien Greimas provides a structure, a square, which builds on the initial binary opposition. Greimas notes that any signifier, S , implies (1) its contrary, $-S$, and (2) its negation or contradictory, $\bar{S}$. The contrary likewise implies its negation, $\bar{-S}$. That is to say, every signifier is an element in a system of signifiers.³

Using Greimas's semiotic square, with pertinent adaptations, the four primary women of the novel can each be placed in an actantial paradigm.

³ For more detailed information, see Greimas's On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory. See Steven Connor, Charles Dickens. Connor succinctly shows how the signifier (the term in the top-left corner of the square) generates its contraries and contradictions.

⁴ The horizontal lines indicate the contraries and the diagonal lines the contradictories.

Helen-Lucy (Lady Audley) is in effect a rival to Clara Talboys, George's look-alike sister, for the title of "Lady Audley." Once Lady Audley is out of the way, Robert will be able to inherit his sonless Uncle's rank and estate, thereby bestowing the title on his future wife, Clara. Helen Talboys, the earlier incarnation of Lady Audley, moves out of her lower middle-class station into the landed gentry by changing her name to Lucy Graham without male permission. In contrast, Clara does not change her name until she is permitted by marriage. Initially, Clara lives in a nameless house with her father, who had refused to accept his name (that is, his son's) coupled with Helen Maldon's. As Lady Audley loses her title of "Lady," it becomes increasingly clear that Clara will become the next Lady Audley. Similarly with Lady Audley and her step-daughter Alicia: Lucy Graham's influence over Sir Michael grows just as his daughter, Alicia's, power wanes, and vice versa.

On the left-side of the square, Lady Audley and her maid, Phoebe Marks, have more in common than the former has with either Clara, her rival, or Alicia, her enemy. In appearance, Phoebe is a faded version of Lady Audley (299) and is of humbler origins. Phoebe also is capable of wicked actions -- she blackmails Lady Audley -- in order to rise on the social scale. Unlike Lady Audley, who rises and falls, Phoebe remains in the same lower class. Unlike Lady Audley, who changes names as she does her furbelows, Phoebe Marks never changes her name even when she marries, for her husband is also her cousin.

The men do not map onto the square as secondary terms but mediate between the four women. Robert is loved by both Clara and Alicia and represents what is good, while Luke Marks is feared by both Lady Audley and Phoebe Marks and represents what is bad. Sir Michael determines the balance of attention, which results in tension between Lady Audley and Alicia. Sir Michael is an impotent character who ironically represents what everyone else wants: title, power, and

wealth. In psychoanalytic terms, he represents the symbolic phallus embodied in wealth and rank. George Talboys causes the tension between his wife, Helen (Lady Audley), and his sister, Clara. During her first marriage, Helen lacks the wealth and position which Clara enjoys by birth. In turn, Clara seeks revenge for her missing brother. These contrasts and comparisons between the active but powerless women and the weak but powerful men cause tension between the women.

The horizontal and vertical axes of the square further contrast and compare the women.⁵ Along the horizontal axis, both Lady Audley and Clara are strong-willed and determined, whereas Phoebe and Alicia are weaker. Moreover, Phoebe, whose contradictory name is the feminine derivative of Phoebus, the sun-god, is a paler version of Lady Audley (299). The vertical axis divides the good from the bad: Lady Audley appears to be the bad and Clara the good woman.

On the good side, Clara and Alicia have masculine traits.⁶ Clara is a replica of her brother, George, and Alicia is fond of manly pursuits, such as riding and hunting. The good Clara and Alicia are both after blood: Clara wants cold and simple revenge (370) and Alicia merely wants an open battle (292). On the bad side, Lucy Graham brings joy to the poor (5) and, as Lady Audley, truly cares for her maid and friend, Phoebe Marks (299). Only Phoebe Marks shows compassion and sympathy for her late mistress, qualities lacking in the good characters (411).

The text, therefore, is structured in contradiction. On one hand, the bad,

⁵ For further information on the bi-axis, see Frederic Jameson's "Foreword" to *On Meaning* (p. xxi).

⁶ In contrast to Braddon's thriving masculine women, Alicia and Clara, many Victorian novelists portray the reformation of the wilful woman who must suffer weakness, illness, and humiliation to melt her down into a chastened female (see Sally Mitchell's *The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading, 1835 - 1880*, pp. 74 - 75).

feminine women are compassionate and sympathetic.⁷ On the other, the good, masculine women lack compassion and are unsympathetic. The reader begins to identify with Lady Audley and not with her antagonist, Robert.

The final chapter, "At Peace," masks the real crime of the novel: the 'murder' of Lady Audley by Robert. His slick hands may be clean but he is responsible for her demise. The narrative forewarns of this murder early in the novel:

We hear every day of murders committed in the country. Brutal and treacherous murders; slow, protracted agonies from poisons administered by some kindred hand; sudden and violent deaths by cruel blows, inflicted with a stake cut from some spreading oak, whose very shadow promised -- peace. In the county of which I write, I have been shown a meadow in which, on a quiet summer Sunday evening, a young farmer murdered the girl who had loved and trusted him; and yet even now, with the stain of that foul deed upon it, the aspect of the spot is -- peace. No crime has ever been committed in the worst rookeries about Seven Dials that has not been also done in the face of that sweet rustic calm which still, in spite of all, we look on with a tender, half-mournful yearning, and associate with -- peace. (54)

We assume that this passage hints of George's murder. However, the crime and the subsequent "peace" are duplicated in Madame Taylor's death and the contrasting fairy-like, family setting of the final chapter. Just as Lady Audley's child-like exterior masks a mind capable of deeper, serious thought, this last chapter also masks (or perhaps accentuates) a tenacious sympathy for the poor Helen Maldon.

Sympathy for Lady Audley entails rejection of Robert Audley and what he represents. That theoretically he should not be rewarded is expressed in the idyllic, rose-covered-cottage resolution that masks the formulaic convention of mass

⁷ Sympathy and compassion, rather than revenge, are themes in another Braddon novel, Eleanor's Victory (1863). The heroine must learn that her deep desire for revenge for her father's death is alienating her from her husband and friends. The villain, Launcelot Darrell, makes Lady Audley look like a misguided girl scout. He is forgiven by Eleanor, who goes beyond mercy to help hide his criminal activity.

Victorian fiction.⁸ This ending mocks middle-class morality. Unlike the novels of Dickens or Collins, Braddon's novels do not find morality in the good characters. Conventional middle-class morality, which falsely accuses a woman and does not admit to error in judgment, is reduced to a tool of power wielded by those whose hegemony is threatened.

Lady Audley is a threat because she undermines the male authority over her being by arbitrarily and unilaterally changing her identity. No one is sure who this petite, pre-Raphaelite beauty really is. Although her character never changes (she is still the same person at the end of the novel as she was at the beginning), her relationships with the various men in the novel alter. Her names represent her positions relative to men. Chronologically, Helen Maldon, her first name, represents her position as daughter; her father, Henry Maldon, has given her his name. Next, George Talboys gives her his name, and the position of wife and mother. After being deserted, she commits her first crime: she changes her name without patriarchal authority. As Lucy Graham, she creates her own identity, one without relation to a father, husband, or son. It is this single crime from which all her subsequent crimes evolve. She bigamously marries Sir Michael Audley, who bestows his name on the unknown Lucy Graham. Finally, after Lady Audley is discovered to be originally the wife of Robert Audley's friend, George Talboys, Robert bestows upon her her final identity, that of Madame Taylor. This final bestowing of a name obliterates Lady Audley and protects the patriarchal name of Audley from scandal.

Using another actantial square, the different names Lady Audley acquires can be plotted paradigmatically:

⁸ I thank Dr. Rutland for providing the ironic term "rose-covered-cottage" to describe the happy, resolved endings to Victorian novels in which the good characters are rewarded with a fantasized home in the clean, fresh country, far away from the evil and corruption of the city.

complete +		
Helen Maldon	Helen Talboys	+
Madame Taylor	Lady Audley	-
		legal

In addition to the four functions, this square is divided by two axes: the complete/incomplete woman and the legal/illegal woman. The vertical axis represents the completeness of womanhood; the left side indicates the incomplete woman and the right the complete woman. Helen Maldon is a virgin and daughter; she is incomplete in that her expected role is that of wife and mother. Thus, the married Helen Talboys is the contrary of the first position: 'from a virgin to a wife and from a daughter to a mother. Madame Taylor, despite her married appellation, is also incomplete because there is no Mr. Taylor. Therefore, she is a not-wife and not-virgin. In contrast, both Helen Talboys and Lady Audley are complete women because they are wives, and mother or step-mother.

The horizontal axis divides the legal from the illegal positions. Both Helen Maldon and Helen Talboys are legal names. The lower half of the square (also encompassing the bulk of the novel) represents the illegal. Lady Audley is a bigamous wife and step-mother and Mrs. Taylor has no Mr. Taylor.

Lucy Graham, the name she gives to herself when she plays the governess, cannot fit into this paradigm because she has no relations with men. The separateness of the name 'Lucy Graham' from the other male-bestowed names is further emphasized by its phonetic difference. The names Maldon, Audley, Talboys, and Taylor are phonetically similar. The 'ald' sound is echoed in Maldon, Audley, Talboys; the dental 'd' appears in the middle of Maldon, Audley, and Talboys; and the ey/oý/ay sound in Audley, Talboys, and Taylor. But 'Graham' has no relation

with her other names. As Lucy Graham, she has no father, husband, or son to give her an identity.

Within the first few pages, another pattern or paradigm emerges to structure the text. Certain terms, descriptions and characters arrange themselves within the binary opposition of madness and sanity. In the first chapter, Lucy Graham responds to Sir Michael's proposal with a "strange passion which agitated her making her voice sound shrill and piercing" (10). Lucy mentions her mother but does not give any details of this mysterious woman. Sir Michael becomes alarmed by this unnatural behaviour in his future wife: "Beyond her agitation and her passionate vehemence, there was an undefined something in her manner which filled the baronet with a vague alarm" (11). That "undefined something" is the madness Lucy Graham believes she has inherited from her mother (345).

In addition to Lady Audley's own doubts as to her sanity, Phoebe Marks also suspects her mistress' mental health:

Lady Audley's face was no longer pale. An unnatural crimson spot burned in the centre of each rounded cheek, and an unnatural lustre gleamed in her great blue eyes. She spoke with an unnatural clearness, and an unnatural rapidity. She had altogether the appearance and manner of a person who has yielded to the dominant influence of some overpowering excitement. Phoebe Marks stared at her late mistress in mute bewilderment. She began to fear that my lady was going mad. (313)

Finally, Lady Audley explains to Robert and Sir Michael that her own mother was "a golden-haired, blue-eyed, girlish creature, who seemed as frivolous as a butterfly, and who skipped towards us with her yellow curls decorated with natural flowers, and saluted us with radiant smiles, and gay, ceaseless chatter" (350). This description alone should point to lunacy, but Lady Audley assumes, as do her listeners, that this is a portrait of a normal Victorian woman. In comparison, Ophelia in Hamlet is also adorned with natural flowers and sings nonsensical verses, but she is considered quite mad because of the conflicting patriarchal demand of

filial duty and that owed to her lover. Ophelia would submit to her feminine duty but she is in an unnatural position since her lover has murdered her father. In contrast, Mrs. Maldon is in a very natural position for a Victorian woman. She is both a wife and mother, and, therefore, a fulfilled woman. However, Lady Audley's mother's madness manifested itself in her inability to know her husband or child. She became increasingly mad after Helen's birth: "from that hour her intellect had decayed" (350). In contrast, Lady Audley is only too much aware of her husband, George, and her child, Georgey. She purposely attempts to forget them, effacing her identity as Helen Talboys, wife and mother. In the text, Lady Audley's madness is not indicated by her silly, frivolous, shallow, and child-like nature but by her conniving, intelligent, and manipulative attempts to discard her feminine duties of daughter, wife, and mother.

In opposition to Lady Audley's 'madness' is the utilitarian logic of the passionless Harcourt Talboys:

He was like his own square-built, northern-fronted, shelterless house. There were no shady nooks in his character into which one could creep for shelter from his hard daylight. He was all daylight. He looked at everything in the same broad glare of intellectual sunlight, and would see no softening shadows that might alter the sharp outlines of cruel facts, subduing them to beauty. I do not know if I express what I mean, when I say that there were no curves in his character -- that his mind ran in straight lines, never diverging to the right or the left to round off their pitiless angles. With him right was right and wrong was wrong. He had never in his merciless, conscientious life admitted the idea that circumstance might mitigate the blackness of wrong or weaken the force of right. (181 -182)

In addition to his pitiless and merciless nature, Harcourt Talboys is also identified with coldness and cruelty because he has disowned his son and will not tolerate any show of emotion in either his daughter (187, 189) or his servants (194). Clara, Harcourt's daughter, has "grown up in an atmosphere of suppression." The natural feelings of her heart have been stifled and dwarfed (200). Her father, therefore, does not stand for the heart but for the mind, the intellect of hard, cold truth.

For Clara, too, the "truth" is very important (201), because she wants and hopes, "for nothing but revenge" (202) for her brother's disappearance.

Through his association with Harcourt, the father, and his love for Clara, the daughter, Robert begins to resemble the square, hard, cold surface of reason, logic, and supposed sanity. Robert answers Lady Audley "with a cold sternness that was so strange to him as to transform him into another creature -- a pitiless embodiment of justice, a cruel instrument of retribution" (271). Ironically, the heartless Robert accuses Lady Audley of being herself heartless: "Henceforth you must seem to me no longer a woman; a guilty woman with a heart which in its worst wickedness has yet some latent power to suffer and feel" (345).

Up to the introduction of the London psychiatrist, Dr. Mosgrave (Vol. III, V), Lady Audley has been positioned on the side of madness, whereas Robert has been on the side of logic, and thus, sanity. But the learned doctor does not believe she is mad:

... there is no evidence of madness in anything that she has done. She ran away from her home, because her home was not a pleasant one, and she left it in the hope of finding a better. There is no madness in that. She committed the crime of bigamy, because by that crime she obtained fortune and position. There is no madness there. When she found herself in a desperate position, she did not grow desperate. She employed intelligent means, and she carried out a conspiracy which required coolness and deliberation in its execution. There is no madness in that (377).

After his interview with Lady Audley, he quite clearly says "the lady is not mad" (379). The text has deliberately deceived the reader into placing characters in particular positions in a binary opposition, such as madness versus sanity, which eventually reveals itself to be that of the powerless versus the powerful (see below).

Soon after the reader discovers Lady Audley's last secret, her sanity, Robert Audley and Dr. Mosgrave switch roles. Dr. Mosgrave, knowing that Lady Audley is sane, will still have her committed to a lunatic asylum only because he believes she

is a bigamist (380). As the doctor forsakes the honour of his profession, Robert Audley, believing that Lady Audley murdered his friend, will forego the judicial system, which as a barrister he should uphold, and executes his own justice. The barrister accuses, judges, and sentences Lady Audley without due process of law. On the other hand, the mad doctor would refuse to smuggle her away if he saw adequate reason for believing her a murderer (380). This reversal of the doctor's and barrister's roles implies that other roles may similarly be reversed. If Lady Audley is sane, then is Robert insane?⁹

At first, Robert is supposedly in the right, a 'good guy' pursuing the mad, wicked woman. He speaks with authority when he says that he arrives at the truth through "inductive evidence" (123). When he says that "now I know that he [George] is dead" (170), he is trusted to be right. But by the end of the novel, Robert's inductive reasoning has not proved that George is dead. On the contrary, George is very much alive.

Furthermore, Robert has continually misread clues and the actions of others. He assumes that Captain Maldon's frightened behaviour means that the old man mistreated his daughter (44). It is true that Maldon did not treat Helen well by some standards, but his actions certainly did not lead to her death (as Robert's actions eventually do). Robert also believes George is afraid of lightning when he recognizes his wife in the painting, because he acts in a peculiar manner. Robert believes Phoebe "is a woman who could keep a secret" (131, 133). Ironically, she cannot, since she tells Luke of what she saw Lady Audley do in the lime-walk.

⁹ Elaine Showalter proposes that Lady Audley is considered insane because of her 'unwomanly' actions. Her real secret, however, is not her latent lunacy but her sinister sanity: "Braddon means to show that the dangerous woman is not the rebel or the intellectual, but the pretty little girl whose indoctrination in the feminine role has taught her deceitfulness almost as a secondary characteristic" ("Desperate Remedies: Sensation Novels of the 1860s", 3).

Moreover, Robert believes Luke will tell all because he is a fool (133). Even the reader is not immediately aware of the extent of Luke's tenacious ability to keep a secret. Finally, Robert assumes that, alive or dead, George is in England (99). He concludes that if George does not answer his advertisement in The Times (102) and the Sydney and Melbourne papers (140), he must be dead. Robert never considers that George might change his name (as he does, to Thomas Brown (98)) just as Robert himself has done in his advertisements (to A.Z. (102)). Robert's logic is not logical, and does not lead to the truth. What the reader accepts as systematic method proves inadequate.

Robert, who is ruled by his inductive reasoning and by duty, is similar to the hard, cold Harcourt Talboys. Harcourt is also ruled by cruel facts (181) and by duty (198). His duty led him to sever a natural bond between father and son. He had "no very warm attachment" for his children (198). Moreover, he is very cold, so cold as to turn blue at times (435). He loves order and hates art: he is not "so weak-minded as to affect pictures and statues . . . far too practical to indulge in any such foolish fancies" (186).

Lady Audley, supposedly mad and therefore on the wrong or bad side, stands opposed to Harcourt and Robert. She is passionate and loves art, as her boudoir attests. In contrast to their coldness, she is often associated with images of warmth -- the melting azure of her eyes (392) or her hair "that surrounded her forehead like a yellow flame" (321).

Lady Audley, a destroyer of her husbands' dreams, -- Robert, however, helps "to shatter the day-dream of his uncle's life" (346) -- is identified with fire. Although fire is a destroyer, it can be destroyed by seemingly innocuous substances. For example, when Lady Audley visits Robert at the Castle Inn to ascertain his intentions, both are associated with particular images: Lady Audley stares and

warms her hands at the fire while Robert looks out at the snow. When she departs from their interview with evil intentions, Robert takes her feeble hand in his strong hand, so that it seemed as if he might easily crush hers had he chosen to be pitiless (141 - 142). The snow that Robert stares at will eventually extinguish the fire that Lady Audley sets. In a provocative display of images, Lady Audley's position of powerful destroyer is reversed and she becomes a victim of another more powerful destroyer. The flimsy Castle Inn is always battling the wind. The very name is ironic because the structure is not a fortification but rather its opposite, a wind-swept hovel:

... that frail and dismal tenement -- the Castle Inn -- had so long struggled with its enemy, the wind, only to succumb at last, and to be shrivelled and consumed away like a withered leaf, by the alliance of that old adversary with a newer and a fiercer foe. (406)

The fiercer foe is the fire, already associated with Lady Audley, who introduced the flames to its fragile laths.

Although Lady Audley is associated with fire and is thus a destroyer, she is also associated with the rickety Castle Inn because she, too, is often described as frail, fragile, and flimsy. Like the Castle Inn succumbing to both wind and fire, she finally yields to two deadly foes, Luke Marks and Robert Audley. After the destruction of both Castle Inn and Lady Audley, the more powerful aggressors, the wind and Robert Audley, are left in absolute supremacy:

The cold night breezes had their way with the few fragments that the fire had left, and whirled them hither and thither as they would, scattering a shower of dust and cinders and crumbling morsels of charred wood upon Robert Audley (406)

The fire that destroyed Castle Inn soon succumbs to the cold wind which disperses the last cinders. Lady Audley, once the aggressor, is now reduced to a victim.

This reversal of roles can be taken a step further to imply that Lady Audley has crossed to the side of sanity and logic; whereas Robert has crossed into

madness and illogic. The boundary line, Braddon says, is that delicate "invisible balance upon which the mind is always trembling. Mad to-day and sane to-morrow" (403, also 205, 353, and 355). This boundary line also delineates the opposition between the powerful and the weak. The person who can convince the world of his/her opponent's madness has the power. Thus, whoever is sane has power or control over the insane. Lady Audley desperately wants to convince her husband that Robert is eccentric if not insane (287). By labelling Robert mad, Lady Audley has power over him. When Robert wants to control Lady Audley, he has her sent to a lunatic asylum despite the confirmations of her sanity.

Another confirmation of Robert's precarious balance between sanity and madness is his belief in the supernatural, the fantastic. For example, when Robert is still innocent of his knowledge of Lady Audley, he does not believe in phantoms. His diagnosis of evil spirits is that they are the result of damp. A cold shiver and an apparition of an old lady in the costume of George the First's time is merely a damp sheet and indigestion (67). Similarly, Lady Audley fears no "shadowy visitations," partly because she fears nothing that could not hurt her (372). In the chapter "Ghost-Haunted," Robert not only believes in ghosts but also believes that the ghost of George is haunting him because the latter's body lies unburied.¹⁰ Robert refers to fiction to prove that there are ghosts. He says he understands the tricks these spectres get up to because he has read Alexandre Dumas and Wilkie Collins. Fiction, particularly sensationalism, is given credence: "What if that dreadful story had its double in reality?" (402). The reality Robert refers to is, in fact, the fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon. In Braddon's fiction, unlike that of her professional colleagues, there are no ghosts or spirits since George is actually

¹⁰ Robert is deeply concerned about burying his supposedly 'dead' friend in "Ghost-Haunted," and yet, he has, without remorse, symbolically buried his aunt in the previous chapter "Buried Alive."

alive. Robert, therefore, is hallucinating and cannot be trusted to interpret reality.¹¹

Robert's interpretation of his reality is a reflection of the contemporary widespread and orthodox interpretation of facts or events pointing to some higher truth. Ruskin, in Modern Painters (1843 - 1860), introduced typological symbolism to the pre-Raphaelite painters. Typological symbolism was a new form of iconological analysis using conventional evangelical Protestant techniques of reading the Scriptures for signs of types or anticipations of Christ. The evangelical reader took apparently trivial episodes from the Bible and demonstrated that these passages were matters of major significance. Everything, therefore, had meaning, and one only needed the key in order to read the universe. Combining both naturalistic detail and clarity with an elaborate symbolism, the pre-Raphaelites adopted Ruskin's symbolic interpretation.¹² Braddon adopts this avant-garde device, in the betraying portrait of Lady Audley:

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 blond 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)

Braddon, later on, imagines what Mr. Holman Hunt would paint "upon a bishop's half-length [a certain size of canvas] for the glorification of the pre-Raphaelite

¹¹ In a similar comparison between the male and female interpretations of reality, George, on his first return voyage to England, looks up at the pale crescent moon and dreams of being united with his long-suffering Helen (16), while Miss Morley, the governess on board the ship *Argus*, looks out at the sea (16, 23) and forces him to look at reality. She is a practical foil to George's impractical assertions.

¹² For a more thorough discussion of Ruskin's typological symbolism, see George Landow's Ruskin (1985). For an example of Ruskin's method of analysis, see Landow's William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism (1979).

brotherhood" if he had the chance to spy Lady Audley lounging in her boudoir (295). (See Appendix 2 for a list of a few paintings which exemplify the pre-Raphaelite view of women.)

Like the pre-Raphaelites, Robert has a propensity for reading his world for clues to a greater or more important meaning. Robert's failure in correctly reading his world is indicative of his general failure as a hero of the novel. Nevertheless, Robert prevails as a hero of the patriarchal order by defending and protecting from scandal the family name.

The role of women or the feminine, as it is generally perceived in Lady Audley's Secret, cannot alone reflect or expose the inversions or subversions created by the text. Male chauvinism was so engrained in the depicted society that exaggerations of this behaviour could not be recognized as such by contemporary readers. In a Victorian novel, a man who treats a woman as inferior would not be viewed as unusual or extreme. Instead, Braddon attacks other areas under male control. Since we follow Robert Audley on his journey to manhood, his views have the weightiest authority in the text. The reader, who initially accepted Robert's views, begins to question his system of beliefs by the novel's close. Ultimately, the reader will look beyond the text to judge the codes created by the patriarchal order.

The patriarchal view of woman is exposed and mocked first in Lady Audley's marriages, and then in Robert's attitude towards and relationships with various women (including George). First, the role of women in marriage is not on the same level as that of men. This double-standard is immediately revealed when Sir Michael Audley asks Lucy Graham to marry him. When he proposes to the poor governess, he cautions her that there is no "greater sin . . . than that of the woman who marries a man she does not love" (9). This is not a sin, apparently, for

the man since Sir Michael never loved his first wife (6-7). Furthermore, the text expects that men would often marry for money rather than love (33). The irony is that Sir Michael asks Lucy not to commit this "sin" for his happiness (10). She readily complies because she is only considering her own happiness, and, therefore, marries him despite her absence of love.

Moreover, it was quite logical to marry for money because middle-class women were offered few alternatives for support. Mrs. Dawson, the doctor's wife, reiterates the practicality of the marriage:

Of course it would be a magnificent match; he has a splendid income, and is one of the most generous of men. Your position would be very high, and you would be enabled to do a great deal of good. (8)

The Dawsons "would have thought it something more than madness in a penniless girl to reject such an offer" (9). By emphasizing the practicality of marrying wealth, Braddon points to the limitations of the only course open to women having no income or wishing to improve their circumstances. This marriage episode between Sir Michael Audley and Lucy Graham reiterates the nineteenth-century's confusion concerning women and marriage.¹³

The heroine, as both Lucy Graham and as her earlier self, Helen Maldon, marries for the money and power Sir Michael can offer. In Victorian fiction, however, women generally marry for love. Therefore, Braddon's Victorian readers should be aghast at Lucy Graham's (and Helen Maldon's) 'prostitution.' Her readers, however, were not shocked by Lucy's pecuniary motives but her willingness to commit bigamy. Braddon forces the reader to question woman's dependence on man for support. Should women marry for love, in which case Lucy Graham, who claims to love no one in the world (11), would remain a poor governess shunted from one

¹³ See, for example, Martha Vicinus's brief discussion of the confused relationship between the prescribed ideal of womanhood and the actual reality in *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, xi.

household to another? Or should women marry for security and support, which is the only morally acceptable alternative for destitute women? In 1868, Henry James described this Darwinian struggle among women:

It is a very dismal truth that the only hope of most women, at the present moment, for a life worth the living, lies in marriage, and marriage with rich men or men likely to become so, and that in their unhappy weakness they often betray an ungraceful anxiety on this point. (Helsing 119)

In a period of increased male emigration to the colonies and a widespread tendency to delay marriage (Helsing, The Woman Question: Defining Voices, 1837 - 1883 119), it was socially acceptable for women to marry for convenience. In The Family Herald, a woman's magazine, the editor in 1856 replied to an orphaned governess who questioned whether she should marry a man forty years her senior:

It is merely a question of expediency, as marriage generally is; it is 'Can I do better -- would it be better to accept a home of this kind than to run the risk of having none at all?' Women all reason thus, and so do men. The ideal of love is never realised; the heart is never thoroughly satisfied; if it is, danger awaits it, for perfect satisfaction is of short duration on this planet. (Mitchell, Widening Sphere 45 - 46)

The male-female relationship between Robert Audley and his old school-chum, George Talboys, seems to serve two purposes. The first is that the relationship highlights the submissive and passive position women were expected to fill. This inferior position would not be remarkable or noticeable if a woman shared Robert's love. Instead, Braddon uses a physical man to play the feminine role which obviously is not biological but psychical in nature.

Thankfully, no genuine woman plays such a weak and wimpish character. George faints (37), is "as helpless as a baby" (39), and often sobs aloud (41). Because these attributes are often associated with the idea of woman, George begins to occupy the position of a female in his relationship to Robert. George is given the prettiest room, the one with birds and flowers, in Robert's bachelor chambers (46); he is continually described as submissively following and passively accepting

Robert's initiatives and decisions. He is a shallow man whose lack of intelligence certainly is not an attractive feature. When he is on board the *Argus*, returning to England from Australia, the other passengers soon realize that he is "by no means too learned a gentleman":

The pale governess had tried to talk to him about fashionable literature, but George had only pulled his beard, and stared very hard at her, saying occasionally, "Ah, yes!" and, "To be sure, ha!"

The sentimental young lady . . . had tried him with Shelley and Byron, and he had fairly laughed in her face, as if poetry were a joke. The woolstapler sounded him upon politics, but he did not seem very deeply versed in them; so they let him go his own way, smoke his cigars . . . lounge over the bulwarks and stare at the water. (14)

George is also a failure, which reflects upon the feminine role he has adopted. He continually wishes for his own death (20, 22, 44) but when he is given the opportunity to die by his baby-faced wife, he cannot. He also wants to escape his misery by taking a boat to Sydney, which, typically, he misses (46). Even his initial purpose of deserting Helen fails since he does not succeed in sharing with her the wealth he earned in Australia (49). George has, however, sufficient masculinity to forward the narrative. He blusters off without a moment's notice to Australia to earn a fortune and returns with as little thought. He rushes off to search for his long-left wife; and once she is found, he again disappears without considering his actions. For Braddon's purposes, George has to have only enough energy to leave the scene so that his wife can remarry another, 'murder' him later, and be imprisoned for a non-existent crime.

Finally, George Talboys' name is indicative of his sexual status. George is not yet a 'man' but a 'tall boy,' still a child. If George's occupation of the feminine position includes the childish, then the concept of woman must also encompass naivete and innocence. This innocent female resembles what Coventry Patmore immortalized for Victorians in *The Angel in the House* (1858). Lady Audley, George's wife, embodies this Victorian ideal of the woman in outward appearance.

Her character, however, will eventually prove how inadequate such a formulaic positioning is.

The second purpose for the male-female relationship between Robert and George is to show Robert at his lowest, his most debauched state before his progress upwards towards a hard-working, clean-living gentleman married to a decent woman of his own social class. Alicia is jealous of his too close attachment to his friend who, all believe, has returned to London:

"What a dreadful catastrophe!" said Alicia maliciously, "since Pythias, in the person of Mr. Robert Audley, cannot exist for half an hour without Damon, commonly known as George Talboys." (84)

Robert, however, does not admit that "he could possibly feel a strong attachment" to George. But Robert is quite anxious about George's disappearance and is "bewildering his brain by all manner of conjectures about his missing friend, and, false to every attribute of his nature, walking fast" (82). One almost is tempted to exchange the anti-climactic "walking fast" with the more appropriate 'in love with George' as a sample of his unnatural behaviour.

The text does not openly state that Robert's attachment to George is homosexual, but their relationship is not merely that of friends. Although he does not suggest homosexuality, Robert describes his relationship with George as other than friendship: "I feel like a man who has an only son whose life has gone wrong with him" (86). He also says that "sooner than be balked in finding him, I'll go to the very end of the world" (89). Robert's intense eagerness to search for the supposedly dead George (the main plot of the novel) follows and mimics the search George conducts for his beloved wife, who is also presumed dead. The reader is never deceived in George's search for his wife; she knows Helen Talboys is Lady Audley. But the surprise or secret of the novel is in Robert's search for the dead George; the reader is deceived because George is not dead. Near the end of the

novel, when the mysteries are revealed, Robert's new love, Clara, wishes to have her brother, George, home again. Robert manfully asks whether he should look for her brother:

"And do you think, Clara, that I should think any sacrifice too great an one if it were made for you? Do you think there is any voyage I would refuse to take, if I knew that you would welcome me when I came home, and thank me for having served you faithfully?" (440)

At this point obviously, Robert has traded his love of George for the look-alike Clara, but one wonders whether his expression of sacrifice and love for Clara will become as rhetorical and meaningless as that of his earlier desire to go to the ends of the world for George.

This father-child relationship between Robert and George coincides with the somewhat paternal love Sir Michael has for his child-bride, Lady Audley (see, for example, Page 309). The examples of real father-child relationships in the novel do not even approximate the affection Robert has for George or the infatuation Sir Michael has for his child-wife. In contrast to Robert's paternal attachment to George, Harcourt Talboys has disowned his son; after marrying Helen-Lucy, Sir Michael Audley ignores his daughter Alicia; and Captain Maldon used his daughter as a high-priced 'prostitute,' to capture an affluent husband. Even George is willing to leave his son, Georgey, with the alcoholic grandfather. Thus, using the codes developed in the text, the reader must assume that the love in the father-child relationship expressed by Robert are similar to that of Sir Michael and his wife, Lady Audley, and not to that of the traditional father-child relationship. The relationship between Robert and George is, therefore, morally unacceptable to the nineteenth-century reader. Robert must pass more tests before he completes his conventional progress towards being a contributing member of patriarchal society.

His second love is for his uncle's wife, Lady Audley. When he realizes he loves his aunt (56, 83), Robert automatically compares himself to "the hero of a

French novel" (56). Sir Michael (218), Dr. Dawson (219), and Alicia (263) also observe Robert's interest in Sir Michael's wife and read or misread what it purports.

Robert is continually associated with French novels, which serves two purposes. First, the Victorian reader would define French romance as a form of pornography. Robert, thus linked with pornography, would certainly lack the moral fibre required to function in society. In an 1865 review of Braddon's novels, the reviewer was upset at the portrayal of the dissolute Robert, since "in everything he differs from ordinary male mortals" (Rae 94). Moreover, Robert's love-interest in Lady Audley is inconceivable: "Truly, Miss Braddon has very strange notions about the manners and customs of young and inexperienced barristers" (Rae 95). Robert's progression from an immoral French novel reader to a righteously busy barrister ends when he finally passes on his French novels, representing his decision to discard his old unacceptable habits. At the novel's end, Robert presents his meerschaums and French novels to a young Templar, another bachelor barrister. Thus, Clara is Robert's replacement for his French novels. Interestingly, Robert does not burn or throw away his books; he opts for the less drastic and also reversible decision of giving them to a bachelor friend.

Second, Braddon's continual reference to French novels is an attack on prudish, moralistic readers. If Robert is like a hero in a French novel, then Lady Audley's Secret, the novel in which he exists, must be an imitation of a French novel. The conclusion of this English imitation of a French novel also brings about the end of the French novels that Robert gives away. French novels, or English novels imitating French ones, cannot have a moral; and Lady Audley's Secret refuses to proclaim a moral, unlike so many Victorian novels by women (see, for example, Mrs. Henry Wood's didactic East Lynne (1861)). Instead of adopting a moralistic

stance, Braddon mocks the prudish English reader who takes offence at French literature but who reads an immoral English novel such as Lady Audley's Secret. Thus, the adoption of the patriarchal system by Robert, the reader of French novels, mocks English morality.

The significance of Robert's French novels also works to contradict his status as a successful member of the patriarchal order. Two contrary codes are operating for the reader in understanding the full potential for meaning of the French novel. First, the general social code labels French novels as pornographic, immoral, and unsuitable for the Victorian reader. Braddon understood this social attitude and used it to show Robert's progress from a lazy reader to a socially acceptable upholder of patriarchal laws. But a second code, Braddon-stimulated, is operating beneath the Victorian code of socially acceptable pursuits. Braddon admired and respected French novelists. Fluent in French, she read Balzac and Soulie. Later she modeled The Doctor's Wife on Flaubert's controversial masterpiece, Madame Bovary; and from the 1870s, Braddon became increasingly interested in French realism, using Emile Zola as a guide (see her letters to Bulwer-Lytton in "Devoted Disciple," edited by Robert Lee Wolff). For Braddon, therefore, the French novel was a work of art. Thus, when Robert gives up reading French novels, such as Dumas (214, 402, 404) and Paul de Kock (214), he is abandoning a pursuit which Braddon respected but Victorian society disdained. Robert's rise in patriarchal society is in Braddon's view his decline.

Robert's final love is for Clara Talboys, George's sister. This love is acceptable because Clara is unattached, of the same social class as Robert, and the appropriate gender. However, the reader may question Robert's attraction to Clara, since she is always described as resembling her long-lost brother (187) and Robert's first prohibited love, George. Clara has "brown eyes, like George's" (197,

371) and is "so like the friend whom he had loved and lost" (202). Robert's love for Clara is also questionable because she, too, is a 'tall boy,' a feminized boy. Despite Robert's love for the strong and competent Clara, he continues to view women as weak and fragile vessels. This discrepancy is resolved if we view Robert's love for Clara as based solely on her resemblance to her brother. Thus Robert, whose change from an unacceptable to an acceptable member of society is chronicled, consistently remains a misogynist.

Braddon invites the reader to judge Robert as a misogynist by giving us more of Robert's character to judge. In this novel, Robert is perhaps the best deceiver of them all because he is never openly revealed, as is Lady Audley. Lady Audley never deceives the reader. First, the reader must suspect Robert's motives for ridding Audley Court of Lady Audley. The Victorian reader would be well aware of Robert's potential inheritance. His inactivity as a barrister is a sign that Robert does not need to rely on his own efforts for financial support since he anticipates inheriting his uncle's title and estate. Therefore, Robert ultimately fears Lady Audley because, if she produces a son by Sir Michael, Robert loses the baronetcy which would otherwise descend to him. Robert, although he feigns disinterest in such matters, is quite aware that he is "heir-presumptive to [his] uncle's title" (161). His position in society is very important to him despite his assumed nonchalance. For example, Robert, the "young philosopher," muses over the "favourite modern question of the nothingness of everything" (206). The implied author, however, warns the reader that "you may frequently find that the philosopher who calls life an empty delusion is pretty sharp in the investment of his moneys" (208). Thus, the young barrister is "very willing to distribute his comfortable little income" but only to those "people who served him" (208). Robert

is also very conscious of his social status. He is not so easy-going when a woman wrongfully identifies him as a working man:

"You're not connected with -- with the tally business, are you, sir?" she asked, after considering Mr. Audley's personal appearance for a few moments.

"The what, ma'am?" cried the young barrister, staring aghast at his questioner. (230)

Robert, then, is something of a hypocrite and not to be trusted since he has much to gain in proving Lady Audley's crime.

The use of Providence also works in the same way as the not-said but understood reading of Robert's fear of losing his inheritance. Providence was considered a given in Victorian texts; uncanny coincidences and happy endings were the result of Providence rewarding the good and punishing the bad. Providence, therefore, is justice. In Lady Audley's Secret, Braddon ridicules the convention of Providential dispensation when she reveals Robert's deceptive use of its powers of justification. Robert continually justifies his search for George as part of his providentially determined destiny. He accuses the same "awful hand of fatality" (204) which forced him to bespatter a girl on the curbstone as also forcing him to destroy Lady Audley: "but I try in vain to draw back or to stop short upon the road, for a stronger hand than my own is pointing the way to my lost friend's unknown grave" (167), "A hand that is stronger than my own is beckoning me onward upon the dark road" (199), and "A hand that is stronger than my own is beckoning me onward on the dark road that leads to my lost friend's unknown grave" (257). As the reader soon discovers, this stronger hand does not point to George's grave but to Lady Audley's. Thus, the author exposes the fallaciousness of Robert's statements when George returns to England, and her stronger hand beckons us to question the validity of Robert's thoughts and premises.

The imagery of the strong hand also implies a weaker hand. Lady Audley, representative of Robert's view of women, is supposedly weak and childish. Yet she has complete control over her husband, Sir Michael. This is symbolized through using their hands as metonymic devices: "The baronet lay in a quiet sleep, his arm lying outside the bed, and his strong hand clasped in his young wife's delicate fingers" (215). This sexual image is also carried over to George's reunion with Robert. George describes to Robert his travels in America and explains why he returned to his old friend: "I yearned for the strong grasp of your hand, Bob; the friendly touch of the hand which had guided me through the darkest passage of my life" (444). George implies that his is the weaker hand, as the woman's is supposed to be, and regards the stronger hand of Robert as, again, a guiding force.

Braddon's continual use of hand imagery is imitative of the pre-Raphaelites. Nina Auerbach, in Woman and the Demon, explains that the hands are important centres of sight in pre-Raphaelite paintings (47). An example of this preoccupation with hands as signifying some expression of the painter can be seen in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting Proserpine. The figure's hands entwined around a pomegranate are representative of the serpent in the Old Testament enticing man to taste the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge. Her strong, masculine features reveal a more knowledgeable and independent woman than the Victorian ideal of the domestic angel. (See Plate 6 in Appendix 2.)

In addition to his fear and hatred of Lady Audley, Robert has, in general, mistaken opinions or misplaced observations of women. For instance, when Robert first hears Clara's story, he "saw that her resolution was the fruit of no transient womanish enthusiasm, which would give way under the iron hand of difficulty" (200). The irony of this statement is that it is more appropriate for 'mannish enthusiasm.' Captain Maldon breaks down when Robert suggests his daughter is a murderer (170),

Sir Michael Audley runs away when his name has been scandalized (358), and even George leaves England when he discovers Helen Talboys is alive and flourishing as another's wife. Lady Audley, the epitome of "womanish enthusiasm," does not feebly give way under pressure; instead, she attempts to change her circumstances by her own actions. For example, Lady Audley becomes determined to explain her past: "The woman rose suddenly and stood before him erect and resolute . . . 'Bring Sir Michael!' she cried; 'bring him here, and I will confess anything -- everything!'" (345) Her strength at this point does not merely belong to "Lady Audley" but also to "the woman" in her.

Although Robert sees women as primarily weak and fragile, the author uses him to reiterate the tiresome cliché that women have all the power they need in their "petticoat government" (206). The woman in power, he says, is the wife who "drags her husband on to the woolsack, or pushes him into Parliament The square men in the round holes are pushed into them by their wives." He then admits "savagely" that he hates women (207). To complete this senseless rhetoric, the narrator suggests that women would be much better off making tea since "at the tea-table she reigns omnipotent, unapproachable" (222). The diction used to describe "the most feminine and most domestic of all occupations" equates women with witchcraft and fairies. Braddon appears to use fairy-tale imagery to mock and so reduce to absurdity such whimsical ideas as simple tea-making. The woman:

imparts a magic harmony to her every movement, a witchery to her every glance. The floating mists from the boiling liquid in which she infuses the soothing herbs, whose secrets are known to her alone, envelop her in a cloud of scented vapour, through which she seems a social fairy, weaving potent spells with Gunpowder and Bohea. (222)

This image of women's witchcraft reflects the patriarchal vision that women are either angels or demons, creatures certainly not human (Auerbach 64). Sir Michael believes he has married an angel; Lucy Graham is domestic, pure, obedient,

and above all, decorative. Sir Michael's vision, Robert muses, is a day-dream to be shattered with the truth that Lady Audley is anything but his angel (346). Instead of replacing the unattainable image of angel with a more realistic creature, Robert envisions a demon: "I look upon you henceforth as the demoniac incarnation of some evil principle" (345).¹⁴ Robert also dreams that Lady Audley has been transformed into a mythic mermaid. Like the mermaid who reportedly entices sailors to a watery grave, Lady Audley, in the dream, beckons his uncle to destruction (246, 273). He also dreams of George's "fatal infatuation" with Helen Maldon (247).

Robert's view of Lady Audley as demon is consistent with his view of women in general. Robert often compares women to either mistakes of Nature or slimy reptiles. In a characteristic moment, Robert muses that matrimony includes picking the right wife out of nine hundred and ninety-nine mistakes. He does not consider that he might himself be a mistake for his "one judicious selection" (204). He then continues with an inappropriate analogy: "Who shall decide from the first aspect of the slimy creature, which is to be the one eel out of the colossal bag of snakes?" (204) The image of the snake has biblical connotations, and Braddon, perhaps conscious of the position the Old Testament has created for women, illustrates Robert's selfish and cruel attitude towards these snakes when he sees a girl on the corner:

"That girl on the kerbstone yonder . . . may be the one woman out of every female creature in this vast universe who could make me a happy man. Yet I pass her by -- bespatter her with the mud from my wheels, in my helpless ignorance, in my blind submission to the awful hand of fatality." (204)

¹⁴ See Auerbach's discussion of woman's marriage of Heaven and Hell in Woman and the Demon, pp. 63 - 107. In this section, she examines the literary mutation of women into fairies, goblins, mermaids, and vampires, and the angel transformed into the demon (107).

Although Robert realizes "that our dreams . . . have never been the realities for which we have mistaken them" (346), he unrealistically dreams of his beloved Clara in the same way his uncle dreamed of Lucy Graham. He dreams of quietly living with Clara in "a fairy cottage ornée" (437). Clara takes on the image of a fairy whose letters to Robert are "fairy-like" desserts (397). By the end of the novel, Robert's "dream of a fairy cottage . . . amid a little forest of foliage" has "been realized. Within this "fantastical dwelling-place," live all the good people (445). The fantastical, fairy-like images in the last chapter are overwhelming and exaggerated. In contrast to Robert's fairy story ending, Braddon continually bombards the reader with the fiction and unreality of dreams. In one example, the implied author describes Robert's mermaid dream as "visions of things that never had been and never could be upon this earth" (246). Much later, Robert, while contemplating the letter urging his visit to the dying Luke Marks, has "visions of things that never have been and never are to be" (399). The similarity between these two phrases only reminds the reader that the dream-like world that Robert envisions is unrealistic. The women who exist in Robert's fantasy world (and, one may add, in men's fictions) are equally unrealistic.

Obviously, Robert (and, in this instance, the narrator) cannot really believe that women are earthly adults trapped by society to occupy continually the nursery, which they cannot leave to experience the world. Beneath Robert's statement that women "riot in battle, and murder, and clamour, and desperation," Braddon's voice is faintly heard. Robert is incapable of understanding women's "desperation" or that they "want freedom of opinion, variety of occupation" (207).

Robert is also incapable of understanding the forced silence, the repression of the woman's voice. He indulges himself in the stock misogynist's complaint of women's incessant chatter. He facetiously suggests that women be allowed to be

"lawyers, doctors, preachers, teachers, soldiers, legislators -- anything they like -- but let them be quiet -- if they can" (207). In this passage, another voice can be heard: Braddon radically suggests that women can do jobs reserved only for men. Ironically, women would be given a voice if they were allowed to contribute to male professions.

This repression of the woman's voice is manifest in the three main active women, Phoebe, Clara, and Lady Audley. Phoebe is the first who manifests the failure to voice her thoughts. She is afraid to marry her coarse cousin Luke Marks but cannot express this to him. She says:

There have been times when I've made up the very sentence I meant to say to him, telling him that I couldn't keep my faith with him; but the words have died upon my lips, and I've sat looking at him, with a choking sensation in my throat that wouldn't let me speak. I daren't refuse to marry him. (107)

Subsequently, she marries him and lives a wretched life. Similarly, Lady Audley cannot speak, albeit in lies, at the time most compelling for her to clear herself:

Lady Audley tried to speak, but the words died away inarticulately upon her trembling lips. A choking sensation in her throat seemed to strangle those false and plausible words, her only armour against her enemies. She could not speak. (283)

When Clara needs to speak, she can only fully express herself away from her father's house, away from the passionless and cold Harcourt Talboys. Unlike the other two voiceless women, Clara does eventually speak to Robert Audley about her brother's disappearance: "let me speak to you . . . let me speak to you, or I shall go mad" (197) and "I must speak to you -- I must speak to you -- calmly, if I can" (198). Forced silence, at least for Clara, is detrimental because it implies madness; but because she speaks she can regain her sanity. Because she speaks with "suppressed passion," Clara convinces Robert to "avenge my brother's untimely death" (199). Robert's subsequent actions are instigated by Clara's urging him on when she finally finds her voice. Similarly, Lady Audley surprises her husband

because she speaks learnedly about madness: she is "transformed from a frivolous childish beauty into a woman, strong to argue her own cause and plead her own defence" (288). The author privileges the articulate woman over the Victorian ideal, represented by the false but tactically effective childishness of Lady Audley.

When women are allowed to speak, they must express themselves periphrastically. Alicia cannot merely say "no" to Sir Harry Towers' proposal but must give a "pretty speech about esteem and respect, which well-bred young ladies substitute for the obnoxious monosyllable" (127). Likewise, Lady Audley cannot clearly tell her husband that Robert is sexually interested in her, but must hint that she is "rather a young aunt for such a nephew, and --" (128). Her real meaning must be concealed in periphrastic redundancy or delicate ellipsis.

In addition to Robert's mistaken view that women are excessively vocal, he also believes that they write long, prattling letters (209). Once Robert has uttered his pronouncement on women's writing, the letters by women are all concise and succinct. Clara's letter contains only nine words (209), Alicia's "letter rarely contained more than a few curt lines" (212), and "the note from Mrs. Talboys was still more brief" (250).

Women's silence in their letters further confirms their lack of power and forced repression, despite Robert's assertions to the contrary. If a woman were allowed to write and voice her thoughts, she would rob the man of his power over her, so the narrator says "better the influence of the teacups and saucers gracefully wielded in a woman's hand, than all the inappropriate power snatched at the point of the pen from the unwilling sterner sex" (223). Here the narrator alone

is speaking and is not to be taken seriously, because Braddon's feminine pen is ridiculing such preposterous notions of silencing the woman's voice.¹⁵

The female novelist during the nineteenth century had a similar difficulty in speaking out. The Victorian woman writer was forced to express herself in a patriarchal language, the language of the Robert Audleys. Lady Audley, like her creator, M.E. Braddon, is also a creator of characters, the 'author' of her own aliases. She also suffers "volumes of anguish" and "agonies that would fill closely printed volumes, . . . sometimes repeating the same chapters of her torments" (314). Lady Audley, as representative of the rebellious female writer, must attempt to express herself, to tell her story so that she can sleep at night (372). Lady Audley does tell her 'story' to Sir Michael and to Robert Audley, who, alone, plays the judge to condemn her. Lady Audley, the 'author' of her own disguises, is identified with her author, Mary Elizabeth Braddon. Obviously, this connection of artistic/creative ability helps the reader to sympathize both with Lady Audley for her failure to succeed in a patriarchal society, and with Braddon for her struggle as a woman writer in a patriarchal publishing world.

¹⁵ See, for example, the similarity between Braddon's pen-point and Gilbert and Gubar's description of the pen as a metaphorical penis (3) and authorship, primarily a male pursuit, as an act of fatherhood (4), in The Madwoman in the Attic.

CHAPTER 2

THE DOCTOR'S WIFE: THE FOOLISH WOMAN

After the success of Lady Audley's Secret, Mary Elizabeth Braddon was intent upon earning money for herself, her mother, and her growing family. Thus, she wrote for her Victorian audience as a market ("Devoted Disciple," Letter No. 3, April 13, 1863). Nevertheless, Braddon was always torn between "a noble desire to attain something like excellence -- and a very ignoble wish to earn plenty of money" (Letter No. 11, September 7, 1864). She set aside the desire to write an explicitly critical novel, which might alienate her readers, rather than an implicit one, such as Lady Audley's Secret. In an explicit novel, subversion of the patriarchal order is closer to the surface: The Doctor's Wife (1864) more closely approaches Braddon's notion of excellence than any of her previous works. This is evident from her self-deprecatory letters to Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton; in one dated January 17th, 1864, she writes of her new novel:

I venture to think you will like my new story "The Doctor's Wife" (this is not a title of my own choosing) better than anything I have yet done, because I am going in a little for the subjective, & for the first time am going to try to infuse a dash of poetry into my hero. (Letter No. 7)

Again in a letter dated June 24th, 1864, Braddon reiterates her hopes for a magnum opus:

I venture to hope that you will like "The Doctor's Wife," which I shall have the pleasure of sending you before the end of October [1864] better than anything I have yet done -- though still unutterably far away from what I want to do, when I read your books, & a few others of the same calibre. There is more attempt at character painting in it, and I have given it more thought than anything else. (Letter No. 8)

During this period (1863 to 1864), Braddon indicates in her letters a growing interest in the French novel. The Doctor's Wife demonstrates influence by such writers as Balzac, Soulié (Letter No. 4, May 1863), and especially the meticulous Flaubert:

Since I have been writing so much, I have scarcely read at all, except a French novel now & then, by snatches. . . . Have you read anything of Gustave Flaubert's, & do you like that extraordinary Pre-Raphaelite style. I have been wonderfully fascinated by it, but I suppose all that unvarnished realism is the very reverse of poetry. (Letter No. 7, January 17, 1864)

In particular, Braddon discovers Flaubert's scandalous masterpiece, Madame Bovary (1856). She qualifies her enthusiasm for Flaubert, however, by complimenting his style (his "unvarnished realism") rather than his content (his "hideous immorality"):

There seems an extraordinary Pre-Raphaelite power of description -- a power to make manifest a scene & an atmosphere in a few lines -- almost a few words -- that very few writers possess -- & a grim kind of humour equal to Balzac in its way. (Letter No. 10, summer 1864)

Her interest in a French writer whose manner of writing seemed homologous with the Pre-Raphaelite style of painting always remained in the background of her novels (cf. the portrait of Lady Audley). In The Doctor's Wife, her interest becomes a conscious effort to render the Flaubertian style.

Superficially, Madame Bovary and The Doctor's Wife appear dissimilar, but intertextually, The Doctor's Wife becomes more significant when the novels are compared. The two doctors' wives are dissimilar. Emma Bovary, believing that a change must always improve the situation, marries the "officier de santé" of Tostes. She devours what pleasure she can as wife of Charles Bovary in their limited sphere. She craves money and desires carnal pleasure. Her insatiable appetite eventually frightens off her lovers, first the high bourgeois Rodolphe and then the scholarly Léon, and encourages the merchant Lheureux to lend her money, which she cannot pay back. This indebtedness and impending bankruptcy, and not her failed love affairs, are the cause of her suicide. She poisons herself, and her lovers continue to live and prosper in their own ways.

In contrast to the French novel, Braddon generates an English novel, although from the beginning she leads us to believe we are reading an English novel imitating a French one. Isabel Sleaford initially believes that a change must always

be for the better (92), but she matures and, by the end of the novel, she no longer believes this (214). Isabel marries the doctor, George Gilbert of Graybridge (the Yonville-l'Abbaye equivalent), only to discover that they have nothing in common. Although Emma and Isabel both escape their unhappy marriages by reading romances, Isabel, unlike Emma, easily finds fulfillment in the sensational novels she 'devours.' She loves and is loved by the local landowner, Roland Lansdell, but she remains physically faithful to her husband.

The ending to The Doctor's Wife is, perhaps, the most revealing of Braddon's intentions since it shows the greatest contrast to that of Madame Bovary. Unlike Emma, who is deserted by both lovers and dies in debt, Isabel inherits the estates of her husband who dies of typhoid fever and her lover who is killed by her father.

Braddon's artistic independence is evident in her handling of the closure of The Doctor's Wife. She appears to have been determined to keep Isabel a heroine who is rewarded with riches, although she offends the propriety of English provincial middle-class society as represented by the gossips and the scandal-mongers of Graybridge (356). She evidently sought Bulwer-Lytton's advice:

It is very, very kind of you to give me a good word about the "D.'s Wife," and I full well know how valuable any such word must be. I am especially anxious about this novel; as it seems to me a kind of turning point in my life. (Letter No. 11, September 7, 1864)

Bulwer-Lytton's "good word" must have included a suggestion for altering the ending. By indications expressed in Braddon's reply, her mentor must have approved the lover's demise but disliked the good and boring husband's illness (the result of working too hard) and his subsequent death. One can only imagine what moral precept Bulwer-Lytton would have imparted. Braddon tactfully apologizes for not heeding his advice and blames herself for being too hurried to correct the ending:

I most entirely concur in all you say about the close of the "D.W." I was cruelly hurried in writing it, and only towards the last decided upon what I should do with George & Isabel. I always meant Sleaford to kill Roland, but

to the last I was uncertain what to do with George. My original intention was to have left him alive, & Isabel reconciled to a commonplace life doing her duty bravely, and suppressing all outward evidence of her deep grief for Roland. Thus the love story would have only been an episode in a woman's life -- succeeded by an after existence of quiet work and duty. I think, now it is too late, I might have done much better with the story in this way, but I am so apt to be influenced by little scraps of newspaper criticism, & by what people say to me. And I sometimes fancy I am rather like one of those most unprofitable race horses that "shut up at the finish." (Letter No. 12, [November or December 1864])

Braddon's sincere concurrence with Bulwer-Lytton's suggested ending seems highly unlikely. Her excuse of being hurried when she had "plenty of copy for the printers" (Letter No. 11) is not consistent and she never adequately explains why she killed George off when her "original intention" was to keep him alive.

Whether Braddon agreed with Bulwer-Lytton's suggestion or not, she left unchanged the ending to the novel which she thought would determine whether she would "sink or swim" (Letter No. 11, September 7, 1864).

In both Madame Bovary and The Doctor's Wife, the characters are deluded by their illusions of reality. Not only is Emma, in Madame Bovary, deluded by images of grandeur, but so are most of the other characters, such as her inept husband and their ambitious neighbour, M. Homais. Flaubert's characters are unable to view their world objectively. Rousset, in his essay "Madame Bovary: Flaubert's Anti-Novel," goes so far as to say that every perception is someone's particular illusion (Rousset 441). Braddon's characters in The Doctor's Wife are no different.

However, the only illusory view of the world presented in the novel appears to be Isabel's. Because she feeds on romantic and sensational fiction, Isabel wants to be a "heroine" (23) and mistakes George Gilbert, the parish doctor, for a hero (91).

Isabel constructs her fantasies on the fiction she reads. But the other characters also have their fantasies. Sigismund Smith, the sensational author, wants to write a "magnum opus" but is stuck writing "for his public" (7). In other words, he is torn between writing great fiction and making money. George, the unexciting husband,

deludes himself in various ways, such as initially denying that he loves Isabel (51, 54, 56), later imagining his proposal to the dark-eyed girl (68), and finally denying his own mortality when he is sick (281). Roland Lansdell, the erudite lover, when a young man, imagined that he loved Gwendoline, his aristocratic cousin (130), and later, in his maturity, that Isabel would willingly be his mistress (250 to 252).

By the end of the novel, these characters have had their fantasies smashed. They wake up to reality: the romantic Roland realizes that he never understood the depths of Isabel's sentimental heart (343); the unromantic George (already dead to the reader) faces his own impending death in an uncharacteristically heroic manner (328); and the creator of romances never writes his magnum opus, although he does not starve. Isabel's perception of the world closely resembles the reality in Braddon's novel: Isabel is the heroine of the novel and George's heroic death confirms her initial view of George as hero.

George and Roland, however, each believes that he has to impart his sense of reality to the hopelessly romantic Isabel. These men take it upon themselves to change Isabel into their own perceptions of woman. Isabel is educated and develops from a foolish child into a mature woman. The mature woman outgrows her self-styled teachers, whom death dispatches, and attaches herself not to a hero but to another "wise and good woman," Gwendoline Pomphrey (343). The Doctor's Wife does not end with the marriage of the heroine and hero but with the friendship of two heroines.

Isabel's education follows various stages, consisting of conventional middle-class schooling, her self-directed reading of romantic poetry and fiction, George's lectures on the concept of the Victorian wife, Roland's instruction in the concept of the Victorian mistress, and finally friendship with Gwendoline, who teaches nothing but represents a mature Victorian woman. Isabel receives a "half-and-half

education which is popular with the poorer middle classes" (23). At the Albany Road Seminary, she learns a little Italian and enough French to read the novels which English society would prefer to be left unread; she knows history only as the romantic adventures of famous heroines, colourful queens, and wicked poisoners; she plays the piano, sings a little, and paints "wishy-washy" flowers resembling nothing like nature: "the passion flowers were apt to come out like blue muslin frills, and the fuchsias might have been mistaken for prawns by short-sighted people" (22).

Braddon satirizes typical female education as inadequate because it teaches women to rely on novels as books of conduct. For example, when Isabel wishes to accept Roland's luncheon invitation, she looks into Dickens's "Dombey" for an example of the type of reply she should write (147). But Mrs. Granger (Edith Dombey) never needs to present "her compliments to Mr. Dombey" nor does Florence have "the pleasure to inform Mr. Gay . . ." (148). This satirical episode is very close to the truth: middle-class women were expected to learn their social functions from the novels they read. Brownstein, in Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels, seems to describe Isabel, who is perhaps more typical to the nineteenth-century woman than we wish to admit:

Generations of girls who did not read much of anything else, whose experience was limited by education, opportunity, and convention, have gone to fiction to escape a stifling or a boring or a confusingly chaotic reality Women who read have been inclined since the eighteenth century to understand one another, and men, and themselves, as characters in novels. (Brownstein xviii)

Kate Millet, in "The Debate Over Women," notes that J.S. Mill despised education for women "as a minimal literary acquaintance with decorative culture deliberately designed to be superficial . . . 'an education of the sentiments rather than of the understanding'" (128).

Because Isabel has had a typical lady's education, her romantic nature reigns supreme. In a neglected garden, neglected Isabel reads her favourite authors and

dreams of herself in similar situations. In the act of reading (or consuming) a romantic novel, she is confronted by Sigismund Smith, the partial boarder living with her family. Sigismund, a writer of sensational fiction, wishes to introduce to her his friend George Gilbert:

"I wish that was 'Colonel Montefiasco,'" said Mr. Smith, pointing to the book which the young lady was reading. "I should like to see a lady so interested in one of my books that she wouldn't so much as look up when a gentleman was waiting to be introduced to her." (19)

Braddon's awareness of the fiction producer/consumer relationship is also projected onto her own writing to draw attention to its construction of letters, sentences, and paragraphs. Her novels are self-referential; Sigismund Smith, for example, is both a creation and a creator, a fictional character and an author of sensational fiction. He is always concerned with inserting a realistic flavour into his three-volume novels. In contrast, Braddon is continually reminding her readers, with figurative language, that they are reading a three-volume novel and not a history. In a typical example, Roland challenges the Graybridge gossips when he defies them to "paragraph me in their newspapers" (233). Of course his words are ominous since his death notice will eventually appear in their papers, just as his scandalous love and tragic death will appear as 'paragraphs' in Braddon's fiction.

In addition to this unusual confrontation of the fiction producer with the fiction consumer, both their desires, through fiction, are contrasted and ultimately fulfilled. Sigismund is not overtly concerned about the effect his female creations as role models have on his female readers, such as Isabel. The writer of sensational fiction wants to make money to support himself. At the opening of the novel, he is being chased by publishers' due dates which in turn mean popularity and increased revenue. By the end, he has amassed "a very comfortable little independence from the cultivation of sensational literature in penny numbers" (361).

In contrast, the female consumer of these novels constructs herself on the novel-heroines. Isabel reads good English novels of which detailed descriptions fill the text: Dickens, Bulwer-Lytton, Thackeray, etc.¹ She does not read French (bad) novels. And in the end, Isabel, already a heroine in a novel and a possible role model for female readers, becomes the English heroine she has always desired to be. Ironically, her own life mirrors her desperate heroines' situations. Her father, affectionately called Jack the Scribe by his partners in crime, supports his family by forging other men's signatures on bogus cheques. John Sleaford, a failed barrister turned criminal, is crucial to the text although largely absent. After he is found out by the law, Isabel is suddenly forced to make her own way in the world as a governess; when she marries Gilbert, she refuses to acknowledge her maiden (i.e. paternal) name; yet the father turns out to be the nemesis of the lover, Lansdell, whose testimony as a witness condemns Sleaford, the plagiarist of others' signatures, at trial.

Early in the novel, ignorant of her romantic future, Isabel compares her life to such characters as Dickens's Florence Dombey (23, 64, 79, 94), Shakespeare's Juliet Capulet (64, 233), and Thackeray's Beatrix Esmond (64); she dreams of Byronic heroes such as Thackeray's Henry Esmond (63), Bulwer-Lytton's Ernest Maltravers (63, 65), Dickens's James Steerforth (63), and Scott's Edgar Ravenswood (91); and she imagines love affairs such as those between Rawdon Crawley and Becky Sharp (91), Rochester and Jane Eyre (91), Beatrice Portinari and Dante (228, 231, 238), Leonora and Tasso (228), and Waller and Saccharissa (231). Her life revolves around

¹ Even 'good' English novels can be 'bad' or poisonous, according to Carla Peterson. In The Determined Reader, she discusses protagonists, usually orphans, as readers who are trying to recapture symbolically the wholeness and unity lost with the mother. But, she continues, reading isolates the reader from the community, and therefore, is a "poison" and not a "remedy" (Peterson 28). For the orphan Isabel, however, it is precisely her reading of romance which attracts Sigismund Smith, George Gilbert, and Roland Lansdell.

fictional heroines and heroes, and life for either a heroine or a hero must end in an early death. As the heroine of her own recurring fantasy, Isabel looks forward to a typically early heroine-like death: "But poor Isabel wanted her life to be like her favourite books; she wanted to be a heroine, -- unhappy perhaps, and dying early. She had an especial desire to die early in a decline" (23) (also 159, 181, 212, 215, 220, 236, 241, 276, 334). After the heroine dies, the hero of Isabel's recurring fantasy looks broken-heartedly at the beautiful corpse ravishing in death, breaks a blood vessel, and dies himself (64, 107, 116, 159, 212). The hero and heroine never live long enough to consummate their love; instead, the climax of their union is their simultaneous deaths. Because of relational proximity in the psyche, one drive can metonymically replace the more prohibited one.² In *The Subject of Semiotics*, Kaja Silverman describes how metaphor and metonymy work in language (Silverman 109 - 122). She notes that repression of a prohibited concept requires replacement with an uncensored term. The repressed and unsaid term becomes more privileged because its absence is felt. The replacement term becomes a signifier pointing to the unsaid which in turn becomes the signified. Thus, Isabel's constant longing for the death of both hero and heroine is a displacement of desire for sexual union.³ This becomes more evident in Isabel's confusion of the two terms as she dreams of heroes and heroines on strong, virile Arabic steeds; her dreams culminate not in sexual consummation but in heroic death:

And then the Row! She saw herself in the Row sometimes, upon an Arab -- 'a black Arab -- that would run away with her at the most fashionable time in

² For a concise discussion of the manipulation of the life and death instincts by the id, ego, and superego, see Calvin S. Hall, *A Primer of Freudian Psychology*.

³ I will not argue the 'chicken or egg' question at which my discussion hints. Isabel is a product of her reading. If the novels she reads include death/sex desire, then she is only imitating the desires of her role models, created by men. Neither Braddon nor Isabel are producing these desires which already exist in both their readings. Perhaps this makes it easier for Isabel later to refuse Roland's sexual advances.

the afternoon, and all but kill her; and then she would rein him up as no mortal woman ever reined in an Arab steed before And then the wicked prince . . . would fall ill . . . would break a blood-vessel and die! (107)

Isabel later projects her own desire to be a heroine onto Lady Gwendoline. She imagines both Gwendoline and her cousin, Roland, riding Arabs in Rotten Row because "nobody worth speaking of ever rode anything but Arab horses." She pictures them in the glitter of high society, "going down to the grave through an existence of dinner-parties, and Rotten Row, and balls, and Ascot Cups" (121).

Isabel's morbid fantasies, however, become the reality for others in the novel.

Gwendoline, originally engaged to Roland, sees a better matrimonial catch in Lord Heatherland. But a month before his wedding to Gwendoline, Lord Heatherland breaks his neck when he falls from his horse during an Irish steeplechase (133).

Ironically, Roland adopts Isabel's romantic fantasy when he creates a false accident to explain the fatal gash on his head: he tells everyone that his injuries were caused by his fall from a runaway horse. Thus, Isabel's real-life lover dies the prototypical romantic death.

Roland's death, however, is a consequence of his jealousy and Isabel's earlier refusal of him. Isabel does not become Roland's mistress; she has been educated well in English morality. Her English novels have supplied her with role models: she is a Jane Eyre who is horrified at the thought of unsanctioned copulation. She is definitely not, however, an Isabel (Vane) Carlyle, a heroine in the popular sensational novel East Lynne (1861), who leaves her husband for the elegant Captain Levison. Her punishment is dragged through hundreds of pages and is only relieved for her and the reader by her welcomed death. The difference between Isabel Gilbert and Isabel Carlyle and the starkly contrasting intentions of both novels make East Lynne an inevitable intertext to the later, less moralistic one.

Ironically, Braddon's habit of mocking the patriarchal novel of proper, female

conduct did not deter Ford Madox Ford from mistaking her for the author of East Lynne (Wolff 418). While both men die, Isabel does not. She remains virginal to the last; her sexual/death desire is left unfulfilled. In contrast to Madame Bovary, where the heroine attempts to satiate her desires, Braddon writes an ironized English novel.

Like the romance heroine, Isabel is not a typical Victorian woman who cooks, cleans, and sews. Instead, she dreams of another world. Ironically, it is this that attracts the pedestrian George to her: "he fell to wondering about her again, and wondered why it was she was so different from Miss Sophronia Burdock and the young ladies of Graybridge-on-the-Wayverne" (26) (also 30, 53, 62, 104, 249). George represents the mid-century English temperament and his village, Graybridge, the typical boring 'gray' English provincial society. George went to the Classical and Commercial Academy and took over his father's practice. Like Mr. Dombey, he values continuity and is prejudiced against change. He is the hyperbole of patriarchal conservatism; thus, when his new bride suggests refurnishing their little cottage, George discourages any alteration:

"I like it all the better for that, Izzie," he said; "it was my father's, you know, and his father's before him. I wouldn't change a stick of it for the world. Besides, it's such substantial furniture; they don't make such chairs and tables nowadays." (102)

Like his prototype, Charles Bovary, George Gilbert completely trusts his wife; that is, he lacks sufficient imagination to be jealous. The only compliment one can make about him comes from Charles Raymond, the altruistic old bachelor who employs Isabel as governess to his orphaned nieces. Raymond, who resembles Binet, the moral conscience of Madame Bovary, is a phrenologist: he observes George's head and comes to the conclusion that the young physician has a very solid moral capacity (63, 116, 135, 208). George's moral capacity, however, is no compensation for his dullness and stupidity. His conversation is so boring as to put his listeners

to sleep (122) or force them to read while he speaks (106); amazingly, he loses his way coming down from a single-staircased turret (190).

Like Charles Bovary, George Gilbert is a failure. In both novels, their characters are summed up in one poignant episode. In Madame Bovary, Charles attempts to achieve medical success when he operates on the cripple Hippolyte's clubfoot (Part II, Chapter XI). Unfortunately, Hippolyte's leg becomes gangrenous and must be amputated. Afterwards, the tap-tapping sound of Hippolyte's wooden leg is a constant reminder of Charles's failure. Braddon also creates an episode emphasizing George's failures, although hers is comic, since George must be saved from total degradation because he is to die a hero. During his courtship of Isabel, he is an occasional visitor at the house of her employer. George wishes to reciprocate Raymond's friendly hospitality and invites him, his nieces, and Isabel to dinner. Unfortunately, the doctor's food proves "bilious" to the orphans and "the experiment was not repeated" (90).

George, a ridiculous character, is a patriarchal failure, and his comic situations satirize the patriarchal order. It is ironic, then, that he is made to preach stereotypical theories on how a wife shall behave. His theories, like his experiments, Braddon seems to imply, should not be repeated. George formulates his philosophy as he dreams of marrying Isabel:

"When I marry, my wife must love the people I love," said George, who entertained those superb theories upon the management of a wife which are peculiar to youthful bachelors. (51) This young man discussed his matrimonial views with the calm grandiosity of manner with which man, the autocrat, talks of his humble slaves before he has tried his hand at governing them, -- before he has received the fiery baptism of suffering, and learned by bitter experience that a perfect woman is not a creature to be found at every street corner waiting meekly for her ruler. (55)

It is interesting to compare George's notion that one can find some anonymous woman on a street corner to fill his needs for a wife and Robert Audley's view of a possible wife in a woman who stands on the street corner only to be splashed with

mud from the wheels of Robert's fly. Both men seem to believe that the decision and choice to marry rests with the male alone. They view wives as waiting to be picked up at every street corner, women who either passively acquiesce to men's proposals or quietly accept the mud from their wheels.

George's courtship of and marriage to Isabel emphasize the traditional dilemma for would-be wives. During the courtship, the hero erects a pedestal on which to place his betrothed heroine; but after the wedding, the wife is knocked off and the husband now takes the seat of honour. When George proposes to Isabel, he is "entirely impressed with her grace and beauty, and his own inferiority" (78). As soon as he is assured of his status of husband-to-be, he increasingly occupies the position of patriarchal tyrant:

He had ceased to regard her as a superior being, whom it was a privilege to worship. . . . He even took upon himself to lecture Isabel, on sundry occasions, with regard to her love of novel-reading, her neglect of plain needlework, and her appalling ignorance about puddings. . . . All his old notions of masculine superiority returned now that he was familiar with Miss Sleaford. (90)

George initially admires Isabel's vague and dreamy replies (76). Later, when he orders wedding announcements, he is surprised that Isabel does not want her maiden name to appear on the cards. Isabel wishes to erase any mention of her father's name "Sleaford" and answers George quite passionately concerning her wishes. For George, her emotional answers are "flights of fancy" which are not appropriate to his "training [of Isabel] with a view to his own ideal of a wife" (93). After the wedding, George continues the training of his wife. He is successful:

Isabel loved him; she smiled at him when he spoke to her, and was gentle and obedient to his advice: he was, perhaps, a shade too fond of advising her. She had given up novel-reading, and employed her leisure in the interesting pursuit of plain needlework. (95)

Isabel learns to be an automaton, responding to George in compliance to his training. Their married life is dreary and mechanical. George is blind to Isabel's responses to him:

Yes; she was satisfied with her life, which was the same every day, and with the dull old town, where no change ever came. She was satisfied as an opium-eater is satisfied with the common everyday world; which is only the frame that holds together all manner of splendid and ever-changing pictures. She was content with a life in which she had ample leisure to dream of a different existence. (106)

And George

... was quite satisfied. He had never sought for more than this: a pretty wife to smile upon him when he came home, to brush his hat for him now and then in the passage after breakfast, before he went out for his day's work, and to walk to church twice every Sunday, hanging upon his arm. (169)

Later, when married life has settled upon them, Isabel brushes the nap of his hat the wrong way, which makes him angry. He objects to the flowers she brings into the house because perfumed blossoms are "liable to generate carbonic-acid gas" (229)

Even before the pair are married, Braddon sharply contrasts their world views. George pictures Isabel making tea in his late mother's Britannia-metal teapot while he sits opposite her in the tiny parlour; he fantasizes her sewing "commonplace buttons upon his commonplace shirts" (68). In sharp contrast, the narrator questions the wisdom of the marriage:

Alas, poor Izzie! and are all your fancies, all the pretty stories woven out of your novels, all your long day-dreams about Marie Antoinette and Charlotte Corday, Edith Dombey and Ernest Maltravers, -- all your foolish pictures of a modern Byron, fever-stricken at Missolonghi, and tended by you; a new Napoleon, exiled to St. Helena, and followed, perhaps liberated, by you, -- are they all come to this? Are none of the wonderful things that happen to women ever to happen to you? Are you never to be Charlotte Corday, and die for your country? Are you never to wear ruby velvet, and diamonds in your hair, and to lure some recreant Carker to a foreign hostelry, and there heap scorn upon him? Are all the pages of life's romance to be closed upon you -- you, who seem to yourself predestined, by reason of so many dreams and fancies, to such a wonderful existence? Is all the mystical fabric of your dreams to shrivel into this, -- a square-built cottage at Graybridge-on-the-Wayverne, with a parish doctor for your husband? (69)

Rather than living the life of a heroine, George wants her to conform to Graybridge society:

Nobody had ever quite understood Isabel; and least of all could George Gilbert understand the woman whom he had chosen for his wife. . . . he wanted her to be happy according to his ideas of happiness, and not her own.

He wanted her to be delighted with stiff little tea parties, at which the Misses Pawlkatt, and the Misses Burdock, and young Mrs. Henry Palmer, wife of Mr. Henry Palmer, junior, solicitor, discoursed pleasantly of the newest pattern in crochet, and the last biography of some departed Evangelical curate. (103 - 104)

The disaster of their marriage is underscored by Jeffson, George's servant, who acts as chorus to the tragedy:

"They wern't [sic] miade för one another. I wonder sometimes to see the trouble a man 'll take before he gets a pair o' boots, to find out as they're a good fit and won't gall his foot when he comes to wear 'em; but t' same man 'll go and get married as off-hand, as if there weren't the smallest chance of his wife's not suiting him." (242)

The analogy of the boot which Jeffson uses is appropriate in that George wants to stamp out Isabel's dreams; he wants Isabel to be obedient and domestic; he wants to erase in Isabel exactly that which he found so fascinating. Braddon condemns this and suggests that George deserves the disdain Isabel feels towards him.

But then, if a man chooses to marry a girl because her eyes are darkly beautiful, he must be contented with the advantage he derives from the beauty for which he has chosen her. If he selects his wife from amongst other women because she is true-hearted and high-minded and trustworthy, he has ample right to be angry with her whenever she ceases to be any one of these things. (144)

Isabel has never pretended to be anything but what she is. Therefore, when later she enjoys talking to Roland about books, she is exonerated at least by the narrator and reader because she is within the bounds of her true character: the immature fantasist-reading and dreaming herself as romantic heroine.

The appropriate activity for a Victorian middle-class wife is maker of puddings and darning of stockings. Unfortunately, as Charles Raymond observes, these qualities are very much lacking in his romantic governess (72). Isabel attempts to become a maker of pies and puddings, but, as with all her worldly attempts, she lapses into fiction and imagines making puddings all day long in hopes that a suitor would be enticed by the puddings' smells:

Isabel had no liking for these things; to her the making of pastry was a wearisome business. It was all very well for Ruth Pinch to do it for once in a way, and to be admired by John Westlock, and marry a rich and handsome young husband offhand. No doubt Miss Pinch knew instinctively that Mr. Westlock would come that morning while the beef-steak pudding was in progress. But to go on making puddings for Tom Pinch for ever and ever, with no John Westlock! Isabel left the house affairs to Mrs. Jeffson, and acted Shakspearian [sic] heroines before her looking-glass, and read her novels, and dreamed her dreams (140)⁴

Isabel's domestic dreams mimic the scene in Madame Bovary in which Mademoiselle Emma first greets Charles Bovary in the kitchen where she has been cooking the farm hands' breakfast; and later, after the first Madame Bovary dies, Charles observes Emma sewing by the hearth (Madame Bovary Part 1, Chapter II). Not only is Braddon criticizing male writers whose unrealistic heroines, such as Dickens's Ruth Pinch, patiently wait for their rescuers, but she also paints her own heroine in bold contrast. Isabel, a fictional heroine unlike other fictional heroines, will not be bothered with the "wearisome business" of the household affairs; instead she will create her own reality where she is free to be whom she pleases, when she pleases.

George soon fades into the background of mediocrity; Isabel surpasses him and enters her next educational stage: she meets the romantic hero of the novel, Roland Lansdell, a rich squire and the poet of The Alien's Dreams. As Roland gains prominence in the novel, George becomes a gastronomical entity, perhaps to reiterate his bilious dinner. He is only seen feeding (106, 167, 169, 186, 213, 229, 233), especially on spring onions (167, 182) and radishes -- "and, oh, how George could eat radishes, crunch, crunch, crunch!" (122).

⁴ In Martin Chuzzlewit, Ruth Pinch goes to live with her brother Tom after being a governess for a wealthy brass- and copper-founder's family in Camberwell. Interestingly, Isabel Sleaford and her creator, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, both lived in Camberwell; but unlike Ruth Pinch, the heroine Isabel and the writer Braddon lived unconventional lives.

In contrast to George's functional education, Roland has studied the classics, first under a private tutor (172), and then at Eton (129), and finally completed his education at Oxford (130). Roland is far superior to the quaint parish doctor.

George wears a long watch-chain given to him by his father which he

artfully twisted and doubled into the semblance of a short one; and on this chain he hung a lucky sixpence and an old-fashioned silver vinaigrette; which trifles, when seen from a distance, looked almost like the gold fusee-boxes which the officers stationed at Conventford wore dangling on their waistcoats. (89)

In contrast, Roland wears a glimmering slender watch-chain

of very yellow gold, with onyx cameos and antique golden coins hanging to it, -- altogether different from the clumsy locket and fusee boxes which dangled on the padded chests of the officers at Conventford, whom Isabel had once so implicitly believed in. (155)

In this passage, Braddon uses the anonymous officers of Conventford as a measuring device because she seems to want to avoid a direct authorial comparison which would openly denigrate the hard-working doctor and elevate the lazy, wealthy landowner; such an obvious authorial comment would only infuriate the hard-working Victorian middle-classes who believed that wealth (like heaven) is the reward for those who laboured, physically and morally.

Most of the comparisons between George and Roland are veiled. For instance, Roland returns to Midlandsire against the wishes of his distant cousin and father-figure, Charles Raymond.⁵ Roland cannot dismiss the love he feels for Isabel; escaping to foreign climes will not diminish his infatuation for the parish doctor's

⁵ Braddon's mythical Midlandsire mirrors the real Warwickshire: Conventford is Conventry, Warcliffe Castle is Warwick Castle, and Graybridge-on-the-Wayverne is Stratford-upon-Avon. Literary allusions also point to this county. Midlandsire is described as a "Shakesperian region" (358) and Isabel often dreams of the mistreated heroine Amy Robsart (92), an historical figure who appears in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Kenilworth* (1821). Kenilworth, a town north of Warwick and Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford, and south of Coventry is fittingly renamed Waverly, the title of Scott's first novel, which is included in Isabel's reading. The fictional river Wayverne follows a similar course to that of the Avon.

wife. Roland describes his uncontrollable love as a "disease . . . past cure." He compares it to a "foolish fever . . . contemptible to the solemn-faced doctor who watches the wretched patient tossing and writhing, and listens to his delirious ravings" (222 - 223). The metaphor could not be more appropriate since his love (his "fever") would be "contemptible" to his lover's husband, the doctor. Ironically, the doctor, and not the patient, never recovers from the pathological fever.

Braddon, however, allows Isabel to make a direct comparison between her husband, who smells of drugs, and Roland, who smells of perfume (240). In this example, Isabel mentally moves from the text's present and reality to the past and her dreams:

He [George] went away, and Isabel listened to his substantial boots creaking down the stairs . . . and he left a faint odour of drugs behind him. Ah, how that odious flavour of senna and camomile flowers brought back an exotic perfume that had floated towards her one day from "his" [Roland's] hair . . . And now the senna and camomile were to flavour all her life. She was no longer to enjoy that double existence, those glimpses of dreamland . . . If she could have died, and made an end of it all! (240 - 241)

Isabel is never on an equal footing with the men in her life. Like George, who had earlier placed and removed Isabel from a pedestal, Isabel, in turn, places Roland Lansdell on one: "she . . . was such a degraded wretch as compared with this splendid being" (138). Isabel is in utter awe of Roland and Gwendoline, those "Beings . . . these radiant creatures" (115). She regards Roland with such reverence that she thinks of him, "in italics" (179, 217).

Roland is Isabel's "demigod" (138), "a shadowy and divine creature, amenable to no earthly laws. . . a modern Byron" (125). In return, Roland initially believes Isabel to be "very stupid," a "pretty nonentity" (142). Soon, however, Isabel becomes Roland's project. He wants to educate her (168-69, 263) and never loses an opportunity to make speeches for her "edification" (178). Like George, Roland is attracted to Isabel because of her difference from other women, her innocent love

of such writers as Shelley and Byron; but he, too, wants to change her, to make her conform to his conceptions. Both men want Isabel to be a projection of their own desire.

In the process of educating her, Roland thinks of Isabel as an object for his amusement. She becomes his possession, just as a "waxen-looking flower in his button-hole" (155) belongs to him. Isabel is often associated with flowers. She is first introduced to the reader and George while she is sitting in an overgrown garden in Camberwell (18); George spies her the second time in the manicured garden of her employer, Charles Raymond (60). Roland orders bouquets to be cut, one looking very innocent, to be given to Isabel: "the flowers had a language for him," which was not the "stereotyped vocabulary" of flowers (184). Roland deceives himself into thinking that Isabel loves him the way he loves her: "She loves me, my beautiful unvalued flower, that I found blooming unnoticed in a desert" (225).

Although he realizes eventually that "Mrs. Gilbert was not stupid, after all; she was something better than a pretty waxen image, animated by limited machinery" (144), he wants to educate her sensitive mind in order to raise her to his own lofty height:

And then in after years, when she had risen little by little to the standard which the world would deem befitting his wife, -- then, fate, or chance, the remote abstraction men call Providence, having favoured the truest and purest love upon this earth, -- then he might proclaim the ownership of the prize he had won for himself; then he might exhibit before shallow, sceptical mankind, one bright example of a perfect union. (263)⁶

But instead of raising her, Roland brings Isabel down to his lower level. This movement is transferred into various physical images. For instance, Roland takes

⁶ Roland sees Isabel as a possession; but he is an extrovert, and, therefore, wants to put her on display. In contrast, Rodolphe views Emma Bovary as a possession to be kept quiet and hidden.

her hand and leads her down the winding staircase of the turret as if she had been a little child.

If that slow downward journey could have lasted for ever -- if she could have gone down, down, down with Roland Lansdell into some fathomless pit, until at last they came to a luminous cavern and moonlit water, where there was a heavenly calm -- and death! (189)

Roland begins his "fatal descent" (222) to perdition which culminates in his last descent down a hill where Mr. Sleaford, a brutal Nemesis, waits for him. Roland finally understands that he was continually moving downward: "if I had tried to mount upwards, -- if I had buckled on my armour, and gone away from this castle of indolence, to fight in the ranks of my fellow-men" (353 - 354). This passage also indicates Roland's adoption of Isabel's romantic inclinations. He has shed the cap and gown of the teacher and has donned the armour of the knight of romance, albeit a Christian knight, on the model of Spenser's The Faerie Queene.

Increasingly, Isabel and Roland change places. Before Roland corrupts Isabel with his knowledge, she is ignorant of any wickedness or wrong in dreaming of him as her Byronic hero (124, 138, 167). After Roland educates Isabel to see evil, he teaches her to view herself as the other Graybridge gossips do: she learns to view her actions and dreams as wicked and sinful (173, 174, 200, 211, 229, 231, 233).

Roland teaching innocent Isabel the knowledge of good and evil replicates an earlier story, in which Eve is the wicked one, the progenitor of all women's wickedness. However, in The Doctor's Wife, the emphasis is not on the innocent Isabel-Eve but on the philandering Roland-Tempter. Roland, like the serpent, reveals to Isabel the evil in the world: "Roland's talk had scared her . . . Eve had listened to the first whisper of the serpent, and Paradise was no longer entirely beautiful" (234). Later this alteration in Isabel becomes evident when she is eating dinner with George. All she can think of while eating are the words "shame and degradation": "she had tasted, if ever so little, of the fruit of the famous tree"

(234). On another level, Isabel's meeting with Roland under Thurston's Oak corresponds to the serpent and the tree. The oak, a symbol of British stalwartness and patriarchal supremacy, is placed on the same level as the Biblical tree. Trees figure prominently in the two men's relations with Isabel. In ignorant anticipation of the waterfall flowing under the branches of Thurston's oak where Isabel and Roland meet, George intends to propose to Isabel at Hurstonleigh, "with the brawling of the waterfall . . . the shadows of patriarchal oaks sheltering [Isabel] from all the outer world" (76). Both men, therefore, want to act the part of "patriarchal oaks" sheltering Isabel from the outside world of which she is already too painfully aware.

In addition to the Biblical serpent, Braddon introduces the Greek myth of Laocoon. Laocoon, a Trojan prince, tried to stop the Trojans from admitting the wooden horse into the walled city of Troy: he knew the truth of what was hidden within that false gift. No one believed him, and he and his two sons were then killed by serpents from the sea. Braddon includes a scene in which, while George is boring Charles Raymond at the picnic site, Isabel and the orphans are slowly walking along a woodland path. These three females are described as "a modern Laocoon family without the serpents." Soon after this observation concerning the absence of snakes, a "rustling of the branches" reveals Roland (123). Like Laocoon, Isabel sees the world more clearly than the other, deluded characters. The serpents were sent by the gods to put a stop to Laocoon's truthful observations; similarly, Roland attempts to alter Isabel's perhaps truthful view of the world.

There is a movement, a shift here from the actual to the fantasy world. Isabel is actually sitting with George, eating dinner, but her thoughts are not on the food but on more ethereal delights. While sitting with the real George, she fantasizes Roland. George discusses exchanging his Graybridge practice for a better

one, but Isabel has little interest in the subject since a change would only bring her a new kind of dreariness. At least her present life, she muses, has more to offer: "it was something to stand shivering on the little bridge under Thurston's oak, so bare and bleak now [Roland has gone to the continent]; it was something to see even the chimney-pots of Mordred [Roland's house], the clusters of dark red-brick chimneys, warm against the December sky" (214).

In another passage, Isabel fantasizes that Roland is reading a newspaper which describes her hoped-for death. This imagined future event forces the reader into the actual past in which Roland had read a newspaper article announcing Gwendoline's engagement to Lord Heatherstone. Then the present, represented by George, cuts into Isabel's and the reader's thoughts. It will be George who, if anyone, reads of Isabel's fantasized death because he is fond of reading about accidents and police reports in his Sunday paper (207). Then, after reading his paper, George breaks into Isabel's dreams of Roland when he announces Roland's name to explain that the latter left them a cheque for thirty pounds to provide medical services for his poorer tenants.

This movement from the actual to fantasy also corresponds to Roland's gradual transformation. As Roland becomes more infatuated with Isabel, he begins to think of himself as a "victim of a romantic fancy" (196), with a love newly "grown up" for a childish woman (199). He is inspired by Isabel to dream such fantasies for himself:

Do you remember opening your eyes very wide the other day, Isabel, and crying out that you would like to see Rome, and Keats's grave, and the Colosseum, -- Byron's Colosseum, -- where the gladiator thought of his wife and children, eh, Izzie? I made such a dream out of that childish exclamation. (250)

As Roland is taught to dream, he places Isabel high above him. With his head bandaged from the beating he received from Isabel's father (Jack the Scribe's

revengeful signature), Roland explains that he now can see the stars which hitherto had been obscured: "What is impossible in a universe where there are such stars? It seemed as if I had never seen them until then" (347). Once Roland has learned what goodness and truth there are in Isabel, he becomes a morally better person. Ironically, with his head bandaged, the phrenologist, Charles Raymond, cannot read this. The sky, he remarks earlier to Gwendoline, is higher (344). The stars and sky are ideological conventions, representing, for Roland, the truth. He could only see the truth, that is the stars, because he was struck on the head and laid low on the ground. This satiric treatment of the Victorian discourse of "truth" emerges from Roland's desire to control and limit Isabel's freedom. He is no longer trapped in the stifling and restricting mentality of the Graybridge folk now that he can place Isabel in an exalted position. In his death, Roland learns to break the petty bonds which kept him from seeing the world from the fresh perspective provided by Isabel:

Our mothers believe in us, and worship us, and watch over us, and seem to fancy they have dipped us in a kind of moral Styx, and that there is something of the immortal in our common clay; but rouse our passions, and we sink to the level of the bricklayer who beats his unfaithful wife to death with a poker. They put a varnish over us at Eton and Oxford; but the matter underneath is very much the same, after all. (346)

If it is only difference in education which places the wealthier over the poorer, then education is equally the origin of the unequal positions of men and women. Isabel's last lesson, therefore, is to see Roland on her own level. Braddon, in a letter to Bulwer-Lytton, describes indirectly what lesson Isabel will learn from Roland:

Happy the Amy Robsarts [in Scott's Kenilworth] & the Haidées [in Byron's Don Juan] who die before their first illusions are worn threadbare! I think the faculty of writing a love story must die out with the first death of love. We cease to believe in the God when we find that he is not immortal. (Letter No. 5, [May 1863])

Isabel finally moves Roland from his pedestal; his suggestion that she run away from her husband and be his mistress finally opens her eyes to his mortality, his commonness. He no longer is her demigod "now that he came down upon common ground and wooed her as an everyday creature" (251). Had he declared his intentions of building a marble mausoleum on the grounds of Mordred and had he requested Isabel to commit suicide so that both the lovers could occupy it, she would have been overjoyed and only too delighted (251), but sordid adultery is not the resolution of her Puritan English romanticism.

Unfortunately, Roland's love and Isabel's are not of the same kind. Roland views his own love as pure and above the "common world and the base thoughts of common people" (311); but when Roland's proposal is refused, he begins to think like the "common people" he despises: he believes that Isabel refused him because she has other lovers. Roland lowers himself to the level of the Graybridge gossips, whose mythology of women reflects the general Victorian attitude. The gossips cannot accept that a woman may make a decision on her own; they cannot give Isabel credit for discontinuing her meetings with Roland at Thurston's oak. Instead, they believe her husband used his "marital authority" to put a stop to their clandestine meetings (276). Similarly, Roland cannot accept that Isabel wishes to discontinue their meetings because she feels wicked and not because she is having an affair with a popular clergyman (269) or with a stranger. His pure love is that of a "spoiled child of fortune" (262); he cannot trust Isabel.

In a letter to Bulwer-Lytton, Braddon describes what she wishes to do with Roland:

I am so afraid of making Roland Lansdell unmanly, or ungentlemanly. I want him to be a gentleman whatever he is -- but I want also to show the wide difference between a man's love & a woman's sentimental fancy, which is utterly out of the region of a man's comprehension unless he is the author of *Zanoni* or *David Copperfield*. I include Dickens though I don't think he has ever described a purely sentimental woman. I know that is a slip of the pen

about the great authors in Roland's library -- & yet I mean what I say. Hitherto Isabel has been reading the works of great men, but they have been all in the region of romance, &, unbalanced by graver books, they have produced the exaltation which poetry must always produce. . . . Isabel has been revelling in light & colour & music, & it is the calm gray twilight of biography & history, & philosophy that I fancy lulling that eager sentimental nature to repose. I cannot express what I mean, but I think you will understand me. ("Devoted Disciple," Letter No. 10, summer 1864)

Braddon emphasizes the difference between a man's and a woman's love and the difference between a male and a female author's description of a sentimental woman. Braddon's hopes that Roland should remain a gentleman would only be a concern if she intended to bring Roland down or to reverse his role of teacher.

Moreover, Roland is not credited with teaching Isabel. He supplies the books, but Isabel takes the initiative to visit Mordred when he has left for the continent:

Her mind expanded amongst all the beautiful things around her, and the graver thoughts engendered out of grave books banished some of her most childish fancies, her sentimental yearnings. Until now she had lived too entirely amongst poets and romancers; but now grave volumes of biography opened to her a new picture of life. She read the stories of real men and women, who had lived and suffered real sorrows, prosaic anguish, hard commonplace trial and misery. (216)

Interestingly, she exchanges the sorrows, anguish, and miseries of fictional characters in three volumes for the "real" sorrows, anguish, and miseries of "real" men and women in other narrative genres.

The ironic effect of her switch from novels to "graver" reading of "real" people is to displace the fictional heroes: "She sat and thought of Roland Lansdell It was better than reading" (166). About this time, Isabel stops visiting the local circulating library because she is now living her own romance. Isabel creates George as a fictional character; sometimes she imagines him to be a Ravenswood, a Rochester, a Dombey, or a Rawdon Crawley (91); but Roland remains Roland. She does not have to imagine him as any fictional hero because he is both clearly delineated and fuzzily obscured. Roland is, simultaneously, clearly drawn and also undescribable. Braddon provides the first glimpse of him in her favourite pre-

Raphaelite style: lots of light to give translucence, a window for depth, and an androgynous human form to represent a symbolic 'other' representing both Isabel's fantasy and a separate character:

What did she see? A young man half reclining in the deep embrasure of a window, with the summer sunshine behind him a man upon whom Nature . . . had lavished all the gifts that women most admire a kind face . . . only familiar to us in a few old Italian portraits; a beautiful, dreamy, perfect face, exquisite alike in form and colour. The nose was midway betwixt an aquiline and a Grecian, but it was in the chiselling of the nostril, the firmness and yet delicacy of the outline . . . the forehead was of medium height . . . His eyes and mouth formed the chief beauty of his face; and yet I can describe neither, for their chief charm lay in the fact that they were indescribable. (115)

In this, as in other descriptions of Roland, he cannot be pictured. He is not as sharply drawn as George (1 - 2) or as Isabel (20) because he is Isabel's dream, and faces in dreams are not focussed. Isabel first meets Roland when she is looking at a Tintoretto and he is commenting on another painting at Warcliffe Castle (113). Isabel is so impressed with Roland, with his melancholy "Rembrandt face" (291, 150, 155), "the wonderful face in which there was the mellow colouring of a Guido," that she makes "a picture of him in her mind" (125). Isabel, however, does not need to confine him to her imagination since the real Roland continually presents himself as a picture: "she was free to watch Roland's face . . . that profile whose perfect outline grew more and more distinct against the moonlit sky. If anybody could have painted him . . . what a picture it would have made!" (187 - 188). Because he is so often associated with paintings and with such intangibles as light, Roland tends to register as a figment of Isabel's prodigious imagination.

⁷ It is interesting to compare Roland in other, similar picturesque poses: "Roland sat to-day in the great window of the library - a deeply-embayed Tudor window, jutting out upon a broad stone terrace, along whose balustrade a peacock stalked slowly in the sunshine" (149 - 50). Although Roland cannot be pictured, he is associated with beauty in conjunction with the peacock. Appropriately the peacock is also emblematic of vanity.

By the end of the novel, although he had always lived an "artificial kind of existence" (133), Roland will only exist as another portrait among the equally youthful portraits of his short-lived ancestors in the gallery at Mordred Priory (129, 268, 291, 351). In contrast to Isabel's fondness for art and the beautiful (101, 103, 146, 156), and Roland's artistic possessions, George lives a drab, utilitarian existence (102, 103), devoid of anything that is not functional. Not surprisingly, George is not enthusiastic about the pictures hanging in Roland's mansion (156).

In addition to his paintings, Roland is always associated with light, perhaps because light is a main ingredient in pre-Raphaelite painting, and must be present before any painting can be seen. In Isabel's dreams, Roland occupies "bright regions" (139), provides a "sunshiny pause in the business of life" (175), and his "dark face [shines] dazzling and beautiful" (138); Roland is "pleased to let in the light of positive knowledge on her vague ideas" (168 - 169), and his face brightens when he sees Isabel (174); when Isabel looks upon her hero, Roland is reflected as "the golden light in her eyes" which "was lovelier than anything out of a fairy tale" (178)⁸. Isabel's life has been brightened by Roland as by a glimpse of the sun. But when she thinks of her necessary separation from her bright sun, she sees the "dull and colourless" life which lay before her (244). Isabel compares the time she spent with George, the "grey, colourless pause in her life," with the time spent with Roland; the "tropical splendour . . . a lovely oasis of light and colour" (336). Similarly, Gwendoline, who also loves Roland, is robbed of the "few rays of that

⁸ If Roland is the light reflected in Isabel's eyes, then his statement that he is denied nothing "except the *ignis-fatuus* light of" Isabel's eyes (311) may be interpreted two ways. First, he, and not she, becomes the 'deceptive hope' because he is not who Isabel thought him to be: a hero. Second, Roland becomes the literal translation of *ignis-fatuus*, the 'foolish fire', because he tracks down Isabel, thinking she has been unfaithful to him despite the fact she owes him no allegiance.

light which was now the only radiance upon earth for her, -- the light of her cousin's presence," by the passive and unknowing Isabel (136).

The lurid light which surrounds Roland's death scene is prefigured earlier when he nobly leaves Isabel for the continent. His sudden departure is like a death to Isabel, who quietly suffers the blow with a "headache" in her bedroom. When she gets up to join her husband in the shabby, dusty parlour, "the west was one lurid glow like a crimson furnace." As she plaits her hair, the reflection in the looking glass reveals "the lurid sky" (204). When Raymond brings Isabel the news of Roland's fatal accident, "a flash of lurid sunshine" (338) and "a dreadful light" (339) fall upon the heroine. The light is restricted from full entry into Roland's sick room by the venetian blinds (341, 350). Finally, his death is quietly suggested when "the sun sloped westward" (351): "the western sunlight shining redly through a lantern in the roof illumined the sombre faces of the dead Lansdells" (351). His death is the death of a sun to Isabel, who gropes blindly in the dreadful darkness which obscures her world (356): "But over all there seemed to hang a dim grey mist that shut out the sunshine" (359).

Isabel, however, survives the passing of the light. Roland had once told Isabel that involvement with him was like playing with fire (343). In contrast to the fire image associated with Roland, Isabel is associated with water. Thus, Isabel, the heroine, cannot be burned (by Roland) because she has the protection of water. The water image does not conflict with conventional interpretations of water as life, memories, and death; instead, this interpretation enhances Isabel's identification with real life rather than with the "foolish" dreams the text appears to suggest. The Wayverne River, like Isabel, who has connections with the other characters, connects the small villages and locales in Midlandshire: Isabel worked as a governess in Conventford; at Graybridge-on-the-Wayverne, she suffers a "dusty"

existence between her meetings with Roland; Isabel first meets Roland at Warcliffe Castle and she continues to see him at Thurston's Crag; Isabel visits the "model" village and woman at Hurstonleigh, where George also proposes to her; Isabel fulfills her dreams at Mordred Priory; and at Nessborough Hollow, she meets her father to pay him to leave her alone, and Roland goes to meet his death. The two men who love her display their manly affection near water: George proposes to Isabel over the Wayverne River (77) and Roland enjoys meeting her at Thurston's Crag, "an island of mediaeval splendour amidst a sea of green pastureland" (105). When Isabel is filled with romantic rapture, she is frequently posed near "brawling" waterfalls (71, 76, 107, 173, 234, 244) or the noisy, busy Wayverne (111, 112, 113, 144, 341). Isabel enjoys dreaming at the mill-stream and waterfall at Thurston's Crag, where the branches of a patriarchal oak shadow all the width of the water (105). In her dreams of Roland, she compares her lowly position, contrasted to Roland's exalted one, to that of the brook to the moon and the sunflower to the sun:

The moon is a cold divinity, and the brooks look up for ever and win no special radiance for their faithful worship: the sunflower is always turning to the sun, and the sun takes no notice of the flower. (141)

The complexity of the fire-water images clearly emerges in the contrast between Isabel's fantasy and the reality of the situation. In her dreams, Isabel dies an early heroine-type death by drowning or is rescued from it (72, 144, 205, 212, 256). However, water resuscitates Isabel from fainting spells, indirectly caused by the fiery Roland. Isabel faints when Roland tells his guests how he is to die (she recognizes the condemned criminal who vows vengeance on Roland as her father); George splashes water to revive his wife (164). Later, when Roland's prophecy comes true, Isabel "had a consciousness of cold water splashed upon her face" (340).

In addition to the revivifying properties of water, Isabel provides a purifying service to the wicked philanderer. In contrast to Roland's light and fire reflected

in Isabel's eyes, Isabel is reflected "like a glimpse of water" in his (124) and will eventually act as a spiritual guide for the wavering, dissolute Roland.

Interestingly, Isabel's religious significance is exhibited in the numerous references to nuns and nunneries. Charles Raymond of Conventford, where Isabel first finds refuge from her family's disgrace, compares her forthcoming marriage to George with the tragic fate of "some fair young nun, foredoomed to be buried alive by-and-by" (73). Comparisons of Isabel are made to such tragic heroines as Louise de la Vallière, superceded mistress to Louis XIV, who took the veil (193, 244), and the pious and faithful Hildegonde, who devoted her days to prayers in a convent while her lover becomes a hermit outside its walls (229, 236, 254).⁹ Isabel pines "for the shadowy aisles of conventual sanctuary . . . but no sympathetic priest" happens to pass her way. Instead, "a sudden gleam of sunshine lighted the waterfall" and Roland comes to request Isabel to be his degraded mistress (245). She had hoped that Roland would want her to be a nun so that he could worship her outside the convent gates (255), and, of course, she would have died young since she could not imagine an elderly nun surviving all those toilsome years of piety and self-sacrifice (335).

Roland, however, did not have faith in Isabel's words, which he had earlier mistaken for childish fancies. Later, he admits that his death is "the execution of a divine judgement" (353). On his death-bed, he finally sees the truth as he murmurs passages from St. John's Gospel and Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (348), and he

⁹ In German legend, dating from the tenth century, Hildegunde (the anglicized version uses an 'o' instead of the germanic 'u') is the fiancée of Walter von Aquitanien. Walter must defend the treasure he took from the Huns and Hildegunde, who escaped from Attila. Walter proves successful after individual contests against Gunther, King of the Burgundians, and twelve knights. This legend reportedly has been replicated in an Anglo-Saxon poem and in a Polish folk tale (see *Meyers Grosses Konversations-Lexikon*, Zwanzigster Band).

informs Isabel that "your childish ignorance was wiser than my worldly experience" (346).

Roland's dying reference to the Bible and to Tennyson, like Isabel's numerous literary references, provides allusions to already established stories, which adds depth to Braddon's own. From In Memoriam, it is only a short step to the Idylls of the King, in which Modred figures as the villain, and thence to the Mordred of Malory's Morte D'Arthur. Modred is either the evil nephew or illegitimate son to King Arthur. In the Morte D'Arthur, Mordred, like Roland with Isabel, attempts to seduce Guinevere when her husband is in France on a military campaign. Arthur, upon hearing the news, returns and both men are killed in the ensuing duel. Guinevere, like Isabel, is left alone with neither husband nor lover. Interestingly, Roland's ancestral home, Mordred Priory, was once a retreat house for monks.

Water provides sustenance to the flower and for Isabel; but for Roland, water has a diminishing effect. Isabel, when she first spies her hero Roland, prophesies that "to-morrow he would melt away . . . into the regions of light" (125); and he does "disappear in a burst of sunshine that flooded the great hall" as he leaves Warcliffe Castle (119). Even Roland, at one time, believes that his memories of Isabel will melt away as "the snows of last winter" (196). Water also becomes a barrier to their love and shrinks Roland to a mere memory when he crosses the channel (215, 245). Finally, Isabel's father, who is disguised as a sea merchant, anoints Roland's head, his phrenological moral region, with fatal blows under the "streaming" moonlight (315). Wild flowers and a "shower of opal-tinted rose-petals" flutter about Roland where he falls (316).

Isabel's last stage of development is a return to her dreams. Gwendoline Pomphrey, a female friend, replaces the two lovers. The two women (and Gwendoline's father, the inconsequential earl) visit "those fair foreign lands for

which she had pined in the weedy garden at Camberwell" (358). The lands that were known to her only through the pages of Byron and Shelley now become familiar (359). In the end, Isabel is found to have already known the truth: "Her dreams were all true, then; there were such places as this, and people lived in them" (112). Isabel's sensational world of fiction becomes the reality of Braddon's novel. Isabel is a heroine of three volumes, and it is her perception of the world that now takes over. She can provide a "liberal education" to her half-brothers (359) and a schoolhouse, "a substantial modern building, set in an old-world garden, where there are great gnarled pear-trees" (360).

If Isabel, a heroine in three volumes, can interpret the world correctly through reading romantic and sensational fiction, then, Braddon seems to say, there is some credibility to sensational novels such as The Doctor's Wife. Braddon, through her misunderstood heroine, vindicates that "bitter term of reproach, 'sensation'" (7). And in vindicating the sensational school of fiction, predominantly written by women, she also exalts female authorship, and the right of women to their own realities and their own independence from the patriarchal fictions of what women must be.

CONCLUSION

Braddon clearly produced antiheroines and heroines with whom the reader could identify. Lady Audley, an antiheroine, elicits the reader's sympathy because the codes in the text reverse the judgement of her violent actions. Dr. Mosgrave's list of mitigating circumstances, Robert's deceptive designs, and George's eventual return to England indicate that Lady Audley must be re-evaluated within the novel's context. Because we sympathize and identify with Lady Audley, I argue, she is representative of the rebellious female writer who struggles against her limitations. Therefore, the reader must also re-evaluate the female Victorian writer, such as the sensationist Mary Elizabeth Braddon.

To shock her reading public, Braddon created an example of a product of her patriarchal society. Lady Audley is the ideal Victorian woman in appearance, accomplishments, and in her ability to delight others. She is atypical, however, in her refusal to be passive and accept whatever the male world thrusts upon her for good or for ill with a martyr's meekness. She is certainly not a Laura Fairlie; if anything, Braddon has constructed her antiheroine intertextually against Wilkie Collins' heroine. Laura Fairlie is the victim of a substitution of a dead woman for herself; Lady Audley arranges her own substitution for her own benefit. Laura Fairlie is rescued from unjustifiable incarceration in a lunatic asylum by the hero of her novel; whereas Lady Audley is placed in one by the hero of hers.¹

From this desperate feminine situation, Braddon produced the imaginative Isabel Sleaford, the doctor's wife. Just as Lady Audley needs men to survive, Isabel believes she needs a hero to be a heroine. The intertext for this Braddon novel, Flaubert's Madame Bovary, also stands in stark contrast. Although both women

¹ For a discussion of aspects of The Woman in White and Lady Audley's Secret, see D.A. Miller "Cage aux folles: Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins' The Woman in White."

believe they read reality correctly through their literature, Emma misreads her world and dies a bankrupt. In contrast, Isabel reads hers correctly and inherits two estates. By the end of The Doctor's Wife, Isabel is the surviving heroine; she is not a creation to be disposed of, like Lady Audley, but a creator of her own world. Isabel learns that she can be a heroine even without a hero.

This movement from the failed Lady Audley to the successful Isabel Sleaford must also reflect society's slow acceptance of and respect for the female imagination, as is exemplified in the created Isabel Sleaford and the creator Mary Elizabeth Braddon.

APPENDIX 1

A NOTE ON THE TEXT LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET

After careful consideration, I chose the Oxford University Press edition of Lady Audley's Secret (hereafter abbreviated to LAS). I had a choice of three modern editions of this sensational novel: Dover Publications (1974), Virago Press (1985), and the Oxford University Press (1987).¹ I used Virago Press, initially, but I came across an important difference between the Virago edition and both the Dover and Oxford University Press editions: the last paragraph of the novel is deleted in the Virago edition, greatly altering the interpretation.

Rather intrigued, I attempted to retrace the copy-texts used for the three modern editions and the publishing history which might have caused this difference and others I discovered throughout the text. This is not to say I have done a thorough examination of all editions published during the author's lifetime: on the contrary, I have only reconnoitered, not explored, this bibliographical labyrinth. I was limited to the texts I could obtain through Inter-Library Loan, and I did not have the resources to conduct a careful examination of the texts I did acquire. In this brief examination, I hope to argue a need for further scholarly research and to justify my use of the Oxford University Press edition for my reference text.

The Oxford University Press edition was set from the Tinsley Brothers "eighth edition revised" (1862). After comparing differences between the Virago and the Oxford University Press editions located throughout the text, both the Oxford University Press and the Tinsley Brothers editions generally appear the same. However, when glancing over one particular page, I noticed that the Oxford University Press edition capitalized "hansom" whereas the Tinsley Brothers did not.

¹ Older editions would be damaged with constant use or else impractical, especially The Sixpenny Magazine on microfilm.

The Virago edition used an "offset" (Virago presumably means photo-reproduced) from the one volume, undated Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. edition.² The Dover edition used the 1887 edition by Robert B. Davis, a New York publisher.

The publishing history of LAS is perhaps more complicated than that of the typical Victorian novel. Most novels were first published in serial form and then brought out in three volumes. LAS appeared in three periodicals. It first appeared on July 6, 1861 in the Maxwell periodical Robin Goodfellow which folded before LAS could be completed. The public felt cheated and demanded that LAS be resurrected (Wolff 4 - 5). Ward and Lock's The Sixpenny Magazine completed the first serialization within twelve months, starting from the February 1862 issue.³ After the book was brought out in three volumes by Tinsley Brothers, The London Journal ran the second complete serialization of LAS from March 21 to August 15, 1863 (Summers 17).

Tinsley Brothers brought out eight 3 volume editions of LAS in 1862 and a ninth single volume edition, illustrated, in 1863. Michael Sadleir, in XIX Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Record, lists identifying differences between these various editions. One difference is a rewriting, between the second and third editions, of the last two paragraphs in the chapter titled "Restored." This rewriting could possibly explain the extra paragraph in the Virago Press and its absence in the Oxford University Press. This paragraph seems crucial since it explains who the mysterious knocker was at Robert Audley's door earlier in the text. Of the

² Michael Sadleir dates this edition to 1891.

³ Robert Lee Wolff, in Sensational Victorian, says that "in January 1862, LAS began serial publication . . . in Ward and Lock's The Sixpenny Magazine" (Wolff 5). Montague Summers, however, in A Gothic Bibliography, claims a later date: LAS "began again in The Sixpenny Magazine, commencing in Vol. II, No. 3, March, 1862" (Summers 17). Both are wrong. The first three chapters appear in the February 1862 issue of the magazine. (See microfilm copy at the National Library.)

copies I have examined, The Sixpenny Magazine, the Oxford University Press, and its copy-text (Tinsley Brothers, 1862) do not have this crucial paragraph.⁴ All the other editions examined have the missing explanation.

After the Tinsley Brothers edition secured LAS's popularity, many foreign editions were published since there was no international copyright at that time. These editions were not sanctioned by Braddon, and therefore I have not considered them as authoritative.

After the copyright to LAS reverted to Braddon, her husband, John Maxwell, published LAS and seventeen other Braddon novels. The last came out in 1886 (Wolff 332). Maxwell published various impressions of LAS, two of which I have seen. Both copies appear to be identical -- some of the same letters are broken or dropped -- except for the title pages and publisher's address. The Maxwell edition represents the transition between the Tinsley Brothers (1862) and the Simpkin editions at the end of the century.⁵ The Maxwell edition has similarities to both its predecessor and its successor. For example, like the Oxford University Press and the Tinsley Brothers editions, the Maxwell includes the expanded description of Audley Court. But like the Virago edition, the Maxwell includes the paragraph about George knocking at Robert's door which ends the chapter "Restored."

In 1888, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, and Kent became Braddon's publisher; but for the next decade she "bought the paper and had the sheets printed and bound . .

⁴ Since I am not including Dover Publications in my analysis, I will not clutter the body of my text with comparisons to Dover. However, Dover Publications edition (and therefore, also, its copy-text Robert B. Davis edition (1887) which I have not seen) appears, in the passages I compared, to be identical to the serialization in The Sixpenny Magazine.

⁵ Since the only available copy of the Simpkin edition is located in the British Library, I have not seen it. However, I assume that what I have found in the Virago edition is the same in its copy-text, the Simpkin edition, except for perhaps the final paragraph of the novel.

. with Simpkin merely putting their imprint on her novels and distributing them" (Wolff 333). Thus, it would appear that Braddon had direct control over LAS and that any changes were made by her.

However, this does not explain adequately why the last paragraph is missing in the Virago edition. Various explanations may be deduced. First, Braddon may have deliberately deleted the last paragraph to emphasize the ridiculousness of the typical Victorian ending. This, of course, would support my argument. Second, Virago Press may have inadvertently forgotten to include this paragraph, if it appeared on the verso side of the last leaf of text in the copy-text (this paragraph appears on the verso side of the last leaf of text in the Tinsley Brothers edition). To ascertain what Simpkin actually had for the final paragraph, I wrote on April 9, 1988 to Virago Press and delicately explained my dilemma. To date I have not heard from them; Virago is either too busy to reply to a student or else embarrassed in finding another paragraph hidden on the verso side of their copy-text.

Because of this ambiguous ending and the fact that I cannot see Virago's copy-text, I decided upon the Oxford University Press edition. In addition, the Oxford University Press edition takes as its copy-text an edition which I have obtained.

VARIATIONS BETWEEN EDITIONS

The following is a list of the passages I used to compare the various LAS texts I obtained. Most of these passages were used in the body of my thesis, and therefore I was concerned about the differences between texts.

The first part of each line, separated by a left square bracket ([), gives the words or passages scrutinized. A long dash indicates that the passage is deleted from those texts. The combination of letters and numbers to the right of the square bracket represents the texts which had that particular variation. The numbers placed in parenthesis () to the right of the code for the text are the page numbers where the variation occurs, and I have also included volume numbers for The Sixpenny Magazine and the Tinsley Brothers edition.

The letters and numbers represent these texts:

A1 = Lady Audley's Secret. The Sixpenny Magazine. London: Ward and Lock, February 1862 - January 1863.

B1 = Lady Audley's Secret. London: Tinsley Brothers, 1862.

B2 = Lady Audley's Secret. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Cc1 = Lady Audley's Secret. London: John and Robert Maxwell, [circa 1879].

Cc2 = Lady Audley's Secret. London: John and Robert Maxwell, [circa 1884].

D2 = Lady Audley's Secret. London: Virago Press, 1985.
(D1 would be its copy-text, the Simpkin edition, which I have not seen.)

E2 = Lady Audley's Secret. New York: Dover Publications, 1974. (E1 would be its copy-text, the Robert B. Davis edition of 1887.)

F1 = Lady Audley's Secret. London: Thomas Nelson, n.d. (This edition had to be returned before all variations could be verified.)

* * * * *

2 of/de 2

MicroD

It lay down] A1 (Vol. II, 278), E2 (2)

It lay low down] B1 (Vol. I, 1), B2 (1),

Audley Court lay low down] Cc1 (5), Cc2 (5), D2 (1)

* * * * *

no one room had any sympathy with another, every chamber running off at a tangent into an inner chamber, and] A1 (Vol. II, 278), B1 (Vol. I, 93), B2 (2), Cc1 (6), Cc2 (6), E2 (2)

in which every room opened into another room, and] D2 (2), F1 (4)

* * * * *

to Sydney] A1 (Vol. II, 392), B1 (Vol. I, 93), B2 (46), Cc1 (40), Cc2 (40), E2 (31)

to Melbourne] D2 (40), F1 (50)

* * * * *

{chapter title} Robert receives a Visitor whom he had scarcely expected] A1 (Vol. III, 195), B1 (Vol. I, 278), B2 (137), E2 (91)

{chapter title} Robert receives an Unexpected Visitor] Cc1 (109), Cc2 (109), D2 (118)

* * * * *

bill, fastened] A1 (Vol. III, 198), E2 (95)

bill, which was carefully receipted by Phoebe Marks, fastened] B1 (Vol. I, 289), B2 (142), Cc1 (114), Cc2 (114), D2 (123)

* * * * *

-----] A1 (Vol. III, 198), E2 (95)

"The Company may make as many bye-laws as they please," he murmured, "but I shall take the liberty of enjoying my cheroot as long as I've half-a-crown left to give the guard." B1 (Vol. I, 290), B2 (143), Cc1 (114), Cc2 (114), D2 (123)

* * * * *

{chapter} The Writing in the Book] A1 (Vol. III, 198 - 204), E2 (95 - 104)

{chapter divided into two} The Blacksmith's Mistake, The Writing in the Book] B1 (Vol. I, 291 - 306; Vol. II, 1 - 11), B2 (144 - 159), Cc1 (114 - 124), Cc2 (114 - 124), D2 (124 - 135)

* * * * *

the iron hand of difficulty] A1 (Vol. III, 320), B1 (Vol. II, 93), B2 (200), E2 (131)

the pressure of difficulty] Cc1 (155), Cc2 (155), D2 (170), F1 (213)

* * * * *

recollection of Cressy and Waterloo, Navarino and Trafalgar.] A1 (Vol. IV, 86), E2 (193)

recollection of bygone conquest and defeat.] B1 (Vol. II, 279), B2 (292), Cc1 (226), Cc2 (226), D2 (250)

* * * * *

Let us hope that when Northern Yankeydom has decimated and been decimated, blustering Jonathan may fling himself upon his southern brother's breast, forgiving and forgiven.] A1 (Vol. IV, 86), B1 (Vol. II, 279 - 280), B2 (292 - 293), E2 (193)

-----] Cc1 (226), Cc2 (226), D2 (250), F1 (313)

* * * * *

Fleet-street . . . The hansom] A1 (Vol. IV, 317)

Fleet street . . . The hansom] E2 (265)

Fleet Street . . . The hansom] B1 (Vol. III, 195), D2 (341, 342)

Fleet Street . . . The Hansom] B2 (404), Cc1 (312), Cc2 (312)

* * * * *

But he could not tell you that I changed my mind after giving him that letter for you, and determined to bid my best friend good-bye before I left England. I came to Fig-tree Court early on the morning of the ninth, and knocked half a dozen times at the door of the chambers -- but there was no answer, the door was locked, and I gave up the attempt in despair, thinking that you had not returned to London.] Cc1 (342), Cc2 (342), D2 (374), F1 (471)

-----] A1 (Vol. IV, 431), B1 (Vol. III, 274), B2 (443), E2 (285)

* * * * *

I hope no one will take objection to my story because the end of it leaves the good people all happy and at peace. If my experience of life has not been very long, it has at least been manifold; and I can safely subscribe to that which a mighty king and a great philosopher declared, when he said that neither the experience of his youth nor of his age had ever shown him "the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." A1 (Vol. IV, 432), B1 (Vol. III, 280), B2 (446 - 447), E2 (286), Cc1 (344), Cc2 (344), F1 (476)

-----] D2 (376)

APPENDIX 2

PRE-RAPHAELITE PAINTINGS

The following paintings are included to give a general impression of the pre-Raphaelites, with whom Braddon was fascinated. Throughout her novels, she refers vaguely to pre-Raphaelite painters and their style. In addition, these paintings reveal women in limited roles: mistresses, as in Fair Rosamund, Monna Vanna, and The Awakening Conscience; maidens, as in The Rose-Leaf, The Carrier Pigeon (The Dove), and The Day Dream; or mad, as in Ophelia.

In these few paintings, the figures, through various codes, appear as 'good' or 'bad' women. The woman's hands are usually in the centre of the painting, expressing salient aspects of their goodness or badness. For instance, in Monna Vanna (see Plate 1), the woman's hands are entangled in her beads, representing her imprisonment in the opulence afforded by her lover. The picture is tight and close with no window, door, or even mirror to allow freedom. Like Lady Audley, this figure is trapped by her desire for luxury.

In contrast to this 'bad' woman, Ophelia (see Plate 2), The Rose-Leaf, The Carrier Pigeon (The Dove), and the study for The Day Dream represent the 'good' women. As I stated earlier, Ophelia is caught between loyalties, which dilemma causes her to go mad. Again, her hands are poised in such a manner so as to imply a Christ-like image on the cross. Her dress blends into the nature surrounding her, implying that her freedom is gained through drowning, an appealing death to Isabel Sleaford. Interestingly, the model for this painting was Elizabeth Siddal, Rossetti's mistress and then wife, who committed suicide by taking an overdose of laudanum. The intertexts for this painting resonate between the historical/dramatic, the Biblical, the sensational, and finally the real, Lizzie Siddal's own burial with Rossetti's best poetry.

In the study for The Day Dream (see Plate 3), the importance of the hands becomes more pronounced. In one hand the figure holds a tree branch and in the other a white lily resting upon a book. The religious aspect of this painting hints at the purity of her day dreaming, although one could also imagine this woman as another Isabel Sleaford, pausing over a passage in a romance.

In The Rose-Leaf (see Plate 4) (also entitled Mrs. William Morris Holding a Spray of Rose-Leaf), the figure's hands gently hold a leaf sprig and her back is modestly to the male painter's eye. Her thick lips and long angular nose represent a new kind of beauty, far different from that appearing in the earlier non-pre-Raphaelite painting The Carrier Pigeon (The Dove) (see Plate 5). Unlike the pre-Raphaelite women, this 'Lady Audley' figure is light, petite, and fairy-like: the ideal of Victorian femininity. While the carrier pigeon gains freedom, the dove, the woman, remains like many middle-class Victorian women on the inside of the window.

The next three paintings represent 'good/bad' women. Proserpine (see Plate 6) recalls the Greek legend in which Persephone ate a forbidden pomegranate and was forced to spend half the year in the underworld. She represents both life and death since her reappearance on earth causes growth and rejuvenation (note the light and leaf sprig in the background) and her disappearance to the underworld brings death above ground. Again, the centrality of her hands entwined, serpent-like, around tempting but forbidden fruit provides further literary connotations.

In The Awakening Conscience (see Plate 7), the tune her lover idly plays on the organ connotes to the mistress images of an earlier, sinless life. She rises in an attempt to free herself from her lover's arms. The window reflected in the mirror behind her symbolizes the freedom for which she yearns. In this painting, the woman, and not her oblivious lover, is aware of her future salvation.

Rosamund Clifford, the historical figure in Fair Rosamund (see Plate 8), has a different and less positive fate. Instead of rejoicing with the reformed mistress as in The Awakening Conscience, we sympathize with Rosamund, mistress to Henry II, who is confined: no window or mirror provides relief to the space her searching face fills. Her hands hold on to a leaf sprig, a remnant of her earlier freedom (and sinless life), and a string, used to lead people to her. She is peering out to discern who is following the string to visit her. According to John Stow's history, her death is near at hand:

Rosamond the fayre daughter of Walter lord Clifford, concubine to Henry II. (poisoned by queen Elianor, as some thought) dyed at Woodstocke where king Henry had made for her a house of wonderful working; so that no man or woman might come to her, but he that was instructed by the king This house after some was named Labyrinthus, or Dedalus worke, which was wrought like unto a knot in a garden, called a maze; but it was commonly said, that lastly the queene came to her by a clue of thridde, or silke, and so dealt with her, that she lived not long after: but when she was dead, she was buried at Godstow in an house of nunnes. (Percy 155)

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Hunt, William Holman. The Awakening Conscience. Tate Gallery, London. Plate 8 in A New and Noble School: The Pre-Raphaelites. By Quentin Bell. London: Macdonald and Co. (Publishers) Ltd., [1982].

Millais, John Everett. Ophelia. Tate Gallery/The Bridgeman Art Library, London. Plate 12 in A New and Noble School: The Pre-Raphaelites. By Quentin Bell. London: Macdonald and Co. (Publishers) Ltd., [1982].

Morten, Thomas. The Carrier Pigeon (The Dove). Indianapolis Museum of Art: Indianapolis. Page 45 in The Revolt of the Pre-Raphaelites: March 5 through April 9, 1972. By Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, 1972.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. Study for The Day Dream. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Plate XXV in Dante Gabriel Rossetti. By Maria Teresa Benedetti. Firenze [Florence]: G.C. Sansoni Editore, Nuova S.p.A., 1984.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. Fair Rosamund. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. Plate 91 in Dante Gabriel Rossetti. By John Nicoll. London: Cassell and Collier Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1975.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. Monna Vanna. Tate Gallery, London. Plate XVII in Dante Gabriel Rossetti. By Maria Teresa Benedetti. Firenze: G.C. Sansoni Editore Nuova S.p.A., 1984.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. Mrs. William Morris Holding a Spray of Rose-Leaf. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. Proserpine. Private Collection. Plate 26 in Dante Gabriel Rossetti. By John Nicoll. London: Cassell and Collier Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1975.

PLATE 1

Rossetti, Donna Vanna (1866)

PLATE 2

Millais, Ophelia (1851 - 2)

PLATE 3

Rossetti, Study for The Day Dream (1878)

PLATE 4

Russetti, The Rose-Leaf (1870)

PLATE 5

Morten, The Carrier Pigeon (The Dove) (1862)

PLATE 6

Rossatti, PROSCRIPO (1877)

PLATE 7

Hunt, The Awakening Conscience (1852)

PLATE 8

Rossetti, Fair Rosamund (1861)

7

LIST OF WORKS CITED

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Braddon, M.E. Aurora Floyd. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Ltd., n.d. [1863]*¹
- The Doctor's Wife. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., Ltd., n.d. [1864]*
- Eleanor's Victory. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863. [1863]*
- Lady Audley's Secret. New York: Oxford U.P., 1987. [1862]*
- "Devoted Disciple: The Letters of Mary Elizabeth Braddon to Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 1862 - 1873." Ed. Robert Lee Wolff. Harvard Library Bulletin 22, Part 1 (January 1974): 1 - 35; Part 2 (April 1974): 129 - 161.

SECONDARY SOURCES

- [Alfred, Austin]. "Our Novels." Temple Bar June 1870: 410 - 424.
- Auerbach, Nina. Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1982.
- *Bennett, E.A. "Miss Braddon." Fame and Fiction: An Enquiry into Certain Popularities. London: Grant Richards, 1901. 21 - 33.
- Brownstein, Rachel M. Becoming a Heroine: Reading About Women in Novels. New York: Viking Press, 1982.
- Connor, Steven. Charles Dickens. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1985.
- Flaubert, Gustave. Madame Bovary. Trans. Paul De Man. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1979.
- Greimas, Algirdas Julien. On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory. Trans. Paul J. Perron and Frank H. Collins. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

¹ Asterisk (*) indicates year of first edition.

Hall, Calvin S. A Primer of Freudian Psychology. 1959. New York: Signet Classic, 1979.

Helsing, Elizabeth K., Robin Lauterbach Sheets, William Veeder. The Woman Question: Defining Voices, 1837 - 1883. Vol. I. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1983.

----- The Woman Question: Literary Issues, 1837 - 1883. Vol. III. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1983.

Hughes, Winifred. The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860's. New Jersey: Princeton U.P., 1980.

[James, Henry]. "Miss Braddon." The Nation I (1865): 593 - 594.

"Lady Audley's Secret." The Spectator. October 25, 1862: 1196 - 1197.

Landow, George P. Ruskin. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1985.

----- William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism. New Haven: Yale U.P., 1979.

Mankowitz, Wolf. Dickens of London. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976.

Meyers Grosses Konversations - Lexikon, sechste Edition, zwanzigster Band. Leipzig und Wien: Bibliographisches Institut, 1909.

Miller, D.A. "Cage aux folles: Sensation and Gender in Wilkie Collins' The Woman in White." The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century. Eds. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Millet, Kate. "The Debate Over Women: Ruskin vs. Mill." Vicinus, Suffer and Be Still. 121 - 139.

Mitchell, Sally. The Fallen Angel: Chastity, Class and Women's Reading, 1835 - 1880. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981.

----- "The Forgotten Women of the Period: Penny Weekly Family Magazines of the 1840's and 1850's." Vicinus, A Widening Sphere. 29 - 51.

Nyberg, Benjamin M. "The Novels of Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1837-1915): A Reappraisal of the Author of 'Lady Audley's Secret.'" Diss. University of Colorado, 1965.

[Oliphant, Margaret.] "Novels." Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. CII (1867): 257 - 280.

Page, H.A. [A.H. Japp] "The Morality of Literary Art." Contemporary Review V (June 1867): 161 to 189.

Percy, Thomas. Reliques of Ancient English Poetry. Vol II. London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., 1887.

Peterson, Audrey. Victorian Masters of Mystery: From Wilkie Collins to Conan Doyle. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984.

Peterson, Carla. The Determined Reader: Gender and Culture in the Novel from Napoleon to Victoria. New Jersey: Rutgers U.P., 1986.

[Rae, W. Fraser] "Sensation Novelists: Miss Braddon." North British Review, American Ed., XLIII (September 1865): 92 to 105.

Rousset, Jean. "Madame Bovary: Flaubert's Anti-Novel." Madame Bovary. Trans. Paul De Man. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965. 439 - 457.

Sadleir, Michael. XIX Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Record. Two Volumes. London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1951.

Showalter, Elaine. A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1977.

-----, "Desperate Remedies: Sensation Novels of the 1860s." The Victorian Newsletter 49 (Spring 1976): 1 - 5.

Silverman, Kaja. The Subject of Semiotics. New York: Oxford U.P., 1983.

Summers, Montague. A Gothic Bibliography. London: The Fortun Press, n.d.

Turner, C.J.G. "The First Kind of 'Novelist's Poetry'." Canadian Slavonic Papers 21: 380 - 87.

Vicinus, Martha, ed. A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women. Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1977.

-----, ed. Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age. Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1972.

Wolff, Robert Lee. Sensational Victorian: The Life & Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979.

END

07/07/89

FIN