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The Saint and Judith Female Conventions in Ouida's *Held in Bondage*, *Strathmore*, *Friendship*, and *Moths*

by
Hannah Lacey Bryant

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College.

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Approved by

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ABSTRACT

The Saint and Judith Female Conventions in Ouida's *Held in Bondage*, *Strathmore*, *Friendship*, and *Moths*
(Under the direction of Dr. Natalie Schroeder)

The following work analyzes the usage Victorian conventions of the saint and Judith figures in Ouida's female characters in her novels *Held in Bondage*, *Strathmore*, *Friendship*, and *Moths*. These eight characters are closely related to the stereotypical representations of women in society during the time Ouida wrote; however, as Ouida became more experienced and acquainted with society, her usage of the conventions altered toward realistic rather than representative women. Of the saint figures, only one female, Vere of *Moths,* escapes from all stereotypes. The remaining three—Alma of *Held in Bondage*, Lucille of *Strathmore*, and Etoile of *Friendship*—are definitive models of virtuous womanhood. They are innocent, naïve, and virginal, qualities that cast them diametrically opposite the Judith figures. These destructive women are openly sexual and possess authority over their bodies, desires, and male lovers, making them seem powerful in a way that undercuts their femininity. However, of the four saint's rivals, two are not wholly evil and so cannot be Judiths. *Friendship*'s Lady Joan and *Moth*'s Jeanne de Sonnaz join Vere as Ouida's characters who cast off repressive conventions and exhibit a trend in late Victorian fiction to move from stereotypes into reality.

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Introduction

Victorian readers, stifled by social standards of false, hypocritical morality in life and literature, were intrigued by novels overflowing with cases of mistaken identity, bigamy, murder, and even overt sexuality. Growing out of the Gothic and Newgate novel tradition, sensation fiction, as these rather exciting works were classified, became a hugely lucrative and popular phenomenon that produced early bestsellers (Mitchell 73). Yet even though novels such as Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* were financially successful for the authors, critics derided them for exploiting the audience's emotions. They contended that "[s]ensational stories were tales aimed at this effect simply—of exciting in the mind some deep feeling of overwrought interest by the means of some terrible passion or crime" (Cvetkovich 20). In the true style of this fiction genre, Louisa de la Ramée, commonly called Ouida, emerged as a sensation novelist with her 1861 serial publication of *Held in Bondage*, a story rife with gripping scenes of bigamy, bribery, heroism, and discoveries of long-lost daughters, wives, and husbands.

Following *Held in Bondage* immediately with *Strathmore* and then with many other novels over her lifetime, Ouida gained fame for her fast-paced, rollicking approach to writing.

> From the very first she set out to shock her public with unspeakable improprieties, and the more she shocked them the more they wanted to be shocked and shocked again. There was a grand, careless, lavish generosity about the characters that made men a little envious at being lesser than

> demi-gods, and women indignant that such beings could not exist out of romances. (Ffrench 22)

Her contemporaries alleged that her literature supported the hierarchy of birth better than those actually born into it did (Stirling 156), a statement buttressed by her infallible and ever noble upper-class characters, of which Bertie Cecil of *Under Two Flags* and Granville de Vigne of *Held in Bondage* are ideal examples. Her heroes are aristocratic, but readers of her novels were mainly middle-class women, for "[t]he style in which her heroes lived was irresistible to middle-class susceptibilities" (Ffrench 22). People, including some men, in both the upper and lower classes, despite their differing interests, could similarly draw entertainment from their reading of the same novels. Through the vivacity of her writing, Ouida created universal appeal.

Though Ouida challenged many social conventions, like most sensation novelists, by including almost forbidden material in her writing, she gave no consideration to Victorian gender roles until relatively late in her career. Preferring the company of men in both life and literature, she often assigned female characters into stereotypical roles that matched the Victorian ideology of women as subordinate to male concerns. The two stereotypes she was most fond of were those of the sexually charged villainess and the submissive young angel, or what Reed respectively entitled the Judith figure (Reed 47) and the saint or angel (33). As "prevailing popular angelology cast angels as irrefutably female and by definition domestic" (Auerbach 64), Ouida's versions of these pious women merely support common perceptions of the way women should be—completely absorbed with caring for their home and family. The Judith figure, on the other hand, often represented all that a moral Victorian woman should loathe to be. Such women

were independent and were aware of their sexuality, two familiar traits that effectively unsexed them in the estimation of men. Ouida's female readers, however, fantasized about the power and freedom of the sexualized woman. By fitting women into these two roles in her novels, at least until she began identifying with her meek and saintly characters, Ouida perpetuated the conventions of the time instead of fighting against traditional conceptions of women.

Typically, Victorian values propounded the purity of women to be quite important in establishing a good marriage, an institution that at the time wives found practically impossible to escape through divorce. The choice of a life partner was then quite critical in terms of financial stability, for there were few other options for women. Some authors, like Mary Wollstonecraft, zealously argued that female worth should not be caught up in identity as a man's wife. She believed that a sense of significance based on their own merits was also required of women (Perkin 74). The severe attitude on female prudery, tending to designate women as a material object to entertain and care for their husbands, seemed to suffocate sexuality outside of wedlock. However, if all women—and men, for that matter—abided by these standards of decency, the Judith figure would not have persisted throughout the Victorian era. That sexually active women did exist in fiction shows that they existed in life. Indeed, in Victorian England, "Sexual activity did not decline, but nor was it talked or written about. When novels mentioned adultery, they gave no details of the sex act" (Perkin 52). The argument for the perfectly chaste and angelic wife illustrated that while men taught women to behave in this way, they also sought out other women as sexual partners. Therefore, Wollstonecraft "also attacked the double standard of sexual morality which allowed men to indulge in sex before marriage

and to be unfaithful to their wives afterwards, yet required women to be virgins when they married and not thereafter to have sex with other men" (quoted in Perkin 74). As a young author, Ouida failed to acknowledge the dichotomy between male and female propriety, and perhaps she was only dimly aware of it in her later years.

Due to her continuing usage of the saint and Judith conventions, Ouida upheld key traits of their characterization. Unfortunately for the saint, being the paragon of female virtue was not very interesting, so that beyond her domesticity and selflessness little about her remains to be said. The docile saint was Ouida's heroine; the author's seeming adulation of her innocence contrasted with her apparent revulsion for the destructive and debauched female. On the other hand, the sexually active Judith figure's subversiveness in defying the rules of society actually made her more intriguing. "The sensational novel's sensational representations are very often literally bodies, particularly women's bodies, whose erotic appeal is part of their sensational appeal" (Cvetkovich 25), meaning that Judiths more than saints generated the novel's success.

Critics attacked the conventional Judith figure because of her unwillingness to subject herself to either social mores or to men. Unlike the saint's role, which was created by males, her problematic existence seemed indefinable to men. Through their dominion over men, these females also dangerously menaced male authority over standards of female virtue. Cvetkovich states: "The figure of the criminal and sexualized woman, by violating the standards of feminine propriety, also threatened the social order" (46). Ouida's portrayal of a woman as extremely beautiful and yet a bastion of evil discomforted many critics who believed "the impossibility of recognizing her wickedness from her appearance adds to her power both to fascinate and to threaten others"

(Cvetkovich 46). Also, the Judith figure's beauty and moral depravity attributed to the belief in her genderlessness. Displaying authority over her body and desires—and especially over men's desires—Judith figures revealed their "abrupt masculinity" (Reed 45). Victorian moralists railed against these women, arguing that "[t]o assume the masculine, aggressive role is to violate her true womanhood, for . . . woman is not naturally aggressive, and if she insists on aggression, she 'must strike through her own heart to reach a human life' " (Reed 47). Her danger at either living in sin or recognizing her misconduct, in a strictly Victorian sense of the word, meant that impending pain loomed over her every action, especially since men, having enjoyed her, tended to then condemn her.

Female domination, the satiating of both partners' desire, and ensuing male censure appears several times in Ouida's early fiction, most memorably in *Strathmore*. However, as she observed more and more women of the fashionable world, her opinions on the Judith and saint figures began to change. Midway through her literary career, for example, Ouida bitterly fashioned Lady Joan in her novel *Friendship* after her personal rival. However, she still created this character differently from her earlier Judith females in that evil is not innate in Lady Joan. She desires to attain greater social status and power, not to destroy the hero or heroine, so that she cannot be defined as a stereotypical villainess. As the conventional destructive woman became less prevalent in Ouida's novels, the stereotype morphed in other fiction of the time as well. Reed states:

> Use of the Judith emblem continued throughout the Victorian period, though with different writers it took different forms, from the direct to the ironic. Moreover, there seems to have been a growing self-consciousness

> regarding the use of emblems, until at the end of the century a more forthright yet complicated attitude prevailed. (Reed 55)

Over time, the conventions fell out of fashion as authors endeavored to create dynamic characters that blurred the realm of the traditional female stereotypes; women in fiction became "psychologically more recognizable in terms of our present concepts of personality" (Reed 55). After the conventions disintegrated, realistic characters emerged.

Ouida's works demonstrate an evolution of her female characters. Her characters changed as she matured, so that as she experienced more of the world and society, she better represented it on paper. Her propensity to identify with her saint figures, however, led her to create them to have everything that she herself desired: beauty, title, and love. Due to this manner of perceiving her chaste heroines, these characters only displayed her imaginary self-image. Ffrench describes an odd penchant Ouida had for role-playing:

> At one time, when she was writing *Moths*, she herself was the Princess Zouroff, that ice-cold beauty, and, playing the part to herself, she would receive her guests arrayed from top to toe in white satin, seated in a red-satin upholstered arm-chair with an air of languid artificiality that was exasperating for her friends to bear. Or again she might stand on the great white bearskin before the open fireplace of her library, and, in Worth's latest triumph of lilac satin, would be Etoile in *Friendship*, and clasp lilies of the valley or bunches of pale primroses in imitation of her heroine's inspired attitudes. (73-74)

Perhaps the most influential factor in altering her perspective was a failed romance. When the Marchese della Stufa, the man she loved deeply, jilted her for his long-time

mistress, Ouida changed the way she perceived upper-class men and women. Though she belittled her gender in her younger years, as a woman scorned, she began to understand the suffering and pain of women. Once depicted as faultless and ever righteous, Ouida's men grew inconstant because she had lost her belief in innate male nobility. After all, it was men who made the sexual Judith figure possible. As representations of Ouida's unfortunate experience, women in her fiction developed from flatness into three-dimensional representations of life. Flying in the face of tradition, the saintly maiden eventually moved from dependence on the male hero to provide for her happiness and physical comfort to a position where she could make her own decisions. While the saint was ever submissive to male authority until *Moths*, her Judith adversary never loved the men she dominated until *Friendship*. Thus, the stereotypes of the saint and Judith figures that predominate Ouida's novels before her romance's unhappy ending ceased to exist as conventions and began to live as women.

In this thesis, I will examine the changes in Ouida's female characters through a chronological selection of her novels. The following four novels consist of the first two books she published and also the two written directly following her devastating love affair. In *Held in Bondage*, the vixen marries a man she despises to obtain revenge, while the angelic maiden cherishes him even upon discovering he is married. The vixen demonstrates unconditional evil, the saint, unconditional love. In *Strathmore*, the hero loves a married Judith figure who lures him into sexual sin. After rejecting her as his mistress, he despises her and ruins her completely. The double standard of Victorian morality condones his past sexual promiscuity even when he loves and marries a virgin saint. Later, in *Friendship*, Ouida exposes Stufa's and Mrs. Ross's affair and depicts her

own experiences as part of a tragic love triangle. Here, she creates a different sort of vixen, for though Lady Joan controls the hero, she loves him to some extent. When the hero in turn loves the saint figure, fear of his mistress leads him to choose her over the innocent maiden. Finally, *Moths* is a dramatic story of an ill-used wife in love with a man other than her husband. When her authoritarian husband divorces her for his mistress, she remarries the man she loves and finally throws off the stereotype of the saintly maiden or wife.

Held in Bondage: Stronghold of Stereotypes

" 'A young man married is a man that's marred.' That's a golden rule . . . take it to heart . . . . Experience is the best asbestos, only unluckily, one seldom gets it before it is too late to use it, and one's hands are burned irrevocably." (*Held in Bondage* 73)

In Ouida's first novel, *Held in Bondage,* the hero Granville de Vigne claims an illustrious heritage, perfect honor, and headstrong will. Unlike the author's later heroes, he does not have a mistress, for no such character exists in this novel. However, one of two significant female characters in *Granville de Vigne* is the traditionally malevolent Judith figure, a symbolic role that later expands in subsequent novels to envelop the mistress. Often described as destructive,

> [t]he Judith emblem was associated in Victorian minds with the unwomanly assumption of power by women who violate their true natures and thereby inaugurate their own despair. If women are believed to be constitutionally tender and palliative, Amazonian traits become pernicious to men, whose roles they disrupt, but also to women, whose established natures they contradict. (Reed 57)

While the Judith character, the Trefusis, seeks to use her powers of seduction to rule De Vigne, the second major female character, the fair maiden and a true saint figure, Alma Tressillian, captures and keeps the hero's love as delineated by archetypal love stories. Her inherent gentility and nobility correspond ideally with De Vigne's aristocratic breeding. Oblivious of her ability to seduce, the naïve maiden would not know how to utilize such power even were she to realize her possession of it. As Reed points out: "Carnality attends the Judith figures, evilly clothed in seductive graces, while saintly fiancées and wives have only a pure beauty and virtue to aid them" (58). This statement

aptly describes the villain and the heroine, the wicked and the perfect, as precisely antipodal conventions.

Originally titled *Granville de Vigne*, the novel deals with the way the Law and the Church bar De Vigne from marrying the woman he loves, as he cannot dissolve his unconsummated first marriage. Having discovered his wife of only minutes to be treacherous and false, he resolves never to see her again and leaves her, unfortunately for him, just past the altar. His legal wife, the Trefusis, schemed to wed him for the sole purpose of shaming him, though gaining his name and money are other motives. The Trefusis is an artful adventuress, a character illustrated in Monica Stirling's biography of Ouida, *The Fine and the Wicked*:

> Adventuresses abound in Ouida's early novels, as they appear to have done in that portion of Victorian society . . . . With most professions still shut to women, being an adventuress was the nearest many gifted ones could come to paralleling the achievements of the explorers whose adventures were so much admired. (56)

Crushed by his marriage, De Vigne leaves England to fight in a campaign to preserve Britain's interests in India. After the passage of nearly a decade, he returns and falls in love with the sweet and innocent maiden, Alma Tressillian. However, for some years, he suspects her to be false and compromised, erroneously believing that she is like all the other women he knows—seemingly innocent but inexorably bad. Eventually, after he learns that the Trefusis has committed bigamy, De Vigne redeems himself and his name by marrying Alma.

The hero De Vigne, however, not the two women, is noticeably Ouida's focus, and so most of the information to be garnered about the women comes from a masculine point of view. The first-person narration of Captain Chevasney, an unreliable narrator because of his obvious adoration of the hero, prevents an in-depth look at the female characters' thoughts and motivations. Granted, certain scenes provide glimpses of Alma's personality, predominantly through the medium of speech. Despite the small attention paid to Alma, the adventuress remains a virtual mystery because only other people describe her. Her reasoning seems not to matter to the author; she is evil for evil's sake, apparently. De Vigne and Chevasney certainly consider her as such.

The youthful Trefusis, née Lucy Davis, though blessed with a wealth of beauty, possesses a temper as fierce as her figure is appealing. She dresses herself admirably, but for all her finery of dress, Lucy is still no lady (*Granville de Vigne* 16). The valet Raymond, her actual husband, tells De Vigne what the Trefusis was like at seventeen years old before either married her: beauteous, ill-educated, yet adroit all the same in wielding her bravado as a screen for her ignorance (543). Beyond her good looks, which attract De Vigne for a short while, she has little to recommend her. The Trefusis's furious reaction to De Vigne's dismissal of her—he, only eighteen, leaves both the Frestonhills school and Lucy behind for the military—best demonstrates her base cruelty. Enraged by her inability to secure him, or more importantly his large assets, Lucy's vengeful nature goes into overdrive (34). Just as "[d]estructive females in Victorian literature are generally motivated by pride or physical passion" (Reed 44), here the Judith figure considers De Vigne to have wronged her. By leaving Frestonhills, he deflates her pride, and consequently she intends to attain retribution by tricking him into marrying her

and similarly trampling his pride (161). Her real husband believes her fully capable of destroying De Vigne's life in her quest for what she understands to be justice (544). To her credit, the Trefusis had received false reports of her husband's death before carrying out her plot to marry De Vigne; bigamy is not her intention (545). Even so, her beautiful appearance cannot hide the ugliness, at least by Victorian standards of womanhood, of her character.

Years later, the disguised Lucy captivates De Vigne again with her physical beauty, vigilantly displaying her only attributes—her carnation-colored yet unrouged cheek, her raven hair, and her extreme děcolletage—to their grandest effect (37). Failing to penetrate her disguise as lady-like and handsome Constance Trefusis, De Vigne tells Chevasney that he loves her "[m]ore passionately than I have ever loved a woman yet" (90). She tempts De Vigne, making herself readily available for his taking. They have playful conversations rife with sexual innuendoes, but neither one divulges what he or she thinks about any issue. He knows her only as he sees her, not as he will later know Alma's thoughts and beliefs (31). De Vigne's mad passion for the Trefusis blinds and arouses him to the point that he offers his heart and home to her, forgetting that love is more than passion alone (101). Even though he knows nothing about Lucy's personal or family history, he yields before her voluptuousness.

Though love blinds De Vigne, others see the Trefusis's true colors. The narrator, Mr. Chevasney, notes that she smiles at De Vigne when necessary, but he discovers her smile to be devoid of the look of love, instead possessing something more akin to hate and longing (37). Sabretasche, a dashing, fashionable friend of De Vigne, warns him that the Trefusis is an "intrigante" (95). De Vigne's mother cautions her son, ". . . there is no

beauty of mind, no beauty of heart! The impression she gives me is, that she is an able schemer, a clever actress . . . illiterate, ambitious, and heartless" (96). On their wedding day, the public disclosure of her vengeance—announcing her true identity to him and all their aristocratic guests—forever squashes any feelings that De Vigne ever had for her. His passion quickly transforms into hate as he becomes painfully aware of the wisdom of his friends and family in attempting to protect him from such a despicable woman (114). Eventually, De Vigne pronounces the Trefusis a "bitter enemy" and a "relentless foe" (525), and he reviles his relationship with her as a "headlong infatuation" (451). He condemns her supposed love for him as a "Judas kiss" (452). Hatred replaces the love that shielded him from Lucy's crudity.

The Trefusis artfully uses her physical powers of seduction to rule other men throughout her years as De Vigne's supposed wife. His settlements are not enough to appease her. For this reason, she constantly schemes to support her expensive yet unrefined taste. She successfully entraps wealthy men—she has no requirement other than money—and lives quite handsomely on gifts from her admirers (551). Aware that De Vigne yearns for a divorce, she conceals her infidelities from her husband. However, she is, as always, a ribald woman, "with her rouge, and her tinting, and her embonpoint, and her cold and glittering eyes, drinking her coffee with that dash of brandy in it . . . , reading the dirtiest of Le Brun's stories, in her scarlet peignoir . . ." (503). Her beauty, not her uncultivated and ignorant mind, enraptures men (552). Rarely engaging in conversation, she knows better than to betray herself. When she loses her beauty and figure, however, she is unable to tempt wealthy men into supporting her. Her downfall comes at last.

The heroine Alma is the antithesis of the wicked adventuress. De Vigne's view of the two women who play the most influential roles in his life, bringing him misery and joy respectively, perfectly reflects their stereotypical depiction:

> the one coarse, insolent, lost to shame, to mercy, and to decency . . . the other delicate, refined, loving, impassioned, with not a thought he might not read in her clear eyes, not a throb of her young heart that did not beat for him, leading him with her soft voice, and her noble trust, and her unselfish love to a higher, fairer, purer life, teaching him faith in human nature. (538)

The Trefusis's boldness of character and pretensions to aristocracy contrast with Alma's innate nobility and liveliness. Similarly, the little Tressillian's natural beauty from both physical and intellectual traits distinguish her from De Vigne's wife's offensive and crude beauty, supported through the use of cosmetics and extravagant costumes (381). When she meets the Trefusis, Alma senses she is not a lady (379), and she feels "a repugnance to this woman—a certain vague fear of her, and dislike to be alone with her" (381). Disgusted, Alma judges the Trefusis "false, coarse, cruel" (384) and views her with "mistrust and dislike" (381). The Trefusis retaliates by calling Alma a "golden-haired child " (519). Both can discern traits in the other that make them wholly unalike.

As Lucy's opposite, Alma is perfectly innocent, very bright, frank, and full of the vigor of life (206). Emitting an exuberance of gayety and vivacity (192), she is "brilliant and lively" (275). Above all, "she was perfectly natural" (206). She is aristocratic by nature (269), able to shine in society (275), faithful beyond the norm, and forgiving in the extreme. From her childhood, her winning, playful sweetness of temper endears her to

De Vigne (14). He tells her that the male gender would improve greatly by associating with more females like her (215). Even so, her charms do not affect De Vigne's bitter renunciation of romantic entanglements, though her vibrant personality does recommend their budding friendship. De Vigne and Alma debate about art and life, unlike he and the Trefusis, who never talked about anything much at all. Alma bubbles over with a robust admiration for these subjects, openly stating what she thinks or feels with little regard to the impression she makes on the male guests surrounding her, thereby vastly entertaining those guests (171). When he is with Alma, De Vigne, Captain Chevasney states, becomes something of what he once was before his miserable marriage (181). Alma imparts her liveliness to those around her.

Still considering Alma a toddler, De Vigne does not see her as "a most fascinating woman, but as . . . a playful, winning child" (192). To him, she is still a three-year-old pelting him with flowers or an eleven-year-old talking of fairies (188). Due to his mistaken perception of her, "he was not on his guard with her as with other women" (183). Though he has known her throughout her childhood, since he was eighteen and she was three, her age now allows them more interests in common. Alma sees him as he was before his traumatic marriage day (208). Her poverty and solitude make him pity her, for they appeal to "his delicacy and warmer feeling" (201). Though she is his ward, he never considers taking her as a lover. While he states that Mr. Tressillian left Alma in his care, he also claims that he does not want her for himself. He keeps her away from Society to protect her from other men who might be attracted by her childish beauty (200). Nevertheless, he forgets Sabretasche's warning that (211) his paternal instinct might blossom into love, which inevitably happens.

Grateful for his attentions to her, Alma loves De Vigne with a reverence that precludes even infidelity. She believes in De Vigne regardless of circumstance. Love, she explains to a friend, "is to credit no evil of the one loved from other lips" (431), and indeed, even from the lover's lips (431). This kind of devotion arises from her passionate love for him, which is lasting and alive even when his reciprocal affection is in doubt, particularly after his spurious wife's disclosure (442). Determined to hurt De Vigne, the Trefusis plots to tell Alma of the marriage. Her "painted face gloating with evil contentment that her brand of justice continues to wreck havoc on her husband's life and love," (504) she thinks that De Vigne will never tell Alma the truth. Alma, however, forgives De Vigne's injustice towards her (433), even after she knows he is married:

> . . . but it was not true—it could not be. He could never have loved that woman—splendid though she might have been in her early youth—with her rouged cheeks, her tinted eyelids, her cruel eyes, her cold, harsh voice, her style, which struck on the Little Tressillian's senses as something so wholly unlike the refinement, the intellect, the delicacy which seemed to please him now. Alma did not remember that a man's first love is invariably the antipodes of his last! (382)

Alma's refusal to believe the Trefusis's assertion in the face of proof flummoxes the vulgar woman. Alma hates the adventuress for her irreverent and mocking words about De Vigne (510). The Trefusis wants Alma to be horrified, shocked, and appalled, but instead she finds a ready insult (515). Unsuccessful in her malice and livid at the failure of her revenge, she cannot understand Alma's steadfast love because she herself has never remained constant, despite her name.

De Vigne is somewhat undeserving of Alma's loyalty, for his love and faith are not strong enough to believe in Alma's innocence. Thinking himself betrayed and the woman he loves deceitful when she unexpectedly disappears with another man, Vane Castleton, his struggle ends in doubt and ultimately complete distrust (344). However, Castleton actually kidnaps Alma after telling her that De Vigne, lying injured, awaits her. "A folly one way had tied him to the Trefusis; a folly in another way now robbed him of Alma" (374). Since Constance Trefusis entrapped him, he tries to be on the defense against Alma. His past heartbreak prevents him from distinguishing between Alma's innocence and the Trefusis's iniquity. Not granting Alma opportunity to explain her startling disappearance with his greatest rival, his love once again hardens to hatred and his faith melts into skepticism.

Eventually, De Vigne acknowledges that he wronged Alma. "[H]e loved her now with so great a love that he could have forgiven her all wrong to him, even though that wrong laid a curse upon his life that no weight of years could lift it, no length of time efface. He loved her, no matter what she was. And is love anything short of that?" (452). However, he will not forgive the Trefusis, who he also had professed to love until he learned of her evil chicanery. This willingness to forgive one and not the other suggests the deeper feeling and regard he possesses for Alma's mind, not merely her beauty, in contrast to the fundamentally physical relationship he and Constance shared.

Alma is extraordinarily forgiving of all De Vigne's wrongs against her, which according to Reed is a distinguishing trait of the conventional saint:

> The typical virtuous heroine of the Victorian novel is a softened version of Griselde—rewarded for exploitation by being venerated as a saint.

> Women, it is implied, are wonderfully angelic and superior to men for giving up their lives to male happiness—but there is no question that this is what they should do (Reed 38).

Admitting her love, Alma asks him, "How could I help but love you in joy or in sorrow, in death or in life; you, the realization of all my best ideals; you, to whom I owe all the happiness of my being; you, who have haunted all my sweetest dreams ever since my earliest childhood?" (327). When she realizes that the Trefusis is married to De Vigne—she does not yet know of the Trefusis's bigamy—she has much more to forgive because he allowed her to love him without telling her the truth. When De Vigne finally reveals to her "the hateful woman that Church and Law decreed to be, though heart and nature refused ever to acknowledge as, his wife" (328), the chances of being repulsed and despised are higher. After he confesses, "he thought he had killed her" (511). Ouida undercuts Alma's role as "heroine" in the novel when she metaphorically and melodramatically compares her reaction to a spaniel pardoning the deathblow of his master (511). The comparison seems to show admiration for Alma's steadfastness, but at the same time Ouida also uses the association between the saint and a dog to ridicule her. Alma, still loving him as faithfully as when she first pledged her allegiance to him, says in answer to his fears, "but cease to love you I cannot!" (513). Given her beloved's appalling lack of faith, Alma's magnanimity, dutiful submission to masculine will, and unconditional love unmistakably classify her as the forgiving angel.

In this battle of good and evil, which is a theme that recurs in Ouida's other novels though with a variety of endings, the faithful angel triumphantly receives her due reward. Marrying into the house of Vigne, she gains love, happiness, wealth, and

prestige quite serendipitously, as she did not set out to find these things. Society punishes the Judith figure, who remains a coarse adventuress past her prime, seeking an ever-elusive fortune. The Trefusis confirms that "[t]he woman who attempts to commandeer physical authority discloses her own incompleteness: a flower perhaps, but one no soil can nourish fully. The saintly way is best" (Reed 37). The respective roles of pure, saintly heroine and wicked adventuress in *Held in Bondage* are black and white stereotypes. On the one hand, the Trefusis, predominantly referred to as vulgar, wicked, and uneducated, lacks a lady's graces. Alma possesses everything that her nemesis does not: noble breeding, goodness, intellect, and all the mannerisms most sought after in a lady. Yet both are beautiful, and at different times De Vigne loves them both and then believes them both to be false. The difference here is that he realizes his mistake in abandoning Alma and recommits his life to her.

The Camellia-Rose and the Lily: The Two Loves of Strathmore's Life

"Pah! Give me women as soft, and as delicate, and as velvet as my peaches!" "Peaches?". . . "Ominous simile! Your soft women have an uncommonly hard stone at their core, and a kernel that's poison under the velvet skin. . . !" (*Strathmore* 10)

The vast disparity in disposition between the destructive woman and the angelic maiden in *Strathmore*, which is again titled after the protagonist, exemplifies Ouida's early and limited characterization. However, she does make a considerable step forward in this second novel. The maidenly saint figure, Lucille de Vocqsal, maintains an Alma-esque purity, while the Judith emblem, Marion Vavasour, bubbles over with all that was immoral in Victorian society—passion, adultery, manipulation, and malevolence. The difference is twofold. First, Marion, unlike the Trefusis, is adored by society because her unpleasant attributes lurk behind a veneer of flawless beauty. Deceptively ruthless, she achieves two-dimensionality by masking her true nature and appearing to be lovely. A married woman, at least to Strathmore's knowledge for the duration of their romance, she is the first true mistress of these novels. Notwithstanding, this mistress and adventuress turns from her hatred and vengeful desires, and she ultimately undergoes a repentance that Lucy Davis, the Judith figure of *Held in Bondage*, or even a young Marion Vavasour would mock.

After succumbing to his lust for the destructive adventuress, Lord Cecil Strathmore, in the vein of Granville de Vigne, finally redeems himself by wedding the virtuous young angel. These two female characters remain almost as stereotyped and jejune as those in *Granville de Vigne*. However, unlike Ouida's first novel, the omniscient narrator openly discloses what each character thinks, such as Strathmore's coldness unwittingly prompting Marion to warm him up and make him feel the passion

he has always scorned as a fool's fancy. In revealing her thoughts, the narrator establishes that she epitomizes evil; she also never exhibits a redeemable quality until her metamorphosis at the novel's end. Conversely, Lucille, the saintly wife, emits purity from every pore, rendering her incapable of thinking anything even remotely cruel. Like DeVigne, Strathmore eventually marries a woman who is a child, a toddler even, when they first meet. This coincidence is bizarre because both men are adults when their respective wives-to-be are babes. Perhaps the men like malleable young women who know no better than to love without questioning their husband's foibles. Furthermore, the purity Alma and Lucille share is indisputable, a boon considering that the males in Ouida's novels tend to dislike marrying sexually experienced women as much as they like to amuse themselves with women before they marry.

Strathmore's premarital amusement is a love affair with sensuous Marion. De Vigne intended to satisfy his desire for the Trefusis through marriage, but because Marion is supposedly married Strathmore does not have that option. His relationship with Marion is decidedly sexual in nature, and his attraction rests on intimately possessing her beauteous body. According to the maxims of Victorian convention, "[m]an-destroying women are frequently and quite naturally presented as handsome, but their beauty had a peculiar quality" (Reed 44), and Marion's siren song is her dangerous sexuality, represented by the camellia-hued roses with which she adorns her hair in a pivotal seduction scene (*Strathmore* 75). Her black eyes, "flashing at him sweetly and softly as an Oriental's" (85), contrast with her perfectly yellow-hued tresses. Her subtly pink cheeks, on either side of her full lips, are artless. All taken together, these elements form a countenance Strathmore finds comparable to those in Titian's paintings (31). By

daylight, patrician and plebian classes alike recognize her artless perfection, for Marion is without "a flaw or a blemish" (96) even when divested of the bejeweled costumes she dons for nighttime entertainments. She is "essentially feminine" (96) and ever graceful, seeming as comfortable on an outdoor bench as she does in drawing rooms. Yet behind her white arms and musical voice (87) lurks a compulsively controlling personality, equally lustful for power and passion.

A true temptress, Marion exploits her beauty to rise into the crème de la crème, recognizing that her face gives her power to lure. She utilizes this asset to attain all she can while she still possesses it (35). Though the European upper class disapproves of her marriage of convenience to the Marquis of Vavasour and Vaux (11), she disarms them with her pretty face and her husband's money. Burgeoning into a pillar of society almost instantaneously (48), she reigns as a ringleader of fashion. Her beauty and voluptuous form along with her wit and slyness lead society to veritably worship (62) "the beauty of Paris" and the "Sovereign of the Salons" (117). Unlike the Trefusis, Marion articulates with ease and fluidity, and she carries on delightful, bewitching conversation (31). Listeners treat her words with respect simply because of the celebrated lips speaking them. She loves for men to pay homage to her and to compliment her (33), a gratification made possible by her husband. He readily allows her to flirt with whomever she pleases (49), which causes men everywhere to rave about her and creates quite a sensation.

In spite of the thorough enjoyment she receives from gleaning society's worship, Marion's true aim is absolute hegemony. She is actually deceiving society because she and the Marquis are not married at all. The Marquis was reluctant to marry the

impoverished but beauteous Marion, so they struck a compromise by appearing to be husband and wife. Though she describes herself as unpredictable (79), she successfully uses his wealth and prestige to sustain her attack on society and her quest for dominance for over half a decade. Nothing matters but "POWER! It was the ideal of Marion Vavasour's religion," and she "never exercised it more capriciously and mercilessly than over Strathmore" (154). She predicts her own future as a beautiful conqueror so long as the instruments of war can be battle-ready (44): "it is power—while it lasts. . . . To make them, as I have made, kneel and pray, and grovel in the dust to kiss one's feet. . . . Ah! it is Power! None wider, none surer on earth, while it lasts!" (283). She does not adequately plan for the day when she will grow old; instead, she endeavors to enjoy her dazzling present life-style (35).

Throughout the first half of *Strathmore*, when Marion is still fresh as her representative roses, her skillful orchestration of others for her entertainment characterizes her power-mongering disposition. A prime example of her ability to dominate is the fierce passion she produces in Strathmore even though he sees "something startling with all her seductiveness, bizarre with all her beauty, dangerous with all her delicacy" (82). Marion slowly tempts and controls him after she realizes that Strathmore scorns and avoids love. Because he believes himself above falling in love, she can manipulate his weakness to her better advantage (35). "Tantalizing, obstinate, capricious, willful, wayward, but bewitching . . ." (46), fully aware of her power, she decides to tempt him with the unattainable as the perfect challenge to his vanity and self-assuredness (63). "I should like to see him roused. Shall I rouse him?" (64). Marion desires to play a game with the unmovable man (44), to crush his thirst for power and to

make him yearn not for authority among nations, but for her alone (85). She manipulates his future, changing his plans to her will (64). Though he dislikes her, Marion dexterously obtains his allegiance. If she were merely a coquette, Strathmore's disgust for women of that ilk would guard him against her. However, she acts perfectly charming, for Marion is "too highly finished a coquette to need any such vulgar and common-place ruses" (79). Strathmore surrenders before her pretty smile, and she claims a wonderfully amusing victory.

Marion achieves this triumph by employing numerous stratagems. At all times, she keeps Strathmore from assuming too much about her interest in him while piquing his interest in her. He loses his self-composure when she is present, a failure for which she rejoices (77). She taunts him and makes him jealous by sending him from her so that his rivals may take his place (86). A true temptress, she knows exactly the ways of the hunt and "that no possible mode of action could have better impressed her on Strathmore's thoughts . . ." (87). Unceasingly trying to beguile him, "She talked gaily, lightly, charmingly, with some little wit, and a little goes a long way when uttered by such lips" (39). Coming to watch him play cards, Lady Vavasour interrupts his deliberation and he loses (89); "he had lost his game and she had won hers" (89). This game of écarte is symbolic of what happens to Strathmore's life because of his susceptibility to an infamous beauty's wordless persuasion. She is confident in her success: "Knew her own power! Truly she did, and used it without mercy, without scruple!" (122). All of her ploys do their job with expert efficiency.

Beguiled by Marion, Strathmore believes she loves him (122), but her affection, like her marriage, is an act. Though she sends him several subtle messages meant to

imply that she returns his passionate love, "Love she had never known, save for her own beauty . . ." (412). She feigns tenderness for him and elicits his pity by sighing as though she wishes herself free. Her blushes undo him:

> The faint rose-blush, that was the most dangerous of all Lady Vavasour's charms, since it was the one which flattered most, and most surely counterfeited nature, came on her cheeks, and her eyes met his with a languid sweetness. It was the first whisper of the syren's sea-song, that was to lead by music unto wreck and death. . . . (86)

When Strathmore finally gives in, he believes he loves Marion. However, his desire is a love "in its most soulless, love in its most sensual form, but that form the most alluring, the most dangerous, in which it ever steals into the life of man" (123). He vows to gratify her every wish if she would love him (134). She convinces him she loves him, whispering her promises "with her temptress tongue" (150). Having won him, she contents herself with thwarting his pleasure (127). She pretends to love him, but she simultaneously ruins his future—not exactly the mark of love.

Once Marion fully possesses Strathmore, her extraordinary control of him increases as he feels greater revulsion towards her power and beauty. This phenomenon occurs because any pain she brings upon him only escalates his passion; it thrills him to play with fire (109). Marion, discerning his thoughts, reflects, "My cold Strathmore, you are my captive now!" (118). To test his obedience and to publicly humiliate him, she orders him to do as she bids on every issue or renounce her forever. The choice is his, theoretically, but she only gives him the option trusting that he will choose her (154). She continues to command and harangue him until she pushes him to hate, and then kill,

his best friend—Lucille's father. He does it willingly, blinded by her treachery. Pushing his passion into idolatry with her lies, "It was the most marvelous and matchless acting with which the false breath of a woman's lips ever yet duped man!" (176). Her commands and his inmost desires meet in evil. However, his love turns to bitterest hatred when he learns the truth about her:

> She saw the man she had fooled with the simulacrum of an undying love, and whom her breath, with its traitorous caresses, had wooed to the bottomless depths of crime. And she knew that he knew her aright at last—saw that there are moments in human life which transform men to fiends, leaving them no likeness of themselves; moments in which the bond-slave, goaded to insanity, turns and rends his tyrant. (186)

Though from the beginning of their romance, "something in the brilliant and witching creature struck upon Strathmore as dangerous—almost as repulsive…" (41), he learns his willful foolishness too late.

Following his retribution, which is his revelation to society that Marion is actually the Marquis' mistress, not his wife, she "gave herself unto dazzling evil" (281). She spends the next decade and a half looking for a way to bring Strathmore down to grovel with her, but her search fails (282). She loses her power and money along with her beauty, and she must experience aging without her crown of title or beauty. Though most of her charms flee, she retains her figure and mannerisms (284), and,

> In this light, with the bloom of art upon all her face, and the lustre of art lent to her eyes, with mock diamonds glittering where once the costly sapphires of a peeress had lain, with the enamel covering the deep haggard

> lines, and a smile haunting the lips with the mocking shadow of its old resistless witchery, there was some loveliness still. . . . (301)

The ghost of what she once was, she relies fully on cosmetic products to recreate her lost youth (280). Her peerless rose cheeks fade and she must recreate them with rouge (221). She becomes a "tired, travel-worn, haggard, heart-sick" (409) pauper.

Marion's downfall follows a distinctive pattern in Victorian literature: "Violating her true womanhood through pride in a society that values the virtue and obedience of women may provide a woman with temporary power, but ultimately, having thus betrayed her womanhood, she must suffer" (Reed 46). Eventually revenge becomes the only thing remaining in Marion's dismal life for which to hope (*Strathmore* 412). She hates Lucille, who is now married to Strathmore, for having the beauty and status she once had (409). Most of all, she envies Lucille for sharing Strathmore's wealth and respect when she has become destitute (450). Having found that Lucille is the means by which she can make Strathmore suffer (414), Marion attempts revenge but fails: "I could not touch her—look on her—breathe near her. Her prayer stood between us, her father's memory held her from me, the dead himself smote my vengeance from my hands. I spared her!" (474). Only Lucille can expiate the crime Strathmore and Marion together committed; her purity wins their redemption. Marion then reassesses her life and sees it as she has lived it—vilely (472). After this experience, she wishes she were pure and sinless like Lucille. This feeling only comes with the death of vengeance in her.

A myriad of differences separate Lucille and the youthful Marion, from their appearance to their mannerisms. Marion's appeal is more luscious and exotic than the wholesomeness so attractive in Lucille. Marion tempts with sophistication and

luxuriousness, whereas Lucille fails to comprehend her own capacity to entice. By the time Lucille ripens into beauty, Marion has aged considerably. Over time, Strathmore discovers the difference in loving each woman; in the mistress, he loves only the temptation, while in the wife he loves how she imparts goodness to him. Gratefulness and passion concisely phrase the different approaches the two women demonstrate in loving Strathmore and vice versa. While Marion is all sexual tension, Lucille has never been exposed to anything impure. Strathmore thinks Marion pretty, a temptress, and a bit wanton, a trait he will never stand for in a wife (66). In contrast, nothing indecent can be connected to Lucille; she is the ideal virgin wife. While the tremendously inconstant Marion is unfaithful to both the Marquis and Strathmore, Lucille wants the attention of only one man for the rest of her life. She does not use her beauty to cause men to throw themselves at her mercy, nor does her love for Strathmore rest on his love for her. Marion's affection, in contrast, continues only as long as Strathmore will subjugate himself to her. Their personalities show that the saint has nothing in common with the wicked temptress, at least until the latter's reformation.

Lucille is indeed the antithesis of Marion. She is more interested in other creatures than in herself, and she mourns even the dying flowers (255). Her perfect innocence prevents Lucille from conceiving of her own beauty, and consequently she knows nothing of vanity (276). She has faultless skin as fair as her unsullied reputation, and her youthful face frames her luminous violet eyes beneath her "low and broad" (255) forehead. She resembles her father, exuding his liveliness of countenance (274). This physical likeness smites Strathmore from the day he takes her under his care. Her smile reminds him of his crime against Erroll (197). Unaware of her history, onlookers only

notice "there was that in Lucille's face which vaguely touched to sadness all those who gazed on her" (322). Her innocent radiance (308) enchants whomever she meets. Ironically, she becomes as influential in society as Marion once was, but she manages to do so without plotting or manipulation.

Through Marion's betrayal and Erroll's untimely death, the child Lucille's happiness becomes of paramount importance to Strathmore: "his tenderness for Lucille had become the one holy and unselfish thing in a heart to which the gentler and purer feelings of human nature and of human ties were by nature a lie" (260). However, at that point he loves her only because of her father and not because of any regard he feels for this pretty child (260). Strathmore isolates Lucille, and consequently she experiences very little except what he desires for her to encounter. Therefore, she does not understand flattery. After Strathmore's friend Valdor's flattery falls on unaccustomed ears (271), Lucille does not know what to make of him. Yet her lack of understanding and her purity only make her all the more appealing to men.

Nothing is dearer to Lucille than her guardian Strathmore. At the age of four, she promises to love him when he asks her if she will (214), and she keeps her vow for life. She relishes time spent with him (271), and he looks upon his visits with her as a purging, a cleansing with hyssop, for his sin (274). However, romantic love is out of Lucille's realm of experience and knowledge (328). When Valdor hints that Strathmore once had a lover, his words alarm Lucille, causing a "sudden breathless terror" (330). She recoils in anguish that her beloved Strathmore loved once before. No longer a child, she now for the first time knows something of womanly love, and that alteration is apparent in her

sudden shyness and in her uncertain blush and smiles (331). Love is an awakening for Lucille.

More timid than Alma and lacking her vivacity, Lucille's affection takes time to progress from loving Strathmore as a father figure into loving him as a man. When the topic of marriage is broached, she grows frightened and even pained that she will be bereft of her guardian; "she scarce knew why" (320). She cries, "tears half sweet, half bitter, born from what spring she barely knew, risen from the heart which was half unconscious, half fearful of all which was waking in it" (335). Strathmore suddenly realizes she loves him (369), which relieves his fear that he would lose his means of making peace with the dead (319). Although he can see love shining in her eyes as she looks at him, because of his guilt he cannot respond to her (380): " 'Love!—from her! My God! If she knew me as I am!—she would abhor me—she would hold my very touch accursed. Wed her to her father's murderer! Ay! It would be but added sin. My life cannot—and yet—who would have cherished her as I—?' " (377). Nonetheless, apprehensive about Lucille's health, Strathmore reveals his feelings. At their wedding, Lucille shyly blushes in contrast to the bouquet she holds of her signature white lilies of youth and innocence (407), ignorantly jubilant as "[h]is love was pledged her as her husband's, the love which had been Marion Vavasour's" (408).

Their relationship, built on mutual trust and not on self-satisfaction, is much different than Strathmore's earlier and wilder obsession. As his wife, Lucille rejoices in being more beloved than any other person in Strathmore's life, fulfilling the Victorian stereotype: "While the unwomanly Judith suffers a crippled femininity, the wholesome saint achieves the blessing of wedlock, and what is more, the opportunity to expand her

goodness to the responsibility and joy of motherhood" (Reed 47). Strathmore never grows reticent; he always loves the affection she gives him (*Strathmore* 417). Marriage changes Strathmore for the better, and Lucille remains as pure as she ever was, transforming from maiden saint to married saint, an "obedient and loving wife, moral guide, selfless individual, and benefactress of the poor" (Reed 38). Strathmore and Lucille's mutual love fosters an interest in each other's happiness, quite distinct from Marion's self-satisfying domination.

The lily's spotlessness imparts goodness to those who have most greatly wronged her. Marion, as earlier described, repents of her past and from then on assists the suffering poor. She is redeemed through Lucille's angelic grace and prayers for the fallen woman. With Marion's radical reversal she illustrates a third category of stereotypes; the Judith figure once redeemed becomes a new Magdalen, figure of the fallen woman redeemed. Her attempts to live like a saint temper her earlier sexuality; however, she can never dismiss her past and become, like Lucille, wholly pure. The line between good and evil becomes slightly blurred with the addition of the new Magdalen to Ouida's fiction, but while Marion changes from her original stereotyped character, Lucille remains the same. She is and will ever be the saint, but the camellia-rose, blessed by the lily, becomes an entirely new convention.

He Loves Me, He Loves Her Too: *Friendship* and the Double Standard

"To put your heart into life is the most fatal of errors; it is to give a hostage to your enemies whom you can only ransom at the price of your ruin." (Friendship 98)

When Ouida fell in love "suddenly, violently, and lastingly, with an Italian ten years older than herself" (Stirling 89), she found a wealth of fodder for her pivotal, notorious, and loosely autobiographical novel *Friendship*. The book closely parallels *Strathmore* in that the Judith-like mistress is an unfaithful wife with both a paramour and a husband who is not at all blind to her having a lover. Similarly, the saintly heroine's characteristics are diametrically opposite those of the mistress. Here too, the mistress desires the love of the same man the saint eventually loves. While this mistress craves the thrill of the chase and the titillation of victory more than she craves the man, the maiden veritably loves him, not his ancestral home or the ability to rule him. However, similarities end when in this novel the mistress usurps the saintly maiden, leaving the maiden desolate and everyone else involved repressed into mute unhappiness. For the first time the hero prefers the ruinous mistress over the saint, just as the Marchese della Stufa apparently preferred Mrs. Janet Ross over Ouida. Prince Ioris, the author's recreation of Stufa, never marries the artist Etoile. He stays with Lady Joan, the mistress who he presumably can never marry.

Early in the novel, the character Ouida fashioned after herself is as uninformed about the love affair as she was, and both the invented character and the real person fall painfully in love before discovering that the man they loved had a mistress. In fact, neither even considered the possibility. According to Stirling,

> Her adolescent stories had been full of dashing males with mistresses, but she had no experiences of mistresses in fact—and her relationship with

> della Stufa was strongly established long before anyone told her...he had been . . . the *cher ami* . . . of Mrs. Ross. . . . (Stirling 96)

Even after learning about Stufa and Mrs. Ross, Ouida waited "for love, like a young girl, on the threshold of middle age" (Stirling 125). Etoile does the same, just as wretchedly and hopelessly. Ioris, like della Stufa, finds himself locked in a binding lie, fated for a life without peace. Like Janet Ross, Joan Challoner wins her prize and manipulates everything to her satisfaction, which is her constant ambition.

While the two rivals for Ioris are quite different in many aspects, their physical difference is most immediately noticeable. Lady Joan is a "handsome, black-browed woman" (2) with dark hair, while Etoile's coloring, both hair and skin, is very fair. In contrast to Lady Joan's intermittently gray and green amorous eyes, Etoile's eyes are "like the boyish portrait of Shelley" (27). Each one has a physical trademark: Lady Joan has perfect teeth and perfectly amiable lips (32), and Etoile's figure is lithe and slim (27). Ioris, however, finds them both quite stimulating in the beginning of each intrigue. He and Lady Joan continue their theatrical love affair only because of his inability to resist her dominance, not because of his physical attraction or aversion to either woman.

Unlike the former Judith and saint figures, both of these women are titled nobility, but Lady Joan's family is much larger and much better known than that of Etoile, the Comtesse d'Avesnes. Lady Joan is the daughter of a Scottish earl with ducal cousins and a family tree dating to before the reign of Robert the Bruce (41). Though in her youth she had been quite capable of marrying a peer, she instead married the middle-class Mr. Challoner, whose family is in carpets, and finds herself approaching middle age as an insignificant gentlewoman (127). She admits her husband is extremely distasteful to her

(74). Perhaps the Challoner wedding took place because of Lady Joan's pregnancy and need to marry someone—anyone—quickly and quietly, a theory made possible given the relative closeness between the age of their twelve-year-old child (54) and the length of their thirteen-year marriage (37). Unlike Lady Joan, Etoile has been an orphan since youth. Therefore she is the last to bear her ancient name (24). Powerless to prove her rank, Etoile suffers under society's disbelief and gossip, while Lady Joan's Perth-Douglas heritage and seemingly happy marriage save her reputation despite her love affair with Prince Ioris.

Like Marion Vavasour, Lady Joan's possessiveness compels her to rule Ioris completely. A much more passive character than his male predecessors in *Held in Bondage* and *Strathmore*, he bends to her will her rather than confront her wrath. As a result, his hereditary duties and affairs gradually become Lady Joan's business (179). She relishes in the power he is too happy to relinquish to her: "She was the ruin of his life, whilst she declared herself his salvation" (164). She likes to have him available at her pleasure, and he infuriates her if he demonstrates a will or idea of his own. Whenever Lady Joan notices Ioris's weariness with her, she struggles to prevent him from escaping her. Having won Ioris years earlier, she keeps him by making him wary of angering her (182). He is, for all practical purposes, the bond-slave of Lady Joan, and he begins to sense his disgrace when Etoile urges him to reevaluate his position (75). Yet Ioris does nothing, and Lady Joan's dominion over his life and property never ceases.

This mistress's dominance extends just beyond controlling Ioris. Lady Joan considers his ancestral home hers (36). In truth, her attachment to him has much to do with Fiordelisa, his family estate in the Roman countryside. Were he to lose this manor

house, she would not hesitate to rid herself of him (249): "Fiordelisa was the Lady Joan's fee-simple of Ioris. Had he never let her within the walls of Fiordelisa, Liberty would not have outspread its wings and fled away from him" (78). Considering the place quite her own, she loves to invite people up for dinners and teas or to "come and smoke under the stars" (81). She even rages at Ioris for proposing to give up his palace and its lands in order to assist those who lost money in one of her schemes (230). His dignity and honor are of much less importance to Lady Joan than her contentment, which she considers dependent on her managing his home and lands.

Due to her supervision of Fiordelisa, Lady Joan seems to herself, and indeed to those in society who are not blind to her hidden appetite for power, both resourceful and wise. While Lady Joan's close friends often notice and ridicule her dishonesty and her foibles, she remains ignorant of her absurdities and of others mocking her for them (51). For example, the explorer Voightel, a loyal friend of Etoile, describes Lady Joan as "a fagot of contradictions; extraordinarily ignorant, but naturally intelligent; audacious, yet timid; a bully, but a coward; full of hot passions, but with cold fits of prudence" (31). Though amply endowed with cunning and liveliness (31), Lady Joan does not know herself. "She never dreamed that she was only a terrible coward at heart, disguised in a fine swagger . . . , having neither the force in her to defy society, nor the force in her to deny her passions" (104-5). Her large ego hides these faults.

Lady Joan's Napoleonic self-image accounts for her blunder in believing Ioris incapable of wandering affections. His mistress believes him still very much in love with her. The faithfulness she demands from him but does not herself abide by increases her propensity to be jealous; however, the same narcissism prevents her from thinking him

unfaithful (162). Eventually, Lady Joan inadvertently drives away all of Ioris's passion for her. After installing herself in Ioris's palace, Lady Joan soon forgets that the sexual charms she used to attract him contrast significantly with the wholesome image of the diligent cultivator she creates for their very upright English visitors (82). He decides,

> She was everything that he disliked in woman; her voice seemed harsh to him, her gestures rough, her attitudes masculine, her look unfeminine. She had none of the soft charms of womanhood; she danced ill, she dressed ill; she was distasteful to him; she saw all that well enough, but she resolved to avenge it. (56)

Though first he found her intriguing and exciting, their invariable interaction makes what was once extraordinary and exciting commonplace (168). As his disenchantment grows, he begins to rue their relationship. Boredom drives him to other interests, and he dabbles in romance with Etoile. That Lady Joan lacks Marion's enchanting beauty or Etoile's understanding should necessitate a constant battle for his commitment, but she forgets he could be physically or mentally bored with her.

Perhaps this lapse is due to Lady Joan's time-consuming calculation of her every action in terms of what good it will bring her in society. Though born well, Lady Joan is by no means wealthy enough to be part of the crème de la crème, a fact that peeves her (103). However, she succeeds in being perceived as she chooses by whomever she chooses, so that her highborn relatives believe her to be a proper wife. She is very aware of the peculiar tendencies of others and how to manipulate them. When she perceives society's condescension, the result of her status as a well-born but ill-married gentlewoman, she "would meet the offender with such a smile, and such an emphatic

cordiality, that she was the best Christian that ever, being buffeted on one cheek, turned graciously the other" (48). Lady Joan also treats those beneath her in society as her equal, thereby solidifying their support for her. While she does not like to associate with the lesser gentility, she knows that good will come from these unpleasant associations (92). They readily proclaim her virtues and promulgate propaganda about Ioris being only her friend. Thus she protects herself from harmful gossip.

Many secrets about Lady Joan's past, like why she married Mr. Challoner, her bawdy romps with numerous lovers while in the East, and her affair with Prince Ioris, make this deception indispensable. She most fears her past becoming public knowledge, crushing the matronly image she strives daily to maintain. For that reason, she treats anyone who knew her during those wild days with the utmost of respect, and she manipulates Voightel with her charm when he visits Rome (209). Lady Joan's daredevil sense of adventure lasts only as long as virtuous visitors from England are absent. In their presence, she expertly pretends to be a prudent wife and mother (44). To carry on this act, the Challoners argue only in private, and consequently the world continues believes their marriage to be very suitable and amiable (108). Despite the fact that she seems as moral as the moralists, she is only expertly pretending, masking her true desire to do as she pleases. Once out of the public eye, she does just that (49). In truth, she disguises her sinful liaisons as adeptly as Marion Vavasour hides her darkest secret underneath the adornments of beauty and title.

Though now and again her cowardice betrays her, Lady Joan leads her double life largely without incident (141). Lady Cardiff, a British matriarch residing in Rome, tells Etoile that Lady Joan continually worries that society will realize she is having an affair

with Ioris. Lady Joan is just as worried that her more artistic friends, present on the nights when she smokes and sings love melodies, will believe the Challoners when they describe Ioris as only their dear friend. She fears becoming unacceptable to either group of people (116). Etoile discovers Lady Cardiff's wisdom when she witnesses Lady Joan's duplicitous act of propriety for the first time. After seeing her hostess so often smoking and singing before one set of guests, Etoile knows her attitude of genteel goodness to be a farce (234), and she becomes disgusted by her hostess's fraud. She sees both facades of Lady Joan, but she does not yet know who the woman really is.

Because Lady Joan and Etoile interact more than any other set of rivals, Ouida has ample opportunity to demonstrate how Lady Joan's deceitfulness pervades even her relationship with Etoile. Before the two even meet, Lady Joan dislikes the artist. Etoile's immediate reception by Roman aristocracy vexes the social-climber greatly (61); she is jealous because Etoile has the money, fame, and position that Lady Joan covets. She recognizes Etoile's superior class and taste, admitting, "She seems to be perfection. I hate perfect people" (15). That Etoile has been so much in the world and still seems so unspoiled baffles Lady Joan, who cannot imagine that an artist could live through fame and still be genuinely spotless. She believes that as a female professional, Etoile must be scandalous (14); therefore, Lady Joan invents lewd stories in hopes that others will believe her (113). Though Lady Joan increasingly slanders Etoile, she simultaneously revels in the attention she receives from association with Etoile's widespread celebrity (64), and she continues to flatter and pretend to admire Etoile (16). Lady Joan's cruel mistreatment of their friendship is only one manifestation of the way she treats all society—for her greater gain.

Reminiscent of Alma and Lucille, Etoile does not at all resemble her mutable, capricious nemesis. Society and Lady Joan believe that "an independent woman challenged moral and social assumptions which Victorians considered essential to a stable society" and that "such a woman promised to be dangerously uncontrollable" (Reed 36). For this reason, they assume that Etoile must have some mystery she does not want unraveled (*Friendship* 13). Their suspicion is quite a change from society's admiration of the saint figure's purity in *Held in Bondage* and *Strathmore*. However, Etoile has no terrible past (18). Regardless of preconceived opinions about the immorality of artists, Etoile is quite comfortable with her own identity, and she does not pretend to be other than she really is (149). Her fame spreads because of her artistic genius, which enables her to have a positive influence on her peers (25). Despite the constraints of society on women's education, she has extensively studied the masters of literature and art. As a result, her artistic achievements extend beyond painting to sculpture and writing (170). All these things combine to make her an unworldly, yet intellectual, woman that society cannot comprehend.

Unconcerned by prevailing reports about her, Etoile makes enemies by not ingratiating herself with Roman society while the obsequious Lady Joan wins their favor with her persistence (146). Never motivated to notice people and inclined to daydream, Etoile fails to perceive her admiring fans, and thereby she alienates people. "This kind of oblivion was usually her deadliest sin, and she was unconscious that she sinned, which made it very much worse" (11). Society does not realize that Etoile hates the fame that her art brings. She would rather be able to live in obscurity and paint unattended than

bear the burden of notoriety, but she knows it is too late to escape this fate (194). She tells Ioris:

> But I do not care very much for society–not even for that of Paris. In my own house there I receive a good deal; that I like; but society is monotonous; it has no infinite variety as study has, and art. Besides, I think the artist, like the saint, should keep himself 'unspotted from the world' as far as possible. It only dims our sight and dwarfs our aims. (148)

Her disregard for those around her also leads her into other mistakes, such as making people nervous without either realizing she does or ever meaning to do so (66). Since she does not notice people, she does not notice that she makes them uncomfortable.

Etoile's naivety, on the other hand, helps her to remain uncorrupted. Although Etoile is very cold to men, she still wants to know what love is. She thinks that a passionate, deep and undying love would compensate for any accompanying heartbreak (31). Ioris immediately observes that she has not experienced love. He considers her too serious, unworldly, and distant to enjoy frivolous society life and idle flirtations (35). Etoile confesses, "Art alone moves me" (151), and because painting enraptures her, she has no need or concern for anything else. Etoile's perfectly insouciant behavior lasts only as long as she does not know human ardor. When she experiences love, she becomes fully human, and her bright-eyed innocence dissolves.

Etoile's danger in falling from perfect innocence into heartache only elevates Ioris's delight at melting her coldness. Initially Ioris's interest in her is aroused because she is something forbidden. His curiosity, stemming from her purity and her coldness,

spurs him to introduce her to human passion (171). After Ioris conquers her emotions, Etoile knows the first pang of a love (207) that should not be: "Ioris had grown to be much. She scarcely knew it, but the pity she felt for him, the sympathy that he had appealed for, drew her heart toward him as it had never been drawn to any mortal creature" (213). He knows that Etoile's fate is in his hands and that she loves him, yet he is insensitive to the fact that he may brutally injure her. This fact makes his love rather self-seeking (*Friendship* 257). After years with Lady Joan, Ioris believes, as Robert Bell states in *The Ladder of Gold*, that "[s]tern and obdurate strength is not the finest characteristic of women; they are most strong and most lovable in their weakness . . . even their errors and failures add a grace to our devotion by leaving something for our magnanimity to forgive" (quoted in Reed 52). He enjoys spending time with Etoile because she does not stifle his interests like his mistress but promotes them over those of her own. "Passion imperious, exacting, cruel, domineering, had long preyed upon his life, but passion tender, obedient, intense, and full of the humility to which a great love bends down the strongest, was strange to him" (284). Her submission heightens his delight in mastering her. As the paramour of perhaps Rome's most domineering and jealous woman, he knows full well Etoile's danger in loving him, and yet he cares more about satiating his desires than for her safety.

In *Friendship*, Ouida argues that Etoile's love is incredibly, even perfectly, true love. She loves Ioris more than she loves herself. Continuing a precedent Ouida started in depictions of the saint figure earlier in her career, Etoile cares more about Ioris than about possessing him (281). Abandoning herself to her love, Etoile believes that he returns her love (320). Ioris shields her from the truth (280) so that the continuation of

his affair with Lady Joan seems irrelevant to Etoile. She fails to recognize that spending time with him does not result necessarily in his commitment to her alone. Instead of pushing him to be loyal to her, Etoile becomes lenient. Even though she knows he remains involved with Lady Joan, her love leads her to trust him nevertheless (322). Her trust enables him to continue taking advantage of her. He sins against her because he knows that she will forgive him. Once she forgives him, he is shameless for his betrayal. Because she foolishly loves him still, his promise that everything will again be perfect pacifies her fears (307). In fact, her tears show him that he could kill her and she would still love him. As a result, sinning again becomes easier for him (261). His response to her love is cruel; it demonstrates that he cares more for the conquest than for her. He acts under the same motivation that induced Lady Joan to seduce him. To phrase it briefly, Etoile loves him even after he renounces her (295).

The end result is heartbreak, which Ouida said was the only possible outcome of a love so true and real that it persists even while enduring pain. Lady Cardiff correctly asserts that the love triangle can only end with Etoile lovelorn. Once Ioris surrenders to Lady Joan's temper, Etoile will no longer have the ethereal, naive qualities that made her unique and that allowed for her artistic genius (274). Etoile is no longer distant from the world and its passions; in teaching them to her and leaving her, Ioris brings sorrow into a once content life (289). Ouida likens her to Elaine, who pines away for Sir Lancelot and eventually dies with her love unreciprocated[1] (260). Indeed, Etoile's physical and emotional strength wanes and her art perishes with her lover.

However, although Lady Joan is obviously Etoile's rival, the prince himself is the true antagonist of the novel. Neither woman can be happy with or without him, nor can

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[1] From Arthurian legend and Tennyson's Idylls of the King

he decide between them. He plans on ridding himself of one woman and doting solely on the other, but he fails. His fear, his spinelessness, and his pride prevent him from ever making his choice; in fact, he remains with Lady Joan because doing so does not require any display of force on his part—because it is easier. Both women end up deceived by him because he cannot be true to either one of them. He pretends to love Lady Joan while he loves Etoile, but when he is with Lady Joan and her close friends, he pretends to love her and to despise Etoile. Thus, Ioris successfully cheats simultaneously on two women without getting into danger. He manages it beautifully. The maiden never has her hero, for the mistress keeps the hero too afraid of angering her to fight for the woman he really wants.

Etoile's disappointment and Ioris's collapse in *Friendship* are not the only alterations from Ouida's early novels. Very importantly and quite catastrophically for Etoile, Lady Joan has all the appearance of goodness while Etoile possesses all of it. In this novel, however, the image of the mistress is no longer the purely evil Judith figure. Rather, the line between good and bad unavoidably blurs because changeability coincides with stalwart immutability in Lady Joan to give her authenticity unseen in Marion Vavasour or Lucy Davis. She is not the personification of any single characteristic, whereas both of the former Judith figures are wickedness itself. Instead, she shows a clear understanding of society's values, and she conforms to them only when she must. Etoile differs from Alma and Lucille in not winning her very literal prince. She is an atypical saint figure in Ouida's fiction because she represents the tragic image of the forlorn innocent pining for unrequited love, but she remains stereotyped as the pure and saintly young female. The author makes Lady Joan a much more realistic character than

Etoile. Only when the saint becomes the victim of a tyrannical man will she too become more complex.

The Angel of *Moths* Finds Her Wings

"The moths will eat all that fine delicate feeling away, little by little; the moths of the world will eat the unselfishness first, and then the innocence, and then the honesty, and then the decency; no one will see them eating, no one will see the havoc being wrought; but little by little the fine fabric will go, and in its place will be dust." (*Moths* 54)

Written shortly after the publication of *Friendship*, *Moth*'s heroine searches for the same happiness that Ouida found so elusive in real life. The major difference between this book, "her greatest success from a financial and worldly viewpoint" (Stirling 132), and the one prior to it is that *Moths* ends favorably for the ever-fair maiden. Love conquers with time, despite the interference of multiple mistresses and an unloving husband who taints the purity of the saint figure, Vere. Once married, the traditional saint emblem morphs into the Griselda figure; the change is minor, as Griseldas are former saints who have become dutiful, submissive wives. Vere is a "typical example of the wife who courageously endures intolerable conditions" (Reed 40).

When her husband, Zouroff, unleashes his devilish cruelty on the famous tenor Corrèze, the innocent man Vere loves, Vere flees her promised loyalty, given before God, though her husband long since broke his vows and wishes to legally dissolve them. Zouroff outrages his wife through his intended, yet unjust and unfounded, retribution. More importantly, he extinguishes Vere's sense of responsibility, successfully ending her commitment to endure a barren life, come what may. Both, in essence, receive their desired freedom, but only Vere is rewarded with contentment through love. In stepping out of the saintly mold into that of the Griselda, she remains a conventional character. But as a remarried divorcée, she can no longer be either a pure saint or pining Griselda

figure. Although she is somewhat akin to the new Magdalen figure, her sexual exploitation came within the sanction of marriage.

Much like Marion Vavasour, Vere's phenomenal exquisiteness destines her to become a social powerhouse. Her mother, Lady Dolly, appraises her assets as bargaining tools for a materially successful marriage (*Moths* 17), but she fails to appreciate Vere as anything more than a commodity to be sold off as soon as someone will have her. Likewise, just as all "fashionable society" saw only Marion Vavasour's beauty, it sees only Vere's physical features. Her blonde hair, gray eyes, and perfect flower-petal skin augment her appeal: "That fair, grave, colorless face, so innocent yet so proud, so childlike yet so thoughtful, with its musing eyes and its arched mouth, became the theme of artists, the adoration of dandies, the despair of women" (153). These spoiled dandies, unfortunately for Vere, have only their own physical satisfaction in mind, and Prince Zouroff is the quintessential libertine. Quite unaware of its dangerous charm, Vere's coldness unknowingly induces him to mistake his libidinous desires for love. However, the singer Corrèze has an inherently different reaction to her, exclaiming, "How sweet she is now! sweet as the sweet-brier, and as healthy.... How clear the soul, how clear the eyes!" (44). His paternalistic instinct to protect her innocence from the menacing deceptions of aristocratic life contrasts with Zouroff's goal of possessing and sexually enjoying her famous beauty. Nothing more will be required of Vere, as Princess Zouroff, to be fascinating to and followed by both the elite and the populace.

Vere, however, is very different from the perceptions of her. From an upbringing spent much in the open air, she garners both good health and knowledge of exercises, including riding and boating. She not only participates in a variety of outdoor activities,

but she studies Greek, science, mathematics, and music with pleasure (20). Her grandmother instilled in her a strong Protestant faith and absolute duty to her family, which eventually enlarges to include Zouroff. This religious and sheltered childhood leaves her wholly unprepared for Lady Dolly, who is nothing like the lady Vere was raised to become. The shaky relationship existing between mother and daughter is emotionally trying for Vere, who only wants to be loved. She cries often when her mother treats her (27) like an inanimate doll that she must dress up and patronize with imitated maternal sentiment. Often perceived as frozen in attitude, Vere feels her suffering acutely but chooses not to reveal it to prying eyes. She hides her pain, first caused by her mother's lack of affection and later as she tolerates life under tyranny of mind and body.

Vere finds society's admiration ridiculous. She shares Etoile's opinion that society is nothing more than a large number of people with absolutely no demands on their time. Though their happiness and frivolity makes her envious, Vere finds it strange that individuals should seek amusement instead of more substantial and worthwhile goals (24). She thinks her mother's friends are not only disgraceful and embarrassing, but also disgusting, and she wants no part in their activities (68). The fraudulence of society life appalls her (81). All the secret intrigues, the flirtations, the love affairs, and the ribaldry disturb her perception of honorable, dignified gentility: "To the complete innocence and honesty of the girl's nature the discovery of what store the world set on all things which she had been taught to hold sacred left a sickening sense of solitude and depression behind it" (72). Seeing society and all that is in it, including her mother, prompts her decision not to conform to it. Lady Dolly, devoid of all shame, embarrasses Vere greatly

(82). Her mother's indecorum in practically all situations is more shocking than society to Vere.

Lady Dolly, however, instructs Vere that she must be more cordial and accepting to society. She fears that Vere's staunchly old-fashioned grandmother ruined the girl by training her to view her flightly life as "grotesque and vulgar" (60). When Vere declares that she does not wish to be a part of such abominations, Lady Dolly cautions her, "You are very contradictory and opinionated; much too opinionated for a girl" (26). While trying to persuade her to immerse herself in society, Vere's mother again reminds her that, "You are very lovely, but you are very old-fashioned, pedantic, unpleasant. You have no *chic*. You have no malleability. You are handsome, and that is all" (94). Still, Vere cannot feign any interest in the crude upper class around her.

Just as Vere dislikes the entertainments and people of her mother's set, she objects to their conception of marriage. She is perfectly apathetic to fortune and title, insisting that honor and goodness are requisite qualities in a husband. After she informs Zouroff that she dislikes him because he seems to be like everyone else in society, egocentric and awful (84), Vere fails to think that he could still desire her. Her disdain prevents her from such a consideration (85). Just as Etoile's danger incites Ioris to woo her, so Vere's absolute indifference tempts Prince Zouroff (70). Both society and Zouroff want the marriage to occur. The former believes the couple to be a fabulous match of beauty and bank accounts, and the latter wants to have total possession of her. Neither one takes into account that Vere altogether opposes marrying a man she does not love.

Once married, Zouroff mistreats his cold wife. Through their unsuitable union, Ouida makes an undisguised statement on marriage in Victorian society. Having an inconsiderate and unloving husband use his wife only to satisfy his sexual urges, *Moths* openly disputes ambitious social marriages unfounded on love and respect. A loveless union formed because of the attraction of faultless beauty or fabulous wealth carries no more honor, in her opinion, than prostitution. Often times, she argues, power-seeking families force their daughters into marriage without due consideration of the misery an unhappily married woman can suffer through her husband's sexual demands (124). Vere, like Sue Bridehead in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, "is the conventional saint who never should have been touched by man, but who is violated by him," and therefore she lives "in perpetual martyrdom, not saintly queenship of the hearth" (Reed 40). As a result of deceit, Vere finds her body owned by a man whose very touch she despises.

Sacrificed into socially accepted martyrdom, Vere's stubborn spirit becomes resigned to suffering. According to Victorian convention, "Only by assuming and believing in the role of the obedient Griselda . . . can a woman save her own soul and keep herself from the rages that male egoism would otherwise engender" (Reed 43). Zouroff's despotic treatment leaves her without hope for her future or for love entering her marriage. "It seemed to her as if she were already dead" (*Moths* 117). With her marriage vows consummated, Vere considers herself a fallen woman; the surrender of her virginity to a man she abhors leads her into self-loathing. Since she regards the marriage as an insult to God because she does not love her husband (295), she feels as though "she had become vile" (133). Zouroff, "[m]aster of her body and mind, present and future" (208), drives Vere to doubt God's justice if even He cannot protect her from her

husband's animalistic passions (295). Self-repression, fast becoming Vere's signature characteristic, prohibits her from speaking of her pain to anyone because sharing her secrets would be revealing her shame. "All the bitterness and humiliation of her heart she choked down into silence, and she continued to live as she had done hitherto, without sympathy and in an utter mental isolation" (185). Nothing gives her pleasure but listening to Corrèze's voice (155). Her sorrow quashes all enthusiasm as she resigns herself to the dolorous prospect of belonging to Zouroff.

Vere bears the tremendous burden of submission and displays unflinching fidelity to Zouroff. Her resilience does not falter even when tempted by her increasing love for her favorite performing artist. When she hears Corrèze sing once again in Paris, palpitations she has never before experienced and that she cannot understand startle her (183). When occasionally she meets him, Corrèze calms Vere (303). Though he has a reputation as a lady-killer, he alone is a steady and genuine individual amidst the tumultuous frivolity of Vere's life in the fashionable world. Despite her love for Corrèze, she remains faithful to her vows. She explains, "I think fidelity is the only form of chastity left to woman who is a wife; the man's vices cannot affect the question" (321). She candidly tells her husband that she lacks any scruples about betraying him but that betraying God precludes her inconstancy (347). Though Zouroff has three mistresses, Vere will not lower herself to match him in his adultery.

That Vere is his wife never affects Zouroff's unfaithfulness. He views her as nothing more than a sexual object. Yet the most startling fact about his lechery is that Lady Dolly ardently advocates his marriage to Vere even though she was once entangled with him. Zouroff, then, is the husband of a former lover's daughter. Even this fact does

not make him ashamed, for he and Lady Dolly both view the marriage as handsomely arranged for their best interests. His mistresses—Noisette, Casse-une-Croûte, and Jeanne de Sonnaz—use Zouroff for their own convenience. They seek revenge for his wrongs against them, namely his marriage, whereas Vere internalizes her pain.

In contrast to Vere's indifference and dislike, the infamous Casse-une-Croûte and Noisette entertain Zouroff. However, he is actually in love with the Duchesse Jeanne de Sonnaz, the Judith figure in *Moths*. Descended from one great noble family and married into another, she "dressed better than any living being, was charming, without having a good feature in her face, except her eyes, and was admired where Helen or Venus might have been overlooked. She was not very clever, but she was very malicious . . . and very violent. . . . She had the power of being very agreeable" (157). As long as Jeanne is a married woman and mother of two daughters, society cannot rebuke her for also being the mistress of another woman's husband. She can even be a guest of the Zouroffs in their several houses, bringing her daughters and occasionally her husband along with her (350). A married woman who does not create scandal cannot be other than what her husband's position makes her, as Ouida demonstrated in *Friendship*, written to expose "the hypocritical society that tolerated Lady Joan's 'friendship' for Prince Ioris, but penalized women who had the courage of their emotions" (Stirling 135). Jeanne, though her distinguished place in society aids her more than Joan's heredity does, quite brilliantly reflects Lady Joan's attitude on disguising lovers as friends so that society accepts their relationship.

Another of Jeanne's strengths is that while she is rather unattractive, her wit and her bawdy behavior makes her more appealing than Vere to Zouroff, who grows tired of

lazily looking on immutable perfection and comes to converse with the amiable Duchesse (269). Jeanne usurps Vere in both her place as the lady of the house and in Zouroff's affections (279). Zouroff wonders at the disparity in his feelings for his wife, who lives in his houses but who is rarely with him, and his patrician mistress, who strives to divert him (195). He enjoys Jeanne's company because they are very much alike in their interests and pursuits, which namely involve seeking out amusement and pleasure. Jeanne keeps Zouroff enraptured with the charming "dexterity of her coquetries" and "maliciousness of her pleasantries" (354). Even after years as his lover,

> Jeanne de Sonnaz had gained the empire over him of a re-awakened passion,—the empire of a strong woman over an indolent man, of a mistress once deserted, and so doubly tenacious of her hold. There was no beauty in her, and no youth; but she had the secret of dominion over men. . . . she railed at him, jeered at him, commanded him, yet fascinated him. He knew her to be worthless, faithless, never wholly his or wholly any one's, yet she held him. (369)

She possesses a remarkable ability to make him malleable to her wishes. This capacity to entice Zouroff with her constant repartee explains why he renounces Vere for an ugly and controlling woman. Jeanne's belligerency explains why he obeys her in almost everything.

Jeanne is almost a true Judith figure, but she is ill-fit for the stereotype because her anger arises not from an evil nature but from provocation. She is furious that Zouroff married Vere. Despite the fact that Jeanne admires Vere, "[t]he mistress of Zouroff will never forgive his wife, and Casse-une-Croûte would pardon her more readily. . ." (253).

In the style of all Ouida's domineering women, controlling Zouroff is not enough for his ambitious and wily mistress. She is fully aware that Vere does not love her husband, and she hopes Vere will take a lover (228). Anxious to unravel the mystery of Corrèze (228), "[t]he sharp eyes of the Duchesse Jeanne watched her, and, as worldly-wise eyes are apt to do, saw very much that did not exist to be seen" (236). But unlike Ouida's earlier Judith-mistresses, Jeanne is not wholly bad. Her indecisive mixture of approbation and jealousy of Vere ironically leads her to demand Zouroff to treat Vere better while she simultaneously causes turmoil in their marriage. Though Jeanne comes close to being an emblem of the Judith figure, her combined affection and hatred for Vere are examples that she is not a symbol of destructive evil.

Reminiscent of the relationship between Lady Joan and Etoile, that of Jeanne and Vere is extremely odd. While Jeanne argues for Vere's sake, telling Zouroff, "I think you are simply discontented with her because she is not somebody else's wife" (159), she simultaneously undermines Vere. As she presses Zouroff to treat his wife better, she also taunts and teases him to rebel against the bonds of his marriage. This "condemnation from the lips of one of the companions of his sins and follies—one of the worldliest of this world—made him wince under its justice; and he knew that his sins against his wife were heavier and grosser than even Jeanne de Sonnaz knew or guessed" (344). Thus, he feels even more an unfit husband for Vere and quite aptly suited for debauchery and philandering. Jeanne argues that since he introduced his wife to passion and then discarded her, Vere's probable infidelity will be Zouroff's fault (343). She ably manipulates him to believe in the possibility of his wife's sin. Though Jeanne really does not care for him except to own him, she expects him to belong to her just as he expects

Vere to belong to him. " 'What do I care for your humiliation? I care to avert my own' " (364), she tells Zouroff. She wants the triumph of winning control over him, but Zouroff himself is not her main consideration. Though Jeanne likes Vere, she is an impediment to her domination.

Unlike Jeanne or Vere, Zouroff does not differentiate between his mistresses and his wife. Vere is no better to him than Noisette or Casse-une-Croûte. His mistresses are more satisfactory to him despite Vere's handsomer face and figure. As far as Zouroff is concerned,

> She abhorred him, yet she accepted him. No mere obedience could account for that acceptance without some weakness or some cupidity of nature. It hardened him against her; it spoilt her lovely, pure childhood in his eyes; it made her shudder from him seem half hypocrisy. After all, he said to himself, where was she so very much higher than Casse-une-Croûte? It was only the price that was altered. (130)

He acknowledges Vere's charms, but he also reflects, "I like Casse-une-Croûte better, who is the color of copper, and smells of smoke and brandy as I do!" (210). His consideration of them as his property leads him to forbid Vere to offend the other three (220); he would rather suppress the pride of his wife than that of a woman who has no official claim on him. After all, they are one and the same to him.

The equity he imparts to the four women arises from his belief that Vere is as materially minded as the mistresses. Just as he supplies his mistresses with their luxuries, he placed enormous settlements on Vere when they married. In light of this, he taunts her, " 'Did I not buy you? What better are you than that other woman who has my

sables, except that I bought you at a higher cost? . . . You high-born virgins who are offered up for gold, how are you so much nobler and higher than the *jolies impures* whom you pretend to despise?' " (323). Zouroff finds Vere dull, but she is his nonetheless. While she would much rather he left her to herself, he demands that she perform her physical duties as his wife. His mistresses do not so satiate his lust that he forgets his complete possession of Vere. "It amused him to lower her, morally and physically, and he cast all the naked truths of human vices before her shrinking mind, as he made her body tremble at his touch" (155). He believes that his costly jewels and splendid houses entitle him to make her submit to his desires.

Through Zouroff's forced compliance to his will, Vere transforms so that she subsequently breaks free from the saint figure stereotype. At this time, she must become a slightly different convention. Living as first the saint and then the Griselda, she, like Marion Vavasour, technically encompasses two unique emblems. However, Vere brings to her role as a Griselda emblem many of the qualities that characterized her as a saint, so that the difference is hardly discernable. When she leaves a wealthy prince to whom duty and law held her fast for a singer, she radically opposes the Victorian social mores that she was raised to respect. Thus, her behavior manifests an extreme alteration in her character from her girlhood. While society condemns her for being a divorcée, only when divorced does Vere finally experience her reward for enduring great suffering—she receives freedom in her choice of romantic partner. Whereas Alma and Lucille's faithfulness merits their reward in *Held in Bondage* and *Strathmore*, Vere commits a social misstep by leaving her brutal husband. The last paragraphs of the novel explains,

> . . . for not fault of her own, the weight of a guilt not her own lies heavily, and the ineffaceable past is like a ghost that tracks her steps; from her memory the pollution of her marriage never can pass away, and to her purity her life seems forever defiled by those dead years, which are like millstones hung about her neck. She was innocent always, and yet she is still marked forever by her suffering. (421)

Even as she is like a fallen woman, she is rewarded with love and happiness through remarriage to Corrèze. Through the characters of Vere and Jeanne, the line between good and evil, once so vivid in Ouida's fiction, becomes indistinct.

Conclusion

I chose *Held in Bondage*, *Strathmore*, *Friendship*, and *Moths* as significant steps in Ouida's career that exhibit the development of her characterization. Her usage of Victorian conventions of womanhood gradually altered as she progressed into more realistic portrayals in *Moths*. The terms saint/angel, the Judith/destructive woman, the Griselda, and the new Magdalen cannot be applied to either Vere Herbert or Jeanne de Sonnaz. The two characters still contain some attributes of the stereotypes from which they grew, but they are quite different from Ouida's earlier female characters.

Reviews at the time of the novels' publications highlighted the improbability of Ouida's early characters. Though the *London Review*, in its review of *Strathmore*, regarded Lucille as "a charmingly ideal figure" ("New Novels" 338), another reviewer said that her sequestered childhood makes her "as white as the Marchioness is black" ("*Strathmore*" 143). Ouida, the same publication charged, was completely inept at creating dynamic, multifaceted characters, explaining that "[s]o far as knowledge of human nature goes, she has absolutely none. . . " (142). They deem Marion very badly drawn: "As a human being she is utterly impossible; but the author dresses her in such fine clothes, and adorns her with such glittering epithets, that the reader cannot help wondering at the splendid *mirage*. . . ." (142). Conversely, the *London Review* praises Ouida for molding a character after absolute evil to show "vice in its wantonness" ("New Novels" 338).

Critics of *Friendship* attacked Etoile, crediting her with the honor of being Ouida's most boring heroine. The *Athenæum* dubbed her "one of 'Ouida's' old friends, and in whom we seem to find her again" ("Novels of the Week" 761). This assertion

suggests that Etoile is the exact same character as all the previous saint figures, deviating from their pattern in name alone. In her biography of Ouida, first printed in 1938, Ffrench censured Etoile's saintly but dreary, lackluster personality:

> Etoile is gifted with beauty, genius, and an exalted nature, but she is unfortunately entirely devoid of any humour. Ouida . . . took her heroines extremely seriously. She invariably endowed with considerable wit her less reputable characters, and forgot to give it to her noble ones. So that Etoile sails through Friendship, statuesque, high-souled, intense: a horrible bore. (Ffrench 78)

Luckily for Ouida, all of her angelic characters are not as uninteresting—and consequently frustrating—as Etoile.

As I have pointed out, the saint emblem is also clearly represented by Alma, Lucille, and at first even Vere, very early in her life, as all of them are like one reviewer's description of Alma: "young, lovely, and innocent" ("*Held in Bondage*" 82). However, Vere's sexually abusive marriage violates her purity. Lucille also marries, but she follows the Victorian model of married sainthood—virginity prior to marriage and bridled, unacknowledged sexuality afterwards. Also, her relationship with Strathmore rests on a foundation of mutual love, whereas Vere's husband perceives and treats his wife the same as he does his prostitute mistresses. Vere fears his advances because she knows of his lechery and hates his embrace. Etoile also knows passion to an extent, but not in a sexual way. She retains her physical spotlessness, but when she gives her heart to a man not worthy of receiving it she surrenders her naivety. In marrying barbaric Zouroff, Vere, on the other hand, loses everything that made her a saint figure: her purity

and her innocent outlook on life. Marriage teaches her far more about male and female relationships than any saint figure can know.

The opposite of saintly women in these novels is the Judith figure, or a female representative of wickedness and sexual immorality by Victorian standards. The only two pure "Judiths" are Constance Trefusis and Marion Vavasour. They desire to obtain wealth and power through the exploitation of their beauty. In truth, that they both seek to subjugate men, just as men traditionally oppressed women in their society, makes them radical and condemnable figures. Lady Joan and Jeanne de Sonnaz do not fit the black-hearted description of the destructive women. While they too dominate their lovers, they do not do so solely for the sake of having control. Lady Joan loves Ioris and his estate perhaps even more than him, so that dominating him becomes the means through which she prevents his escape. Jeanne's fury at the marriage of her lover prompts her to regain his allegiance. However, by feeling compassion for Vere, Jeanne de Sonnaz reveals that she is not all evil. Although she shares some qualities of the Trefusis and Marion Vavasour, she displays occasional acts of kindness.

During her marriage, Vere becomes a perfect suffering Griselda, but the annulment frees her from both her husband and this classification. Jeanne cannot be a new Magdalen figure either because she never repents; instead, she relishes in her ultimate victory over Zouroff through a marriage in which she will hold all the power. Marion remains the only true symbol of the new Magdalen, as she reforms from an agent of revenge to one of charity.

Since neither Vere, who will forever feel like a fallen woman, nor Jeanne, who ironically keeps her respectability by marrying her lover, remain trapped in traditional

gender roles. *Moth's* characters finally break free of the conventional models of how women behaved. Ouida disliked society females and cast them as the destructive Judiths, which contrasted to the figure she utilized as self-representation, the saint emblem. Reviews of her early novels demonstrate that readers easily noticed her employment of stereotypes in the novels *Held in Bondage*, *Strathmore*, and *Friendship*. However, as she began to deal with the complexity of real society figures, her characters were free from the flimsy, shallow foundations ascribed by convention. Vere Herbert and Jeanne de Sonnaz are products of the slow change Ouida's characterization underwent from her first and extremely stereotypical novel, *Held in Bondage*, to the liberated *Moths*.

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