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Bad girls in corsets: Women and the transgressive body in the nineteenth century

Colleen Warwick Green
Purdue University

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BAD GIRLS IN CORSETS: WOMEN AND THE TRANSGRESSIVE BODY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Is approved by the final examining committee:

Thomas Rickert

Chair

William J Palmer

Shaun Hughes

Manushag Powell

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Approved by Major Professor(s): Thomas Rickert

Approved by: Manushag Powell

Head of the Departmental Graduate Program

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BAD GIRLS IN CORSETS:
WOMEN AND THE TRANSGRESSIVE BODY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty
of
Purdue University
by
Colleen Warwick Green

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
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For my little light, Charlotte

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ABSTRACT

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Women, and their bodies, posed an increasing anxiety for Victorian society. Culturally and outwardly, the Victorian era strove to maintain a level of decorum that, increasingly, the nineteenth-century woman were, rebelling against. The urge for women to break through social barriers and constraints binding them to the century created a divergence in thought from the traditional mores of the past, in turn affecting the ways in which womens' bodies were portrayed, displayed and manipulated by the authors and artists of the century.

As women entered actively entered into spaces once closed to them, they furthered the rift of uncertainty and discomfort. Importantly, critical attention must be paid to these social deviants, the transgressing women of the nineteenth century, those women who exist in the margins of the marginalized having broken not legal, but social contacts, of a century. Their placement in the margins of the marginalized attempts to erase them from the narrative of the century shutting them up, or away, or sometimes both. This project is motivated by two questions, 1) how transgressing women complicated and yet reflected the shifting narrative of a century and 2) how the treatment

of the female body, in art and literature impacted the binds that continued to tie women to a domestic and patriarchal existence. These transgressive bodies deserve discussion and analysis, closely considering the spaces of power and agency they occupy and possess and further, *provide*, for women inside the fictional and factual narratives of the nineteenth century.

FRAGMENTING WOMEN: TRANSGRESSING NARRATIVE AND SOCIETAL
BOUNDARIES, AN INTRODUCTION

“Avoid the widow of the man I killed – if the widow still lives. Avoid the maid whose whicked hand soothed the way to the marriage – if the maid is still in her service.” – Wilkie Collins, Armadale

Nineteenth-century authors like Dickens and Braddon, alongside critics and scholars like Margaret Oliphant and Eliza Lynn Linton, have helped to establish an image of an idealized Victorian woman offered up as a model to all nineteenth-century women. However, while more closely considering which authors have helped establish the model of the domestic angel, it is important to differentiate those authors and critics who are historically *upholding* this traditional feminine model and those who are *challenging* it. Noteworthy too are the authors who, in fact, do a little of both. Jane Austen, for example, supports the cult of domestic womanhood with female characters who are also able-bodied, quick-witted and independent. Women like Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* are written as acting out against the constraints of a male-centered society, yet in the end of her narrative tale the marriage market and domesticity prevail. Meanwhile, in Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*, the fits of passion, the opposition to the prevailing behaviors deemed appropriate for women and a stoic independence do not always yield positive results. Mary Elizabeth Braddon too, in *Lady Audley’s Secret*, seems to simultaneously highlight and undermine the challenges facing the nineteenth century woman. In another

of her novels, *John Marchmont's Legacy*, Braddon pits the conflicting roles of women against one another through her two opposing female characters, Olivia Arundel and Mary Marchmont. As the two women exist as diametrically opposed binaries of one another, readers are left to judge for themselves the characters based on the complexities of their individual actions and their social (societal, norms, accepted, etc.) merits. Wilkie Collins, in works like *The Woman in White* and *Man and Wife*, likewise positions women in precarious and disheartening situations only to have them overcome these to achieve happiness, success and/or, at the very least, solace. Essentially then, what problematizes a study of these examples is that while there are abundant and elaborate examples of the perfect nineteenth-century woman in the literature of the period, there are also wonderfully complex female characters that do not fit neatly into the domestic angel mold. There are those women in literature who act out against the stifling ideologies of the period and, like the madwoman in the attic from *Jane Eyre*, are marginalized, ignored, and even killed off within the narratives themselves. Despite these examples of dissenting woman, critical attention has focused on the criminal or the sexually provocative acts of women, but has fallen short in recognizing another of the socially subversive versions of marginalized women – the social deviant. While there is much scholarship available on the *sexually* subversive or marginalized woman in literature (i.e. the prostitute) and the Victorian female criminal as well as cultural studies about nineteenth-century women and crime, only a few texts currently devote themselves to analyzing social and civil transgressions of women in literature and not all are specific to the treatment of women deemed criminal through the social norms of the century. In this project, I will focus on those women; those women who exist in the margins of the

marginalized, who are deemed deviant because they have violated the social rules of the century. What is more, in this project I will focus on how the portrayal of these socially deviant characters in literature helped to define, constrain, and even free women from the ties that bound them to the oppressive nineteenth-century conventions of behavior. In short, I seek to demonstrate in this project how, in defining female transgressions of the nineteenth century in this particular way and through the lens of literary examples, the idea of the nineteenth-century woman, *her person, her body, her mind, her very existence* is not just undone but reshaped, challenged and questioned to re-create a counter-history, a different liminal story.

A Brief Overview of Scholarship

There is much scholarship that exists that speaks to The Woman Question inside nineteenth-century literature and society. The foundation laid by scholars the likes of Elaine Showalter, Nina Auerbach, Mary Poovey, D.A. Miller, and Judith Butler to name just a few, has in large part allowed for the trajectory of this study. While each of these studies that have come before have offered up eloquent theses on the role, rise, and plight of women in the nineteenth century, and raised the bar for future scholars of the period, they have also raised more questions. The focus of this study is born from these questions. The issues inside the abundance of nineteenth-century critical scholarship surrounding women's transgressions in its literature are often problematic because they focus on the moral flaws of the women who are constructed by a patriarchal society and not the treatment of women in that society. Because looking at itself introspectively would have forced calls for reforms in nineteenth-century society, both legal and social,

critics instead wrote off (literally) these female characters. One most obvious example of this disregard comes from Elizabeth Rigby Eastlake's scathing attack on *Jane Eyre*, not only as a book but as a character who is "the personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit" (Robinson 69). Eastlake's assault on the character of Jane Eyre whom she later calls a heathen and remarks that one almost would "have flung the book aside to lie for ever among the trumpery" (69) suggests that critics like her look no further than Jane's individualistic nature and her actions and not at the reason or merit of those actions. If then characteristics of the women in literature were to mold the ideal behaviors of the women of the period, were espoused to function as models, Eastlake's public disavowal of *Jane Eyre* serves as a call to action *against* such behaviors from women throughout the Victorian age. While *Jane Eyre* might be considered tame by comparison to other female characters in the transgressive circle, it *is* integral to note not only how, but why authors like Austin illustrate women acting out, despite the vocal challenges of critics. In this project, this is my aim. In an effort to bring into focus the connection between the treatment of women in literature and in nineteenth-century life, I will concentrate on transgressive behaviors including women who adopt male dominated roles as their own and those who thrive without interference from, or reliance upon, men. I will also analyze the motivations and contributing factors for these decisions and behaviors and, focusing special attention on the social, political and economic factors that drive women to these *deviant* behaviors, determine their corresponding significance in nineteenth-century society.

Moreover, this project strives to address what it means to be a 'transgressive' woman in nineteenth-century literature. While there have been works that deal

specifically with the prostitute and murderess of the nineteenth century, I will argue that the word 'criminal' for the nineteenth-century woman is currently too narrow and should include a much wider scope of characters, utilizing the expression transgressive to more adequately define these fallen women. In nineteenth-century life, and literature, then, women could be considered 'criminal' if they disrupted the idealistic vision of a nineteenth-century woman by stealing, participating in fraudulent behavior (either personal or financial), abandoning their families (child(ren) or husband) or murdering (or attempting it). It is important however to note that while relying on the word 'criminal' to define and discuss this larger group of women in literature, each woman is still unique in her motivations; in Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lady Audley's assumption of an alternate identity differs uniquely from Magdalen's in Collins' *No Name*. While both women assume new personas which are inevitably discovered, by men, Helen, or Lucy, or Lady Audley, does so by leaving a current life, and child, behind to increase her status while Magdalen, merely assumes her new identities in an effort to gain back family inheritance, importantly not wholly forsaking her previous identify, *her family*, in doing so. However, each woman's decisions of deviance, while intriguing, are not merely as telling as the treatments each woman receives at the novels' conclusion; I will argue that the more severe treatment levied against Lady Audley, and characters like her, comes less from the choices she makes to hide her identity or even her hand in the attempted death (though she thought she was successful) of her former husband, but more from the abandonment of her marriage vows and her child, breaking the ties of the restrictive social contracts of proper Victorian womanhood.

By broadly encompassing a group of women such as Magdalen or Lady Audley, this project seeks to illuminate the individual circumstances of these *criminal* women. Therefore, for this project I argue a ‘criminal’ woman should be considered anyone who strayed from the widely held moral and social standards set up by a patriarchal system and should therefore be aligned under the broader term “transgressive.” Virginia Morris notes in her book *Double Jeopardy* that “women guilty of. . . crime were at odds with the culturally nurtured image of acceptable womanly behavior, and they are punished as much for this as for the actual crime they commit” (9). Like Lady Audley who, even after confessing her crimes, is found insane, shut away in an asylum and dies a tragically lonely death, women who subvert the culturally accepted behaviors of the period, suffered on the page as readily as they suffered in life. Ultimately, these women who are continuously “at odds” with the society that defines them will be the focus of this project. Moreover, in using of the allusion Morris makes about punishment, this project will also consider the larger social implications of the punishments carried out upon these women.

Therefore, throughout this project, the definition of a transgressive nineteenth-century woman includes anyone who breaks the social, legal or moral codes of conduct. Morris discusses the criminal nineteenth-century woman in terms of women who murder, and while murder is certainly one the most apparent crimes committed by nineteenth-century women, there are other behaviors and actions that place women in that ever-marginalized position. It is these other, less evident, crimes that might even make criminal women psychologically more troublesome because their attributes and actions run so counter to the established standards for the nineteenth-century. These subsets of transgressions align with one another closely and are ambiguous in a way that allows the

lines between them to be blurred. However, in an effort to differentiate them throughout this project, I will describe the transgressions that break the ‘social’ codes of conduct as marrying up, remaining single (or being a spinster) or child abandonment. Transgressions that break the ‘legal’ codes of conduct are theft, murder and prostitution and those transgressions that break the ‘moral’ codes of conduct for this project are prostitution, extra-marital or pre-marital affairs, lying, divorce and, once again, child abandonment. According to Anthea Trodd’s book, *Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel*, during the nineteenth century “anxieties concentrated on the lady of the house [because] she. . . was the guardian of the inner sanctuary [and] it was her job to keep ‘the place of Peace’” (6). Straying from this private place of the household into the public domain of action seems to place these women in a criminal position, both socially and in the eyes of the law, because they no longer are the keeper of peace, but the ones who are disrupting it and in turn, disrupting the guise of the neat narrative of the nineteenth century. Trodd’s text focuses mostly on domestic spaces, a point illustrated through her discussion of how the public and private spheres collide, contradict and react when members of private and public spaces interact. My argument will differ from Trodd’s by focusing on *some* characters from the domestic realm but concentrating on those women who leave the private realm to enter a public sphere that is continuously rejecting them. One area of similarity I hope to capitalize on with Trodd’s text is her utilization of the policeman. While I will not be focusing on this public figure in the same way, I do hope to make use of some of Trodd’s expertise when I make my own arguments about the woman as detective and the woman as detected.

Terminology: Transgressive vs. Deviant vs. Fallen

For the purpose of this project, I will be defining social deviance as a breach of one or more of the ‘norms’ established for women in the nineteenth century. Some of these norms include, or are at least related to, rules and regulations set forth for all members of society, particularly in the nineteenth century. For example, crimes like murder would, in most cases, be considered a deviation from the regulations of society either for man or woman. To differentiate for cases such as murder, this project will seek to address the disparity in punishments levied against women for these deviations. However, this is not a project that will strictly align itself with these types of violent crimes, which would only reiterate the works of scholars like Anthea Trodd and Virginia Morris. Nor will this project focus specifically on the sexual subversiveness of women (in literature or culture) as has been noted by critics such as Deborah Anna Logan or those women who would have been deemed “fallen” for merely giving in to the seduction of a suitor or who fell into life of prostitution. Instead, this project will evaluate fictional women who actively attempt to deviate – or who transgress - from these social norms, or do deviate in less overt ways and are struck silent (emotionally, psychologically and physically) because of their behaviors while considering the ways in which the transgressive female figure fragments the narrative (the structure of the narrative and the narrative itself) of the nineteenth century.

There are two essential problems with using the term “social deviant” for a project like this as it pertains to nineteenth-century literature. The first is that with the emphasis on the word “deviant” comes the presumption that there can be – and should be – rehabilitation for these behaviors. Secondly, the term “social deviance” presupposes

behaviors that are inherently negative, wrong and/or bad. This project will address these two issues by examining what, how and why behaviors were deemed deviant for women, which behaviors merited rehabilitation and what that rehabilitation process entailed. In addressing these two issues, I will delineate the term “transgressive” in this project as it pertains the places where women are failing to stay within the social limits placed upon them by society, are continuously acting in resistance of social boundaries and are participating in behaviors deemed socially deviant. In this way, a transgressive woman will be considered one who ignores, rejects and/or declines the norms of nineteenth-century society.

Scope of Inquiry

This project does seek to participate in an existing discussion concerned with nineteenth-century women while extending an analysis to those women who socially defy the norms of the century and how they, in turn, illustrate the slow shift in ideology surrounding women. Much of the criticism surrounding the most popular novels of the century, from *Great Expectations* to *Lady Audley's Secret*, from *Wuthering Heights* to *The Woman in White*, seems to support negative attitudes toward these strong and subversive female characters. Charles Dickens, alone provides several marginalized female characters worthy of scrutiny based on their willfulness within his narrative. In particular, the character of Emily or, Little Em'ly, in *David Copperfield* stands out among the rest. As his favorite and most autobiographical text, Dickens' treatment of Little Em'ly perhaps sheds the most light on the views of strong and deviant women held by Dickens and his contemporaries. Emily's fall and her later deliverance, from another

fallen woman no less, may just be the capstone of treatment of fallen women in literature. However, even those that show a glimmer of change from the prevailing thought of the century are not introspective to the point where they suggest an overt change in the course of action taken toward these women as representatives of their century. Instead, writers like Margaret Oliphant or Elizabeth Rigby Eastlake critique these misbehaving women and chastise them for their inappropriate and unruly behavior. I would argue that the reasons for this all stem from a desire to maintain the stable narratological structure of the century. Stability in the fictional narrative was as important in the century as stability in the century itself. That stability was being threatened by an influx of single, unmarried women who were in search of purpose, responsibility and freedoms that came with not being married but that had not, early in the century, become opened up to them. Women of the fictional narrative variety mirrored their real-life counterparts and made the general public, equally uneasy. This unease relegated female characters, even those with narrative authority, to a complicated and undermined space. W.J. Harvey notes in *The Double Narration of Bleak House* that “the necessary limitations of Esther’s character [pushes] the real problem one stage further back.” For Harvey, Esther’s narration lacks value but in lacking value, the narration itself is able to remain complex. If her female narration gained complexity, Harvey argues, “the novel would have to be correspondingly simplified and the Dickens world depopulated” (230). Esther as a weak and an “utterly untrue and inconsistent” character, as George Brimly asserts in his 1853 review of *Bleak House* in the *Spectator*, upholds the conservative narrative structure; she maintains the order in the narrative and representing an upholding of narrative order in the greater story of the century. I do not argue that authors, critics, and/or the general public were not

aware that these repressive ideas were being represented, nor do I suggest that they did not care, but instead I would argue that they were not yet equipped, as a nation, to overtly take a stance that would undermine a nationalistic ideology and national identity that was so clearly, and even comfortably, in place. On the other hand, it is important to note that a selection of authors of the period, male and female alike, were exhibiting female characters who were acting out and were doing so with a purpose. The Bronte sisters pepper their novels with female characters who struggle constantly with establishing themselves in society, though in doing so they almost always seem to uphold the gendered norms of the nineteenth century. Braddon too creates characters whose actions distinguish themselves from the typical and docile woman of the house, though both her characters and those of Wilkie Collins, often find themselves having at least undergone great turmoil before their conclusion. Again, one can reference Dickens as an author who offers up characters who extended beyond the average domestic female, who are too often shown in the least flattering light. In *Bleak House*, the juxtaposition of treatment between Lady Deadlock and her maid Hortense illustrates this most adequately. While Lady Deadlock finds herself in turmoil, her death in the narrative provides closure and readers are privy to her forgiveness, even if her character is not. Hortense, on the other hand, must linger in her punishment through an extended prison sentence. I would argue, however, that it is not for the murder that she receives this punishment. Instead, Hortense, who is vilified from almost the beginning of the novel, bears the brunt of a harsher punishment, more devastating than a death, because she questions the status quo, the weakening male dominated structure of the nineteenth century that held everything, and everyone, neatly in place. While Lady Deadlock was the woman who initially

transgressed the boundaries, had an affair a child out of wedlock, she kept the secret. In doing so, Lady Deadlock helped maintain the proper order of public and private space. In divulging Lady Deadlock's secret, Hortense ripped a hole in the delicate fabric of the century. Her punishment, unlike Lady Deadlock's, required a longer sentence. Hortense's disruption cost her more than her life - it cost her freedom and it cost her, more importantly, her voice. While it is difficult to argue that authors of the period – or the period itself – are not able or willing to look introspectively at the treatment of women, I will argue that no matter the social implications, or perhaps because of them, the literature of the nineteenth century could not contend with transgressing women in any other way than by writing them into, and often harshly out of, the plots of its popular literature. While Lady Audley exists as one example of how transgressing women are severely dealt with inside the narrative space, Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* provides an even darker one. When Lady Isobel Vane, like Lady Audley, rejects her place as wife and mother, she is not simply punished, but physically disfigured and forced to take on a role of servitude in the home where she was formerly the lady of house, all before she dies painfully and broken of spirit, bleakly removed once and for all from the life she turned her back on and from the narrative itself.

This basic addressing of the transgressive woman as a pivotal figure in the literature of the period further problematizes the situation regarding a critical study of the nineteenth century. The evidence that supports this is the premise that these socially deviant, seldom civically criminal women¹ are not punished or treated in ways which are

¹ The distinction being made here between social and civic is to call attention to the disparity of crimes for which women were held accountable. Even though often theirs were not crimes for which they might be

appropriate to the crimes they commit. In fact, in most cases and without much hesitation, the transgressive woman in nineteenth-century literature finds herself locked away, banished, tortured, disfigured or removed from the narrative altogether. These discrepancies in punishments suggest an intentionally patriarchal and oppressive reaction to the bad girls of nineteenth-century literature. This project will analyze how “crimes” are defined in relation to the nineteenth-century woman as well as why and how they are inextricably linked with punishments that are overtly patriarchal in nature.

For at least two chapters of this project I will be using Foucault to inform my argument, most significantly through the texts *Discipline and Punish* and *Madness and Civilization*, focusing my attention in these chapters on the evolution of punishment from corporeal to non-corporeal and how this shift can be seen as representative within nineteenth-century literature. For example, chapter three, *Bodies That (Don't) Matter*, will connect Foucault's discussion of the docile body with that of Judith Butler's arguments on the same subject, homing in on the unique and disturbing punishments, like that of Woods' Lady Isobel, levied against the transgressive nineteenth-century woman in literature. By further playing off of Butler's idea that the “unsettling of ‘matter’ can be understood as initiating new possibilities, new ways for bodies to matter” (30) this project seeks to illustrate that these new ways of understanding the female transgressive body come from the treatment of those bodies within the narratives of the century. I connect Foucault and Butler in my argument here because Foucault's emphasis on punishment as control and Butler's binary assumptions about form/matter are both useful in questioning

tried in the court of law, they were still often held accountable for these behaviors, actions and “crimes” through the court of public opinion.

the treatment of transgressive women, more specifically the female body of the transgressive woman because as Butler suggests that “to know the significance of something is to know how and why it matters” (32). In part this project seeks to know the significance of the differentiated treatment of the body of the transgressive woman, to analyze how her body is both a representation of the fragmentation of the nineteenth-century narrative and how also her body is discarded or distorted in significant ways (both inside and outside those narratives), connecting those treatments to their meaning for women throughout the nineteenth century. I will further utilize Foucault’s work on madness and the asylum, in coordination with Butler’s examination of female hysteria and other forms of mental illness, to analyze non-corporeal imprisonments commonly imposed as punishments on the transgressive woman. Foucault is an important influence on this project because the transgressive woman is more than just marginalized by her sexuality, she is also set so far apart from society that she has no chance at rehabilitation. Her actions are more often than not seen as a mental defect, as opposed to a reaction against her repressed, or oppressed, position by men and her society. Women exhibiting transgressive behaviors such as child abandonment, theft, arson or prostitution are often victims of more than just circumstance, but of a whole society working against them. Moreover, women assuming roles dedicated thus far in the century only to men find that their success both as women and as professionals is called into question. In chapter one, *Professions of Transgression*, I will be using Foucault’s work on the panopticon to inform a discussion of women and detection, looking specifically at female characters who are acting as detective figures and how that detection translates to their transgressiveness. Connecting Foucault to Žižek here, chapter one will also consider the

ways in which women, as travelers, observers and participants in the public sphere circumvent the male-centered gaze and unearth the debilitating rhetoric that kept women from fully escaping domestic suffrage. While each fictional character, and in turn every woman, can only be considered on an individual basis, there remains a fruitful discussion to be had around how each of these circumstances relate in keeping women oppressed. Each woman's transgression is always, in some way, a response to the stifling regulations placed upon her, either by the men in her life, by society and, sometimes, even by other women or herself.

I have begun my study with an in-depth look at nineteenth-century literature in which transgressions by women play a major role. I am aided by a study of murdering nineteenth century women by Virginia Morris entitled *Double Jeopardy* and by a study from a year earlier by Anthea Trodd, *Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel* as well as by D.A. Miller's essential text *The Novel and the Police*. While Trodd's book does offer some insight into female crime, her focus is more often than not on secondary characters. Morris, on the other hand, focuses solely on murdering women who are of significant importance in the novels. In an effort to align my arguments with knowledge of the nineteenth-century criminal justice system, I will be referencing the following texts: Judith Walkowitz's *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, Annette Ballinger's *Dead Woman Walking*, Camille Naish's *Death Comes to the Maiden* and Lucia Zedner's *Women, Crime and Custody in Victorian England*. Zedner's text helps position the transgressing fictional woman and her punishments alongside the growing number of women committing crimes in Victorian England. Zedner's project also helps situate these fictional women alongside their real-life counterparts as she interrogates why such large

numbers of women were turning to crime and the reaction to these women in the courts and in society. Ballinger's text, while mostly focused on post-Victorian atmosphere, offers necessary historical background on the role and reception of the execution of women and Naish's work provides a detailed, if somewhat disturbing, historical look at how death has impacted women and the female body. Walkowitz's project, which focuses almost entirely on prostitution, is useful in terms of understanding the rapidly growing problem of prostitution and the radical laws put in place to attempt to curb the problem and to further limit the rights and freedoms of women in the nineteenth century. For a look at more recent criminal behavior of women (and the causes thereof), I am utilizing Carol Smart's, *Women, Crime, and Criminology*, which delineates both from a historical and sociological perspective reasons why women commit crimes and the traditionally accepted modes of punishment for those crimes. Christopher Lane's *Hatred and Civility* helps inform the particularly feminine reasons for transgression of social standards through his discussion of revenge. Garrett Stewart's *Death Sentences* aids in building a foundation for the ways in which death and dying are treated in literature. Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter* helps to inform my argument about the particularly patriarchal nature of punishments inflicted upon women's bodies and inclusion of Foucauldian readings helps further situate my analysis within both of their arguments. Furthermore, I will be focusing on two books that deal specifically with the criminal aspects of life in the nineteenth century: Martin Wiener's *Reconstructing the Criminal* and J. J. Tobias' *Urban Crime in Victorian England*. I will also be utilizing heavily the works of Michel Foucault, including *Madness and Civilization*, *Discipline and Punish*, and *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault's studies assist in reaffirming the nineteenth

century society as the ideal panopticon. His various works also assist in making arguments for reasons women committed crimes, as well as the reasons specific punishments were passed along to those women.

Areas of Inquiry

The focal argument of this project is an historical one that suggests that nineteenth-century narratives, interrupted and fragmented by transgressing women, were doing important cultural work in sorting through the cultural issues surrounding women's voice and place inside nineteenth-century society. Those women who were led to transgressive behavior out of willful resistance to men and/or a patriarchal society, who were rebuffing or acting out in a judgmental backlash to the widely accepted "Angel in the House"² mentality, or who were attempting through whatever means possible to raise themselves up the ladder of social and economic classes, speak to the cultural-historical problems facing women at large. While men and society may have prompted women to act out, their motivations are still quite individualized; what leads one woman to adultery is often not the same motive that leads another woman into prostitution or arson. However, I will argue in this project that despite this, each of these transgressions is inextricably linked to the other because they are always essentially reactions to a stifling patriarchal order. Others in society besides Patmore helped sustain the widespread and stifling ideology imposed on women of the period, including writer and critic Eliza Lynn Lynton and various Punch cartoonists. The very fact that women were acting out is important because it was specifically these behaviors that were placing them in the

² Coventry Patmore's much referenced poem, written for his wife Emily, whom he considered to be the perfect specimen of the ideal Victorian woman.

marginalized positions for which they were often punished. It matters that they were acting out because their actions were in response to their limited rights. It matters that they were then punished for these actions because by allowing these punishments to go unchecked inside the literature, they are almost being sanctioned by the period. It is also important that these women were acting out because, in doing so, they were no longer serving as a docile body to be acted upon; they were taking control of their own bodies and their own lives and gaining entrance into a part of the society that had once been denied to them. Therefore, this project will address the reasons women in literature were motivated to pursue any of these transgressive behaviors. Building on works such as Morris' *Double Jeopardy* and Carol Smart's *Crime and Criminology*, this project will encompass an analysis of women in many roles (mother, lover, wife, prostitute, daughter, servant, etc.) and will look closely at those women who are found guilty of transgressions due to social stigmas and circumstances. Despite women making public their very private realms, inside and outside of literature, the ways in which the texts handle these dissenting women offers us ways to consider and to understand the dialogue that was occurring between the literature of the period and the reading public.

What is more, this project will focus on several forms of transgressive behaviors by women that, at first, may seem much less offensive than murder, but as I will argue were just as much, if not more, alarming to nineteenth-century society as a whole because they were not as easy to explain away. While stealing or participating in fraudulent behavior were seen from a criminal/legal perspective as minor, the reasons provoking these criminal actions were often extremely complex. In this respect, Lady Audley is a perfect example. First, she is abandoned by her husband, and in her attempt to move on

with her life, and marry into yet an even higher station, she is sought out and punished. She is accused and never cleared publicly of a murder that she did not commit, she is completely socially ruined and shut away in an asylum to die alone. Lady Isabel in *East Lynne* offers another example. Pushed to the limit by an absent husband and a conniving dandy, Isabel leaves her family and her children. She does so, not because she no longer loves them, but because of her feelings of abandonment and jealousy. When she makes this decision, clearly taking her own happiness into her own hands, she is left alone, pregnant, is figuratively and literally destroyed by a train wreck and must live out the remainder of her days, disfigured and waiting on her ex-husband, his new wife, their children and her own abandoned kids suffering through it all in silence. Silencing women this way is the surest form of punishment and by taking away their voice, in this manner, the punishments for women who are forced into these transgressive behaviors are certainly worse than simply death. In *Double Jeopardy*, Morris notes of similar petty crimes that “most women who were arrested were accused of minor crimes: stealing to feed themselves and their families, picking pockets. . . [and that] they posed little threat to society” (29-30). However, within nineteenth-century fiction, women who stole money, goods, or even food, were degraded within the novels, and often coupled with other, not so minor crimes because these crimes call into question nineteenth-century society overall. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Charles Dickens’s last major work, Lizzie, along with her ruffian father, steals from dead bodies she finds in the river; it is because of her occupation, then, that she also has a reputation that is constantly called into question and why she constantly finds herself in compromising situations. While in the end, the reader finds that she is a character of high moral standing, her near demise and reputation as a

'river rat' point in the direction that she may have compromised her position as a proper Victorian woman. Likewise, for her part in deceiving an entire family and town, Becky Sharpe is condemned in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Not only does her secret marriage to Rawden Crawley cause problems within the family, her rushing into marriage with him alleviates the chance of her marriage to Sir Pitt Crawley, an older and much wealthier prospect. Becky's ambitions and lust for money further lead her to compromising situations with Lord Steyne – a relationship that might be likened to that of prostitution, but one that Thackeray stops just short of explicitly stating. Neither Becky Sharpe nor Lizzie actually commit any criminal acts as they would be defined by the legal system. Yet these types of female crimes were crimes against nineteenth-century standards – where women crossed an imaginary line drawn to illustrate the moral and social boundaries set up for them to abide by.

While this project will expand the definition of deviant or transgressive to include a broader range of activities, it clearly recognizes that the harshest treatment of women in nineteenth-century literature goes to those women who are accused of murder. It is when women in literature *attempt* to murder that authors and the general public fear them most and know least what to do with them. As previously noted, in many cases these women are institutionalized or simply killed off within the very plots themselves. Whatever their crimes, Morris writes that criminal women were viewed as distinctly different from other women because they were seen as "abnormal or unnatural" (33). Morris' statement raises the appropriate question – why were women's crimes seen as so dramatically different, unique and terrifying?

I argue that the inability to punish simply, without torture or torment, the transgressing women of nineteenth-century literature comes from an idea that women are held to very specific moral standards and that, in showcasing their deviation from those standards, the expectation of the literature is that their punishment be levied as a warning. However, destroying women, as Ellen Wood does to Lady Isabel Carlyle in *East Lynne* and then either institutionalizing them as happens to Lady Audley in Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* or eventually killing them off, even simply through illness, as occurs to Mrs. Denby in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* simply ignores the reasons that drove them to their crimes in the first place. Women who committed crimes were not seen as acting out of willful resistance, but were seen as insane and incapable of rational thought. In fact, the exact opposite was more often the case. The criminal behaviors for these women are deliberate reactions to specific experiences and not due to a lapse in judgment, mental instability or mistakes. By defining as insane a woman with no voice, like Rochester's wife in *Jane Eyre* or Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*, women were made even more inferior and were positioned as examples to other women who might consider breaking from the upheld standards of nineteenth-century womanhood. According to Foucault in *Madness and Civilization*, "confinement. . . betrays a form of conscience to which the inhuman can suggest only shame" (67). Much like Rochester, Sir Michael Audley and his family are ashamed of Lady Audley, and do not want *his/their* reputation blemished, and so, they lock her away declaring her mad. Again, if as Foucault notes, "confinement hid away unreason, and betrayed the shame it aroused" (70), this confinement of nineteenth-century characters behaving badly allowed the nineteenth-century to keep its own dark secrets safely locked inside the narrative.

As the madhouse became for the nineteenth century a place used to ‘store’ those who did not conform to the standards upheld by the rest of (a patriarchal) society, the novel likewise silently housed its transgressing women safely inside the text. After Lady Audley confesses all to her husband, he responds only by saying to his nephew Robert:

I want to know nothing more. Will you take upon yourself the duty of providing for the safety and comfort of this lady, whom I have thought my wife? I need not ask you to remember in all you do, that I have loved her very dearly and truly. I cannot say farewell to her. . . (352)

He doesn’t ever say another word to his wife; he simply erases her from his life altogether, despite his professed love. When Robert Audley dispatches his uncle’s request, he writes that Lucy is ill and inflicted with “mania” (362). As in nineteenth-century society, the true reasons surrounding Lucy’s crimes are swept under the carpet and Lucy is sent to an asylum under an assumed name. Not only are the reasons for her crimes forgotten, her entire existence as Lady Audley is wiped out by the erasure of her name. In this manner, Lady Audley’s narrative is not simply fragmented, it is truncated; erasing her name symbolically erases her behavior, wiping her from the narrative, the memory of the novel, and the consciousness of the century.

According again to Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*, “the asylum sets itself the task of homogenous rule of morality, its rigorous extension to all those who tend to escape from it” (258). Those who ‘escaped’ in the nineteenth century, specifically the women, were sent to the asylum in the hopes that their illness could be cured, or, at the very least, the rest of society would not have to look at a reminder of the real problem. Furthermore, Foucault notes that “the asylum becomes . . . an instrument of moral

uniformity and of social denunciation” (259). Women institutionalized for their crimes, whatever they may be, were put there as a lesson to them, as well as a lesson to society as a whole.

Another argument that this project will pursue is the discrepancies of and reasons for significantly different punishments for female transgressors. Despite this type of constant surveillance and supervision, the tides were changing for the nineteenth-century woman, and as Gilbert and Gubar state, “the Victorian angel’s scheming, her mortal fleshiness, and her repressed (but therefore all the more frightening) capacity for explosive rage are often subtly acknowledged” (26), and both society as a whole and individual authors were addressing the ideal woman motif through female characters that both upheld and uprooted the proper roles for nineteenth-century women. Despite the growing knowledge surrounding women’s issues, the majority of nineteenth-century criminal women in literature were portrayed as monstrous, conniving or insane; little emphasis was given to the motivations for crimes, most of the intrigue surrounded instead the punishments for the crimes. In emphasizing the punishments for the transgressive woman and not the motivations for her crimes, authors and their audiences were not obliged to make a moral judgment based on her motivation. In looking at actions alone, the woman could be held accountable by the standards of the nineteenth-century society and, while those standards might have covertly been under attack, the punishments ascribed to her served at once as a policing of behavior and in a small way still called attention to the discrepancies women faced on a daily basis – without ever having to voice those opinions.

In nineteenth-century society, the most vivid, most popular, and most grotesque way of criminal punishment was death by hanging. Associated with the common people, as the grotesque is for Bakhtin, the scaffold became a gathering place for the public – turning the death sentence of a convicted criminal into a carnivalesque atmosphere as opposed to an atmosphere of justice. The spectacle of the execution then seemed not to reinforce ‘good’ behavior but instead rallied society around the excitement of death. Foucault notes in *Discipline and Punish* that public executions had an almost theatre-like atmosphere where “if the crowd gathered round the scaffold, it was not simply to witness the sufferings of the condemned man or to excite the anger of the executioner: it was also to hear an individual who had nothing more to lose curse the judges, the laws, the government and religion” (60). In *Victorian Studies in Scarlet*, Richard Altick writes that:

public hangings themselves remained the best attended of all the ‘sports of the people.’ . . . Schools were dismissed so that the young gentleman could absorb a wholesome lesson from beholding the demise of a wrongdoer. Rooms commanding a good view of the scaffold, rented out at fancy prices, were the scene of all-night drinking parties on the eve of the execution and of jolly breakfasts after the merrymakers had watched their fill of the proceedings through opera glasses and the trap has been sprung.
(111)

While not altogether unheard of, instances of criminal women being hanged were indeed isolated incidents, particularly in the latter half of the century. However, because transgressive women were so offensive and disturbing, their crimes typically gained widespread attention and their deaths drew huge numbers. The almost celebratory

atmosphere at public executions was heightened even further at the prospect of seeing a lifeless *female* body hanging from the noose. Public executions, while waning by even the early 1800s as the most popular form of punishment, generally remained a spectacle, a performance. In 1848 when James Blomfield Rush was tried and executed for the shooting of four people (two of whom died), “up to 13,000 people attended [his] execution, with special excursion trains bringing viewers from Yarmouth and further” (Flanders 155) in order to observe from the gallows, a space that newspapers at the time referred to as a theatre, all despite a trial which left many unanswered questions and much room for doubt of Rush’s guilt (155). Later, the trial of Maria Manning and her husband in 1849 presented another unique opportunity for spectacle in England; newspapers and magazines, cartoonists and editorialists hovered around the court proceedings of Mrs. Manning and her husband. On November 13, 1849 when they were executed, Herman Melville “recorded in his diary that he and a companion had ‘Paid half a crown each for a stand on the roof of a house adjoining...Police by hundreds. Men & women fainting. - The man & wife were hung side by side - still unreconciled to each other - What a change from the time they stood up to be married, together! The mob was brutish. All in all, a most wonderful, horrible & unspeakable scene.’” (Flanders 155). Preparations for the Manning execution began almost a week prior to the execution itself, and as much as two days prior to the execution, crowds of spectators began to form in front of the scaffolding that would later be the platform for the Manning’s death. According to Flanders’ account, “The Times estimated that by noon on the 12th there were possibly 10,000 people waiting [and] On the day itself, estimates of the numbers present ranged widely, from 30,000 to 50,000 with five hundred police in attendance”

(170). If any one public execution represents the carnivalesque, it is that of the Mannings.

With crowds in the tens of thousands, food and drinks sold and with a garish sexual and subversive undercurrent among the spectators, directed toward Maria Manning, it is no

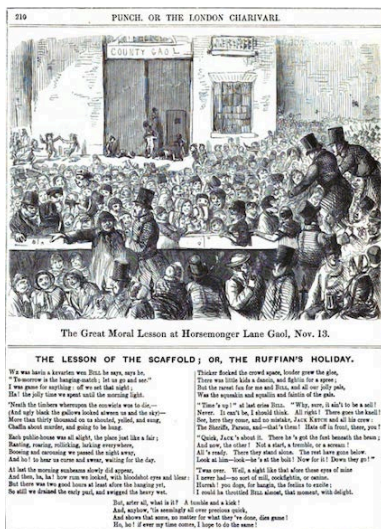


Figure 1

wonder this execution captured the interest, the imagination and the memory of a nation. Punch magazine parodied Manning's choice of black satin and many onlookers, including John Forster and Thomas Carlyle, were enamored by the beauty of the convicted Manning. Forster wrote later that Manning was "beautifully dressed, every part of her noble figure finely and fully expressed by close fitting black satin" (Flanders

171). Further, in Punch magazine's 1849 issue editors presented a poem alongside a rendering of the crowd gathered at the Manning execution, capitalizing on, and simultaneously acknowledging, the spectacle. While Flanders accurately asserts that Charles Dickens later creates a Manning-esque character in his own Hortense inside the novel *Bleak House*, it is possible then that other authors such as Braddon introduced madness into *Lady Audley's Secret* so that nineteenth century society would not have the revelrous and grotesque pleasure of seeing Lady Audley publicly hanged. Despite her being socially destroyed in the novel, Lady Audley, unlike Maria Manning, was saved from at least some humiliation in the public sphere by avoiding a *very public* death.

The shifting attitudes of the century created a heightened sense of awareness in nineteenth-century writing. Yet, despite this assertion, women, even in novels, are still

held to a higher (or at least, very different) moral standard than men. Lady Audley's actions are offensive only because she is a woman. Furthermore, after George Talbot is thrown down the well, he does not even pursue his wife – and so the assumption can be made that he was only interested in destroying her. In Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, when Bradley Headstone attempts, yet fails, to murder Eugene Wrayburn in order to keep him away from Lizzie, his death comes quickly and without much consideration in the novel. Likewise in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, when George Osborn, one of the most detestable and superficial male characters in nineteenth-century literature, is killed in the battle of Waterloo, his death is almost a footnote, handled in merely a line or two. Unlike female characters who act deceptively or criminally, male characters who share the same traits are often merely killed or punished. On the other hand, before women are killed off in the plots or shut up in institutions, they are ruined socially and personally. Two main examples of this are Lucy Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret* and Isabel Vane in *East Lynne*. Lucy is destroyed socially within her family, abandoned by her unlawful husband and then locked away into an asylum even though she is not crazy. Isabel Vane leaves her husband and her children for her lover. She gives birth to an illegitimate child, is disfigured by a train accident, loses her child, and self-punishes by acting as the governess to her own children in the home of the husband she abandoned and his new wife. Here she dies a slow and painful death. Women like these characters are often so far removed from the Angel in the House that they are defined as fallen women and are destroyed *as well as* punished³.

³ It does not always happen that women are stigmatized as fallen, destroyed and then punished, with all three afflicting every fallen woman; more often than not the woman is not simply killed off, destroyed or put away. When this does happen, however, what it suggests is that these women are both unable to be

The most powerful institution that helped to hold the nineteenth-century woman to the lofty standards was the society itself. Society, personified through characters like Sir Michael and Robert Audley, establishes and upholds the factors surrounding how a woman, a proper nineteenth-century woman, should act. Furthermore it was society (and Robert Audley for Lady Audley) that acted as the panopticon in order to keep these nineteenth-century women in check. Once again, Foucault notes “the major effect of the Panopticon [was] to induce in the inmate [here, the woman] a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (201). In the nineteenth century, men and women served as the surveillance, ensuring that nineteenth-century women were constantly under watch and holding them to these specific, yet arbitrary, standards of morality and action. Foucault asserts in *Discipline and Punish* that “the classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention paid to the body – to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful. . .” (136). No other form or body in the nineteenth century is as much an example of Foucault’s docile body than that of the transgressive woman and the prison system’s treatment of nineteenth-century female convicts illustrates this profoundly. According to Lucia Zedner’s *Women, Crime and Custody in Victorian England*, “whereas male convicts were expected only to work hard and refrain from breaking prison rules, a much higher level of surveillance over women patrolled every aspect of their demeanor and behavior for possible fault” (210). Up to the nineteenth century women’s bodies were manipulated and shaped physically, by the

dealt with by the rest of society, that they are a threat and that they cannot remain as integrated into any part of the accepted society for fear that they will infect other women.

corset in the hopes of achieving the ideal feminine body and emotionally, by the penal system that established and carried out their punishments and by the strict and stringent standards imposed upon them by society. In this manner the panoptic nineteenth-century society led to a self-policing of the nineteenth-century woman, where she would inflict upon herself these accepted social norms and legitimize her actions as part of her *duty* as a nineteenth-century woman.

CHAPTER 1. PROFESSIONS OF TRANSGRESSION: WOMEN AND THE ARTS OF TRAVEL AND DETECTION

*I was traveling for health, when circumstances induced me to land on the group, and the benefit which I derived from the climate tempted me to remain for nearly seven months. During that time the necessity of leading a life of open air and exercise as a means of recovery, led me to travel on horseback to and fro through the islands, exploring the interior, ascending the highest mountains, visiting the active volcanoes, and remote regions which are known to few even of the residents, living among the natives, and otherwise seeing Hawaiian life in all its phases. – Isabella Bird's *The Hawaiian Archipelago**

*My tranquility as a woman – perhaps my dearest interest as a wife – depended absolutely on penetrating the mystery of my mother-in-law's conduct, and on discovering the true meaning of the wild words of penitence and self-reproach which my husband had addressed me on our way home. – Valeria Brinton from Wilkie Collins' *The Law and the Lady* (38)*

*No, monsieur, you shall not go free. Either join with me in accusing this man, and help me to drag him to justice, or by the light in the sky, by the life-blood of my broken heart – by the life of my only child, I swear to denounce you! Gaston de Lancy shall not go unavenged by the woman who loved and murdered him. – Valerie de Cevennes from M.E. Braddon's *The Trail of the Serpent* (307)*

Women behaving badly, or at the very least differently, caused significant social anxiety throughout the nineteenth century. Women transgressing the stringent boundaries imposed upon them were treated as if they were carriers of a social contagion that could easily spread to other unsuspecting women creating a heightened, hyper-critical, social awareness and distrust of any woman who ventured too closely to the perimeters of societal expectations. Conversely and yet simultaneously, the transgressive woman of the century also created a buzz of excitement resulting in a seductive allure for many, one

that generated a promise of freedom and autonomy not yet afforded to women. Yet it was specifically these freedoms that also threatened the mainstay of Victorian civil society, domestic stability. Women's roles, occupations and public reception were in a burgeoning state of flux, a confused transition from domestic to public spheres impacting women's rights, roles and responsibilities across the century. And whether the shifting roles of women or the shifting tensions of the century led to it, women were acting defiantly – even deviantly – as they established their voice, their place, their long-awaited and rightful position within the landscape of the nineteenth century. As the century progressed more women than ever were taking the social laws of polite nineteenth century society into their own hands, traveling alone to distant lands, seeking justice where injustices had been served against them (or other, Others) and entering professions formerly closed to them. The bold actions of even these few caused fear among the traditionalist of the century, a fear that all women would soon begin acting and transgressing the social ties that bound them to their domestic spaces and the status quo. Not surprisingly, some of the loudest critics of women challenging boundaries were the women who were not inclined to do so. In Hamilton's *Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors*, Eliza Lynn Linton, in her essay, "The Wild Women: As Social Insurgents", lambastes these transgressive women, explaining how their behaviors "exemplif[y] how beauty can degenerate into ugliness" (Hamilton 198). By equating women challenging the boundaries that tied them to the stifling century to insurgency, Linton sparks fear of what lies ahead should the 'insurgent women' be left unchecked, namely a lawlessness which culminates in "absolute personal independence coupled with supreme power over men" (198). In a society teeming with women teetering on the brink of access to the

public sphere, Linton's remarks echo the overarching concerns of the traditionalists and the debilitating argument for continued oppression.

In what seems like a different century, and in the world of non-fiction, the travel and subsequent written accounts produced by the young, often single women like Isabelle Bird, Eliza Fay and Lady Callcott, who recorded their journeys vis-à-vis letters and journals, contrasted the continued support of oppression and promulgated for all women [and men] newly forming desires, sensibilities and capabilities of the nineteenth-century woman. Travel, up to this point, was an inherently masculine activity, a space for male exploration and domination that occurred while women waited patiently at home for the 'heroes' return. It is important to note, however, as Karen Morin does in *Frontiers of Femininity*, that the narrative these women were creating was a complex one. A study of women transgressing boundaries or borders, as some of these women did, is not to suggest that all women travelers were weaving their way down a clearly defined new path. Instead, as Marin points out, many of these women "exhibit highly complex, ambiguous and often contradictory or paradoxical representations of themselves as gendered individuals" (50). It is in creating this complexity of understanding that allows for continued questioning of women's roles in these new, public spheres to occur more regularly. What remains most impressive is that women were, in very real ways, emerging in their own rights into, and literally *on* to, the public landscapes, and not only surviving but thriving. When Morin relates the episode of Therese Longwurt's travels through Yosemite, her encounter with a bear and her lone wilderness survival after being stranded in the snow overnight, she captures the essence of these women's triumphs. Longwurt writes:

I rounded the corner with a beating heart and exultant hope, and found myself face to face with a - grizzly bear - so near that our eyes actually met; and I shall carry the memory of his expression with me to my dying day. I do believe that the beast saw the agony of my soul when this horrible crisis of my fate assailed me. (80)

Despite the “agony in her soul”, Longworth was a trailblazer for fellow female travelers. What differentiates women’s travel writing from men’s is their positioning onto the narrative, as well as the narratological style itself. Instead of the narrative of men seeking adventure, women’s writing in this vein is, as Marin notes, as it was for Longworth, “not a conquest of a mountain peak but a conquest over herself” (80). For women, the conquest was their own foray into the wilderness, and that wilderness could be a forest in Yosemite just as surely as it could be the streets of London. The wilderness women were working to dominate was the male-dominated public sphere and, in dominating that figurative wilderness like Longworth does in her literal sense, women were securing their subsequent survival.

If the travel writings of female experience provide insight into the daily participation of women in this public sphere, fiction picked up where letters and journals left off and included more impassioned and explosively creative stories to accompany the travelogue narrative. While not ostensibly travel narratives, novels such as Florence Marryat’s *The Blood of the Vampire* or *Her Father’s Name* enlist heroines Harriet Brandt and Leona Lacoste, female characters who while overcoming personal physical challenges and extending their own frontiers, essentially, like Longworth, successfully vanquishing the debilitating, patriarchal lives they ‘should’ lead. In the reality of the

century, as well as in the fiction, like their counterparts who in leaving England and traveling abroad were literally and figuratively breaking through the domestic sphere, women who mastered the art of professions such as medicine and law were re-creating the boundaries of the century and were widening their own sphere of influence. In breaking out into a newly widened sphere of influence, and in influencing the public sphere themselves, women who behaved “badly” according to the stringent nineteenth century were no longer controllable or even, in terms more unsettling, predictable. The shifting narrative being rewritten about and by the nineteenth-century transgressive woman resulted in a mobility, between the public and the private spheres, creating an accessibility to the world and its experiences that had not previously been allowed or challenged.

Without this domestic mooring, authors of the century were able to recreate a fear of the socially deviant women in novels that engrossed the Victorian reader on several levels of feminine transgression. While exotic travel enraptured some, other fiction of the era included insight into women acting beyond their means in a number of ways, sometimes seeking the truth, sometimes retribution and other times seeking knowledge - answers for themselves or to ease the lives of others. These were women who, in life and fiction, continued picking away diligently at the glass house that surrounded them. In this chapter I will examine women of the century in their role as traveler as well as in their other exploratory roles - in those of politics, detection and medicine - each in an effort to more comprehensively articulate the social anxieties surrounding non-sexual female transgression and how women in the nineteenth-century, both literary and not, shaped the role of the modern woman. In this chapter, I argue that while nineteenth-century women

were breaking through these barriers they were doing so in an inherently feminine way, establishing themselves in the public sphere while maintaining the integrity of their femininity and paving the way for other women, fictional or otherwise, to follow.

A lady explorer? A traveler in skirts?: The Transgression of Travel

In 1854, when she was only 23 years old, Isabelle Bird left England for the first time, traveling to America to stay with family. This first visit, which lasted only until the small sum of money her father provided her ran out, was only the beginning for the woman who over the next 50 years traveled all over the continental United States and Europe; though she never made it into the East, upon her death, one additional trip to China was in the planning stages. Bird was not the first woman from England to travel and record her journeys in journals, articles and letters but she was arguably the most prolific and became a household name in many homes throughout England. The narratives of her journeys are as poetic as they are to the point; her prose is personal while her message is overtly public in nature, in that, as Monica Anderson notes in *Women and the Politics of Travel*, “Bird’s travel texts are composed of both a recognizably public and a recognizably private narrative” (87). Anderson, who builds on observations by Paul Valery, suggests that Bird’s style combines scientific writing of her litany of sites and specimens with the more personal and introspective narrative of the letters and journals, where the focus is private experiences and contemplations. With this, Bird is able to hover in both the public and private, masculine and feminine, spheres. What is more, according to Anderson, it was her use of private writing for the public that provided Bird with a more ‘authentic’ reception from her readers overall (90).

When Isabelle Bird recounts the tumult of being assailed by angry mobs on their trip through the Yangtze Valley in 1899, she does so with a narrative voice that is at once powerful and sentimental, one that illustrates bravery and fear at the same time. It is this juxtaposition of narrative voice in their travel writings that sets women's writing apart from their male counterparts. Bird, like other women travel writers, captures images through her writings that show the impact of existing inside an othered space, writing that is complicated by the fact that she while still othered and objectified within her own country, is othered in these spaces not because she is a woman, but because she is a foreigner. While the male travel writings continuously posit the indigenous populations othered, because of their ability to write from a space of continued power, female travel writers both identified and objectified the foreign populations of which they wrote; and they were, at once, also objectified and identified as foreign by these populations, but this foreignness held, for the female traveler, a sort of power because they were existing now in public spaces versus their private sphere. In Bird's role as "foreign", her gender does not define or alter her experience. She also creates a space where she takes power from being the object *petit a*, where now the gaze directed at her is met with her own subversive gaze. An iconic and almost uncanny example of this occurs when locals scrape holes in the plaster between her and their rooms, simply to catch a glimpse of the foreign traveler. Bird remarks, in an atypical female fashion, that "it was always a temptation to apply the muzzle of a revolver or a syringe to the opening" (Robinson 297). By recognizing and acknowledging she is the object of their intentional yet secretive gaze, and because she is a foreigner not because she is a woman, Bird appropriates power from the relationship. However, her ability to write about her fear in the most tense

moments, like these, allows her to create a bond with her readers, particularly those who were women. When faced with circumstances where her physical safety, and in fact, her life, were in danger, Bird remained stalwart. Her behavior in these moments of strife prevented remonstrances from critics of women's independent travel. When attached on the road, Bird writes:

a well-dressed man, bolder or more cowardly than the rest, hit me a smart whack across my chest, which left a weal; others from behind hit me across the shoulders; the howling was infernal: it was an angry Chinese mob. There was nothing for it but to sit up stolidly, and not to appear hurt, frightened, or annoyed, though I was all three. (Robinson 298)

Later, when the crowd continues to surge and began to shout "Beat her! Kill her! Burn her!" (298), Bird remained present and composed. She finishes her entry about this particular trip with a conciliatory note on why she chose, after all of this, not to change rooms in the boarding house:

The innkeeper, on seeing my special passport, was uneasy and apologetic, but his inn was crowded, he had no better room to give me, and I was too tired and shaken to seek another. I was half inclined to return to Wan, but, in fact, though there was much clamour and hooting in several places, I was only actually attacked once again, and am very glad that I persevered with my journey. (299)

Bird's narrative, despite illustrating her negotiation of tumultuous and dangerous spaces, often and great personal peril, do not contribute to the imperialist agenda proliferating male traveling excursions. Bird recognizes her role as a traveler, but does not, even in the

most dangerous and dire circumstances, assume superiority over the populations among whom she travels - even, it seems, when those very people try to kill her.

It is particularly this mode of discourse that separates Bird and other female travel writers of the nineteenth century from a world dominated by their male counterparts. Bird and other women captured their experiences using personal and emotional rhetoric, sharing insight, feeling, and perceptions of their experiences that went beyond cataloguing facts, species and populations. While prior Bird's experiences, two other travelogues penned by women had gained widespread popularity, Elizabeth Justice's *A Voyage to Russia* (1739) and *Embassy Letters* (1763) by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (Turner 48), other nineteenth-century women were writing about their journeys and were gaining more access to travel experiences, both accompanied and alone, and were making their accounts more accessible and readily accepted by the general population. It is not simply the fact that women were now more often traveling by themselves during the nineteenth century that alone deserves critical attention. Instead it is the nature by which travel writing was closing the gap between the body - the female body - and the physical world. In doing so, these women writers were displacing the traditionally othered female form - their form - and othering, though not always objectifying, the populations of those countries to which they traveled. Marin's argument, that women travel writing creates a new and complex narrative is strengthened when considering Bird's experiences as a female writer who is creating the narrative; in doing so, Bird gains power. She shares what she sees and experiences and the other Other, the indigenous people about whom she writes, causing unintentional oppression, have no voice in the narrative. Critics may argue here that despite the unintentionally, women travel writers of the nineteenth

century were inextricably linked with an imperialist agenda, by supplanting their own othered spaces with those indigenous peoples they were observing. And those critics may be correct; by her observations alone, Isabelle Bird reconstructs the gaze and usurping its very power, takes it over herself. Her personal, made public, travel writings helps subvert the historic and historically male gaze and places her own female gaze in the position of power but in doing so, Bird complicates the existence of the indigenous people. Yet, as Susan Bassnett points out in “Travel Writing and Gender”, the nineteenth-century female travel writer is situated in a somewhat contradictory and precarious role, fundamentally othered as a female in her own society while prone (not always, but often) to other the indigenous people with whom she came into contact. Bassnett notes that both female and male travel writers in the age of imperialism “moved to secure the knowledge of their own superiority, [were] quick to patronize or mock, yet on the other hand, they were ready to bear witness to what they saw as exploitation and cruelty by fellow Europeans and North Americans” (228).

What continues to complicate the study of nineteenth-century women travelers and female travel writers is the complexity of their standing – their socio-economics, their religions, their marital status. Regardless, women travelers were situating themselves far from the average norms, expected and traditional roles, ascribed them in the age of Victoria. Bassnett notes that there is often a regard for these women as being “exceptional [and] empowered to perform feats no normal woman would be capable of carrying out” (228). Contrary to this claim however is what Sara Mills argues in *Discourses of Difference*, that these women are much more than exceptional, are much more than women who are “struggling against the social conventions of the Victorian

period” (3) but are women who should be placed within a larger “colonial context.” I would argue here that these two are not mutually exclusive. The very fact that these women were living extraordinarily is the very reason we can, and should, look more closely at them as a significant part of the colonial experience. Karen Morin correctly asserts that “class privilege allowed [these] women access to travel [and] ultimately the travel narrative provided a forum for them to consolidate their positions as members of the ruling classes of the world’s most powerful empire” (82). There exists, then, a complexity with simply reading meaning into these narratives or positioning them as part of a greater feminist agenda in the century. These traveling women were, in many ways, breaking down barriers for themselves, but at the same time reinforcing part of the structure, by way of a colonial agenda, that created the boundaries for them in the very first. Women travelers may have subverted the oppressive gaze away from themselves, but they did so by participating in the subversion of the indigenous people in the countries to which they traveled. This subversion of the gaze created an opportunity for some women to sneak across boundaries of both gender but also class. Emily Lott, an English governess, during her time in Egypt wrote she was “surrounded by intriguing Arab nurses, who not only despised her because I was a Howadji, but hated me in their hearts because, as a European lady, I insisted upon receiving, and most assuredly I did receive, so far as H.H. the Viceroy and their H.H. the Princesses, the three wives, were concerned, proper respect” (Robinson 127). Unlike Bird, Lott’s experiences of her travel were tinged with her own desire to meet her needs instead of attempting to fit into the spaces that she was traveling through. Lott goes on to discuss the ways in which women of the Harem “resolved to do their utmost to render [her] position as painful as possible”

(128). While it seems Lott's experiences as a traveler kept her bound by her English duties, her writing reflects the complicated situation and station of European travelers. By venturing outside the domestic sphere, these women were also no longer protected by the comforts of that domestic space. This experience was one that Bird adapted to that other travelers like Lott seems not to have done; it is in this refusal of acceptance of this, another boundary, that critics suggesting women travelers participated in the oppressive nature of the imperialist agenda can find a hold.

According to Cheryl McEwan's *Gender, Geography and Empire*, white women travelers in the nineteenth century were themselves "complicit in imperialism" (11). She goes on to say that "women occupy a primary and complex role in representations of ethnicity, and it is often their sexuality which is a major concern underlying these representations" (11). What complicates any reading of the female traveler in the imperial world is that, from their position of other they are othering those indigenous peoples from their space of white superiority, inadvertently or not. In the eighteenth century, according to Katherine Turner, the majority of women's travel writing was favorably received (48), it seems from contemporary criticism that a more misogynistic attitude toward female travel was adopted during the nineteenth century.

By the mid 1800s however, there were enough female travelers and travel writers to make the conservative nineteenth century critic uneasy. In June of 1893, *Punch* magazine published "To the Royal Geographical Society" which raises the question of (when has *Punch* shied away from anything) women breaking from their traditional gendered roles.

A lady explorer? A traveler in skirts?

The notion's just a trifle too seraphic;

Let them stay and mind the babies, or hem our ragged shirts;

But they mustn't, can't and shan't be geographic.

What better way to vilify the female traveler than to poke fun of her publicly through Punch? This prose in Punch is merely one example of a century seeking to discredit, through the veil of satire, the desire of women to take on any role traditionally held by men and traveler or explorer, vis-à-vis membership in the Royal Geographic Society, is merely one representative example. The reception of the female traveler and her often “flowery” prose had both male and female critics alike increasingly uncomfortable and vocally critical. Moreover, a woman who rebuffed the flowery prose akin to a feminine gendered narrative and embraced a more scientific or anthropological approach to her travel writings was rebuffed because of the assertions that women, who by nature more delicate, were ill equipped in experience or education for scientific research writing. could not possibly approach any scientific research or writing with any level of knowledge or experience. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mary Wollstonecraft touches on one of the ways in which women's travel writing differs from their male counterparts. Wollstonecraft writes, “a man, when he undertakes a journey, has, in general, the end in view; a woman thinks more of the incidental occurrences, the strange things they may possibly occur on the road (Poston 60). Considering men were in the business of traveling for a purpose and women often were along as companions or employees, quite literally in these situations as accoutrements, Wollstonecraft is not far from the mark. Despite perhaps not traveling for official English colonial purposes, the voyages of women in the nineteenth century became increasingly purposeful for retelling

the stories of the societies they visited and, for critics later, insightful in an examination of shifting gender identities. In general, however, women were writing differently; their accounts of travel were inextricably linked to their own experiences and the ways in which they wrote about and reflected on those narratives were flavored by those same, specifically female, experiences. They wrote about what they saw or where they ventured based on what their experiences at home, as Mary Russel notes in *Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt*, women writer's "brought to their part of the things they were good at; an ability to listen, to empathize, to assimilate. They became observers, not of places, but of people" (213). For those women who, unlike Emily Lott our English governess, chose to embark on travel as explorers or tourists, or in any other capacity, their narrative, their specifically female narratives, provide insights into both domestic and public spaces abroad. Where their male counterparts gained access only, typically, into the latter, women travelers, as observers, were often allowed entrance into both spaces. In 1854, Mrs. Henry Duberly found herself working along the dead and dying on the front lines during the Crimean War. During the battle of Balklava, Duberly rode her own horse directly into the battle to aid the wounded, she was entreated to information about the war from the men she worked among and she found herself privy to the gruesome sights of front line battles often reserved for men.

Now came the disaster of the day - our glorious and fatal charge. But so sick at heart am I that I can barely write of it even now. It has become a matter of world-history, deeply as at the time it was involved in mystery. I only know that I saw Captain Nolan galloping; that presently the Light Brigade, leaving their position, advanced by themselves, although in the

face of the whole Russian force, and under a fire that seemed pouring from all sides, as though every bush was a musket, every stone in the hill-side a gun. Faster and faster they rode. How we watched them! They are out of sight; but presently come a few horsemen, straggling, galloping back.

‘What can those skirmishers be doing? See, they form up together again.

Good God! It is the Light Brigade!’ At five o’clock that evening Henry and I turned, and rode up to where these men had formed up in the rear.

[...] I rode up trembling, for now the excitement was over. My nerves began to shake, and I had been, although almost unconsciously, very ill myself all day. Past the scene of the morning we rode slowly; round us were dead and dying horses, numberless; and near me lay a Russian soldier, very still, upon his face. In a vineyard a little to my right a Turkish soldier was also stretched out dead. The horses, mostly dead, were all unsaddled, and the attitudes of some betokened extreme pain. One poor cream-colour, with a bullet through his flank, lay dying, so patiently!

(Robinson 91-2)

In the end, however close to the very real and very public sphere of war, Mrs. Henry Duberly shares a response that is as emotional as it is informative, as feminine as a response to war can be, illustrating that even though she witnessed a horrid battle that later as she slept her “closed eyelids were filled with the ruddy glare of blood” (92). Mrs. Duberly’s remembrance of the events of this fateful day in December 1854, where nearly 250 of the over 600 soldiers were either killed or wounded, varies in tone and treatment from the more famous homage from Lord Tennyson. In “The Charge of the Light

Brigade”, Tennyson’s treatment of the event carries a markedly less somber, more heroic tone, with the bitterness and realities of the brutality lost among more traditional images of war.

Tone and treatment set women travel writers apart, but also opened them up to the most harsh of critics. As Monica Anderson references one conservative Anglican critic in *Women and the Politics of Travel* noting, “Travel notes, unless written by an expert, or in a specially fresh and interesting way, are, of all copy, the most valueless” (22). By the mid to late nineteenth century women were more than ever before regularly traveling alone, unaccompanied by male chaperones and were traveling for reasons of scientific exploration, excitement and tourism, all of which broadly and publicly removed them from their domestic spaces and catapulted them into roles and activities traditionally held by men. According to Anderson, “women’s status in imperial society depended on them conforming to accepted standards of female behavior” (20) and those women who traveled were overstepping the normative gender roles of polite society “could be labeled both unfeminine and ‘unnatural’” (20).

Travel, for women, represented a departure from the norm that relegated them to private spaces, particularly the home, and, further became a disregard of the responsibilities of those domestic spaces. Unlike Fanny Burney’s Juliet in *The Wanderer*, who experiences travel as “displacement and alienation rather than the confirmation of identity” (Gilroy 4), for these nineteenth-century women, traveling meant more than just an escape but an entrance into a world that had been locked away from them, hidden and often exoticized. Arguably, however, if a part of this traveling was to fill or void or escape constraining domestic responsibilities, another part of the act of traveling for the

nineteenth-century woman reinforces those same domestic pressures because women travelers often still were not able to fully escape the ties that bound them to the hearth; in many accounts those ties are never truly broken or unbound yet traveling women were closer to a freedom from these chains than ever before. Most often women traveling in the nineteenth century were kept out of 'important' travel purposes of scientific or imperialist agendas and more captured their experiences through travelogues, accounts read mainly by other women. Less often, women like Florence Nightingale who famously trained and led nurses on the battlefields like her less famous companion, Mrs. Henry Duberly, were allowed entrance into more purposeful work through their travel. However, while women travelers were removed from many purposeful aspects of travel, segregated from the purposes of travel from their male counterparts, they also found themselves uncomfortably aligned with the same sex that had relegated them to begin with, being both white and foreign automatically likened them more with their male traveling companions than with the indigenous peoples among whom they traveled. According to Dea Birkett in *Spinsters Abroad*, "a woman traveler could only conquer and penetrate by ignoring the fact of her sex, aligning herself entirely with the white male explorer" (137). Women travelers then existed in a new, yet equally complex and sometimes equally confining space while traveling as they did caged in their domestic spaces. Another precarious situation facing these women was the reality that, however complex, this 'freedom' was temporary, was fleeting. When their travels ended, so too would their existence inside this world where they had achieved through their travels, a modicum of independence and a status, in the case of their ability to roam freely, more on par with men of the century. When this ended, these women would return to a continued

domestic experience. To complicate their experience more is the reality that where, in the domestic world they were subjected to an othered status, in this world, where they were temporarily granted access, they participated, intentionally or not, in the imperialistic othering of whole other populations. Women such as Isabelle Bird, while a moderate exception, can still be seen as not far removed from the imperialist agenda of the century. While she did not participate in any major research and was more of a naturalist, she and other women, traveled to places on the globe that had not been visited before, providing detailed accounts of the land and the populations there. The dislocation of gender roles vis-à-vis the travel writing and travel experiences of women like Bird, magnifies the cultural context of gender. Whereas a woman in the nineteenth century Bird herself was the non-normative other, as a traveler, Bird's identity as other is appropriated by those non-national others in foreign lands, lands where the white, European was staking imperialistic and nationalistic claims. In this respect, Bird and other lady travelers, were embroiled in the imperialist agenda and their travels and subsequent writing illustrates the disjointed and feminine interaction of gender, class and national identity. Birkett notes that by the late nineteenth century women were recognizing increasing discomfort in the temporality of their positions as travelers in a male-dominated experience. The rise of archeology and anthropology, Birkett sites, provided women with an important new avenue into the world of travel and one that suggested more permanence. However, these new studies further immersed women travelers into the imperialist agenda, which further complicates their own identities in terms of the gender and power. "This strange blend of preserver and destroyer of indigenous cultures" Birkett writes, "was reflected in the attitudes and precepts of the women travelers. [While] many mistrusted and spoke out

against Europeanization, they were also fervent imperialists” (175). This is merely one more way in which women travelers faced a dual identity crisis: woman in a man’s world, woman in non-domestic spaces juxtaposed with woman in new places of power and esteem alongside woman continuously relegated to the margins inside this world of travel and subsequently subjecting and relegating others.

Despite this, not all women believed in or promoted Europeanization or even sought to extend the imperialist agenda. These women believed travel to merely be an opportunity to experience adventure and possibly their way out of their domestic spaces permanently. Regardless, many women learned to appreciate and even come to love the locations and the people they traveled among without a desire to impart the stifling ideologies they themselves were escaping to the people they traveled among. A few of these women, like Lady Anne Blunt, traveled alongside male counterparts such as brothers, fathers or husbands. Blunt, granddaughter of Lord Byron, began her travels through the middle east with her husband, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, a travel enthusiast and eccentric poet. Lady Blunt loved the travel and excitement independent of her husband and took great pleasure in traveling on horseback, dressing and living like a Bedouin and learning to speak and translating Arabic during her journeys. Lady Blunt traveled for pleasure, and continued to do so even after she and her husband separated. In one such account of her time in Nejd, Lady Anne Blunt discussed in great detail the eccentricities of exotic travel. She writes:

Locusts are now a regular portion of the day’s provision with us, and are really an excellent article of diet. After trying them in several ways, we have come to the conclusion that they are best plain boiled. The long

hopping legs must be pulled off, and the locust held by the wings, dipped into salt and eat. As to flavour this insect tastes of vegetable rather than of fish or flesh, not unlike green wheat in England, and to us it supplies the place of vegetables, of which we much in need. The red locust is better eating than the green one. Wilfrid considers that it would hold its own among the hors d'ourvres at a Paris restaurant; I am not so sure of this.

(Robinson 178)

Her tinge of humor, offset by the hard realities of travel that is so far from the typical Victorian woman's life and the matter-of-fact time with which she is recording her experience, creates a narrative that is both interesting and free of judgment. She goes on to discuss the best times of day to catch locusts (in case her readers should be in need) and how they have come in great swarms to devour the decaying animals in the desert. Her wry humor returns as she ends her excerpt noted that "Awwad says this year many tribes have nothing to eat just now but locust and camels' milk; thus the locust in some measure makes amends for being a pestilence, by being himself consumed" (Robinson 179). Arguably, Lady Blunt is being coy in her example here, knowing full well that women travelers are, in many regards, the pestilence, but for women, the pestilence is the men and, in some small victories, their abilities to travel is allowing these women to consume the male spaces once off limits to them.

Learning to withstand the rigorous and treacherous climates of travel alongside a husband is still remarkable for a nineteenth century woman. However, other travelers like Mary Henrietta Kingsley, who traveled alone to the deepest parts of West Africa for the better part of her adult life, are even more remarkable yet. Kingsley, born to a servant

who married her father just days prior to her birth, started her travel early after the death of both of her parents; following, perhaps, in her mostly-absent father's footsteps in seeing the world. An uneducated Victorian woman, Kingsley had little money at her disposal when starting her travels. It is by this necessity that Kingsley became involved in trade, finding a strong and long-standing belief that trade, and not colonization or religion, was the way for England to work with the populations of West Africa. Before she died at age 38 from a fever, Kingsley had successfully used her trade skills to also collect rare specimens for the British Museum, of which three new species were named in her honor. Mary Henrietta Kingsley's involvement in trade with West African tribes, along with her willful denial of the need for missionary work with these tribes, did not win her much favor among her fellow Englishman. Despite this, and her intrinsic love and appreciation for West Africa and her tumultuous living conditions, Kingsley boldly clung to a very proper and feminine English style. According to Jane Robinson's *Unsuitable for Ladies*, Mary Kingsley remained "true to her style as she presented, wherever she went, a neat and trim figure in stiff, stayed black silk, black button boots and a perky black astrakhan hat" (Robinson 189). In the daunting conditions of West Africa, Kingsley would be found rummaging for specimens in a full-length wool dress, maintaining, perhaps her own relegation of distance between herself and the West African native populations. About one excursion in Africa, Kingsley wrote:

I made a short cut for it and the next news was I in a heap, on a lot of spikes, some fifteen feet or so below ground level, at the bottom of a bag-shaped game pit. It is at these times you realise the blessing of a good thick skirt. Had I paid heed to the advice of many people in England, who

ought to have known better, and did not do it themselves, and adopted masculine garments, I should have been spike to the bone, and done for. Whereas, save for a good many bruises, here I was with the fullness of my skirt tucked under me, sitting on nine ebony spikes some twelve inches long, in comparative comfort, howling lustily to be hauled out. (Robinson 214)

Like her fellow traveler, Lady Blunt, Mary Kingsley approached her travels and travel writing with equal parts wonder, caution and humor. In writing of her extraction from the game pit, Kingsley remarks:

Wiki went and selected the one and only bush-rope suitable to haul and English lady, of my exact complexion, age, and size, out of that one particular pit. They seemed rare round there from the time he took; and I was just casting about in my mind as to what method would be best to employ in getting up the smooth, yellow, sandy-clay, incurved walls, when he arrived with it, and I was out in a twinkling, and very much ashamed of myself. (214)

Kingsley relied on metaphors in her writing that seemed at once to reinforce and undermine gender distinctions. She traversed wild African lands alongside her guides and never shied away from any task or trail.

According again to Birkett, “women travelers were [...] continually torn between two conflicting landscapes of self-fulfillment and duty. These clashing voices would never be resolved, and their passage from their rooms to the world outside was a troubled one” (27). For Kingsley, the trouble began after her parents’ death, when she left for the

Canary Islands with the full expectation of going there to die. However, the contagion she caught on this first trip was not one that would soon bring her death, though it would bring her a lifetime not fulfilled by any normalcy by nineteenth-century standards of femininity. Instead, the excitement and allure of travel sparked her interest and instead of settling down into the domestic sphere of some Victorian home, Kingsley set about traveling until her own early death.

Kingsley's records of her travels in Africa are as insightful as travelogues as they are for her humor. And, likely this humor is what sets her female writing apart from the men writing of the same times and of the same locals. After she falls into the pit, her group comes upon a swamp and the first man of her companions "went at it like a man, and disappearing before the eyes of us close following him, then and there down through the water" (215). Kingsley relates that she requests others show the group the way across, a journey that takes them a full three hours and "left them all covered in leeches. She remarks that it "was most comic to see us all salting each other; but in spite of the salt's effaciousness action I was quite faint from loss of blood and we all presented a ghastly sight [...] of course our bleeding didn't stop at once," she continued and "it attracted flies and - but I am going into details, so I forebear" (216). Another recollection where her experience is tinged with humor is in her encounters with leopards. Of this Kingsley writes, "I have never hurt a leopard intentionally; I am habitually kind to animals, and besides I do not think it is ladylike to go shooting things with a gun" (216). And yet, she does. Twice. Later Kingsley describes another instance where a leopard is attacking a dog:

I being roused by the uproar, rushed out into the feeble moonlight, thinking she was having one of her habitual turns-up with other dogs, and I saw a whirling mass of animal matter within a yard of me. I fired two mushroom-shaped native stools in rapid succession into the brown of it, and the meeting broke up into a leopard and a dog. The leopard crouched, I think to spring on me. I can see its great, beautiful, lambent eyes still and I seized an earthen water-cooler and flung it straight at them. It was a noble shot; it burst on the leopard's head like a shell and the leopard went for the bush one time. Twenty minutes after people began to drop in cautiously and inquire if anything was the matter, and I civilly asked them to go and ask the leopard in the bush, but they firmly refused. (217)

She undermines the courage with which she approached the situation by noting that readers should “not mistake this for a sporting adventure [because she] no more thought it was a leopard than a lotus when [she] joined the fight” (217). Of another, non-sporting adventure she writes:

My other leopard was also after a dog. Leopards always come after dogs, because once upon a time the leopard and the dog were great friends, and the leopard went out one day and left her whelps in charge of the dog, and the dog went out flirting, and a snake came and killed the whelps, so there is ill-feeling to this day between the two. For the benefit of sporting readers whose interest may have been excited at the mention of big game, I may remark that the largest leopard skin I ever measured myself was, tail included, 9 feet 7 inches. It was a dried skin, and every man who saw it

said 'It was the largest skin he had ever seen, except one that he had seen somewhere else.' (217)

Women travelers, both in their records of their wanderings and in the way they carried themselves, promoted their personal causes, connected with others (native and not) had a particularly feminine guise. Kingsley, who in discussing her desire to circumvent the political agenda of missionaries in West Africa, noted that she would go about her business "with feminine artfulness, not like a bull at a gate" (231) a statement which hearkens to her sentiments on gendered responses during her travel writing. Perhaps Kingsley, who specifically approached her travel with the desire to maintain a feminine mystique was her way of gaining acceptance of women travelers of their own accord as women, not as companions for men or guests in a still male-centric, male-dominated experience. Once again, Robinson posits in *Unsuitable for Ladies* this made Kingsley "nothing more than a visitor from another world" (189) in her travels through Africa. I would argue that was not problematic for Kingsley. For, as much as she loved Africa and her freedom to travel there, acceptance as an equal was never her goal in Africa so much as it was in her own European world, as a woman, that she sought that acceptance, with the ability to successfully participate actively in a public domain that was not off limits to her. Like Isabelle Bird who pursued her mission to be included into the Royal Geographical Society away from the public sphere, through a more 'private society', women travelers understood that understatement, poise and grace in the face of these tensions could still get them a great deal farther in the male-dominated world of travel and travel experiences. Once again, noting Birkett, for these women "the sphere to which [they] had so often been relegated – the domestic and social – now became a the

place where they could exert their own particular form of power” (231). Early in the century, other than domestic service, there were few other ways for women to gain entrance into the public and professional sphere save that of writing. As such, writing, even journals and travel narratives provided women an opportunity to leave the domestic confines. The travel narratives shared by women of the century who managed to leave England behind were important in shaping continued entrance in the public sphere, therefore, because they were able to fill the void for women who *were* still tied to their domestic space. For these women who continued to live with absence of experience, the widely read travel narratives provided by women were integral in expanding the knowledge of all women of the century.

Under Surveillance: Women and Detection

Today when one thinks of a detecting woman, they may lay reference to any number of female roles from Detective Olivia Benson (Law & Order SVU), to Detective Lillian Rush (Cold Case) to right down to sassy teen television icon, Veronica Mars. These detecting ladies, while still finding the need to prove themselves in a male-centered profession, and some would say a society, represent women that are allowed to work their detective wiles without being labeled socially abnormal, deviant or transgressive. Why not kick some bad-guy butt wearing tight jeans and high heels? Why not solve crimes before attending the high-school prom? Yes, why not? Especially, since the way has been paved for these television crime-fighting divas by a more reserved, corset sporting nineteenth-century counterpart. While society in general and the media-viewing public has all but condoned the crime-fighting heroines we have come to know and love on our

big – and little - screens, and while we have come to champion the success of the female detective inside our own popular culture, women in the nineteenth century who undertook similar roles, both real and fictionalized, were touted as socially transgressive, undermining nineteenth-century values as strong as prison bars.

The figure of the female detective in nineteenth-century fiction invokes images of a woman outside her place in the private sector armed with tools of surveillance and punishment that might very well be levied against her for her very acts of detection. The female detective of nineteenth-century literature both represents and misrepresents the nineteenth-century woman and the shifting notions of womanhood from this socially tumultuous period. Authors, whether male or female, who penned women taking on active roles of detection created a transgressive figure by proxy and in doing so, fed into a host of concerns and criticisms facing women in the nineteenth century. Suzanne Young notes in *The Simple Art of Detection: The Female Detective in Victorian and Contemporary Mystery Novels*, “the female private eye is an embodied detective who sees herself implicated in the scene to which she is a witness (456). In this way, the female detective and the object of her detection hearken the Lacanian notion of object petit a, where the unattainable object of desire (self and detection) can never truly be attained. Nowhere is this idea more clearly illustrated than in Collins’ *The Woman in White* – Marian is the detective but wishes she could identify with Laura who mysteriously also identifies with an identical, but very different, woman in white. Where the trope of the female detective draws out the concerns about the changing roles of women within the public and private sectors of nineteenth-century society, she also acts as a figurehead to the contradictory ideas surrounding women’s gender and sexuality,

their political and social power and their influence on the shifting definitions of nineteenth-century national identity. In this portion of the project, the focus is on the nineteenth-century literary examples of the transgressive woman detective as contrived, contradictory representations of nineteenth-century womanhood. Here, female characters situated as detectives act as destabilizing forces for the traditional gender roles imposed on women, while at the same time positioning them as social deviants and providing them with a power as yet reserved for men. In sleuthing their way through fictional mysteries, the nineteenth-century female detective represented an agent of change for women of the century who while finding only limited success on the page opened the door to the public sphere for many nineteenth-century women.

The fictions addressed here may not spring to one's mind when contemplating the all-time greatest detective fictions. They certainly are not hallowed tales from the "Golden Age of Detective Fiction" or the much acclaimed "hard-boiled" tradition. They do hail, however, from a century that saw an explosion of detective novels alongside the rise of a Metropolitan Police Force in England and in doing so offer plots and subplots which provide a feminine twist to the traditional whodunits of the century. In Wilkie Collins' *Who Killed Zebedee?* Pricilla Turlby assists in a murder investigation in which she is both victim and culprit. And in another of Collin's tales, *The Law and the Lady*, doting wife Valeria Woodville is the "lead" investigator and actively seeks to prove her husband innocent of his first wife's murder. In yet another Collins' novel, *The Woman in White*, Marian Halcombe assists the novels hero in restoring the freedom and honor of his true love, the not-so-innocuously named, Laura Fairlie. Finally, in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Thou Art the Man*, the female duo of Lady Penrith and her niece Coralie, seek

out the truth behind a murder that destroyed the reputation of Lady Penrith's first love, Brandon Mountford.

Detective stories provide “structure” and “order” in a way that other stories do not – rising action, falling action, climax, heroes, heroines, villains and villainesses are all wrapped up or shut up or solved at the culmination of a detective story. Yet through the art of detection, which on many levels purports to be a very secretive and private affair, the soundness and structure of the private world is unraveled. Young posits “[t]he figure of the female detective is [...] in the business of reasserting middle-class order, performing the conservative re-establishment of the accepted hierarchy for which detective fiction has been critiqued (450). However, I argue that the woman as detector instead further challenges and unravels this structure, subverting order, in ways that a male would not. First, women are not, in the nineteenth century, determiners of order and structure in the public sphere as much as they are the *followers* of order and structure that is set upon them by the male centric society. Women have been, and continued to be well into the twentieth century according to Annette Ballinger's *Dead Woman Walking*, “regulated, disciplined and controlled by a pervasive system of male definitions of what constitutes a ‘normal’ woman” (3) which more often than not in the nineteenth-centuries confined them to a limited existence inside a the bubble of the domestic sphere. What is more, those middle-to-upper class women who did gain access to the order and control of their home or some other domestic space – only were afforded so under the supervision of a father, a husband or a male legal representative of estate affairs often as a governess, a domestic servant or, in some cases a young wife and mother. Kathleen Klein's *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre* reinforces Ballinger's assessment by suggesting

that detective fiction's "inherent conservatism upholds power and privilege in the name of law and justice as it validates readers' visions of a safe and ordered world" (1).

Arguably then, nineteenth-century figures taking on the role of detective and actively engaging in the public sphere are undermining the very idea of a safe and ordered world.

What is more, women as detectives are invading the private sphere of others, a place that they have, thus far, been relegated to themselves. The social anxiety caused by women breaking the confines of their domestic cell vis-à-vis detection stems from their both their placement in the public sphere, a space they are not supposed to occupy at all as well as from their ability to disrupt the private sphere of others. According to Klein, "criminals and women are put in their proper, secondary places" (1) in the ordered world of detective fiction. The subversion for the female detective then is the very fact that she is at once in her secondary place (i.e. acting [socially] criminally by detecting) and outside of her secondary place, seeking out those that have broken other social or criminal norms. Unlike their male counterparts, women assuming the role of detective figure are analyzed under the dual lens of woman *and* detective. In doing so, references to their physical body and their effectiveness as a detective exist to define them both in relation to their womanhood and their status as detective. Klein suggests this duality often resorts in "the undercutting of the woman detective in one or both of her roles" (4), thus making her less of a woman or a less effective detective.⁴

In Collins' *Who Killed Zebedee?* this distorted subversion is most apparent, in particular through the character of Priscilla Thurlby, a domestic servant who becomes

⁴ Foucault's Knowledge-Power continuum, specifically the discussion in *Discipline and Punish* suggesting that "power and knowledge directly imply one another (27) can be a tool for further consideration of this dichotomous relationship for women.

assistant to the police detective. Readers first encounter Ms. Thurlby as she approaches (we are told) “frantically” the police station. In his first encounter with Ms. Thurlby, our narrator calls into question her abilities at observation when he chides her in her response to whether or not she has found the police department, asking her “can’t you *see* it is?” Quickly we learn she has seen – or rather heard – about a murder in which a young wife stabs her husband to death, supposedly in her sleep. We learn the master of the house is distraught and that she and other servants are left to take care of the arrangements of notifying the police and the medical examiners. Doubt looms heavy over Ms. Thurlby in our opening moments of meeting her, as the desk sergeant tests her for drunkenness and madness – neither of which prove true. Suddenly, Ms. Thurlby becomes the expert witness, shifting from her position as unreliable (drunk, mad, lack of insight) to the key witness to the confounding crime, one that has left a husband stabbed in his bed and the wife awakening next to him and admitting her own guilt. We are left with a scene where, in his bed the husband lay stabbed to death with a knife on which an unfinished engraving, “To John Zebedee, from...” was noticed and the wife’s habit of sleepwalking the true culprit of the crime.

During the investigation, the narrator, our official detective, comes to rely on Priscilla Thurlby suggesting that because she is “sharp and active” she could be of use to his investigation. That she comes to her current assignment with a strong recommendation from her past male employers also helps and encourages the detective to continue to officially ask if Priscilla might be inclined to assist in his investigation. Soon, our narrator also informs us that he has fallen in love with Ms. Thurlby and continues the investigation with her as his aid even after proposing marriage to her. One weekend as

they visit her parents in a neighboring town, the train leaves him behind at a stop. During this time, the ever-mindful detective continues his investigation into the unfinished engraved knife that killed John Zebedee and what he finds shakes him to the core – the unfinished knife was to say “To John Zebedee, from Priscilla Thurlby. At this point our narrator recognizes the deception of his assistant and that it stems from Zebedee’s abandonment of Pricilla; the narrator approaches her with the information about the knife, burns the receipt with the originally engraving on it in front of her and she leaves and is never seen again. While Pricilla Thurlby does not exist in this space truly as a detective figure, her role in the detection process, and her ability to undermine the case position her among other female transgressors. She is, in this story, at once assisting in the detection and at the heart of the detection. Her own identity becomes her undoing, and she is forced out of the narrative – not because, it could be argued, she has committed the murder, but because she has hindered the investigation of our male detective. He remains present, collecting his thoughts and telling the tale and she is relegated to ‘history’ because of her deceit, not her murder. Here Collins uniquely places Pricilla at the heart of the investigation, as both an avenue of detection and as the detected but punishes her not for her crime, but for her involvement in the investigation.

There are also several of Wilkie Collins’ novels that represent a female detective figure but one such overt example exists in *The Law and the Lady* where Collins represents the amateur detective figure through the character of Valeria Brinton. In *The Law and the Lady*, Valeria and Eustace marry, and while honeymooning, Valeria finds out that she has been married under an assumed name and that even her new mother-in-law feels she has made a grave error in marrying her son. Valeria finds that a cloud of

suspicion hangs over her new husband for the poisoning death of his first wife. At trial, he was not found innocent or guilty, but was given a verdict of “Not Proven”, meaning the jury really thought he was guilty but they just didn’t have enough evidence to convict. In a move that specifically undermines the role – and rule – of the courts, Valeria sets out to prove her husband’s innocence. Like the courts who are resolved to the inconclusive decision, Eustace does not want his new wife to try and prove his innocence definitively. As punishment for her doing so, he leaves her to join the military. Here Collins is setting up an interesting dichotomy. Valeria’s insistence on detection demasculinizes her husband who is forced to reacquire his masculinity by joining the military ranks, thereby allowing Valeria to continue her pursuit of the truth. Likewise, the very absence of her husband places her beyond the watchful, patriarchal eye, and affords her the freedom to continue searching for the truth, which again takes some control away from her husband but allows her to harness her personal independence and prove his innocence which, in turn, allows her to validate her marriage.

Several characters within *The Law and the Lady* find themselves under a uniquely female gaze vis-à-vis Valeria’s lens of suspicion. However, despite the position of power her gaze places her in, two of these suspects also undermine the very representation of Valeria as a female detective figure. The first of these two is Eustace’s former lover, referred to as possessing the “patience of a tigress in a state of starvation” (238) when discussing her desire to win back Eustace’s love and affection. Here jealousy clouds Valeria’s detective instincts, allowing her to grossly misjudge another woman and follow clues that lead her down an entirely wrong path. Here too Collins creates an interesting nexus of female transgression, a woman detective, transgressive because of she acts

outside of her domestic spaces seeking out another woman, thought to be transgressive by way of murder. If, as Klein notes, a woman acting as detective is destined to fail in at least one of her attributes, here is where Valeria comes close to failing in both - as a woman plagued by a blind jealousy and as a detective following rash leads. Upon realization of how her “smouldering” (243) jealousy made her “hastily and cruelly [suspect] an innocent woman” Valeria, “so ashamed of [her] folly...and so completely discouraged, so rudely shaken in [her confidence of herself]” (253) she redeems herself only by asking for the help of man, Mr. Playmore, Eustace’s trail lawyer.

Valeria’s gaze is misguided when it comes to another of Collin’s eccentric characters, the notorious, Mr. Dexter, a crippled madman who is friends with Eustace and who desperately loved Eustace’s first wife. When she turned down his offer of marriage and married Eustace instead, his love degenerates into an obsession, one that drives him to attempt to destroy the only evidence that would clear Eustace of his first wife’s murder. The reappearance of the letter, “unearthed” from the ashes of a ruined house, do eventually clear Eustace. While Valeria is present when Mr. Dexter tells the true story of the death of Eustace’s first wife, she relies on a man to transcribe the events of the “confession” and then turns those thoughts over the Mr. Playmore, who eventually puts all the pieces into place. Here, as in other nineteenth century fictions, a woman is stopped short at gaining control and complete autonomy. For, as Valeria herself notes, she is “entirely in the dark” (327) about the events that occurred during that period of time while Mr. Playmore controls knowledge and thereby the truth.

As before, Valeria’s attempts at detection alone present her with the dilemma facing all female transgressors, that which Žižek notes is the “loss of loss”, in that

obtaining the object of desire, in this case, the truth, she relegates herself to the role of transgressor while at the same time, in order to find success without the shame (loss of proper identity and status) she must turn to a man, thereby losing her independence. For the nineteenth-century reading audience, a woman independently acting as a detective, digging around in and blurring the lines between the public and the private spheres exists as an anachronistic – in fact, completely foreign - anomaly to the figurative and literal narrative of the nineteenth century. When the familiar detective narrative is upset by a woman usurping the lead, the only way to set the narrative right again is by taking out the uncanny actions of the female detective and having a male detective step in and take back control of the narrative space, either by invitation (when a woman realizes what she has done “wrong”) or by force (thereby leaving the woman left to be punished for her overstep).

In what might be the most telling example of the stalemate women detectives faced inside the nineteenth century is from another Collins novel, *The Woman in White*. When Wilkie Collins shows readers Marion Halcombe, he illustrates a woman who has a form that is aligned with beauty and grace, and a mind that can be measured by any male, but who is also quite ugly. Marion’s physique continues to be a notable issue throughout the text, regardless of her skill and abilities at resolving the mystery surrounding her family. The fact that her beauty is not feminine, that her “complexion was almost swarthy, and the dark down on her upper lip was almost a moustache...[that] she had a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute brown eyes; and thick, coal-black hair, growing unusually low down on her forehead” (35) allows her to find more success in her acts of detection, but her gender remains an obstacle which is

only overcome by her reliance on Mr. Fairlie. In this way Marion is, perhaps, the saddest example of the female detective coming out of the nineteenth-century fictions of Wilkie Collins because both her physical form and her gender provide constant stalemates for her success, as a woman and as a detective.

The instances inside nineteenth-century fiction where women must rely on men in order to find security and success in their lives are not few and far between. Take any of the score of Austen or Dickens novels to find examples where even the most strong-willed of woman does not find peace or true happiness without some aid from a man. The difference between the traditional heroine stories of the nineteenth century and the story clearly aligned with the detective genre is thus: while women, a damsel in distress or a strong-willed young heroine are marking their territories inside the domestic sphere and just barely stepping outside of their confines of “womanhood”, those women shown as embarking on errands of detection are purposefully placed in a very public world that society, as a whole, has not condoned for them. What is more, after finding themselves in this position, they are forced to rely on the men in their world to successfully accomplish their ‘missions’. The nineteenth-century detective story as a phallogocentric space requires that the female who lacks the powerful phallus, as always both literally and figuratively, is confronted with her lack and must submit to any man for successful closure and even forgiveness for her transgression. However, considering the shifting tides of nineteenth-century sentiments, do these fictionalized women exist to reinforce the status quo or, conversely, to overtly subvert the gender stereotypes that nineteenth-century society placed upon women?

In a century where women the likes of Eliza Lynn Lynton suggest “the *raison d’être* of a woman is maternity” (Hamilton 188), it is no small wonder that women stepping out of their domestic spheres and into the realm of public service, social revolution or politics raised the eyes and anxieties of proper nineteenth-century society. Like Madame Defarge’s incessant knitting during public upheaval and even executions, women’s entrance into the public sphere through almost any means was disconcerting, to say the least.

The examples of women critiqued in this who shed the pervasive and stifling shroud of domesticity, nineteenth-century women who plunged themselves into the public sphere made it that much more difficult for those who desired to uphold the cult of domesticity and the very separate and unequal roles of men and women. Yet some women seeking entrance into the public domain wanted such an entrance to maintain an air of separation as well because the significance of that difference held a powerful tool for woman. In *The Feminine Political Novel in Victorian England* Barbara Leah Harman notes “it was frequently argued that the woman’s sphere must be separated from man’s lest it be tainted by the connection” (2). Harman goes on to suggest that [p]articipation in public life jeopardized the clarity of woman’s position as disinterested analysts and observer, someone capable of influencing the public realm precisely because [...of] her separateness” (2). Harman’s claims are lent credence through, for example, study of characters such as those found in the Bronte novels, characters who dance around the outskirts of public life while still asserting influence.

CHAPTER 2. BODIES THAT DON'T MATTER

“You could part her from a man who loved her with every drop of his heart – and she said she loved him, or, at all events, preferred him to others – and you cannot part her from a miserable corset....” – Charles Reade, *A Simpleton*

There has always been a fascination with the criminal mind, one that deepens when that criminal happens to be a member of the female sex. Unquestionably, women who commit crimes of any kind, especially murder, are considered the most heinous of offenders. Yet, these bad girls in corsets seem to always attract a seemingly perverse amount of attention. While not the majority offender in the nineteenth century, women were still behaving badly throughout the Victorian era. What is most intriguing to this study is not necessarily the reasons women were behaving badly, but instead the societal and penal response to those women. What is equally intriguing is that the representation of punishment for criminal behavior in women in many Victorian novels strays from *actual* punishments carried out on nineteenth-century criminal women. Of further interest is that the nineteenth century also saw a shift from the spectacular punishments of the gallows and guillotine, to a less corporeal form of punishment for women. While women were still, though rarely, executed in Victorian society, even those punishments were carried out in what some might consider more humane conditions. Despite the fact that the Victorian criminal woman was a deviant, often in more ways than one, the harsher forms of punishment were not carried out on the Victorian female body. And within

many Victorian fictions, criminal women were punished in an even less abrasive or severe manner. Despite this, their fracture from the proper Victorian woman, the Angel in the House, still required they suffer a punishment, but one that I would argue was often even more traumatic, tragic, and emotional rather than those that would be considered overtly corporeal.

While in a project devoted solely to this topic one might easily consider examples of women as criminals in the eyes of the law, in this chapter I will focus on the representations of punishment for a different type of Victorian (criminal) woman, that of the social deviant guilty of crimes against social codes and norms. While Mary Elizabeth Braddon's wildly popular *Lady Audley's Secret* offers a prime example of the former, this chapter will focus on the latter by working closely with Ellen Wood's 1861 novel, *East Lynne*. It should be noted then, that by relying on the text that I do, I do not mean to offer a comprehensive look at the punishments of women in nineteenth-century literature. Instead, the motivation in focusing here on *East Lynne* is the availability and conciseness of the incorporation of a two-fold argument as illustrated in one (rather long) novel. First, Lady Isabel Vane, later Madame Veen, offers as a character an example of a woman who literally embodies non-corporeal displays of disciplinary measures, surveillance, incarceration, and punishments of body, mind, and soul. Secondly, and no less important, Wood's novel exhibits the clear disparity between the politics of gendered bodies. *East Lynne*, therefore, is an exquisite representation of the forms of punishment often aligned with the female body throughout the Victorian age.

During the nineteenth century, more specifically during the Victorian era, there was a significant and interesting shift in discourse about criminal or fallen women. This

shift, seen in commentary, criticism, and literature, was from a discourse of corporal punishment to a discourse of reform. Clearly outlined by Foucault, the move from the spectacular to the surveillant, is particularly interesting in light of the fact that, despite the shift, there were still lingering remnants of the earlier “spectacular” system not being illustrated in the literature of the period. With the exception of novels like *Adam Bede* and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, most criminal or fallen women were punished in less corporeal manners. Lynda Hart, in her article “The Victorian Villainess and the Patriarchal Unconscious” points out that the critics in the age of Victoria were very concerned with how women were represented as well as how they were acting. During this period, she correctly posits that “the eruption of violence by women was perceived as a real threat to the social order” (13). Yet, despite this notion, writers of the period persisted in portraying women as villainous, deceitful and immoral. Hart goes on to state that

[w]hile on the one hand audiences were flocking to the courtrooms to witness the trials of real women who had performed acts of violence as or more heinous than their fictional counterparts, on the other hand reviewers were insisting upon the villainous heroines as inferior aesthetic creations on the basis of their credibility. (13)

Likewise, according to Richard Altick in *Victorian Studies in Scarlet*, the Victorians found a ready channel both for the release of such rudimentary passions as horror, morbid sympathy, and vicarious aggression and for the sheer occupation of minds otherwise rendered blank or dull by the absence of anything more pleasing or intellectually more elevated. (10)

Yet, despite the fact that the public yearned to live vicariously through murderous stories and that Victorian writers obliged them and insisted on portraying villainous women in spite of the lambasting by critics, the legal systems were beginning to reform their stance on the treatment of women. In 1820 an act was passed in parliament which completely abolished corporal punishment for incarcerated women, but which did not altogether eradicate capital punishments. In fact, women were still executed for various crimes (most often infanticide), though admittedly fewer in comparison to their male counterparts. What this new act established however, was a guideline for the treatment of the incarcerated female body which in interesting ways found its place in many literary representations.

Women were arrested, convicted and confined by the nineteenth-century penal system for a wide variety of infractions, from kidnapping to theft, from sexual crimes such as prostitution to abortion, failure to report birth and murder. Yet the nineteenth-century criminal justice system faced a significant dilemma in dealing with female transgressors at any level. According to Zedner, “the means of punishing women prisoners were debated lengthily, not least because notions of femininity ruled out many of the sanctions commonly applied to men” (168-9). Women who defied the legal systems and social mores of the century by participating in, and being convicted for, criminal or deviant behaviors could no longer be looked at as the examples of moral high ground but instead as aberrations to the acknowledged and entrusted role of women, the Angel in the House, the keeper of domestic spaces. And while in prisons the rod and the shackles may have been a last resort after manipulative psychological pressures failed,

the punishments levied against women were always mounted specifically in an effort to gain control over her socially and emotionally while making an example out of her.

In many ways, incarceration was nothing new to the nineteenth-century woman. In life and literature, women were clearly imprisoned by their own bodies, socially, politically, and sexually (per gender). It might be then because of this clear shift in a discourse of punishment to one of reform, instead of in spite of it, that a change occurred in the focus of Victorian writing. By analyzing the literature of the period one might garner more insight as to the implications of this change. As Foucault has established in *The History of Sexuality*, the rhetoric of sexuality in the Victorian period was “carefully confined” (3) despite being clearly present and highly influential, and in spite of the prudish mask publicly presented. How then, without meeting the overt and stifling eye of the critic were Victorian writers able to address these issues and ideas? Further, why, as in Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*, was a villainous woman who attempted murder, but succeeded at least in arson, not punished to the full extent of the law but instead pent up in an insane asylum? Likewise, why is the fallen woman in *East Lynne* so perversely and severely punished yet still not by the laws governing criminal behavior? According to Beth Kalikoff in her book *Murder and Moral Decay in Victorian Society*, “[I]n fiction, murders are presented in more complicated ways...and their remorse reflects that complexity. Their guilt is often all-encompassing, dooming them far more than any string of evidence could” (8). This remorse never set in for Lady Audley – her own desires and fears left no other recourse but for her to become yet another *madwoman in the attic*. This very remorse is, on the other hand, achieved for the *East Lynne* heroine, even though her crime was not murder. The guilt for Isabel Vane however, is astounding, all-

encompassing and even, at times, overwhelming; it is a guilt that is literally felt by the readers of the novel. So even though her crimes were not tantamount to murder, in the eyes of the Victorian society, they came close enough to warrant a severe penalty that did reflect the complexity of her transgressions.

Criminal women, deviants of any sort, were enticing to the Victorian public and even more so to the Victorian reading public. Sensation novels capitalized on this fascination and created characters such as Isabel Vain, Lady Audley, Becky Sharp, and Valerie de Cevennes. Despite the allure of the female deviant, the actual incidents of female criminals in nineteenth-century fiction may seem disproportionate to the actual numbers of female transgressors in the nineteenth century. According to Judith Knelman's study *Twisting in the Wind: The Murderess and the English Press*, "for criminal offences generally, the male-female ratio is usually about six or seven to one [and] from 1875 to 1879, the proportion is much the same: about 86 per cent of those sentenced to life imprisonment (for all offences) were male, and about 14 per cent were female" (15). Punishments for women found guilty of criminal behaviors included short prison terms, life imprisonment, incarceration in an asylum for criminals, or execution.

Again, even though punishments on the 'real' criminal women of the Victorian age were less severe, they were still in existence and when levied still suggest a unique and peculiar motivation on the part of the criminal justice system and society as a whole. While punishments inflicted by authors upon literary characters were not confined by the same legal constraints that kept the harsh realities from their real-life counterparts, as is the case with a woman as deviant as Lady Audley, this evasion of corporal punishment on the literary female body deserves further attention: begging the question, what is it

about the Victorian female body that mandated this neglect of representation? In aligning with a Foucauldian idea, surveillant discipline (i.e. the asylum) was more apt to create the “docile body” that the Victorian period wished the woman to inhabit. Instead of a harsh death penalty, women were relegated back to their ‘proper’ spaces of submission, confined by their own sexuality inside the walls of a panoptic system. While this might have been an unintentional ramification of the Victorian period writers, it nonetheless profited the patriarchal accord of the critical public. According to Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*:

discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies.

Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility)

and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In

short, it dissociates power from the body. (138)

Capitalizing on both Foucault and Butler then, I would argue that the Victorian female body was manipulated, ignored, and at the same time, misused as a cultural signifier illustrating the ‘proper’ role for the Victorian woman. The female body, particularly, the corporeal body, was a body that exhibited less power than both the male body and the incorporeal female body. It is quite clear, looking at both Victorian criticism and literature, that the female body – and less, the female criminal body – was in fact a body that did not matter culturally or materially in ways that might empower women. It was instead a vessel in which to purport an ideology that a patriarchal system wished to remain as a mainstay.

Judith Butler’s seminal work *Bodies that Matter* is therefore central to the study of the Victorian woman, criminal or otherwise. Despite the fact that an enormous

emphasis was placed on establishing an “appropriate” Victorian woman, the actual body of the woman mattered little. For Butler, “to be material means to materialize, where the principle of that materialization is precisely what ‘matters’ about that body” (32), but for the Victorian age, the materiality of the female body is not what mattered; instead, what mattered most about the female body were the ways in which it might be constrained. In her book *Culture and Adultery*, Barbara Leckie notes that during the Victorian age, “men and women alike rallied to the support of established social boundaries, values, and prohibitions” (115). It was this support, fueled by critics of an age of sensationalized fiction, that continued to front the problematic definitions of gender that Joan Scott questions throughout her book *Gender and the Politics of History*. For Scott, breaking down some of these artificial barriers comes from “analyzing the ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics” (27).

Butler’s argument, and Scott’s guidance, draws our attention to Ellen Wood’s sensational novel *East Lynne* which embodies the very politics of materiality of the body and circumstance, from the first pages to the last. While Isabel Vane turn Madame Veen is not the strongest example of a criminal woman in the eyes of the law, she nonetheless epitomizes the shift from a corporeal punishment to that of a more surveillant one, placing the reader in the position at the center of the panopticon – the reader becomes the surveiller. *East Lynne* also exemplifies the discrepancies in gender politics as they existed in the Victorian age. Early in Wood’s novel when our unlikely heroine’s father dies, debts unpaid, we see his dead body ‘arrested’ for payment. Two ruffian characters enter the death chamber and refuse to leave until payment is made, reporting their employers sent them down to “arrest the dead corpse” (134).

While one might spend more time on the scene with Lord Vane's arrested body, I will focus more here on how differently a woman's body is treated, using Isabel Vane among other examples. Lord Vane's criminal activities finally caught up with him post-mortem, and because he did not settle his debts while alive, his body was held captive after death. Up to this point innocent of any knowledge of her father's misdoings, Lady Isabel Vane is helpless and is forced to confront the ferocity of the truth – she is no longer rich because her father has squandered their fortune away. Her body, like that of her dead father, becomes a commodity “sold” to the highest bidder – first her rich uncle and the heir to her father's estate, then to another rich, strong man who becomes her husband. She is never left to fend for herself, her body always protected and traded, by either her uncle Lord Mount Severn or her future husband, Mr. Archibald Carlyle. Neither man allows for Lady Isabel to suffer, nor do either allow her an opportunity to make any decision regarding the status of her own body; though both men felt a paternal (and then some) love for Isabel, her sex (as her body) mattered less than her status as property in a material world, and she was therefore rarely treated as anything more than a commodity.

In nearly all Victorian novels, save those like *Adam Bede*, there is a distinctly different feminine politics of the body illustrated. Even while women were still receiving corporal punishments in Victorian society, punishments for women who acted criminally, whether in the eyes of the law or society, were carried out in ways that were highly emotional – for the woman as well as the reader. In fact, according to Leckie, for critics of many sensation novels, the focus “shifts to an anatomy of the female reader in the form of [the authors] heroine” (113). More sensational yet, this claim compounds the

effects criminal women's behaviors had on the reading public. Because, just as punishments were still being carried out on the female body, they too were affecting the bodies of the female readers. For D.A. Miller the nineteenth-century novel exists clearly to act out an emotion upon the reader and more specifically the *body* of that reader. In *The Novel and the Police*, Miller writes normally, "Novel reading takes for granted the existence of a space in which the reading subject remains safe from the surveillance, suspicion, reading, and rape of others" (162). Miller argues that for sensation novels, this space does not always exist, and in fact, seems to be constantly erased by sensation authors. Miller goes on to say that

the specificity of the sensation novel in nineteenth-century fiction is that it renders the liberal subject the subject of a *body*, whose fear and desire of violation displaces, reworks, and exceeds his constitutive fantasy of intact privacy. The themes that the liberal subject ordinarily defines himself against – by reading *about* them – are here inscribed into his reading body. (163)

If, as Miller argues, these bodies are gendered then, in fact, the disparity between punishments of male and female characters in fiction play an even more integral role upon the sensationalization of the readers body. The shift from public beatings and executions for women to punishments on the body that were more emotional would elicit prolonged feelings of suffering from the readers and would, as Miller notes, "produce repeated and undeniable evidence – 'on the nerves' – that we are perturbed by what we are watching" (162). This is not to say then that if women were not executed or whipped, they escaped corporal punishment or that corporal punishments themselves would not

evoke strong reader responses. Instead, relying on Foucault, this marked difference and shift in ideology illustrates the altered focus and ramifications of such punishments:

Thanks to the techniques of surveillance, the ‘physics’ of power, the hold over the body, operate according to the laws of optics...without recourse, in principle at least, to excess, force or violence. It is a power that seems all the less ‘corporal’ in that is it more subtly ‘physical’. (177)

Isabel Carlyle, or Madame Veen, illustrates this new power, this alternate physical punishment that Foucault speaks of.

One is meant to esteem ‘poor’ Isabel from the moment her father dies early on in the novel. The reader sees Isabel as a meek and helpless woman, not prepared for the harsh reality of the cruel world. Her father, after mismanaging his affairs, has left her with nothing – no money and no skills. Isabel becomes simply one more commodity, a remainder of a lost fortune. Her uncle takes pity on her frail body, on the verge of hysteria, and ‘sells’ her off to Mr. Archibald Carlyle. Lady Isabel’s desire to return to the comfort of East Lynne, the home she and her father shared, nearly extorts a marriage proposal from Archibald Carlyle; their marriage begins with a proposal that seems a mere business transaction. After Carlyle’s proposal, but prior to giving him an answer, Lady Isabel held a conversation with herself in her chamber:

Isabel was little more than a child, and as a child she reasoned, looking neither far nor deep: the shallow, palpable aspect of affairs alone presenting itself to her view. That Mr. Carlyle was not of rank equal to her own, she scarcely remembered: East Lynne seemed a very fair settlement

in life, and in point of size, beauty, and importance, it was superior to the home she was now in. (166)

But for all these desires of reinstating herself in the home of childhood, Lady Isabel had no real feelings of love for Mr. Carlyle. In fact, she maintained a crush on Francis Levison, who would later contribute to her very demise. But, as marriage was a contract and she herself a commodity within it, she conceded to Carlyle's proposal. Her acceptance speech was tempered with the truth of her feelings, "I like you very much; I esteem you and respect you: but I do not yet love you" (168). With this lackluster acceptance, Carlyle merely inquired whether or not Lady Isabel would let him earn her love and with that, the contract proposal was sealed.

Lady Isabel never learns to love her husband while she is married to him, but somehow still feels the pangs of jealousy. While her body is certainly a commodity for Carlyle, Isabel's jealousy seems to stem from an idea that she considers him property as well. A reintroduction of her one-time infatuation, Francis Levison, and the secret business her husband maintains with the neighbor woman, Barbara Hare, propels Isabel into a frenzy of rage and jealousy: "[t]he few meetings that Lady Isabel witnessed between her husband and Barbara would have been quite enough to excite her anger and jealousy, and to trouble her peace; but, in addition, Francis Levison took care to tell her of those she did not see" (296). Isabel remained a pawn, a commodity as part of a game, in Levison's abetting her worst fears, fears in fact, that were grounded in nothing. It was because of this intrusion, Isabel eventually left her husband and children and ran away with Francis Levison. Her sudden and secret departure devastated her doting husband and catapulted Isabel into a downward spiral, notorious of a "fallen woman."

It is at this moment, when Isabel becomes a criminal herself, that the difference in treatment becomes most apparent. Women who turned to criminal behavior (despite how ‘socially deviant that behavior was) were usually determined to be ‘sick’ or ‘mad’ as opposed to truly capable of their crimes. By continuing these diagnoses, the true reasons for women’s crimes were ignored. In a chapter of his book dedicated to *The Woman in White*, Miller defines the difference between the male and female deviant in nineteenth-century fiction that can be useful in a reading of *East Lynne*. For Miller, the difference between criminal men and ‘sick’ women “bespeaks a paternalism whose ‘chivalry’ merely sublimates a system of constraints” (169). Not only do these constraints work against women, they eradicate nearly all evidence of the actual intentions of deviant women – sick or criminal. Miller goes on to argue that “the very category of madness that, like a fate, lies ever in wait to cover – account for and occlude – whatever behaviors, desires, or tendencies might be considered socially deviant, undesirable, or dangerous” (169).

It is here where the story of Isabel Vane’s fallen body is met with harsh punishment despite the absence of a corporal sentence. Likewise, it is this space in the novel where the sensational affliction of pain and emotion reaches out to affect the body of the reader alongside Isabel. After her departure from the comforts of East Lynne, Isabel Vane consummated her affair with Francis Levison and bore an illegitimate son. Francis Levison, she soon learned, was as much a scoundrel as ever and Isabel sunk deeper into despair. “Her recent and depressing illness, the conviction of Sir Francis Levison’s complete worthlessness, the terrible position in which she found herself, had brought Lady Isabel *reflection*” (350). Drawing the readers deeper into the disparity of

the situation, Lady Isabel soon learns of the error of her ways and despite her past actions, actually learns to feel love for the husband she abandoned. After a visit from her uncle informs Isabel of Levison's marriage to yet another woman, and in which she gets the proof that her husband had been “true and faithful” (360) to her, she determines to start her life over yet again, alone with her bastard child. She embarks on her journey by train, accompanied by her child and an inexpensive nurse maid. But, “within a short distance of the station...there came a sudden shock and crash as of the day of doom: and engine, carriages, and passengers lay in one confused mass at the foot of a steep embankment” (373). In this massive train wreck, the baby and nurse maid were killed and Lady Isabel so badly injured that rescue workers directed their attention to other passengers who had more hope of survival: “she heard them say that she would not survive amputation, and that nothing else could be done; that she must die whether there was an operation or not” (373).

For her crimes against society and her husband, Lady Isabel suffered immensely, though not through any penalty of the law. As she lay in the wreckage of the train carriage,

[s]he had not counted upon dying in this manner, and death in the guise of horrible suffering was not the abstract thing of release and escape which it had seemed, when she wished for it as the end of all her wretchedness.

(374)

But Isabel did not die. She confessed to a Sister of Charity at the crash site that “my death will be the only reparation I can offer, for the grief and shame my life has brought on all who had the evil fortune to belong to me” (374). But death, despite “being a great sinner”

(374) was not to be the end of her suffering. Instead, Ellen Wood prolongs the suffering of Isabel's life and makes her cross that much harder to bear and in doing so ensures that readers of *East Lynne* bear the torture alongside the fallen heroine.

Nearly a year after the railroad accident, after hearing of the 'death' of Isabel, Barbara Hare and Archibald Carlyle are married. In looking to hire a governess for Isabel's abandoned children, but not the child Barbara and Archibald share, readers are reintroduced to a severely deformed (punished) Lady Isabel, under the assumed name, Madame Veen. The railway accident, along with her "grief and remorse" (445) altered Isabel so far beyond recognition that not even her children suspected her true identity.

She limps slightly as she walks, and stoops, which takes from her former height. A scar extends from her chin above her mouth, completely changing the character of the lower part of her face; some of her teeth are missing so that she speaks with a lisp, and the sober bands of her gray hair – it is nearly silver – are confined under a large and close cap. (445)

Isabel's deterioration from beautiful to beastly exemplifies the more physical punishment Foucault referred to. Furthermore, this deliberate and delayed punishment carries more emphasis for the Victorian reader – a stronger warning against straying from the accepted behavior for Victorian women. Straying, in fact, from the person that Barbara Hare, now Carlyle, embodies in the novel *East Lynne*. The remainder of the novel emphasizes the vast difference between Barbara and Isabel (even though as a reader, one still has a tendency to empathize with the fallen Isabel) and illustrates the continuous suffering of a fallen woman. Not only did Isabel have to suffer through hiding her true identity from her

own children and the husband she now loved, but she had to watch her rival, Barbara Hare, take over her space, her ‘belongings’ with ease and effortlessness.

Isabel’s jealous eyes were turned on them. She saw Barbara’s passionate, lingering kiss in return, she heard her fervent whispered greeting... Isabel flung her hands over her face. Had she bargained for this? It was part of the cross she had undertaken to carry, and she *must* bear it. (468)

Bear it she did, though not without an undertone of constant whining and self-demoralization. Isabel somehow remained a sympathetic character, due in part to her lingering and somewhat self-inflicted misery.

Before her own death, Isabel was to live through the torture of discovering she left her husband and her happiness based on lies and with a man who had committed murder. She lived through and mourned silently the death of her eldest son. Her presence in the house that was no longer ‘rightfully’ hers was a constant source of pain for Isabel, yet she bore her heavy cross on her severely deformed body that incarcerated her in her lonely and ostracized position/prison. Returning once again to Miller, “if typically, *he* ends up in the prison or its metaphorical equivalents, *she* ends up in the asylum or its metaphorical equivalents” (168). Isabel’s father’s body was ‘arrested’ post-mortem for *his* crimes and Francis Levison was found guilty in a court of law for *his* crime of murder, the penalty for which he was “to be taken back to the place whence [he] came, and thence to the place of execution, and that [he] be there hanged by the neck until [he is] dead” (639). But for all of her crimes, legal or social, Isabel escaped all penalty of law on her body and still ended up in Miller’s “metaphorical equivalent” of an asylum. Isabel’s body was not spared severe punishment and her death was slow and painful for

both body and soul. On her death-bed, confessing to her sometime husband, Isabel was shone mercy. This last minute absolution allowed Isabel to die more peacefully than ever she had lived and in essence pardoned her for her lifetime of sin. Yet, hers was a death far more tragic and emotional than could ever be achieved by any form of corporal punishment.

While Lady Isabel Vane was not publically humiliated inside a courtroom, she was subject to a smaller public confrontation, that of her abandoned husband and family. If as Kenlman argues “part of a transgressive woman’s punishment is public scrutiny” (250), Lady Isabel Vane is not so separated from the reality of women deviants in nineteenth-century society. In the real-life spectacle of the courtroom “the justice system put [a woman’s] body on show [...] [emphasizing] the way an accused murderess wore her hair, the movements she made with her hands, the tint of her complexion, the focus of her eyes, the thickness of her lips, the firmness of her step, [and] the construction of her frame” (250). In her death, Isabelle Vane’s body like her true-to-life counterparts became the topic of discussion for those she left behind:

She was young, gay, active, when she left here, upright as a dart, her dark hair drawn from her open brow and flowing on her neck, her cheeks crimson, her face altogether beautiful. Madame Vine arrived here a pale, stooping woman, lame of one leg, shorter than Lady Isabel Vane – and her figure stuffed out under those sacks of jackets. Not a bit, scarcely, of her forehead to be seen, for grey velvet, and grey bands of hair; her head smothered under a close cap, large blue double spectacles hiding the eyes and their sides, and the throat tied up; the chin partially. The mouth was

entirely altered in its character, and that upward scar, always so conspicuous, made it almost ugly. Then she had lost some of her front teeth, you know, and lisped when she spoke. (686)

Like the newspaper reports of those criminals she mirrored from reality, Isabell Vane's post mortem description focused on the devastating physical effects she had suffered, giving an external and very public signature to the inner deviance that now defined her as an individual. The description of the physical state of Isabel Vane in her final days compares to the sensationalized journalism that focused on the female criminal inside the courtrooms of the nineteenth century where "this form of reporting savors the feminine body, which is about to be ravished by the hangman" (251). Though spared the public humiliation and brutality of the scaffold, no one can argue that Isabel Vane did suffer traumatically for her transgressions.

Despite her weaknesses, even early critics esteemed Isabel as the heroine, or perhaps at least the martyr of Mrs. Wood's acclaimed novel. Even after her 'fall' one reviewer wrote, "Lady Isabel is not made either too bad or too good. We cannot bring ourselves to condemn her very harshly" (714). In reading about punishments given women in Victorian society for committing the same or similar crimes, one might wonder why this reviewer (and many readers otherwise) feel they cannot "condemn her very harshly." Victorian society was still participating, in fact encouraging, the spectacle of feminine crimes and punishments – courtrooms were packed when a woman was on trial, and public executions of women drew enormous crowds. Drawing again on Foucault, Isabel was seen to suffer significantly, and that perhaps a far worse and longer lasting fate than even the death penalty could provide. Yet it was this punishment upon her body, so

significantly different, vitally so, from the men in the novel that might allow readers to feel a kinship to this fallen woman. In her fall Lady Isabel escaped legal ramifications and suffered immensely on a moral scale and in her suffering and death was allowed a semblance of repentance.

CHAPTER 3. ARTFULLY DYSPLAYED: ARTISTIC REPRESENTATIONS AND THE TRANSGRESSIVE BODY

The body - despised, adorned, represented, medicated, ignored, dissected, and desired - is ineradicably entwined in subjectivity. – Pamela Gilbert

In the previous chapter, this project focused on the literary representations of the female transgressive form and how those representations can lend readers significant insight into the reception of women throughout the century. These often-shattered representations of the female form reinforce the nature of the body politic, specifically the social subordination of women as a cultural norm. When transgressing, these bodies felt the full weight the disciplinary practices and politicizing of power the patriarchal nineteenth century levied upon them. This chapter considers representations of the archetypal transgressive woman as they appeared on public display, and with a comparative look at their representations in the art and literature of the century. In looking at specific anatomical representations associated with aspects of transgression, juxtaposed against the domestic, Angel in the House representations of women, this chapter highlights how artistic representations of the century, including works of fiction and paintings, but also including public anatomy displays in museums and traveling exhibits, displaced transgressive women by quite literally, and quite publicly, fracturing their identities and displacing them from the norm.

As early as the late eighteenth century, anatomical models of the female body were being commissioned for public and private medical anatomy study. These wax figures, intricate, pliable and, throughout the nineteenth century, increasingly aligned with the idealized standards of female beauty, provided medical men, and men in the general public, unprecedented access to the female body. Women entered into the public sphere in these ways, through these models, but existed in a space that allowed their bodies, not just mere models of their bodies, to continue to be constrained and restrained. Problematizing the issue further, women's own agency, access and control over their own bodies, remained limited; the Anatomical Venus' as well as other anatomy museums specializing in the female body, women's genitalia, childbirth and venereal disease regularly offered segregated and limited access to women. This space in which the nineteenth-century woman's body existed in this way, a space that situated her body as a point of knowledge, one necessitating control and *honored* by public display, while not affording any of that knowledge, control, or honor to the nineteenth-century woman herself, is the space that this chapter is focused.

In moving forward, it is important for the cohesiveness of this project, that I take the time to define and in some ways, redefine the body, specifically the female body as I am considering it in this chapter. Foucault asserts that the body is at once normalized and resistant and, while I rely heavily on Foucault as I situate the bodies I am discussing in this project inside the Victorian context, I would take this further and suggest that these bodies are only normalized from a shared aberrance and are, in turn, punished for their shared resistance. In *Volatile Bodies*, Elizabeth Grosz notes that in most theoretical, historical and literary conversation, the female body is "represented, even constructed, as

frail, imperfect, unruly, and unreliable [and is] subject to various intrusions which are not under conscious control” (13). Insofar as a patriarchal theorizing has continued to restrain women’s bodies, or conceptualizations of women’s bodies in this fixed mindset, feminist theory has sought to contest those limiting definitions. I will argue that to reach a new feminist understanding of the concept of the body, of the agency that the female body has and is stripped of, we must first re-categorize the ways in which bodies are constructed, rename our understanding of those categories. By simply recognizing “the problem” by suggestion that the female body is marginalized, we are limiting our ability to engage deeply about bodies and their agency. If knowledge is, in part, about regulation, from a Foucauldian perspective, then this chapter seeks to unregulate or deregulate existing knowledge defining women’s bodies; or rather, to reregulate how, in redefining the construction of the female body, that body gains, maintains, or loses its agency – both in the nineteenth century overall, and in the literature of the period.

Here it is important to situate and define the ways in which bodies themselves can be, and are defined; moreover, it is important as well to explicate how this project categorizes bodies. In this part of the project, we will be reading bodies as closely as we read the text; this reading of bodies in this way, I argue, gives greater insight into the authority that the female body in particular possesses and allows us to define the power that the female body has within the century and the literature of the period. Considering this body authority allows us to identify and determine the spaces where the authority of the female body is being subjected, or undermined, or even stripped away. It allows us to identify spaces where female body authority problematizes the situation of the woman in the century overall and illuminates the constant struggle for

power that the female body, and women, undergo. While there are similarities with how we can consider and how we can construct lifeless, docile and marginalized bodies, as well as corpses, there is, I argue, a distinct difference among them. Further, I argue that this distinction, while we are naming it, would not have been lost on the Victorians themselves. After all, Victorians were enthralled with all things relating to death. The use of post-mortem photography, staged scenes of dead women, mothers, infants, and siblings, among their living relatives, provides evidence of this morbid obsession, an obsession that was deeply embedded in a relationship with the body. The bodies were positioned and adorned in ways that accentuate a Victorian preoccupation with death and the dead, but also with the bodies themselves. Understanding this preoccupation allows us an avenue with which to analyze Victorian bodies on the whole. The differences among the types of bodies we can read, specifically in relationship to the female body, is what further situates women inside the 19th century, and, in many cases, inside the fictional narratives popular in the era as well.

It is too simplistic to look at the body of the woman in the nineteenth century and singularly categorize it. Instead it is important to individuate the ways in which women's bodies are conceived, perceived and received. The ways in which Foucault, Grosz and Butler discuss and analyze the body remain too broad so I have provided definitions that allow one to, through this project, read the bodies more individually. Further, these definitions allow us to consider how each definition helps tease out the circumscription of the understanding, belief and misappropriation of the female body as exemplified throughout the nineteenth century. We must look at the body, particularly the female body, as a significant component in understanding societal status for women, or, more

specifically, how women were assiduously relegated and delegated to particular spaces within society. Defining the bodies more specifically allows us to understand why some women, why some bodies, were designated to their particular spaces, and why other female bodies were left out of even those uber-regulated spaces all together. Pamela Gilbert aptly notes in *Disease, Desire and The Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* that “the body [has been] despised, adorned, represented, medicated, ignored, dissected, and desired [and] is ineradicably entwined in subjectivity” (15). It is precisely these acts upon the body that require us to define “the body” more specifically.

In many ways we have to start this new analysis by looking at the docile body for it is, perhaps, at the heart of understanding the placement and displacement of the female body inside the wider century. There are myriad examples of the docile body in the fiction of the Victorian era; one that stands out is Marian Holcomb from Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*. Foucault's definition of docile body in *Discipline and Punish* truly resonates for this part of the work in understanding the bodies of women, like Holcomb, as he states, docile bodies are “ones that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (136). Holcomb's fierce independence is consistently challenged by Count Fosco, who wishes nothing more than to control her. The docile body, like the marginalized body referenced in more detail below, is a prevalent trope in relation to nineteenth-century women and Collins' description and treatment of Marian Holcomb accentuates this trope. The docile body is the construction of the body that stands in the way of women's equality, a body that they have to overcome to gain back agency but also one that contains a vast amount of power, even when it is being suppressed. The docile body has to undergo or suffer “improvements” or is being regulated. Despite this, the

docile body has agency, she exists in spaces where she continuously attempts to make her own choices, choose paths of independence and exert her will. Yet the docile body is one whose agency, free will and independence, is constantly being undermined or taken advantage of. The fact that the docile body HAS agency, however, is the thing that makes it most a threat. In fact, I would argue, all women's bodies are struggling to avoid, escape and resist being made docile. And this struggle, this active resistance, is what allows them to maintain their agency and establishes them as a threat. Here I agree and align a definition of docile body alongside that of Elizabeth Grosz who notes that “[t]he body is not simply a sign to be read, a symptom to be deciphered, but also a force to be reckoned with” (120). These docile nineteenth-century bodies, like that of Marian Holcomb, are made docile by the appropriation of their agency, but consistently and conscientiously object and resist the oppression and their struggle is what provides them their power. For Marian Holcomb, for example, this resistance exists on both the physical and intellectual levels. Her appearance, distinctly noted as masculine and unattractive, separates her from other women and her intellect and strong will, continue this separation further. Yet she continues to be relegated to this docile space, having her agency as detective undermined by Walter Hartright, and her status as a woman, and a threat, exploited by Count Fosco. One of the departures from both Grosz and Foucault’s definitions here that is important to include is that the docile body is more than a body acted upon or one that has some future potential for force. Instead, the docile body as I argue it here is a body that is acting out, acting against the constraints constantly levied against it. It is this active resistance, not the potential for resistance, that is a most compelling difference. It is that in the moments of constant struggle, this is a body that confronts its own definition and rejects it.

A specific subset of the docile body is the lifeless body. While the docile body includes characters such as Marian Holcomb who maintains some agency in her fight to secure it fully, the lifeless body is limited to those characters who are stripped of their power and agency and left completely at the disposal and power of men. Lady Audley from Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* becomes an example of the lifeless body in fiction. A lifeless body, for our purposes here, is a body that most closely resembles what Grosz defines as “a body of femininity with corporeality in effect [that] leaves men free to inhabit what they (falsely) believe is a purely conceptual order while at the same time enabling them to satisfy their (sometimes disavowed) need for corporeal contact through their access to women's bodies and services” (14). Lady Lucy Audley, formerly Helen Talboys, is a lifeless body, more than once throughout Braddon's novel. She first transitions into the lifeless body when she gives up her true identity, abandons her child, and “marries up”, all transgressions she 'must' be held accountable for within nineteenth-century standards. Her second transition into a lifeless body comes when she is finally held accountable for those actions, as well as the attempted murder of her former husband. Despite the fact that her former husband does not die, Lady Audley's body transitions to the definition of lifeless body again as she is ripped of both lives, of her authority over her sanity, and over her freedom. Lady Audley's lifeless body is locked away to die in an insane asylum, under the observation of a male doctor who admits that she is not insane, but dangerous nonetheless.

...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 a 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. (370)

And yet after alluding to her first husband's mysterious disappearance the doctor spends 10 minutes alone with Lady Audley coming back to report that "we understand each other very well. There is latent insanity!" (372) and Lady Audley is committed to the asylum. It is the lifeless body like that of Lady Audley which male physicians would like to think they are acting upon and the version of the female form that is most laid bare for public consumption. While considering the lifeless body, it is important to recognize the distinction between the violators and the violated. The men who are dissecting women's bodies, even for scientific endeavors, and the observers who visually dissect the female body in the public anatomy museums of the century, equally feel entitled to this knowledge, this experience. The violators hold all the agency and with each dissection, literal or figurative, continue to strip away the agency of the female body because, for all intents and purposes, these bodies have been violated their whole existences anyway, a feeling which allows the current violators a sense of entitlement. It is obvious that no one in the century is explicitly suggesting this, but the intentionality is there without the explicitness – what is the problem with continuing a physical dissection upon bodies that have already been manipulated and dissected. However, much like the shift that occurred in the nineteenth century from the use of the midwife to the male doctor was a shift that

stripped away the⁵ agency of the woman of the nineteenth century to take care of, provide care for, their own/each others' bodies, the violators against the lifeless body continue to strip the agency of the female body away and isolate the lifeless body under the prevue and control of the male gaze.

One of the most profound visual examples of this comes from the 1864 chalk drawing by J.H. Hasselhorst showing four male physicians in the process of dissecting a beautiful woman, whose lifeless body lays bare on the dissection table under an almost



Figure 2: Engraving, after a chalk drawing by J. H. Hasselhorst, 1864

angelic beam of light. Despite the angelic depiction as seen in Hasslehorst's work, the act of dissection was an act of violation, and those who are violating the lifeless body in these ways are, in essence, performing acts of punishment and oppression on the bodies, wherein the bodies are becoming a site of

résistance to be subdued and overcome. The oppression of the body, and the punishment on the body, comes from the visceral nature of the act of dissection. Bodies in dissection are not neat and orderly, angelic even, as Hasslhorst's sketch would suggest. They are sites of violence, of dehumanizing penetration and displaying bodies without displaying this violence places these bodies in parallel with the grotesque and suggests there is more at stake than mere scientific

⁵ This is not to suggest that women were completely relegated out of the field of medicine, as that is not the case. In Europe and even in America, women were still being trained in the medical fields, particularly as nurses. Their roles as midwives, those in charge of the birth process, did, however, become more limited as male physicians began taking on this role. Women being trained in anatomy and physiology, including that of dissection, were trained in all-women's facilities.

discovery. Instead, these bodies are places, they become spaces, for the male gaze to take root, to become tangible, and to conquer or suppress the violent response of the body being carved open. This then becomes the only way for men to gain knowledge and access to, and to overcome their own lack of knowledge of, a woman's body. In these ways, and with Braddon's heroine Lady Audley in mind, the lifeless body becomes a Victorian fictional heroine, and a representative of the female body who has lost the agency it may have possessed as a docile body.

Another way in which women's bodies can be defined is through that of the corpse. The state that moves a body into that of a corpse is more than just death itself, but is the movement into abandonment, where no one is left willing to lay any claims to the individual person, let alone her body. A corpse, in short, is a dead body that has lost agency upon death. It has lost claims on life and the living have no longer claimed it, either because it has fallen so far into transgression prior to death that it has been disavowed by any living relatives, has been forgotten about or, like the lifeless body of Lady Audley, has been relegated to an isolating silence. It has become a commodity whose only use is utilitarian. Hetty Sorrel of *Adam Bede* finally loses her own agency in death, though her lighter sentence of transportation, significantly less punitive than others who are convicted of child murder, allows her to maintain this agency longer than other women in her situation would have. In the end, however, Hetty Sorrel still dies alone and in a 'foreign land', having no claim left on her native land and nobody left to lay claim to her upon her death. Hetty's physical transit from one country to another literally leaves her body in a perpetual state of homelessness.

The most prolific of our bodies is the marginalized body, a body whose agency, whose performance, whose identity formation, and even whose restraint we do not see - it is the body that lacks visibility, that has been erased. The marginalized body, through its erasure, is robbed of a story, of its own narrative, thereby depriving it of becoming a site of empathy, the way a developed character can. Lady Isabel Carlyle in Ellen Wood's novel *East Lynne* exemplifies nearly every definition of a marginalized body in this way, as her true identity is most nearly erased from the narrative. In that regard, the corpse, the lifeless body, and the docile body all can also be dually and more broadly categorized as marginalized bodies. However, as a point of departure, for example, where the docile body is complicit in its own oppression, the marginalized bodies are not. Despite this difference, each of these bodies are marginalized in their own ways, as these bodies can all be set aside, trod on, overlooked and disrupted, and exist or occur outside the primary production of identity within a narrative, fictional or otherwise.

Finally, the diseased body becomes for the nineteenth century an outward projection and physical manifestation of the internally diseased, fallen, less visible marginalized body. The diseased body is the marginalized body embodied physically. As Gilbert outlines in *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels*, both the prostituted body and the diseased body are a contagion, making them bodies that are marked, "watched and regulated" (42) in ways that make it a visible casualty of the gaze, specifically, Gilbert notes, when they are locked away. In many ways, Lady Dedlock of Dickens's *Bleak House* can be read as a diseased body, in that the reader finds she has given birth out of wedlock, is truly vilified for this action and spends

much of her time in the novel trying to outmaneuver the truth, further displacing her from the noble actions of the heroines of other novels.

Without these definitions, we cannot look at the unique conditions in which women's bodies are displayed - in public or on the page - and clearly understand what that body represents. Without these definitions, we cannot dissect our understanding of the body to look at it as part of a whole, or to look at parts of the body as parts of a whole - in other words, without these definitions, we cannot look at the female body or at the "bits and pieces" of the female body and antithesize what parts of the body are constructions of social position or even characterizations of lack, of impulses, or of desires; without these definitions the female body cannot represent any of these. With these definitions, we can understand how the female body comes to represent *all of these* inside a century where the allure of the female body, and female sexuality, was complex. A century, where access to the female body, in physical, sexual, and psychological ways (i.e. ways of seeing, feeling, understanding the body), for both men and women, was limited, where belief and commentary on the propriety of behavior connected with the female body was prolific. Essentially, though so few people outside of the woman herself had full access to the female body, the century is rife with rules of decorum, display, and behavior prescribed specifically to, for, and on the female body. The sexualization and the socialization connected to the female body in its various forms allows us to analyze the presentation of the female body in two distinct and connected spaces prevalent in the nineteenth century: in medical dissections and in public anatomy museums.

In 1832 British Parliament enacted the Anatomy Act in an effort to thwart an increase in illegal trafficking of corpses. Parliament's new "Anatomy Act of 1832" allowed medical students, physicians and, teachers to access bodies for dissection more readily by providing more avenues for people to donate their bodies after death, thereby providing more access for medical schools and students to legal opportunities to study anatomy and physiology vis-à-vis dissection. While concerns of a shortage of bodies for study still existed, prior to this act, the only bodies allowed for dissection in study were those of executed criminals. These options were not plentiful enough to support the growing interest and study of the human body and did not curb the trade, or sale, of stolen and unclaimed corpses, which found their way to the dissection table by "chance" not through any legal channels. The increase in medicine and anatomical research over the century, coupled with an increase in private anatomy colleges, resulted in an increased need for an underground, lucrative and illegal, trade in dead bodies.

In one of the most well known scandals of the sort, surgeon Dr. Robert Knox was found to have used corpses of individuals murdered by two Scotsmen, William Hare and William Burke for his own dissections and teachings. While Knox was never found guilty of knowingly accepting the bodies of individuals murdered only to be sold into scientific research, his anatomy laboratory did profit from these murders. Burke and Hare murdered at least 16 individuals in 1828, selling them to a variety of medical persons before getting caught. The general public watched these cases with scrutiny and with a great deal of fear; the knowledge that one's body was not safe after death - and more so that one could be murdered in the name of science, exaggerated the public's fears of "body snatching." As late as 1863, the public interest and concern remained heightened. Publications such

as *Once a Week, An Illustrated Miscelany of Literature, Art, Science and Popular Information* ran the story of London's very own Burke and Hare case, titled “Body Snatching and Burking” and outlined the practice of body snatchers, naming the thief's “Burkers.” The article offered an overview of the practice of “burking”, while also highlighting one of London's own cases of “Resurrection Men,” the Bishops, Williams and May case, in which body snatchers offered up the body of a young boy to those willing to pay the high fee.

Let the reader picture, if he can, the excitement that accompanied the disclosure of this second affair. Parents whose children were missing came weeping before the magistrates, fearing that of their dearest treasures “subjects” had also been made, to be sold at “per inch.” (*Illustrated Miscelany* 266)

While the scandal, outrage and fear that surrounded the “institution” of burking (266) was steadily increasing, Parliament had not resolved to step in. The original infamous case of William Hare and William Burke, however, and their murder and subsequent sale of Mary Paterson’s corpse, was scandalous in that it most notably implicated a direct connection with a working physician, not just a



Figure 3: Burke and Hare, 1921

nebulous network of underground resurrection men. When Dr. Knox acquired Paterson’s corpse, he was so enthralled with her that he preserved her body in whisky for several months prior to actually dissecting her and, in that time, invited artists and sculptors in to

re-create her likeness. Paterson, who was a part-time prostitute and part-time, temporary resident of Magdalen Asylum, a place known for housing women not yet fully ensconced in the criminal lifestyle, ended up in Dr. Knox's lab mere hours after she was murdered by Hare and Burke. Paterson and women like her were easy prey for the body snatching Hare and Burke; as women who had fallen beyond the scope of acceptable nineteenth-century living, living on the streets and surviving often by way of prostitution, they were, as yet, invisible. Their escapades had them living licentiously, but under the radar of the law while simultaneously off the radar of their families who had written them off as lost souls, among the other fallen angels. A not uncommon fear among people of the century, even those who had not fallen into despair, was that their bodies could be displayed or physically dissected upon their death. This fear was propagated by reports of burking surrounding cases like that of Dr. Knox and exacerbated by an equally intense fear that any person could fall victim to murder for the sole purpose of having their bodies later sold for dissection or display.

While the public outrage was intense and, in some ways led to the eventual discrediting of Dr. Knox himself, it is the treatment of Mary Paterson's body that best begins our conversation. Dr. Knox's adoration of her corpse, this extended preservation of her body, and his decision to bring in artists to capture her likeness, call attention to the specifically gendered relationship between bodies, knowledge, power, and the erotic that are of most interest to this argument. The Criminal Broadside of London shared the details of the trials and executions of those found guilty of burking, further fanning the flames of fear among the general public. In a century preoccupied with decorum and propriety, where women were isolated to the private sphere, the dissection

of the female body, and showcasing of the female form in these ways, provided a sexual, sometimes perverse response, one disconcerting for the stalwarts of traditional nineteenth-century conventions.

Not all physicians were elated with the use of the use of bodies in anatomical studies, even for medical purposes. AW Bates relates in his article “Indecent and Demoralising Representations: Public Anatomy Museums in Mid-Victorian England” that one physician suggested that the use of human dissection “unsettled men's minds” (Bates 2008), adding that anatomy was a “beautiful but seductive science.” The public distaste and distrust of anatomy as a field of scientific study and connected to the practice of dissection, was pervasive and, after the passage of the Public Anatomy Act, which did not necessarily impact the accessibility to bodies for dissection, the medical community began turning their attention towards anatomical models.

In their own way, public anatomy museums helped fuel this exhibitionist response to the female body. This male-dominated focus on the body, particularly on the female body, as a segway to scientific exploration and knowledge, cannot be examined outside of the context of Foucault or contemporary feminist theorists who, like Margaret McLaren in *Feminism, Foucault and Embodied Subjectivity* continue to situate the body as the “source of knowledge [and] site of resistance” (81), and without attributing the power structures that belie the nineteenth-century medical or scientific search for answers at the expense of the lifeless female body. The power, figuratively and literally operated upon the bodies of victims of medical corpse scandals, as well as simply those who were 'donated' after being put to death for their crimes, prolonged the experience of death indefinitely; bodies dissected in both public and private anatomy schools were not given

proper burials after the dissection process but often wound up in museums or part of displays for future study. In the case of those who were sentenced to death for their crimes, the punishment of death by dissection was considered, as Ruth Richardson notes in *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, a punishment worse than even the gibbet.⁶

While necessary to study the female body displayed in the public anatomy museums, it is equally important to consider the female dissected body, because the power perpetrated against women's bodies during these post mortems is commensurate to a form of disciplinary power. Like the criminal male whose bodies were 'donated' to these scientific endeavors, the bodies of women who fell into prostitution or died in the madhouse did not have anyone readily available, or willing, to claim their bodies upon their deaths. These female bodies were lifeless long before they became corpses, their agency removed as they were relegated to the periphery of societal normalization, their bodies left unprotected, unhallowed, bodies that had been deemed wicked and sinful and open for desecration, dissection and elimination. During a post mortem, the body is physically maneuvered is adjusted and displayed, to appropriately respond – to be open to – the process of dissection at the hands of a man. While women not readily conforming to the Angel in the House model existed inside bodies that were expendable, according to nineteenth-century society, the lifestyle of prostitution and institutionalization – public displays and medical prodding – prepared the *bodies* of these living women to be

⁶ Gibbeting was a mid-18th century practice often offered as a punishment, secondary to dissection, for the crime of murder. Richardson describes gibbeting in chains this way: "Hanging in chains was consciously designed as a grim fate. The corpse of the victim was treated with tar, enclosed in an iron framework, and suspended from a gibbet - either at the scene of the crime, or at some prominent site in the vicinity. The body would of course decay over time; birds would tear the flesh, pieces would fall to the ground. The gibbet with its creaking human-scarecrow corpse occupied an important place in popular imaginative apprehension of 'justice' and judicial retribution (36).

displayed and manipulated, later, as corpses. The oppressive dissection occurring throughout the lives of these women, while living, becomes explicit after death, in the treatment of their corpses when death removes the necessity for privacy. However, for these women public dissection, the process of observation, scrutiny, and even judgment began while still alive. These women's' transgressions catapult them into a space that, while living, they are examined with disgust and labeled destitute, relegating to the margins in ways that proffer judgment without understanding, support, forgiveness or a way out. In death, their bodies are treated with this same disregard, and this constant and physical scrutiny, that exists as the normed response against their bodies while living and dead, was the exception for those existing inside the sphere of acceptable behavior.

The institutions where women died continued this disregard and disrespect upon death. According to Helen MacDonald's *Possessing the Dead*, these bodies often underwent multiple dissections – violent post-mortems prior to their bodies being delivered for a secondary post-mortem, dissection for medical study or display. One university medical teacher, William Mackenzie, kept meticulous notes of the state of the bodies as they entered his laboratory where “more than a third of the corpses that arrived...had already been opened” (24). In his notes Mackenzie articulates his “disapproval for these mutilated remains” (24), though not because he found the mutilations deplorable on a moral level. He, himself, kept corpses longer than the intended six weeks for study, at times half a year longer than the law allowed. Instead, these bodies coming to him already dissected alleviated his ability to do the full dissections himself. Regardless, his notes suggest the level of disregard that he and other medical students and professionals held for the bodies of the dead who were destitute and

forgotten. Mackenzie catalogues such findings as that of 25-year-old Margaret Stewart's, a patient in an infirmary, noting that her body was "cut to pieces" and that of Martha Bain, also an infirmary patient who had "her skull, the bones of her face and her viscera removed, leaving her corpse also much mutilated" (24). These bodies, existing only within the undercurrents of established, accepted, societal norms, underwent a sort of violent sort of vivisection; and if their bodies were already violated in this way, while living, the violation post mortem becomes less invasive. In *Volatile Bodies*, Grosz provides a context with which we can read this death-life continuum in the treatment of the female body. She notes that "the body is commonly considered a signifying medium, a vehicle of expression, a mode of rendering public and communicable what is essentially private" (9). The act of dissection upon the living bodies of transgressive women manifests in their displacement in society. Their use in anatomy schools and public anatomy museums makes their violation of society public merely by being on display; the public anatomy laws allowed for medical dissection and display of only those bodies who remained unclaimed. This essentially protected everyone who was not, while living, marginalized, forgotten or, in essence, transgressing in life. If a woman was on display, it was because, unclaimed and unwanted, the law did not protect her – she was equally unprotected in death as she had been in life. Further, it was this display then, that allows those who are manipulating or observing her body to overlook their own violations of the body⁷.

⁷ The Hottentot Venus as a persona, and Sara Baartman specifically, represents for us, just as readily as she did for readers in the 19th century, the lifelessness and loss of agency of the transgressive, marginalized bodies of women. Clifton Crais and Pamela Scully's extensive work *Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus, a Ghost Story and a Biography* references nineteenth-century European laws enacted to "control the biological deviance of prostitutes and their Hottentot sexuality" (3) while also reminding readers that

This othered-ness that made them expendable to the public sphere and allowed them to exist as an instrument for patriarchal oppression, also eliminated their access to protection from within the private sphere, a sphere continuously rejecting them for their transgressions. The rejection, this lack of protection, created the avenue by which their bodies fell to the medical profession, a profession that, while public and open for men, continued to be limiting and constraining in ways in which female bodies were accustomed. Inside this space, female bodies were utilized to produce new forms of knowledge for the burgeoning male physicians, limiting access further than even the public anatomy museums had done. The ways that these women's bodies were regulated after death mirrored the ways in which their bodies were regulated in life. The transgressive female body was left open and exposed while simultaneously surveilled. This type of regulation allowed a patriarchally-focused gaze to deconstruct the very spaces that the female body occupied. In doing so, the female body becomes an explicit site for a struggle that is both political and social in nature, problematizing the correlation between the female bodies agency and the desire of the nineteenth century to control the transgressing female body.

In the late eighteenth century and throughout the early nineteenth, this public interest in human anatomy soared to levels not seen before and laid the groundwork for the murder, theft and sale of corpses, as well as an increase in models of the human

physicians regularly "excised women's genitals to make them less pronounced" (3), presumably to curb sexual deviance and other maladies connected to the 'feminine physique'. Sara Baartman's display as a freak-show commodity exemplifies the ways in which the female body could lose agency and become lifeless before a woman was even dead. Baartman's display also, I would argue, illustrates the ways in which a woman's agency was a threat and how that threat was continuously attempted to be subdued, subjected to relegated spaces, confinement and ridicule.

body for display or dissection. The culmination of this insatiable interest, however, arose with the birth of the Anatomical Venus. In the 19th century, the Anatomical Venus, along with her male counterpart, the Anatomical Adonis, provided opportunities to dissect the female body by medical students and teachers, but also in traveling shows, by the general public. The Anatomical Venus sculptors included removable breast plates, which allowed observers to get a close and in color look at the internal anatomy of a woman, including the sexual organs; the organs inside were very often represented in vibrant color and were, to the distaste of Victorian sensibilities, removable. The naked female body displayed in any capacity, whether as a nude in the Royal Academy or as part of a public or private scientific-educational exhibit, performed as an outlet for the repressed sexuality of the century, the nature of which was not lost on the most austere Victorians. When the Bishop of Carlisle visited a gallery showing nude representations of women, Ronald Pearsall notes, in *The Worm in the Bud*, that he remarked “for a living artist to exhibit a life-size life-like almost photographic representation of a beautiful naked woman strikes my inartistic mind as somewhat if not very mischievous” (Pearsall 105) and when female nudes were modeling for artists, they could only do so in front of artists that were married. This prudish sensitivity toward the female body changed little when the body was that of a dead woman or a model. Oliver Wendell Holmes discusses the use of bodies in the study of anatomy in his *Medical Essays*, from a lecture in 1857 noting that one must eventually leave the books in the study of the body and turn instead to the physical models “in which lovely ladies display their viscera with a coquettish grace implying that it is rather a pleasure than otherwise to show the lace-like omentum, and hold up their appendices epiploicae as if they were saying 'these are our jewels'” (Holmes 279).

Michael Sappol argues in *A Traffic of Dead Bodies* that “the dissection of beautiful young women constituted a small erotic subgenre” (87) in the world of anatomical study, which would include illustrations, deceased women and, I would argue, the anatomical models used when the procuring of a real body became too dangerous, too difficult or too illegal.

In many ways the anatomical models were no different than the bodies of real, but dead, women. The faces and body of the Anatomical Venus was also often accompanied by real or incredibly life-like hair, an idealized female body, and beautiful facial features. I would align this shift with Foucault’s assertions that the body is at once normalized and resistant; in these cases, the choice of the medical community to turn to physical and pliable models illustrates most significantly the creation of the docile body. The sensual and placid expression typically displayed on the faces of the Anatomical Venus, most closely mirrored the exquisite, relaxed beauty of many of the models in nineteenth-century art. These representations created an incongruous experience for the observer: an eviscerated human body gruesome in nature, but beautiful and beautifully still; at once scandalous and pleasing.



Figure 4: “Josephinum Museum”
of the Medical of Vienna, Austria.
Late 18th century



Figure 5: Lady Lilith, Dante
Gabriel Rossetti, 1866-1868

The Anatomical Venus was often captured in her stillness, beautifully flowing hair lavishly adorning her shoulders, intricately braided, and with delicate strings of pearls around her bare neck. The models, like their male counterparts, allowed for portions of the torso to be removed, dissected, down several layers, to allow observation of the internal organs. For the female models, this often times included access to the uterus and an unborn fetus. In an uncanny but certainly not an unintentional way, many of the Anatomical Venus models resembled the artistic representations of women found popularly in the works of the Pre Raphaelite artists.

The Anatomical Venus does not merely represent or resemble the idealized, artistic representations of women captured by the Pre Raphaelites. The ways in which her body is displayed, and the ways in which the general public is preoccupied with her body and its display, directly connects to the ways in which the nineteenth-century public was preoccupied with the transgressive woman, her body, and the constraint, punishment and repression of her body. The regulation and consequent silencing of women whose bodies and behaviors did not fit into the accepted standards for Victorian femininity (slim figures, corsets, demure behavior) are flaunted through the use of the Anatomical Venus, which purposefully, intentionally and deliberately illustrated diseases, often sexual in nature, of the female genitalia and organs, serving as a beacon of warning against transgressive behavior. These bodies are inextricably linked to an overarching sentiment aimed at controlling women as objects of male pleasure and curiosity. The Anatomical Venus exists as the quintessential model of female bodily anatomy for this purpose, but not before that body has become a docile body, having already been subjected to the violations of the transgressive body whose actions are always already sanctioned, to the

marginalized body which cannot speak its story, to the lifeless body, which is stripped of all agency, and to the corpse which can neither act nor be protected. Only then is the anatomical model, which can be subjected to the same violations as the corpse, again reinscribed to the limits of the docile body.

If as Foucault suggests, social norms often operate on the body, the very physical display and dissection of the Anatomical Venus, I would argue, illustrates the nineteenth-century preoccupation, distrust, infatuation and, desire surrounding women, one that sexualized and scandalized the female body in ways that distorted who women were and how they were allowed to be perceived. Quite literally the Anatomical Venus, as the idealized version of the nineteenth-century woman (in form, in health, in accessibility) was deconstructed, dissected, displayed for all the world to see. Ironically, the Anatomical Venus brought women into the public sphere in ways in which their real female counterparts never could have imagined, showcasing their sensuousness, and their sexuality in plain view. However, creating this space also allowed for a literal and figurative public dissection of women, ostensibly reinforcing the limits placed upon them in nineteenth-century life. Museums faced scrutiny for displaying female reproductive and sexual anatomy and responded, either by removing the female body parts from the exhibit, or by excluding women from entering the exhibits at all. Secreting the examples of female reproduction and disease out of public sight embodied the ways in which the nineteenth century limited women - in their dress, in their modes of public employment, in their sexuality, and in their roles outside of the home. By simply hiding women away, in the private sphere, whole aspects of their lives - their identities - remained invisible. Preventing women from entering an exhibit that illustrated the realities of their own

bodies further reinforced the nineteenth-century attitude suggesting women do not possess agency of their own bodies.

While the Anatomical Venus presents one space where men gain unprecedented access to the female body, another aspect of this access was occurring in the nineteenth century in the form of medical dissections. A corpse has, in the strictest sense of the word, no legal standing. While the laws relating to corpses have been ambiguous for centuries, there have been regulations in place to protect bodies when it comes to their disposal and to crimes committed against a corpse. Essentially, however, once a person dies, unless their family provides an alternative, their bodies are no longer so much considered individual with the liberties afforded to them, but garbage, or, in some cases and for some families, as property. Despite this, and even as recently as this last decade, an individual's own personal wishes for what happens to their corpse after their death can be overturned or disregarded. A corpse has no rights, and when that corpse also has no other living person to fight for it, death means that the deceased body loses any control they had over their body in life. It is essential for us to recognize here that transgressive women, including the fallen woman, the prostitute, living and dead, are bodies that for all intents and purposes, fall into this definition of corpse. These women, these bodies, have no rights. Essentially, in order for a body to retain its rights after death and not become a "corpse" or a commodity, it needs someone to claim it - and to *know* they had to claim it. For many transgressive women, and prostitutes in general, family members lose touch, there are no relatives or friends left to know they have died or that would care to claim the body. Therefore, the body becomes a corpse and in the property of whatever institution obtained it upon death - including insane asylums, which is where many

transgressive women and prostitutes ended up. Further, while these bodies may have entered with an identity that would allow them to be claimed, being put in the asylum was the first step in marginalizing them, disconnecting them from their families, loved ones who could lay claim.

For women, who lacked true choice in life in the nineteenth century to begin with, choices and decisions on what could occur or should occur to their corpse after their death was, as in their life, almost solely up to the men to whom they belonged – their fathers, their husbands or their nearest male relative. The legalities of what can be or cannot be done to, with, and on the female corpse becomes a complex web of ethical and legal manipulations, none of which have anything to do with the rights and agency of the woman herself. When a woman's body, therefore is sold, smuggled, dug up or dissected, it reinforces the credence of dominance that exists in a patriarchal society. When a woman dies, her corpse no longer serves the functional purpose of procreation and male-satisfaction and, therefore, loses its utilitarian usefulness. In this loss, then, the dissection of the body does not stand as a violation under the rules of patriarchal oppression; losing purpose in death forfeits the rights of the female body. Elizabeth Grosz contextualizes our understanding of the corporeality of the female body in *Volatile Bodies*, by suggesting that “[p]atriarchal oppression...justifies itself, at least in part, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body and, through this identification, restricting women's social and economic roles to (pseudo) biological terms” (14). She notes further that “this coding of femininity with corporeality...enables men to satisfy their (sometimes disavowed need for corporeal contact through their access to women's bodies and services” (14). This active misogyny that Grosz so explicitly identifies illustrates the

critical nature of the violation of medical men enacting dissection, even for scientific study, on the bodies of women. I would argue, further, that these acts are not uncomplicated when the dissections are reserved for anatomical models such as the Anatomical Venus; men are not only complicit in the violation of the agency of the female body when they dissect on a physical human corpse. For male medical students and doctors, dissection, whether on a model or anatomical model, becomes a means of dominating the body. In the nineteenth century, inside the scope of modest decorum and acceptable behavior, even “good men” did not have intimate access to a woman’s body in this way, at least certainly not publically. In contrast, the public anatomy museums and the opportunities for public dissections inside an educational setting provided almost exclusively to men, provided men an intimacy, awareness and proximity to the female body that is more invasive than they would have been able to access through typical sexual encounters.

A Lacanian perspective provides another alternative lens with which to view man’s violation of the female body in these nineteenth-century situations, including medical dissections, anatomical models and exhibition of female bodies and body parts in public anatomy museums. Elizabeth Grosz analyzes for us in *Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* that in most instances “vision performs a distancing function, leaving the looker un-implicated in or uncontaminated by its object” where alternatively, the other senses more typically provide a direct connection, tactile and explicit, between the subject and the object (38), this is not the case in the aforementioned *dysplays* of the female body. Instead, in these situations, vision becomes the avenue to which men gain physical access and knowledge of the body; as the woman is dead, or she is a mere shell

of a body, the phallogocentric recognition necessary to provide men their dominant social structure, the one that castrates women, is circumvented by the power of the man's gaze over the lifeless female body. In this relationship, the phallic ocularcentrism that exists becomes man's very first step toward dominance over women, where he can freely utilize the privilege of his male body. In this incapacitating capacity, women's bodies were looked at, used and constructed; the female body has become utilitarian for men for a second time. The phallogocentric gaze, physically penetrating the lifeless and/or lifelike bodies of the woman. It is nearly impossible to dissociate the ways in which men were acting and enacting on the bodies of women in public anatomy museums, from the sexual act of necrophilia; the difference, I would argue, between the two is that while one may be construed as rape, the other is done in the name of scientific discovery. Ronald Pearsall, in *The Worm and the Bud*, provides us one way of recognizing the utility of women in the century, suggesting as he does that "if anything went wrong with the delicate mechanism of reproduction [women] were left to the mercy of a profession that dragged its feet - the medical." (203). This same profession which lacked the adequate understanding of, or even patience for determining the realities of the female reproductive system⁸, was, a second time around in the public anatomy museums, showcasing these bodies as their property, as their knowledge. This is a way in which men continued to wield their phallogocentric knowledge over the bodies of women⁹, and

⁸ Doctors in the mid-1800s still considered Hippocrates' working hypothesis of the uterus to be, if not accurate, at the very least, not warranting a reversal or alternative understanding. That working hypothesis, according to Pearsall, notes "The uterus greatly resembles an animal. It moves itself to various parts of the body, sometimes upwards in the throat, then to the sides, causing oppression in the lungs, the heart, the diaphragm, the liver, and the intestines" (203).

⁹ One of the most disturbing images illustrating male dominance over female reproductive bodies comes from a life-size wax model of a caesarean section, as noted in Figure 6. This image, shows one hand with a

the way in which they continued to castrate the woman's body - tearing from women any claim they had over their own bodies.

The response to public anatomy museums and who had access to what was inside illustrates for us how and who in the Victorian public participated in the visual, sexual gratification of seeing women's bodies on display. In several instances, the public anatomy museums opened up to the public at large only to be chastised for allowing a population of women to observe what had previously been reserved for men. These museums succumbed to the public outcry and scrutiny and removed displays of women in pregnancy, women's internal sexual organs, and women's venereal diseases. Critics of this move argued that women should be allowed to have access to what was ultimately an education of what was occurring in their bodies. Those voices were not strong enough to outweigh the desire of the anatomy museums to remain open and so, women who were living were displaced from seeing their displaced female counterparts.

This connection between transgressive women in fiction and in the larger scope of the nineteenth century exists because the body of the woman existed in a sexual and social liminal space. This transitional space can be read in texts and characters like Harriet in Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* who through her journey in the text occupies each of the bodily spaces discussed in this chapter. Harriet Brandt, traveling unaccompanied by any men at the ripe age of 21 and fresh out of a convent school, illustrates to the century all of the dangers of women given such freedoms. Readers are

scaple cutting into the body of a woman while three other male hands grope toward her open uterus, almost looking as if they are crawling toward the opening of the womb. More alarming are three details: the facial expression on the wax Anatomical Venus conjures up images of pain or discomfort, eyes wide open and mouth agape, she is adorned in a pristine white gown reminiscent of a bridal gown, down to the lace fringe, and her ankles are bound together by a knot of cloth (Ebenstein 151).

soon made aware of an even more subversive and dangerous side to Ms. Brandt, one that positions her as a physical and mental threat to everyone with whom she comes in contact. Her entrance into the novel as a “remarkable looking girl – more remarkable



Figure 6

perhaps than beautiful” (4) sets the tone for readers to imagine an exotic and enticing young woman whose addictive allure mysteriously draws everyone closer to her, but puts them in danger at the same time. Harriet is defined by her looks, but also by her appetite. On this first introduction hers is an appetite that seems as insatiable as the unyielding interest others have in her. From the outset, she becomes the proper foil to Angel in the House representative female counterpart, Miss Leyton.

Miss Leyton thought she had never seen any young person devour her food with so much avidity and enjoyment. She could not help watching her. The Baroness Gobelli, who was a very coarse feeder, scattering her food all over her plate and not infrequently over the tablecloth as well, was nothing compared to the young stranger. It was not so much that she ate rapidly and with evident appetite, but that she kept her eyes fixed upon her food as if she feared some one might deprive her of it. As soon as her plate was empty she called sharply to the waiter in French and ordered him to get her some more. (4)

In the schema of the nineteenth century, Harriet Brandt represents several complexities. She is at once the o/Other and the impotent. As the performative and sexual object in the text, she is on display and this display provides her enough agency to move her into the space of the docile body. At each turn in the text, however, individuals, particularly men, attempt to rip this agency from her. The other women in the novel are drawn to her, both in sexual and contemptuous perversion; they at once love her, are intoxicated by her, and loath and are disturbed by her. Margaret Pullen’s reflection after intentional and intense study of Miss Brandt captures this juxtaposition of response best:

They [her eyes] were beautiful in shape and colour, but they did not look like the eyes of a young girl. they were deeply, impenetrably black - with large pellucid pupils, but there was no sparkle nor brightness in them, though they were underlaid by smouldering fires which might burst forth into flame at any moment, and which seemed to stir and kindle and then go out again when she spoke of anything that interested her. There was an attraction about the girl which Mrs. Pullen acknowledged without wishing to give in to. She could not keep her eyes off her! She seemed to hypnotise her as the snake is said to hypnotise the bird, but it was an unpleasant feeling, as if the next moment the smouldering fire would burst forth into flame and overwhelm her. (29)

The pull that Margaret Pullen feels toward Miss Brandt is in exact contradiction with the aversion she feels at the same time. Yet the power of Miss Brandt's agency remains potent. A married mother, Mrs. Pullen fights the urges of her sexualized attraction to Harriet Brandt, an attraction she likens to the "smouldering fire" that could "overwhelm her" (29). With her sexual desire unsatiated by Mrs. Pullen, Harriet's siphons life off the next closest things to Mrs. Pullen, both her child - who later dies - and her brother-in-law Ralph Pullen, who falls ill as well.

Occurring at this same time is the normalized and approved Victorian relationship between Miss Leyton and Ralph Pullen. The acceptable norms of the century require Miss Leyton, Ralph's fiancé to stave off his sexual advances, which she does with an enthusiasm that sends him in the direction of Harriet Brandt, who, as a 'foreigner', does not share the same Victorian constraints. As is true in many nineteenth-century

narratives, though the man behaves badly, the woman is at fault; this becomes true for Harriet's story as well.

It is in this space of a docile body that Harriet Brandt spends the majority of her time in the novel. Once that agency finally does begin to be extracted from her, her trek through the other bodily spaces occurs more rapidly. It is, however, Ralph Pullen, Miss Leyton's fiancé, who continues to send flirtatious advances to Harriet. And these advances are what propel Harriet from a docile body to that of a lifeless body; as Ralph continues to "amuse himself with the girl" (120), Harriet slowly begins to lose control over her life. This loss of control is emblematic of the loss of agency that her transgressions have gotten her: living wildly, flirting with an-almost married man, spontaneity, and self-reliance. And it is also these transgressions that situate her in a space where men begin to gain control over her life, her actions, and her future.

Harriet's movement from lifeless body is stalled, only briefly, upon her meeting and future marriage with Anthony Pennell, a man who enters the narrative with the sole purpose of discrediting Harriet and putting an end to her flirtations with Ralph Pullen. The flirtations do end, but only after Pennell begins his own dissection of Harriet, couched in his almost immediate infatuation with her. She enters the room and he invasively attaches his gaze to her, noting "each line of her swaying figure – each tint of her refined face – with the pretty hands hanging by her side, and the slumberous depths of her magnificent eyes" (128). In these moments, overtaken by the male gaze and intimated nearly to silence, Harriet is already a lifeless body, where men are ascribing their desires and wills upon her, manipulating her behavior, her emotions and her responses to suit their needs. While Harriet's own pull is intense, as a physician soon

warns her, it is not strong enough to ward off the male gaze. It does not take long for readers to ascertain that Harriet Brandt's "strange stigma attached to her birth (139) accounts for the equally strange illnesses that overtake those with whom she becomes close. After the death of yet another person who is close to Harriet, a doctor presents her with the reality of how her birth has contributed to her illness:

But I think it is my duty to warn you that you are not likely to make those with whom you intimately associate stronger either in mind or body. You will always exert a weakening and debilitating effect upon them so that after a while, having sapped their brains and lowered the tone of their bodies, you will find their affection, or friendship for you visibly decrease. You will have, in fact, *sucked them dry*. [...] You must never hope to keep anyone near you for long, without injuring them. Make it your rule in life never to cleave to any one person altogether, or you will see that person's interest in you wax and wane until it is destroyed! (162)

The doctor's advice to remain as isolated as possible ensures that Harriet essentially becomes marginalized, erased and forgotten from the narrative. Her disease, the ways in which her birth and life are outward reflections of this disease, position her to die without the agency that others have, without someone left to claim her. Harriet does not heed the doctor's advice however, and she and Anthony Pennell marry. Their short marriage is eclipsed by his death, a death that Harriet no doubt believes she is the cause of. In the end, Harriet pens a note to Anthony's friend, Margaret Pullen, whose friendship she has all but written off as one of her own, leaving her all that she and Anthony had. When Harriet finally takes her own life, in the last pages of the novel, she has ostensibly erased

herself from the narrative of those around her – there is not one person left to care about her, to claim her. Indeed, when Margaret Pullen reads the note, the novel ends with absolutely no response or reflection from her on Harriet's death, or the legacy she has left behind. The story closes in around her and with her own words that she may be “mercifully wiped out” (187).

Harriet Brandt's entrance and erasure from the public sphere of Marryat's novel illustrates the ways in which the female body in the nineteenth century becomes dysplaced and loses agency. The ways in which her body is manipulated time and again by the men in the novel, and the ways in which her body is misunderstood by the women in the novel, equally speaks to the struggle women had for ownership over their own bodies, the resistance they met to gaining or maintaining agency of their bodies. By defining bodies more explicitly the way in which I have in this chapter, I allow readers to look at examples of the nineteenth-century woman and situate her more specifically within her marginalized position. It is not simply enough to suggest that women's goals were to, or should have been to, enter the public sphere. Instead, it is important to recognize the ramifications of what could occur, or would occur, as they continued to attempt entry into these public spaces.

CHAPTER 4. BIOPOLITICS, THE FEMALE BODY, AND NARRATOLOGICAL POWER

“...a fine shape, so elaborately corseted and artfully dressed, that it was quite unchanged in its trim appearance as it slowly swung from side to side.” – Charles Dickens, on the site of Maria Manning hanging from the gallows (*Underworld London*, 194-5)

This project began out of an interest in the Victorian genre of Sensation fiction, the role of women inside the narrative, the art of detection and the role of the fictional detective, both male and female. In the process, these concentrations merged and my literary interest converged, expanding to include authors and texts that were underrepresented in much of the current scholarship. Several of those authors, and even some of the texts by more popular authors, have been receiving more attention as of late, but they remain a space of possibility for critical representation and discussion within the body of nineteenth-century literature.

Nineteenth-century authors writing with women in mind either upheld the Angel in the House persona or worked to undermine that ideal within the narrative, and some even did both. This helps to complicate a focused study of the treatment of women throughout the century, but also makes it rich and worthwhile. This is particularly true because so much of this non-standard, non-canonical, literature has yet to be looked at through the critical lens of the study of women. Just as many of the writers, and characters, of the century complicate the Angel in the House motif, they complicate what

the alternative is as well. This requires that we question the intention on the part of male and female authors and suggests, a representational shift in the considerations of these women and the authors and their choices inside the narrative as well as the representation of the shift in treatment and understanding of women, and their place, inside the century. The overarching narrative around women and their bodies became the central focus each chapter of this project pivots around.

To start, this project has contributed to the field of Victorian studies in addressing the ways in which women are named, identified, and categorized. It has reshaped a definition of transgression that was, too limiting in scope and did not allow for access into the conversation around women who were punished, penalized, and restricted for subverting social mores versus breaking laws or legal structures. Redefining the term transgressive more explicitly allows me to expand the ways in which we can approach these bodies critically. In doing so, this project is able to amplify an understanding of how we define and analyze women's bodies, their utility and their agency, for themselves and as representatives of the nineteenth-century woman. Being able to do so was an important step forward because it allows for further critique of the use, description, and display of women's bodies. Moreover, it allows us to broaden our understanding beyond the docile body, and to examine, more closely, the gendered, political, and sexual othering that occurs when bodies are the subject of our analysis.

Much critical attention has been paid to women exhibiting criminal and sexual deviance, but that those who are guilty of social deviance have gained less widespread attention. This nuance is true for both life and literature, yet with the percentages of women perpetuating deviant behavior on the social scale occurring at much higher rates

than that of their counterparts acting criminally, there is much more for critics to focus on. This distinction is important for a larger scale consideration of women in the century. The goal of this early chapter was to highlight these women and illustrate how their portrayal shaped, defined, and even allowed for the deconstruction of understanding of what it meant to be a woman in the nineteenth century and, more, what it meant to be a woman transgressing boundaries. Women who are analyzed through the expectations of the century are done so through the lens of a morality that is patriarchal in nature, constructed by men for the objectification, alienation, and domination of women, creating a binary of expectation and rights that favored the male gender. For critics of these women, it is essential to parse out the types of behavior that defined them and the definitions these behaviors imposed upon them.

Defining terminology as related to women's bodies and redefining existing language was important for this work. In the early introduction chapter, and later in chapter three, I spent much time narrowing and clarifying definitions that have been used in the criticism I relied on. This begins with an introduction that looks at the word "criminal", arguing that this word, without a deeper designation does not reflect the contributions of women who disrupted the Victorian ideal without breaking any actual laws. The term "transgressive" posits more clearly this possibility and becomes a seminal term throughout the rest of the dissertation. In chapter one I work to break down transgressive women by the roles they occupied throughout the century, looking specifically at professions women began to maneuver into that had been previously dedicated to men. This chapter asserts these transgressing women were both dangerous and exciting to the Victorian era, or perhaps, were exciting because they were dangerous.

Regardless, the transgressions which took women into the role of world traveler, travel writer, and detective catapulted them into the public sphere and, very publicly, put them on display, a display that invited a bevy of criticism.

The changes to the norms of society these women portrayed made men and women nervous because suddenly all women did not “fit” within the mold created for them. Within that mold, both men and women knew what to expect and what was expected, even in the face of uncertainty. However, breaking the mold, transgressing these barriers, meant that women were now in roles where the expectations had not been set. What might a woman do when faced with angry “indigenous people” while traveling on horseback by herself? What might a woman actively seeking out criminals do when faced with the murderer she seeks? Women had not been in these roles before, so the expectation about how they would react and respond, and how the world would react and respond to them, was unsettling.

Women who chose freedom and travel were seen as shirking their ‘womanly duties.’ They were chastised for choosing travel, freedom, and professions over marriage, duty, and having children. These choices allowed the critics in the century to label these women wild and insurgent, creating a narrative filled with negative stigma, demonizing any woman who chose any level of independence. However, even *these* women seemed to know to push only so far into the public, male-dominated sphere. Women of the Victorian period broached these choices with a fine, delicate balance. As such, in some respects, these women played into an oppressive colonial narrative that was much like the narrative they were trying to escape. Lady Isabel Bird, an avid world traveler and travel writer, occupied this space. As a woman, she was the Other. As a travel writer, she

arguably adopted the male gaze and Othered the indigenous populations through her writing. She may have escaped the imperialist, patriarchal oppression from home, but subjected others to it through the invasion of her travel writing.

What complicates this further is the fact that women travel writers gained access to many of the private spaces of the indigenous populations, access that was not afforded to their male travel writing companions. This access allowed women power in ways that men did not have, or could not have. But it also created a space where women were allowing, through their writing, men access to these very sacred, very private spaces, spaces that, much like the private spaces of a woman's body, were both desirous and forbidden – exotic. In opening up these private spaces, women travel writers like Bird, complicate the role, responsibility, and nature of women who gained access to the male sphere, who transgressed the boundaries of nineteenth-century society.

Likewise, women who took on the role of detective subverted this male gaze while also remaining the object of the gaze, through criticism of their role. While the female detective more overtly subverted gendered roles, she also subverted the power structure that existed between the genders. Detection remained a profession of order and structure. Women disrupted that order and infiltrated a male-dominated space becoming an avenue of subversion for the male gaze, often taking ownership of the gaze itself and turning it back on the men in a narrative. These two examples of women gaining access yet complicating access of private spaces remain an important contradiction to analyze, situating the role of the nineteenth-century woman, her transgressions and reception within a larger feminist narrative.

The project, overall, further contributes to the study of Victorian, and twentieth-century feminist theory and representation through an active exploration of women's bodies in their relation to gender identity, power and, agency. Frankly, the discussion of women, their role and their rights and access to and over their own bodies as well as how those bodies are shaped, defined, constrained, restrained, and judged is as prevalent today as it was in the nineteenth century. This dissertation is an important contribution to the continuation of the examination of the body, acknowledging women in literature who have not been critically discussed and in doing so furthering the consideration of their bodies, and how the treatment and examination of their bodies is still something that women are fighting today. When a female Presidential candidate is chastised for raising issues relevant and important to women, like paid family leave and equal pay, and is criticized for playing the "woman card", when sexual assault victims are re-victimized when they are attacked for being drunk while being raped, or when we still have nations that have not banned genital mutilation for women, it is exceedingly clear we still have decades of work to do and our discussions of women and their bodies remain necessary.

The treatment and punishment of bodies, in particular women's bodies, remains a constant focus throughout my dissertation. In chapter two, the focus narrows to the punishments levied against women in the nineteenth century – both in fiction and life - as an avenue for critical discussion on the agency women have over their own bodies, or the lack of agency they possess. The focus remains here on those women guilty of social transgressions instead of women facing ramifications for breaking any standing constitutional decrees, mandates, or laws. It is not a coincidence that corporeal punishment for incarcerated women was banned by 1820 but that capital punishment for

women still existed, even through public executions. This example bolsters the argument that the literal incarceration of women for breaking any law only mirrored the figurative incarceration all women of the century faced – imprisoned by their gender, in their bodies, by laws *and* social mores. Moreover, women who did not show proper remorse were chastised further and punished most severely. However, even women who begged for forgiveness, received harsh punishments.

This chapter also focused on the fact that these were bodies that did not matter to the narratives in the century, the larger narrative of the nineteenth century, or the narrative for the story of women overall. These bodies mattered only in ways in which they could continue to be constrained, used as signals or warnings for appropriate, acceptable behavior, or punished and then discarded.

Throughout the entire dissertation, my goal was to provide critical attention to works and even authors who are not consistently being considered in Victorian studies scholarship. It has brought into the conversation women in underrepresented texts, dynamic women who allow us access to a clearer understanding of the complexities of the problems women faced in the nineteenth century and the dynamic nature of women. Instead of illustrating a two-dimensional, rule following woman or the women who so overtly broke the laws that they were impossible to overlook, this project homes in on the dynamic nature of what it meant to be a woman in the nineteenth century. Nobody would argue that the canon of nineteenth-century literature is limited, but what we often see in our critical attention are the more well-known works by the more well-known authors. I am purposeful in my choice of authors and their texts throughout this dissertation, bringing to the forefront of critical discussion lesser known Sensation authors, like

Florence Marryat and her novel, *The Blood of the Vampire* as well as lesser known works by our more well-known authors, like Mary Elizabeth Braddon's, *The Trail of the Serpent*. Not only are these women writers important for our continued study of Victorian Sensation fiction, but they are women writing about women, examining the place of women in the century, the status of women inside and outside of the home, and the reception and rejection of women, in every space in which they reside.

Finally, chapter three has become the chapter that is most pivotal to my work as it opens up, further, the discussion of transgression to include a critical conversation about the political nature of gendered bodies. What began merely as an inquiry into how artists of the century represented transgressive women has shifted into a more provocative and complex analysis of how visual representations of the female body, the likes of anatomical models and dissection cadavers, were instrumental in establishing and upholding a narrative around women and the body. Notably, the use of the female body in these very public and very disruptive ways, allowed the female body to gain power while simultaneously having it stripped from her. The female body becomes, in these instances within the century, a site of power, struggle, and resistance. This chapter emphasizes the importance of the acknowledgement of the agency that the nineteenth-century female body has and how that agency was stripped and also strengthened during each of these public displays.

One of the challenges throughout this work was the necessity and importance of defining and redefining terminology so that it more appropriately fit with the scope of the project and making those definitions my own while at the same time acknowledging the scholarship and impact of those this project builds upon, who have made my work

possible. As noted earlier, it was necessary to do this with the words “transgressive”, “deviant”, and “fallen” because each of these words had historic connotations that did not always measure up to the nuance around women I was searching for. In the final chapter too, in my work on the body, the narrow definition of how bodies were defined merely as marginalized was not specific enough to capture the severity of the oppression levied against them. Again, this defining work was essential for an ability to situate my choices in characters, roles, and authors inside the larger nineteenth-century critical conversation. This remains an important step, but even my definitions could be narrowed further, specifically because as they stand, they are upholding a gendered experience specific to women and do not take into consideration any non-standard female experience. This would be an important next step of this project, to expand the scope of these definitions to be inclusive of all nineteenth-century non-normative gendered expectations.

Over the scope of this work my interest has expanded to an overarching interest in gendered bodies and the manifestation of gendered norms upon bodies of women in literature as representative of women in the nineteenth century. Moreover, as is evidenced in chapter three of this dissertation, I have become increasingly interested in the study of how these gendered bodies come to be defined and redefined inside the scope of the nineteenth century, as well as in the literature of the period. In the late stages of my work my attentions and interest turned yet again toward the issues of biopolitics and their relation to the female body, particularly the Victorian female body. I would likely extend this inquiry to include a conversation about the fluidity and questioning of gender, gender normativity, and Victorian sexual culture and counter-culture.

A discussion specifically linked to the biopolitics and gendered spaces that bodies exist in, and resist, is where I would continue to focus my attention in this project. Florence Marrat's *Her Father's Name* is a place to start an additional discussion of gendered bodies, particularly because it is another example of a novel that has not claimed much critical attention but one that offers up yet another strong, gender-fluid, non-traditional female character. While Marrat writes about the escapades of the young Leona Lacoste as she tries to clear the name of her father, it is at once a novel that highlights the plight of strong women but also the dynamic of the relationship between men and women, with the structures and struggles of power associated with relationships between marriage and family. Moreover, the struggle of Lacoste, who is attempting to clear a name that she has, in all respects, no legal rights to as a woman destined for marriage and, as such, the loss of her name, an interesting critique on the agency of women alongside the men, their fathers and husbands, in their lives. Further, it illustrates the fluidity of gender as her journey continues, as she physically changes her appearance, cross dressing, to fit personas of expectation and the explicit gendered norms of the century. This novel provides an avenue for a deeper exploration of the body as a site of resistance and definition and, for women's bodies in particular, how this resistance plays out and what these definitions presume. This is where some of the richest work on this subject still lies and I am truly excited to continue with the exploration and analysis, bringing to the forefront of nineteenth-century scholarship, female authors and characters who disrupt expectations of gender.

This is where a continuation with Foucault would be essential. Specifically, considering how biopolitics has explicitly played a role in shaping and reshaping the

nineteenth-century identity, not only for women, but for anyone who did not fit into the strict gender binaries we are still trying to constrict people to today. It is clear that Foucault has been a major influence on this dissertation, in particular through the investigation of the ways in which power structures our experience with and on the body – and even more particular, on the bodies of women. Therefore, a logical frame for a continued argument would be to continue to utilize Foucault in a further analysis of how the bodies of women in the nineteenth century specifically became sites of political power. As alluded to in the final chapter, the body is the site of engagement for so much conversation about political and socio-political power for women in the century and is the site of continued resistance and power today. However, as this project has focused intently on the transgressive female body, future iterations of my argument would anticipate the ways in which confusing the gendered norms of the nineteenth century, for both men and women, brings in a larger discussion of biopolitical power and who has the right to even make their body a site of resistance and how issues of gender fluidity compromise and complicate that agency.

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VITA

VITA

Colleen J. Green

Administrative Experience

2012 – 2014

Director, High Tech High International

2007 – 2011

Director, High Tech High Chula Vista

- Create professional development structures to support all staff in building project-based curriculum and assessments and establishing a professional learning community where teachers develop as leaders
- Design effective structures and systems to communicate with, and support, all stakeholders
- Recruit and hire all school personnel, including leadership, teachers, support and after school staff
- Build and maintain a balanced school budget, including federal, state, private and grants
- Disseminate knowledge about charter school structures and design principles to community members, district officials, local, regional, national and international campus visitors
- Develop a student-centered school culture around the HTH Design Principles of Personalization, Adult World Connection, Common Intellectual Mission and Teacher as Designer
- Create school-home and school-community communications around school events, outreach, college-going culture, campus expansion, and admissions information regularly to all stakeholders
- Create and deliver curriculum that supports adult learning in non-HTH school environments through project-based and advanced project based learning workshops
- Collect and disaggregate data to inform and enhance student performance school-wide with particular attention paid to English Language Learners and students of low-socioeconomic status

Teaching Experience

2016 – Present	Adjunct Online English Faculty Member, Central Texas College University
2014 – Present	Grade Eleven Humanities teacher, High Tech High International – <i>San Diego, CA</i>
2011 – 2012	Grade Nine Humanities teacher, High Tech High – <i>San Diego, CA</i>
Summer 2012	Teach with Africa Fellow, LEAP 6 - <i>Ga Rankuwa, South Africa</i>
2010 – 2011	School Leadership Program Faculty, High Tech High Graduate School of Education- <i>San Diego, CA</i>
2007 – 2011	Summer/Winter Institute Instructor, High Tech High Graduate School of Education – <i>San Diego, CA</i>
2005 – 2007	Junior/Senior Humanities teacher, High Tech High – <i>San Diego, CA</i>
2005 – 2006	Adjunct English Instructor, University of San Diego – <i>San Diego, CA</i>
Spring 2005	English and Debate teacher (9th – 12th grades), Poway High School – <i>Poway, CA</i>
2004 – 2005	Adjunct Composition Instructor, Ivy Tech State College – <i>Indianapolis, IN</i>
2002 – 2003	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Purdue University – <i>West Lafayette, IN</i>
2001 – 2002	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Bowling Green State University – <i>Bowling Green, OH</i>
2000 – 2001	English, Journalism/Photojournalism and Children's Theater teacher (9th, 11th, 12th grades), Heritage High School – <i>Saginaw, MI</i>

Education

January 2003 - Present	Purdue University West Lafayette, IN A.B.D./ Ph.D. candidate in 19 th Century Literature Dissertation topic: <i>Bad Girls in Corsets: Women and the Transgressive Body in the Nineteenth Century</i>
December 2002	Bowling Green State University Bowling Green, OH M.A. in Literature Thesis: <i>Charles Brockden Brown and the Transcontinental American Gothic</i>
Summer 2002	Institute de Touraine Tours, France French language classes to satisfy graduate requirements

December 2000	Saginaw Valley State University Saginaw, MI Secondary Teacher Certification Major field: English ; Minor field: Communications and Theatre Honors: Deans List
May 1998	Grand Valley State University Allendale, MI B.A. in English and Journalism, double major
Other Experience	
June 2016 – Present	We Care Solar – Curriculum Development Write humanities inquire-based curriculum for ten hours of teacher use through the Solar Backpack Program
Spring 2013 – Present	Teach with Africa Executive Board Member / Board Secretary Participate in planning for growth and financial oversight of the non-profit organization, Teach with Africa.
December 2015	Ombudsman Afloat Training Group, San Diego, CA Liaison between command leadership and command families.
Fall 2011	Faces of Learning – Visions of Education Planning Committee Collaborate with other education professionals to plan March 2011 event, hosting educators, education researches and policy makers from across the nation, to find tangible ways to strengthen the state of education and schools overall in San Diego, California and across the nation.
2008 – 2012	Family Readiness Group Advisory Board Member; Treasurer (08) Secretary (09/10) USS Halsey, DDG-97 - <i>stationed San Diego, CA</i>
2003 – 2006	Lafayette Parks and Recreation Hire and run daily operations at two aquatic facilities in Lafayette, IN.
2003 – 2005	Purdue Graduate Student Senate Excellence in Teaching Committee – <i>West Lafayette, IN</i>
2002 – 2003	GradSTEP Development Leader Bowling Green State University – <i>Bowling Green, OH</i>
2001 - 2002	Graduate Research Assistant, Program Researcher MA/TESL department, Bowling Green State University - <i>Bowling Green, OH</i>
2000	Education Research Assistant Mackinac Center for Public Policy - <i>Midland, MI</i>

Professional Development

Teacher Training and Curriculum Development Workshops
in Hawaii (2012), Israel (2014, 2016), Michigan (2012),
Minnesota (2015), Kenya (2015), Canada (2016), San Diego
(2012 – 2016)
Deeper Learning Equity Fellow, 2016 - 2018