WANDERING WOMEN: SEXUAL AND SOCIAL STIGMA IN THE MID-VICTORIAN NOVEL

Lisa Hartsell Jackson, B.A., M.A.

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APPROVED:

J. Don Vann, Major Professor and Chair
L. Robert Stevens, Committee Member
Giles Mitchell, Committee Member
Lynn Eubank, Chair of Graduate Studies in English
C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

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The changing role of women was arguably the most fundamental area of concern and crisis in the Victorian era. Recent scholarship has done much to illuminate the evolving role of women, particularly in regard to the development of the New Woman. I propose that there is an intermediary character type that exists between Coventry Patmore's "angel of the house" and the New Woman of the *fin de siecle*. I call this character the Wandering Woman. This new archetypal character adheres to the following list of characteristics: she is a literal or figurative orphan, is genteelly poor or of the working class, is pursued by a rogue who offers financial security in return for sexual favors; this sexual liaison, unsanctified by marriage, causes her to be stigmatized in the eyes of society; and her stigmatization results in expulsion from society and enforced wandering through a literal or figurative wilderness. There are three variations of this archetype: the child-woman as represented by the titular heroine of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Little Nell of Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*; the sexual deviant as represented by Miss Wade of Dickens' *Little Dorrit*; and the fallen woman as represented by the titular heroine of Thomas Hardy' *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hetty Sorrel of George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, and Lady Dedlock of Dickens' *Bleak House*.

Although the Wandering Woman's journey may resemble a variation of the bildungsroman tradition, it is not, because unlike male characters in this genre, women

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A WANDERING WOMAN?

Millennial anxiety is nothing new. As we face the millenium, we have a deeper understanding of the Victorians as they watched the close of a turbulent century. Scientific discoveries had made the Bible obsolete, Queen Victoria would not come out of mourning, and the Industrial Revolution had changed both the landscape and society. As is the case today, people believed that morality had been sacrificed in the name of progress. Because society had gone through so many rapid, radical changes, the old rules of propriety were out of date and out of synch with the need for more flexible, livable standards. In his seminal work *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, Walter Houghton recognizes the duality of the destruction of an old order and the reconstruction of a new standard inherent in revolutionary change. The struggle between the old and new orders is evident in the evolving role of women in the nineteenth century. T. H. Huxley "related the demand for the liberation of women to the general notion of greater individual freedom for all" (Fernando 2). Indeed, as Sally Ledger states in "The New Woman and the Crisis of Victorianism," "the recurrent theme of the cultural politics of the *fin de siecle* was instability, and gender was arguably the most destabilizing category" (22). Recent scholarship has done much to illuminate this evolution, particularly in regard to the development of the New Woman of the late eighties and nineties. The New Woman,

in both fact and fiction, sought a freedom in living hitherto unavailable to Victorian women. She was a complex character who wanted, among other things, to work for a living, and to have sexual freedom while avoiding the traditional roles of wife and mother, which were conventionally held to be the ultimate goals of women. Her very presence raises a question. How, precisely, did women evolve from Coventry Patmore's "angel of the house" to the New Woman of the *fin de siecle*? Certainly, this new, liberated, fearless woman did not just suddenly appear on the horizon. I contend that there is another character type who has a specific set of qualities that makes her as distinct as the New Woman or the "angel of the house," and who serves as an important intermediary link. I call her the Wandering Woman. The literary characters I have chosen as representative of the Wandering Woman adhere to a list of shared similarities, and represent a growing consciousness on the part of both male and female authors that the Victorian woman was undergoing an important, dynamic change. In this dissertation, I will discuss three types of Wandering Women: the child-woman, the sexual deviant, and the fallen woman. By examining these characters, I will refine the definition of the Wandering Woman, and demonstrate the ways in which she bridges the gap between the Victorian "angel" and the New Woman.

For women, the bounds of propriety, like the corsets that were then popular, were tightly laced and difficult to loosen. These bounds stipulated, in part, that women should find complete fulfillment in marriage and motherhood and should be an "angel of the house" whose sole duty was to beautify and cultivate the hearth and home. In "Marriage, Redundancy or Sin," Helene E. Roberts agrees that Victorians were certain "that being a

wife was the beginning of a woman's life and that motherhood was its culmination" (53). Roberts also asserts that "it was the sweet, passive, obedient wife, busy within her domestic setting, showing her concern and appreciation for her masculine protector, apprehensive for his comfort and safety, ever watchful of his reputation, that brought a throb of emotion to the manly breast" (50). A woman should accept her financial and social position in life, and be pleased and grateful if marriage improved it. She should want and cherish children. It was of paramount importance for a woman to maintain her virginity before marriage, and then to cultivate a saintly, Madonna-like quality after the birth of her children. A Victorian woman should appear to be apathetic about sex, which meant she could express neither desire nor repulsion for the sexual act. Russell Goldfarb, author of *Sexual Repression and Victorian Literature*, writes that this attitude stems from the Victorian obsession "with hiding sex" which "accounts for the extraordinary pressures the age brought to bear upon society to satisfy its compulsion. If sexual expression could be hidden deeply enough, if it could be successfully repressed, completely repressed, then one could speak easily and apparently without guilt of being respectable" (21). What then, happened to women who fell outside the traditional roles? Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* is full of women who are too old to marry and too genteel to work. Although sources give varying numbers, statistical evidence shows that there was a widening disparity between the female and male population. Karl Pearson, in his 1855 paper entitled "The Woman Question," "dismissed as absurd the view of woman's proper place as being in the home, since it failed to take account of the twenty percent of women who remained single" (Fernando 15). G.R. Drysdale, author of *The Elements of Social*

Science, or Physical, Sexual and Natural Religion, which was first published in 1854, "gave a figure of 1,407,225 women between the ages for twenty and forty years who never married" (Fernando 17). Social critic W.R. Greg "quotes the population statistics of 1851 to show that of every 100 women over twenty, 57 were married, 12 were widows, and 30 were spinsters. He also estimates there must be 1,248,000 women in England and Wales 'unnaturally' single" (Roberts 57). Whatever the findings, reviewing these statistics illuminates that there was indeed a growing gap between the number of potential suitors and the increasing majority of women for whom marriage would not be a possibility.

New Women are a direct contradiction of unmarried Victorian women who were "either eagerly anticipating that blessed state or were deploring the pathetic circumstances in which life without a male protector had left them" (Roberts 75). While the term "New Woman" is used to describe real women like Olive Schreiner and Eleanor Marx, it is also applied to female characters in the fiction of writers Mona Caird, Grant Allen, and George Gissing, among others. The New Woman was the embodiment of a new style of living often associated with feminism. She was much maligned by those who disagreed with feminism, and was treated as a threat to the idealized roles of Victorian women. The New Woman insisted that there was more to life than marriage and motherhood, and demanded that she be allowed to search for fulfillment on her own terms. She often expressed doubts about religion, or was an outright atheist. The New Woman was intelligent, informed, and idealistic. She insisted on conforming to no standards but her own, and demanded freedom of choice in "the areas where personal choice could operate" (Cunningham 10). Ultimately, the New Woman is the antithesis of

the "angel of the house." Therefore, it is neither a small wonder that the literature of this period reflects an anxiety about the changing nature of women's role, nor a surprise that it results in the unintentional creation of the Wandering Woman.

The Wandering Woman is an outcast who is driven literally to wander in the wilderness because of her failure to adhere to the Victorian era's strict codes of conduct. Unlike the male characters of the picaresque or the bildungsroman, these females do not seek adventure, experience, or maturation. Their wanderings are not undertaken by choice, but by necessity. These women are propelled from society for their "inappropriate" behavior, whether the indiscretion is sexual, societal, or financial, and must move each time their "secret" is in danger of being exposed. These women continue to wander until they decide either to return to a normative type of behavior, or to separate totally from proper society. The Wandering Woman's expulsion from society underscores the fact that "the Victorians seemed to have a compulsive necessity for seeing the world as they wished it to be" (Roberts 75). Exiling women who "misbehave" temporarily solves the problem and illustrates that the societal pressures for conformity fall primarily, if not exclusively, on women.

Although there is some fluidity in their characterizations, these women share a common set of attributes. The Wandering Woman is a literal or figurative orphan whose lack of familial support puts her at an immediate disadvantage. Rather than receiving guidance and protection from a parent or guardian, the Wandering Woman must rely on her own intuition and judgment. Since she is always either genteelly poor or of the working class, her orphaned status is even more debilitating than it initially appears to be,

because she has no financial protection. Her naiveté and inexperience render her susceptible to poverty, exploitation, physical danger, and the treachery of the world. Predators, in the form of rogues, inevitably pursue her. She is always accompanied by a rogue, which illustrates the sharp dichotomies in the standards of behavior for men and women. This illuminates the double standard that Victorians accepted; what was questionable yet acceptable behavior in a man was damnable in a woman. Drysdale writes that "for a man to indulge his sexual appetites illegitimately, either before or after the marriage vow, is thought venial; but for a woman to do so, is the most heinous crime" (Fernando 18). Although there were restrictions placed upon men's behavior, their options were neither as limited as women's, nor were they so closely associated with their sexual status. Since even genteel men could work if necessary, they were not as dependent on marriage as a means of survival as were women. The rogue could father illegitimate children, have unscrupulous financial arrangements, and be of questionable social status, all while he continued to operate within polite society.

The rogue is attracted to the Wandering Woman because of her difference from other women, as well as the fact that her unprotected status provides him with unimpeded pursuit of her. Rather than treating her as an individual with personal value, thoughts, and feelings of her own, the rogue sees the Wandering Woman as a commodity that can provide him with physical pleasure and/or personal gain. To him, she is a non-person whose only value is what she adds to his own status. The rogue is an astute predator who is aware that the Wandering Woman is vulnerable not only because of her orphaned status, but also because financial peril is an ever-present threat to her. This allows the

rogue to offer his "support," while simultaneously making his victim feel an obligation to him. At times, the sense of obligation is coupled with the delusion that an alliance with the rogue may alleviate her financial woes. The promise of financial assistance is an intoxicating offer that the rogue can and does use as a tool of manipulation. His price is always the same -- he either proposes, demands, or receives sexual favors.

Because she is an orphan and is in financial difficulty, the only things the Wandering Woman has to offer a man, or the rest of society, for that matter, are a spotless reputation and an intact virginity. The threat (or fact) of a sexual liaison is the catalyst that initially causes the Wandering Woman's expulsion from society. She is tainted and stigmatized by her relationship with the rogue. In society's eyes, it does not matter whether or not the Wandering Woman was a willing or actual participant in a sexual relationship. The hint of scandal is enough to damage her precious reputation. Society can not tolerate this breach in propriety, and the Wandering Woman is forced into exile. Exposure to the elements of nature parallels her emotional exposure, as well as the fear that her transgression might be revealed to others she may encounter on her journey.

Because the Wandering Woman begins her journey out of necessity rather than out of choice, the first days can be, and usually are, terrifying. Her expulsion makes her more alone and unprotected than she has ever been. She is more acutely aware than ever of society's harsh judgements and its inability to accept any deviation from its limited norm. For the first time, she is protecting herself physically, mentally, and emotionally. Alienation allows her temporarily to step outside the traditional roles of wife and mother,

and instead changes her focus to her own needs and desires. She is not submitting to the wisdom or protection of men, but is relying on her own judgment and her own ability to make decisions. Lest we think this sudden freedom makes the Wandering Woman powerful, assertive, and wise, it is necessary for us to remember that she has, up to now, had limited experience in making independent assessment of the direction her life should take. Although some Wandering Women seem quite capable of taking care of themselves, it is more common for their lives to end tragically as a result of their inability to make wise decisions.

Whatever the outcome of her journey, the Wandering Woman discovers strength of character of which she was unaware. Her strength and resourcefulness are often misread by society and are typically viewed as obstinate selfishness. As is typical of Victorian narratives, her story serves a didactic purpose. However, the lesson is not so much a warning against the Wandering Woman's behavior, as it is an indication of what lack of tolerance does to a woman. Ultimately, she is imbued with a sense of courage and dignity that comes from expressing the realities of her humanity. The multi-dimensional nature of her exposure allows her, for however brief a time, to maintain control of her destiny and to escape the bonds of compulsion, secrecy, and intimidation. The Wandering Woman is often able to embrace her spiritual, emotional, physical being, and to explore avenues of expression hitherto unavailable to her. As exciting as this possibility is, it is equally intimidating and frightening. Because true liberation as we know it was not a possibility for the Victorian woman, and alienation was an uncomfortable existence, the

Wandering Woman, by the end of her story, is either convinced to conform in some way to society's expectations, or suffers death for her refusal to do so.

The titular heroine of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Little Nell of Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* are representative of the child-woman wanderer. Jane is not wanted by the Reed family, and she makes few concessions, if any, to their demands. Her wanderings are initiated by her journey to Lowood School, where she is also an outcast. Part of Jane's ostracism stems from her refusal to accept her "fate"; she is unwilling to acknowledge that her status as a plain, poor orphan mandates that she should gratefully accept any crumbs of happiness that come her way. Jane knows that there is happiness to be found, and she is determined to find it. Her wanderings resume after her relationship with Rochester fails. She is tainted both by his attempted bigamy and his offer to make her his mistress. Although a woman of her position should, stereotypically, be satisfied with even a clandestine liaison with her lover, Jane refuses to accept less than what she feels she deserves. She realizes that becoming Rochester's mistress will make her equivalent to a prostitute, yet will not alter his status. Realizing that she can not stay with him, the orphan Jane is propelled into the wilderness. The same determination that prevents her from enslaving herself to Rochester prevents Jane from accepting St. John Rivers' proposal of marriage. Although her eventual marriage to Rochester puts Jane back within the conventional bounds of society, the fact that they live in seclusion keeps her on the fringes of proper behavior and away from society's scrutiny.

For Little Nell, wandering takes on a different shape because she is not guilty of any sin herself. Instead, her journey is undertaken because of the compulsive gambling of

her beloved grandfather. Her wandering, in a way, enables him to continue his destructive behavior. He is a rogue because of his addiction, and this serves to stigmatize Little Nell. Her travels are also a way to escape the sexually predatory Quilp. As a young teenager, Little Nell is too young to engage in an adult relationship; her journey is a means to maintain her virginity, which is her most precious commodity. Her youth also prevents her from being able to provide adequately for both herself and Grandfather Trent. She is figuratively orphaned when her grandfather loses his mind, and this leaves her unprotected from the rogue's gallery of characters that they meet on their journey. Her sweetness and naiveté are eventually destroyed by the corruption that surrounds her, and she almost wills herself to die once she has reached the safety of the church.

Miss Wade of Dickens' *Little Dorrit* presents a special problem because she is a sexual deviant. Although she tells Arthur that her dissatisfaction with men is a result of her ill-fated affair with Henry Gowan, it is more likely that she distrusts men because she is a lesbian. This makes her, for the politically incorrect Victorians, a sexual deviant, and also ostracizes her because her sexual orientation is an open refusal to accept the traditional roles of wife and mother. Miss Wade, who has no family of her own, has an inordinately close relationship with Tattycoram, the Meagles' young ward. This relationship causes great distress for Tattycoram's adopted family, and Miss Wade's obsession with the young orphan precipitates a rupture in the girl's attachment to the Meagles. The destructiveness of their relationship is a clear warning to the reader of the Victorian belief that homosexuality, particularly among women, is a dangerous and all-consuming lifestyle. Miss Wade is seen as a threat to almost every character that she

encounters. She is wandering across the continent at the beginning of the novel, and her continued inability to have a relationship with a man propels her into the wilderness of London, where she will never find a place to rest.

The fallen woman is the most common type of Wandering Woman because she was "the symbol for Victorians of what was physically and morally monstrous" (Roberts 67). She is a reminder that there was "a double standard which preached forgiveness for an erring husband [but] would not tolerate such charity for a wife" (73). In *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*, Gail Cunningham writes, "The fallen woman was a stain on society and had to be punished, either by the intolerable pangs of conscience or by death -- preferably both. Even the novelist who took the rather advanced line that many such women were victims, that they did not jump, but were pushed to their fall by some callous profligate, could not dispense with final retribution" (21). The fallen women included in this dissertation certainly follow this paradigm.

Lady Dedlock of Dickens' *Bleak House* is a mysterious woman who has frequently been misunderstood, both by readers and by scholars. While she appears to be cold, proud, and aloof, her reserve masks an inner fire of passion. We do not ever learn the real reasons her engagement to Captain Hawdon was broken, but many critics have surmised that Lady Dedlock, who has no family, is an opportunist who spurns Hawdon for the possibility of upward mobility through marriage to Sir Dedlock. However, it is just as likely that Hawdon was an unscrupulous cad who seduced and subsequently abandoned his lover once her pregnancy was revealed. Lady Dedlock maintains her reserve in order to conceal her fear that her past indiscretion will be discovered. Through

her relationship with her young maid Rosa, as well as her impassioned confession to Esther, the narrator reveals that Lady Dedlock is not cold, but is instead a woman who harbors deep emotional attachments to both her child and her former lover. Lady Dedlock's wandering is a result not only of Tulkinghorn's threat of exposure, but also of her intense feelings of shame and guilt over sullying the name and reputation of Sir Dedlock, who has always been kind and loving to her. The narrator also shows that Lady Dedlock feels a measure of contrition for failing to provide Esther with a mother's love and nurture. Her remorse is deepened by her realization that in her effort to maintain her composure, she has failed both as a wife and as a mother. Lady Dedlock can not face the stigma of her past, and concludes her wandering by dying on the grave of her former lover.

Hetty Sorrel of George Eliot's *Adam Bede* also suffers, partly, for her failure as a mother. Hetty begins her journey as the beautiful, yet vacuous, love interest of both the poor Adam Bede, and the wealthy, shallow Arthur Donnithorne. Both men serve as rogues because they each are interested in Hetty's beautiful visage, and do not adequately attempt to know her as a person. Eliot continually indicates Hetty's immaturity by using images of small, underdeveloped animals in describing her. Hetty is detached from her aunt's family, with whom she lives, and instead, is more involved in pursuing her narcissistic interests. This is a stigmatizing factor because it illustrates that she is a self-interested girl rather than being a selfless Victorian ideal woman. She is attracted to Arthur not only because he is rich, but also because his interest in her acts as a mirror of her own beauty. Hetty spends an inordinate amount of time looking at her reflection and

daydreaming about how she would look adorned in finery. Her immaturity does not prepare her for the reality of pregnancy. Like many teenagers, she tries to ignore her condition, hoping that doing so will make it disappear. Eventually, her body betrays her by swelling with child, and she is forced to leave her home and travel to find Arthur. On her journey, she continues to try to hide her pregnancy, with varying degrees of success. Denial of her impending motherhood is tantamount to denying one of the ultimate goals of the Victorian woman, which further stigmatizes her. Since she has denied her condition, it is not altogether surprising that she leaves her baby to die. While it is no surprise that Hetty is punished, Eliot puts in an unexpected twist to the story by punishing Arthur as well. Both Hetty and Arthur must accept responsibility for their reckless behavior. This seems to be a plea by the novel's female author for fallen women -- and men -- to be treated as being equally guilty of moral transgression.

Tess of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is an outcast from the beginning of the novel. Because her parents provide little in the way of guidance or instruction, she feels responsible for both them and her younger siblings. Their lack of parenting also renders Tess incapable of interpreting events, and she feels guilty for every misfortune that befalls the family. This feeling of guilt propels Tess into wandering, whether it is in her journey to find her lost d'Urberville "relatives," her quest for a new life at Talbothay's dairy, her separation from Angel, or her eventual return to her rapist Alec. Both Alec and Angel play the role of rogue in *Tess*, and follow the paradigm of the Victorian double standard since they are both allowed to get away with inappropriate, unfair behavior toward her. While Alec is a conventional rogue, Angel emerges as the true villain of the

novel because he expects Tess to accept his double standard for sexual indiscretion. Because Tess does not have a strong moral support system, she passively accepts responsibility for any accusation leveled at her. There is no way out for Tess, and her execution for the murder of Alec turns her, at the altar at Stonehenge, into a human sacrifice for society's failure to treat her with fairness and compassion.

CHAPTER 2

LITTLE GIRL LOST

The titular heroine of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Little Nell of Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* seem to be polar opposites. In their groundbreaking work *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar helped to establish Jane Eyre as one of the premier figures in feminist criticism. Little Nell has not been as fortunate, and has been deprecated by Mark Spilka, among others, as nothing more than "a sentimental textual blur" (Cox 174). However, Jane and Little Nell have more in common than is readily apparent. While most critics have treated each girl's journey as a variety of the bildungsroman tradition, there is something more subtle and more potentially sinister going on in their respective travels than is typical in the novel of maturation. I contend that Jane and Little Nell are driven to wander by the secrecy surrounding sexuality in the Victorian age. Their attempts to unlock these secrets lead them into potentially hazardous, damaging situations that stigmatize them and firmly establish Jane and Little Nell as Wandering Women. In her informative, thorough study *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, Deborah Gorham states that "Victorian doctors believed that menstruation was the central event of female adolescence, and encouraged mothers to regard their pubescent daughters as physically fragile and vulnerable" (91). Gorham goes on to explain that "a change in the style of dress was the

most obvious physical sign of a girl's transition from childhood to 'young ladyhood'" and that "throughout the century, no matter what the fashion epoch, such styles were constraining and confining" (93). According to Gorham, the typical indication of this sartorial transition was the adoption of the corset as an everyday garment, which generally occurred when girls reached their early to mid-teens (93). Although this custom may have been considered both correct and healthy, we must remember that the Victorians also thought the wearing of corsets was "healthful" and not "injurious" (93). Ironically, the corset did injury to internal organs by constricting them in order to give the bust, waist and hips a distorted outward appearance. If wearing a corset was a symbolic rite of passage that was a harbinger of maturity, it was also emblematic of the constraint and confinement of female adulthood and the distorted, idealized view of women the Victorians upheld. Gorham also says that although mothers were instructed to tell their daughters "something" about sex, it was unclear exactly what that "something" was. It is entirely probable that many mothers either did not tell their daughters anything at all, or chose only to "emphasize the dangers of sexuality" (92). The famous (or perhaps more appropriately, infamous) Dr. Acton agreed with this idea. He said "perfect freedom from, and indeed total ignorance of, any sexual affection is, as it should always be, the rule" (Goldfarb 40).

Therefore, adolescence, which is, at best, a confusing, difficult time, becomes even more so for Jane and Little Nell. As motherless girls on the brink of puberty (Jane is ten at the beginning of her narrative; Nell is almost fourteen), neither of these child-women has anyone to explain to them the metamorphosis their bodies are undergoing.

Both girls are orphans who live with members of their extended families. While this situation was hardly unusual in the nineteenth century, Jane and Nell are, unfortunately, thrust into families that are ill equipped to give them the nurture and support they so desperately need. They have no one to turn to for comfort or advice, and must solitarily deal with the conflicting feelings brought on by their impending womanhood. Each girl must grapple with these changes, while she must simultaneously try to maintain the idealized role of the "good" Victorian daughter, who was "gentle, loving, self-sacrificing and innocent" (Gorham 37). Without guidance, they are in imminent danger of inadvertently attracting unwanted sexual advances, and their physical fragility and vulnerability make them especially incapable of dealing with this type of danger. Although each girl encounters people who could step in and perform the role of surrogate parents, these potential guides ultimately fail to perform in any meaningful, supportive way. Jane and Little Nell continuously find themselves in peril both because they have no parental protection, and because they are subconsciously trying to achieve mastery over the hazardous, confusing situations brought about by their budding sexuality.

Jane's childhood is a cold, emotionally barren, alienating existence that consistently reinforces her impression that it is impossible for her to be a good daughter. Although she lives with her uncle's widow, Mrs. Reed, the woman does little to nurture young Jane. As a surrogate mother, Mrs. Reed should give her niece the same affection, instruction, and moral guidance she would normally be expected to give her own children. Instead, Mrs. Reed chooses to concentrate on Jane's negative qualities without ever suggesting any tangible, practical ways for the girl to improve herself. Jane's

cousins, Eliza and Georgiana, are models of bad behavior. Eliza is a penurious, "headstrong and selfish" girl, while the beautiful Georgiana has "a spoiled temper, a very acrid spite, [and] a captious and insolent carriage" (Bronte 8). Given these qualities and the praise they garner, it is no wonder that Jane is mystified about why she is incapable of pleasing anyone in the Gateshead household. While Jane makes it clear that she feels mistreated by the Reeds, she also reveals that she would, like most children, be glad to be more pleasing if she could only discern how. She says, "I dared commit no fault; I strove to fulfil every duty; and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking, from morning to noon, and from noon to night" (9). Part of Jane's inability to be pleasing stems from Mrs. Reed's obvious resentment of her. As a child, Jane lacks the maturity and experience to understand Mrs. Reed's feelings. The adult Jane, who is narrating the novel, is more perceptive: "It must have been irksome to find herself bound by a hard-wrung pledge to stand in the stead of a parent to a strange child she could not love, and to see an uncongenial alien permanently intruded on her own family group" (10). In spite of Jane's shift in perception, the fact remains that Mrs. Reed's inability and unwillingness to give her niece guidance puts Jane in emotional and physical danger.

This danger presents itself in the form of Jane's fourteen-year-old cousin, John Reed, who continually abuses her. His physical aggression towards his cousin establishes him as a rogue, while it simultaneously stigmatizes Jane. Although at age ten she is, ostensibly, too young to have reached adolescence, John is not, and his abuse of Jane is full of sexual tension. His first attack draws blood from Jane, which is suggestive of the bleeding that is often caused by a female's sexual initiation. John's "rape" of Jane is a

manifestation of his hostile, violent nature, along with his need to control a female whom he sees as a potential menace to his family. While Jane admits that this attack brings on a "pungent suffering" (9) that is consistent with the pain of penetration, she refuses to be controlled by it, and reacts to John's aggression by fighting back. Jane's refusal to be submissive is a refutation of the mandate that daughters should be "self-sacrificing," and causes her difficulty both at Gateshead and throughout the rest of her narrative. In fact, Mrs. Reed wantonly misinterprets Jane's reaction because she cannot and will not acknowledge that John instigated the altercation. Doing so would require Mrs. Reed to empathize with Jane, which is something her dislike of the child will not allow.

Some critics have deduced that Mrs. Reed sees Jane as a rival for the late Mr. Reed's affections, since "her relationship with Jane quickly emerges as highly competitive; and the competition is ultimately shown to have its main motive in sexual jealousy" (Maynard 101). However, most critics assume this competition involves the late Mr. Reed, and they fail to make a similar connection between young John and Jane. Although she does not verbalize it, Mrs. Reed is aware that the tension between John and Jane could eventually evolve into a more permanent attachment. Since it was common during the nineteenth century for first cousins to marry, Jane could, in time, become John's wife. She would thus become a rival for John's attention and love, which is an intolerable thought to the widowed Mrs. Reed. As the leader of her household, Mrs. Reed must stabilize and order her family. She cannot allow the tension between John and Jane to continue and escalate, and understands that it is easier to ignore John's indiscretion than it would be to try to re-channel it into a more appropriate manifestation of his

interest in his cousin. In addition, blaming Jane for the incident validates Mrs. Reed's feeling that she is a victim who has had to bear the burden of raising this unwanted child. John's assault on Jane is the catalyst that deepens Mrs. Reed's resentment of her ward, and ultimately results in her decision to send Jane to Lowood in order to maintain control of the family. Excusing her son's misbehavior by accusing Jane of failing to perform as an ideal "daughter" is both unfair and inappropriate, and therefore renders Mrs. Reed a failure as the controller of the household and the safeguard of her family's morality.

Jane's imprisonment in the red room, which is the first in a series of incidents where she is either in danger or feels endangered while enclosed in a bedchamber, has received significant critical attention. While the color red can be associated with Jane's menarche, as is commonly argued, it is also symbolic of danger. Mrs. Reed's "tutelage" has given Jane insufficient information to understand what has just happened between her and John, as well as the potential danger of future, similar incidents. Jane is fearful of being locked in the red room not only because of her apprehension of Mr. Reed's ghost, but also because she feels that her confinement is unjust. This injustice will be mirrored later in the novel in the confinement Jane feels in the accusations of Mr. Brocklehurst, in Mr. Rochester's concealment of his insane wife, and in the emotionally barren prospect of being St. John Rivers' wife. It is just as unfair for Jane to receive the blame for John's attack, as it is for Mrs. Reed to expect Jane to understand why she has been confined for John's sexual hostility. Jane's naïveté covers her vision of the situation just as heavily as the curtains in the red room cover the windows and the view of the outside world. Her instinct tells her to use "some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable

oppression" (9). This is the first indication that Jane will have to resort to flight in order to escape the stigmatization of unwanted sexual advances.

Because she has already considered trying to escape Gateshead and its oppression, Jane is initially pleased to learn that Mrs. Reed plans to send her away to school. She says, "school would be a complete change; it implied a long journey, an entire separation from Gateshead, an entrance into a new life" (18). The Reeds completely ostracize Jane now, and Mrs. Reed in particular intensifies her treatment of the girl as a paragon of bad behavior. Jane's sense of injustice causes her to say "words without [her] will" (21) as she accuses Mrs. Reed of failing as a parent. Jane tells her, "My Uncle Reed is in heaven, and can see all you do and think; and so can papa and mamma; they know how you shut me up all day long, and how you wish me dead" (21). This declaration enrages Mrs. Reed, and she abandons all pretence of "mothering" Jane. Mrs. Reed shows her disdain for her unruly niece by banishing her to Bessie's care, while focusing all her energies on her own children. Jane's need to lavish love on her pitiful, tattered doll is indicative of her own need for affection and is an ironic contrast to the attention and love Mrs. Reed lavishes on her spoiled, pampered children.

Critics have also made much of Jane's first encounter with Mr. Brocklehurst. Jane thinks he looks like "a black pillar! -- such, at least, appeared to [her], at first sight, the straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug; the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of a capital" (24-5). While most critics focus on the figurative, phallic imagery of this description, it is also necessary to think of the literal significance of pillars. Architecturally, pillars are the essential elements that

support and hold together the various levels of a building. Mrs. Reed uses Mr. Brocklehurst and his fundamentalist ideals about raising children as support for her desire to rid herself of this troublesome, querulous child. John Maynard contends that "Mrs. Reed, who authorizes both her son and Brocklehurst in their conduct toward Jane, has in a sense alienated her from any positive relation to a male" (101). Like Samson, Jane is about to destroy these pillars of support in her denouncement of Mrs. Reed. Throughout the rest of the novel, Jane continually challenges and shakes both the pillars of Victorian propriety, and the nineteenth century's idealized view of women.

After Mr. Brocklehurst leaves the house, Jane attacks her aunt for lying about what has really taken place at Gateshead. Jane says, "you made me suffer because your wicked boy struck me -- knocked me down for nothing. I will tell anybody who asks me questions this exact tale. People think you a good woman, but you are bad, hard-hearted. *You* are deceitful!" (Bronte 30). Mrs. Reed's efforts to pacify Jane are unsuccessful, partly because her attempts to reconcile with Jane are more about her own need to maintain propriety than they are about a real desire to make amends with her niece. Both Mrs. Reed and Jane are visibly shaken by the altercation, and Jane tells the reader, "A child cannot quarrel with its elders, as I had done -- cannot give its furious feelings uncontrolled play, as I had given mine -- without experiencing afterwards the pang of remorse and the chill of reaction" (31). Children have an innate need to be pleasing to their parents, even if the parents are abusive and distant. In spite of everything that has happened at Gateshead, including the unjust way the Reeds have treated her, young Jane still harbors a desire to be a part of the family, and to be pleasing to her aunt. She says,

"Willingly would I now have gone and asked Mrs. Reed's pardon; but I knew, partly from experience and partly from instinct, that was the way to make her repulse me with double scorn" (31). Since reconciliation is not possible, Jane must begin her life as a Wandering Woman by leaving Gateshead for Lowood School. The only person who seems sorry to see Jane go is Bessie, the housemaid. Just as Jane is leaving the Reed household, Bessie gives her a small sample of the nurturing, motherly attention she should have received from her own aunt. Bessie's attentions are like "gleams of sunshine" (33) to Jane, and they allow her to be hopeful for a better future at Lowood.

While it takes a series of incidents to initiate Jane's journey, Little Nell is introduced as a wanderer who is lost roaming through the wilderness of London's streets. Unlike Jane, Nell has a loving caretaker in her grandfather. However, he leads a mysterious life, and his refusal to reveal what he does under the cover of night causes Nell great anxiety, while it simultaneously puts her at risk. Indeed, in the opening scenes of the novel, Nell confesses to the strange old man who has found her that she has been on an errand the purpose of "which she did not even know, herself" (Dickens 3). Nell has a trusting, child-like nature, and it does not occur to her to question the trustworthiness of this old man. This is an early indication of the danger her innocence, coupled with her grandfather's carelessness in regard to her care, will continually put her in throughout the course of the novel. As the patriarch of the Trent household, Nell's grandfather should act as a shield between his granddaughter and "the harsh, competitive public sphere" of the outside world (Gorham 4). Since Nell has been wandering alone through the streets of London late at night, it is clear that he is already failing in his duty toward her. Although

Grandfather Trent kindly shows his gratitude to the old man for bringing Nell home safely, he shows his lack of consideration for her by becoming defensive when the old man admonishes him to "'[take] more care of [his] grandchild'" (Dickens 5). Grandfather Trent acknowledges that "'in many respects, I am the child, and she the grown person'" (10); however, his denial of the problems inherent in this situation indicates that he is both unaware of the peril Nell is already in, and unwilling to accept responsibility for it. His failure to perform as the adult in their relationship forces Nell to take on adult responsibilities without the benefit of an adult's experience or perception.

In fact, danger already looms all around Nell. The old man she has brought home seems benign, but he takes an inordinate interest in her physical appearance, her sleeping arrangement, and the lack of protection she is given during Grandfather Trent's nocturnal wanderings. The old man, who has noticed Nell's hair "hanging loose about her neck" and her "flushed" face (6), tells Grandfather Trent that "'it always grieves me to contemplate the initiation of children into the ways of life, when they are scarcely more than infants. It checks their confidence and simplicity -- two of the best qualities that Heaven gives them -- and demands that they share our sorrows before they are capable of entering into our enjoyments'" (6). On the surface, this statement sounds harmless enough, but it has sinister, pedophilic undertones. Nell's fallen, loose hair and flushed face are evocative of sexual arousal, and although she is clearly unaware of this, the old man intuitively perceives her artless sensuality. At almost fourteen years of age, Nell is a very young adolescent, who is barely more than an "infant." Her purity and "simplicity" make her incapable of believing that anyone would try to harm her, which is precisely why she is a

perfect target for pedophilia, and why the old man contemplates Nell's "initiation" in the first place. He is perfectly aware that Nell is too young to engage in sexual "enjoyments," yet he feels compelled to think about that possibility. Even after he leaves the Trent household, the old man continues to think about "a region on which [he] was little disposed to enter" (14).

As the old man contemplates what he has seen at the old curiosity shop, he ponders how curious it would be "to imagine [Nell] in her future life, holding her solitary way among a crowd of wild grotesque companions; the only pure, fresh youthful object in the throng" (14). If this old, infirm man can see Nell's budding sexuality and the lack of concern her grandfather exhibits in protecting it, other more capable predators will sense it too. In this scenario, and indeed throughout the rest of the novel, Nell is the real curiosity. Although a young girl should be able to depend upon her home and family as a secure fortress and a safe haven, Nell's life is vulnerable to attack from all sides, including from within. The old, musty, medieval weapons that fill her grandfather's shop are reminiscent of the bygone custom of chaste, courtly love, and suggest that fresh, virginal girls like Nell are becoming an anachronism. Like the rusty, broken-down weapons themselves, Grandfather Trent is a quixotic, rapidly decaying shield that offers inadequate protection, and renders Nell defenseless. The antiquated arsenal at the Trent's shop is as insufficient to protect Nell as her limited knowledge of the outside world is. Thomas Hood, one of Dickens' contemporary reviewers, said Nell's bedchamber was "like an Allegory of the peace and innocence of Childhood in the midst of Violence, Superstition, and all the hateful or hurtful Passions of the world" (McCarthy 20). The old

man senses that Nell really has no dependable source of protection, and that the wicked forces that surround her will inevitably destroy her innocent defenselessness.

Nell's relationship with her dissipated brother Fred shows how vulnerable she is to attack. Fred is an utter failure as a sibling because he fails to conform to the idealized Victorian paradigm of the brother-sister relationship. Gorham says that this paradigm included the belief that the brother-sister bond was the ideal relationship because it "could have all the emotional intensity of marriage, but at the same time, the issue of sexuality could be avoided, and the relationship could be invested with sacred overtones" (44). Gorham states that brothers were expected to act as intellectual, practical guides for their sisters, particularly if the sister was the younger sibling (45). She also says that "more than any other relationship, the sister-brother dyad was perceived as free of conflict" and that because of this, sibling rivalry "could simply be discounted" (45). Fred is convinced that his grandfather has spurned him in favor of Nell, and that she will be the beneficiary of what Fred assumes is a large inheritance. Like the nameless old man who brought her home, Fred has noticed that "'Nell will be a woman soon'" (Dickens 22). His observation carries none of the tender, protective anticipation of a devoted brother for his beloved sister, but is, instead, an ominous foreshadowing of a more self-serving interest. Fred is planning to "sell" his sister in marriage to his ne'er-do-well friend, Dick Swiveller, so that they can share in her "inheritance." Fred knows that Nell is young enough to "'be easily influenced and persuaded'" (63), and he is willing to use threats, manipulation and emotional blackmail to get what he wants. He is patently unconcerned with Nell's safety or happiness, and concentrates only on the enjoyment he and Dick will

get from spending her money. Fred is thus, effectively, prostituting Nell without any thought to the damaging effect that this stigmatizing role will have on her. He has taken sibling rivalry to a new extreme and violated the sanctity of his role as Nell's protector by planning his future around sexually, emotionally, and financially exploiting her, and his roguish behavior has the potential to mark her as a Wandering Woman. As threatening as this scenario is for the unsuspecting Nell, a more ominous predator is pursuing her.

Daniel Quilp is a bestial antithesis to Nell's angelic sweetness, and his deformed, dwarfed body is an outward manifestation of his misshapen psyche. The narrator says, "the ugly creature contrived by some means or other -- whether by his ferocity or his ugliness or his natural cunning is no great matter -- to impress with a wholesome fear of his anger, most of those with whom he was brought into daily contact and communication" (33). Quilp's roguish, manipulative powers belie his small stature, and extend to his business dealings, which the narrator says are "diversified" and "numerous" (32). One of his financial arrangements involves Grandfather Trent, and during the course of the narrative, it becomes increasingly clear that the dwarf uses it as leverage against the older man. Quilp has keen powers of observation, and uses this ability, along with his caustically concise conversational style, to control and intimidate others. His timid, browbeaten wife suffers from these fears more acutely than anyone else in his life does, and he takes a malicious enjoyment in making her squirm with suspense-filled anticipation and dread of his every move. Much of Mrs. Quilp's fear stems from Quilp's potent, yet repulsive, sexual attractiveness. Mrs. Quilp tells her friends, "'Quilp has such a

way with him when he likes, that the best-looking woman here couldn't refuse him if I was dead, and she was free, and he chose to make love to her'" (35).

Mrs. Quilp understands her husband's mesmerizing power more than anyone else, and realizes he could have the same sinister effect on Little Nell. In some ways, Nell and Mrs. Quilp are mirror images -- both are young, pretty, and soft-spoken. James R. Kincaid concurs with this idea when he states that "Betsy Quilp is very nearly Nell's double" (Kincaid, *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* 83). However, as an adult, Mrs. Quilp is a frightening portrait of what could happen to Nell if she becomes the victim of Quilp's diabolical plot to make her "'Mrs. Quilp the second, when Mrs. Quilp the first is dead'" (Dickens 53). Like Nell, Mrs. Quilp has a sweet, pliable nature that has allowed her husband to intimidate her into being "notoriously under the dominion of her husband" (33). Quilp demonstrates his ability to dominate and control his timid wife in a particularly vicious, thinly veiled episode of conjugal rape. He forces Mrs. Quilp to sit up with him all night because he is "'in a smoking humour, and shall probably blaze away all night'" (41). His glowing cigar is a hot, smoldering phallic symbol that will not burn out. Quilp's astounding stamina frightens, fatigues, and humiliates his wife, and thus ensures that she will submit to his will, whatever it may be. This is apparent when Quilp orders his wife to use her tenderness and natural affection for Nell as a means to obtain information about Grandfather Trent's activities. Mrs. Quilp has a unique opportunity to act as a surrogate mother by warning Nell of the dangers implicit in trusting Quilp. However, Mrs. Quilp's intense fear of her husband forces her to choose the role of

accomplice to his roguish intentions instead of the more protective, maternal role that her gentle temperament naturally inclines her to assume.

Mrs. Quilp's failure as a surrogate mother has damaging, irreversible consequences for Nell and her grandfather. Within a few weeks, Quilp uses the information his wife obtained from Nell to force Grandfather Trent into forfeiting his business. Quilp convinces Grandfather Trent that Kit, his trusted friend and Nell's sometime security guard, has betrayed the older man by revealing what he does on his mysterious evenings out. This creates a dangerously precarious situation for Nell. Her grandfather's grief over Kit's "betrayal" has made him physically and emotionally ill, and he can no longer protect Nell, even in his own inadequate way. Because Quilp's passion for Nell is so intense, he can not conjure up enough smoke to satisfy his longing, and he invites two of his roguish friends to join him in smoking and lounging in the curiosity shop, thus increasing the threat to Nell's unprotected innocence three-fold. Quilp uses smoking to frighten, humiliate and intimidate her in precisely the same way that he used it on his own wife. He is menacingly patronizing to Nell as he asks her whether she is going to "sit upon [his] knee" or go "to bed in her own little room" (101). Both suggestions are clearly sexual, and patently inappropriate. His threatening presence makes Nell live in "continual dread and apprehension" (102) because she knows he will not give up his pursuit of her.

Nell is entirely correct in assuming that Quilp's attentions are unrelenting. Quilp, in his determination to occupy her bed in some capacity, no matter how trivial, has taken it as "a sleeping place by night and as a kind of Divan by day" (Dickens 101) where he

continues to smoke "violently." This makes it difficult for her to fall asleep, and marks the first of many instances in which Nell's sleep will be disturbed by anxiety and fear. She is intuitive enough to understand that Quilp's small stature disguises the enormity of his lascivious intentions, and that his frighteningly distorted appearance is a reflection of the nightmarish existence involvement with him entails. With Grandfather Trent delirious with grief and guilt, and Kit banished from the house, she feels an increasing urgency in her desire to leave both the shop and life as she has known it thus far. Michael Steig contends that "Nell's response to the sexuality of Quilp grows into a pattern of flight, obsession, and death" (168). This idea is obviously on Grandfather Trent's mind as well. As his "fever" begins to lift, he reminds Nell of her earlier entreaty that they "walk through country places" (84) in order to escape the pressures of their current lives. Grandfather Trent's illness has made him even more incapable than ever of protecting Nell, and he is obtusely unaware of her impending molestation by Quilp, Fred, or the old nameless gentleman. Because they lack the financial resources to make restitution to Quilp, fleeing is their only resort. In order to save her chastity, as well as what little remains of her grandfather's sanity, Nell must begin her life as a Wandering Woman. Her determination to be a good daughter to her grandfather helps her overcome her fear of Quilp long enough to devise a plan of escape. As she plans, she has "no thought of hunger or cold, or thirst, or suffering" (109). She can no longer sleep peacefully inside her home, and the risks awaiting her in the outside world seem small in comparison.

Like Nell, Jane has hopeful thoughts for the new life she is entering, and does not stop to consider the possibility of cold, thirst, or suffering. She has no idea that the

emotional privation of the Reed household will be mirrored in the physical privations of Lowood. After three weeks at her new home, Jane has had enough time to distance herself from the hardships of life at Gateshead, and is now able to "[glance] sideways" (54) at Mr. Brocklehurst. This shows that he is now a less threatening persona than he seemed during their initial meeting, and that he seems to be a less formidable obstacle to her happiness. However, her former fear of him is revived when Mr. Brocklehurst publicly humiliates her by declaring her "a liar!" (Bronte 59). Since he levels this accusation in front of the whole classroom, he crushes her intention "to be so good, and to do so much at Lowood; to make so many friends, to earn respect, and win affection" (60). Fortunately, Jane's teacher, Miss Temple, and her classmate, Helen Burns, do not believe Mr. Brocklehurst's assertions. Miss Temple offers Jane tea and sympathy, as well as an unarticulated offer to become her surrogate mother and guide. Ironically, the meal Miss Temple offers to Jane and Helen is "only a very small portion" (65), just as the emotional nurture she has to offer will be only a very small portion of what Jane needs to sustain her into adult life.

When an outbreak of typhus hits Lowood, the "delicate fare" (65) Jane has been offered in the way of physical and emotional sustenance is threatened. Helen has tried to instruct Jane to be a good girl, and thus a good daughter to God, by telling Jane that she is "but a little untaught girl" who should learn to "Love [her] enemies" (50). However, Jane is quick to remind the reader that she is "no Helen Burns" (58) because her "passionate" nature will not allow her to forget the injustices she has already had to suffer. Unlike the more spiritually minded Helen, Jane is unable to ignore the harsh realities of life at

Lowood. The unprotected wandering the girls must endure on the grounds of the school grimly foreshadows Jane's future wandering after she is compelled to leave Thornfield. Once again, Jane's naïveté is threatened while she is enclosed in a bedchamber. As she lies in "a little crib" (74), Helen's ethereal goodness succumbs to the ravages of typhus, forever disrupting Jane's spiritual "sleep." If being enclosed in the red room caused Jane to ponder the injustices she suffered at the hands of the Reed family, Helen's death causes Jane to ponder the existence of a "mighty universal Parent" (74). Jane is as incapable of meekly accepting the injustice of Helen's death as she is of submitting to the idea that God wants her to be "always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust" (50). Jane would more readily accept this directive if she had had "a good home and kind parents" (47) to guide and protect her.

Jane feels some justification when the typhus epidemic precipitates Brocklehurst's downfall, and she is satisfied to see that the new committee that governs Lowood is able to "combine reason with strictness, comfort with economy, compassion with uprightness" (75). Mr. Brocklehurst falls as a pillar of the community because of his inhumane neglect of the girls at Lowood, and the directors of the school hold him responsible for the deplorable conditions there. Miss Temple thus becomes the pillar of Lowood, and takes on the role of "mother, governess, and, latterly, companion" (76) to Jane. Jane transfers her need to please a parental figure by taking "great delight in pleasing [her] teachers" (76), especially Miss Temple. There is a type of structure implied by Miss Temple's name, as well as by her presence, and Jane tries to shape herself into her teacher's image. This idealized "temple" of femininity is destroyed when Miss Temple marries and leaves

Lowood, particularly because she neither returns nor communicates any information about married life. Jane quickly shakes off eight years of her mentor's tutelage, and now, at age eighteen, begins "to feel the stirring of old emotions" (76-7). Her "passionate" nature puts her in danger because she no longer has a maternal influence to keep her in conformity with Victorian society's ideals about nubile young girls. Ostensibly, Jane is of an age at which she should be preparing to marry, but with Miss Temple gone, there is no one at Lowood who can or will instruct Jane about how to proceed to this next step. Miss Temple's nurture and support made Lowood tolerable to Jane -- without her and the protective structure she offered, it becomes just as insufferable as it had been under Mr. Brocklehurst's tyrannical direction.

The orphaned Jane feels a new sense of abandonment, which is marked by her announcement that Lowood is "not enough" (77) to satisfy her because she longs for "a new servitude" (77). Without parental guidance and support, and without a husband to "protect" her, Jane feels that her only alternative is to wander. Her lack of family subtly stigmatizes Jane, and her need to leave Lowood to seek "change [and] stimulus" (77) is indicative of her desire to be a good daughter, even if it means pleasing an employer instead of a parent. She knows that she cannot return to the Reeds because they have not communicated with her in any way since she left Gateshead. Although she longs for a change, Jane is still hesitant. She says, "a private fear had haunted me, that in thus acting for myself, and by my own guidance, I ran the risk of getting into some scrape; and above all things, I wished the result of my endeavours to be respectable, proper, *en regle*" (80). She is aware that her parental instruction has been slight, and that because her

"passionate" nature inclines her to rebel against conformity and "proper" behavior, she is likely to put herself in a dangerous, stigmatizing situation. Jane's intense need to please has manifested itself in what Karen Ann Butery calls her desire "to discredit the hateful image created by the Reeds by always acting *en regle* in the eyes of the world" (Paris 125).

The fact that Jane has very little to pack into the same trunk she "had brought with [her] eight years ago from Gateshead" (Bronte 81) represents that she has not gathered much new information about how to perform the role of good daughter while at Lowood. As she is preparing to leave for her new life at Thornfield, Jane has a "chance" encounter with Bessie, the Reed's maid and Jane's former "nanny." Bessie is able to recognize Jane immediately because she still looks like a child, and her need to "mother" Jane is still evident, particularly when Bessie tells Jane that she has a daughter whom she has named after her. Bessie also tells Jane that she had a strong desire to "get a look at [Jane] before she was quite out of reach" (83). Like a dutiful daughter, Jane recounts all the skills she has mastered during her tenure at Lowood, and Bessie's pride is evident as she tells her, "Oh, you are a quite a lady, Miss Jane! I knew you would be; you will get on whether your relations notice you or not" (84). Jane tells the reader that "at eighteen most people wish to please" (83), which underscores her intense and abiding need to be pleasing to a parental figure, whether the parent she is pleasing is Bessie, Miss Temple, or even Mrs. Reed. Ironically, Bessie, who has no real ties or obligations to Jane, is the only consistent parental influence in her life, and sees Jane off on the first two important journeys of her young life.

Like Jane, Little Nell begins her journey, in part, to serve her rapidly deteriorating grandfather. Although both she and her grandfather are hopeful that wandering through the countryside will help alleviate their problems, they have barely left their home before Nell becomes convinced that someone is following them. Grandfather Trent, who is acting more "like a little child" (Dickens 136) than ever, is also frightened by the poverty he sees in the slums of London, and he urges Nell to go "'further away'" (136). However, there is no distance that will put Nell out of danger, because her naïveté makes it difficult for her to know whom she can and cannot trust. This becomes particularly apparent when she and her grandfather meet Codlin and Short, two performers who operate a Punch and Judy show. In fact, once Nell and her grandfather join Codlin and Short, they are surrounded by traveling carnival performers, and Nell's life takes on a surrealistic, nightmarish quality that makes it difficult to distinguish appearance from reality. Codlin and Short, as well as the other performers, live in a world that operates on their power to delude their audience. In fact, Short is reluctant to let anyone see that he is repairing Punch because "it would destroy all the delusion" (145). Once again, Nell is the real curiosity among all these other curiosities because her physical appearance matches the reality of who she is -- a sweet, naïve young girl. Codlin and Short are unable to accept Nell and her grandfather at face value as mere travelers, and they speculate on why the young girl and old man are together, what they are trying to escape, and how they could profit from Nell's youthful, innocent beauty. She is again in danger of being stigmatized by the unwanted advances of two roguish men, and the Punch and Judy puppets become an eerie reminder of Nell’s vulnerability to potentially abusive relationships.

Nell's anxiety is manifested in her inability to sleep soundly. Codlin in particular is mesmerized by her -- he looks at her "with an interest which did not appear to be diminished when he glanced at her helpless companion" (146). Nell is startled the next morning to discover that "she had been moved from the familiar chamber in which she seemed to have fallen asleep last night," and she does not know "whither she had been conveyed" (149). This indicates that she is unsafe both waking and sleeping, and her inability to rest soundly escalates as the novel progresses. Her apprehension increases when Codlin cryptically admonishes her that "'it's me that's your friend -- not him'" (169) just as she is planning to retire for the night. Although she is exhausted by walking all day, Nell is unable to fall asleep right away because "she [was not] quite free from a misgiving that [Codlin and Short] were not the fittest companions she could have stumbled on" (170). Nell's fears are realized the next day when "Codlin testified his jealousy and distrust by following close at her heels, and occasionally admonishing her ankles with the legs of the theatre in a very abrupt and painful manner" (171). Because she has no parental influence, Nell has not yet lowered her skirts to a length that is suitable to her burgeoning sexuality, and thus, her exposed legs are highly erotic. Codlin's insistence on poking and thrusting the legs of the theatre into Nell's legs is emblematic of the hostility and viciousness of rape, and he is obviously desirous of the control that is an integral part of that illicit act because he keeps "his eye steadily upon [Nell]" (171). This "increased [her] misgivings, and made her yet more anxious and uneasy" (171), because she is worried that Codlin and Short will separate her from her grandfather. Nell is "frightened and repelled" (172) by the life Codlin and Short and their cronies live. Patrick

J. McCarthy incorrectly assumes that "Nell's fears and hopes are as unspecified and as real-unreal as those of a fairy tale" (26). However, Nell's fear of Codlin's uninvited attentions are specified because she understands that they have the power to stigmatize her, and since her grandfather is incapable of protecting her, she knows that they must flee before it is too late. Nell's suspicions about her delicate situation are confirmed when she and her grandfather pass by a group of women who "[turn] their backs, or [look] the other way" (Dickens 175) rather than look at the fate that is befalling her. If people who do not know her can see the taint of her involvement with the puppeteers, others will be able to see it as well. Flight is the only option as Nell continues her journey as a Wandering Woman.

Although Nell does find comfort in her journey, it is more a flight from danger than it is a quest for relief. She has a brief respite at the schoolmaster's house because he is a sympathetic, selfless man who has projected his paternal longings onto one of his students. Ironically, his favorite pupil is ill and has been "wandering in his head" (214). The schoolmaster's compassion and devotion toward this child indicate to Nell that he is someone she can trust. He has no interest in using Nell for any personal gain, and she feels free to perform the duties of a good daughter to him by trying to make things in his home more comfortable for him. The security she feels in the schoolmaster's presence is most evident in the fact that Nell is able to sleep soundly while she is under his roof. Once she is secure in her own room, Nell grieves deeply over the little boy, giving "free vent to the sorrow with which her breast was overcharged" (225). Although she sincerely grieves for the dead child, she is unaware that she is also grieving for the life she herself

has lost; Nell has had to give up her own childhood and her own innocence in order to protect herself and her beloved grandfather. As she ruminates on "How many of the mounds in that old churchyard where she had lately strayed, grew above the graves of children" (225), it is obvious that she too will die while still a child.

Nell and her grandfather set out once again on their interminable journey, this time "at a much slower pace [because they were] very weary and fatigued" (226). Clearly, Nell's strength is being diminished by her wanderings, and as her physical health declines, so do her spirits. It becomes increasingly obvious that she will not be able to carry the heavy burden of being constantly and consistently exposed to situations that are potentially stigmatizing to her. When she and Grandfather Trent meet Mrs. Jarley, the proprietress of a "famous" wax-work, Nell learns that her reputation has suffered because of her involvement with Codlin and Short. Mrs. Jarley admonishes her by saying that she was "'very sorry . . . to see you in company with a Punch; a low, practical, wulgar wretch, that people should scorn to look at'" (229). Mrs. Jarley overlooks Nell's poor judgement because she is "young and inexperienced" (229), while she scolds Grandfather Trent because "'[she] should have thought [he was] old enough to take care of [himself]'" (237). The imperious Mrs. Jarley sees her own work as highly respectable, and ostensibly offers a job to Little Nell because it will offer prestige, as well as a chance to erase the taint of her previous liaisons. Mrs. Jarley also extends an offer for Nell to sleep in her caravan "as a signal mark of [her] favour and confidence" (239). Although this should alleviate Nell's anxieties about her safety and her financial situation, she is immediately thrust back into the nightmarish situation that forced her initial flight from London. Just as she is taking a

pre-slumber stroll, Nell sees Quilp, her most formidable enemy. She is successful in keeping herself hidden from him, but when she tries to go to sleep, "she could get none but broken sleep by fits and starts all night, for fear of Quilp, who throughout her uneasy dreams was somehow connected with the wax-work, or was wax-work himself, or was Mrs. Jarley and wax-work too, or was himself, Mrs. Jarley, wax-work, and a barrel organ all in one, and yet not exactly any of them either" (242). Clearly, her life has become like a living nightmare in which it is difficult to distinguish between waking and sleeping terrors. Joan Winslow says, "These imagings of Quilp that recur again and again throughout the journey [are] always associated with fear and danger, [and] greatly augment our awareness of intended pursuit and keep this threat alive, even though he never again sees Nell and her grandfather after they leave London" (164).

In spite of her fear, Nell knows that as a good daughter, she must earn some type of living to support herself and her debilitated grandfather. She sets out to learn all about each wax figure so she can perform her job as a kind of tour guide. Mrs. Jarley pays particular attention to her instruction about Jasper Packlemerton, one of the wax figures "who courted and married fourteen wives, and destroyed them all, by tickling the soles of their feet when they were sleeping in the consciousness of innocence and virtue" (Dickens 247). This is a sinister reminder of the nightmarish existence that awaits Nell if any of the rogues who pursue her, including Quilp, Codlin, Dick Swiveller, or her brother Fred are able to locate her. In fact, all of these men have the power to be either protectors or destroyers of Nell's innocence. It is this dichotomy that "works to produce [an] erotic seam between trust and violation and to create in our conception of Nell a constant, vivid,

erotically desired awareness of violation and loss" (Kucich 64). Although she has unwittingly been involved in several potentially compromising situations, Nell's innocence and virtue are still intact because she has been successful in avoiding a sexual awakening. Thus, the reality of what the wax figures represent makes Mrs. Jarley's wax-works take on the ghoulish, dreamlike quality that renders this type of exhibition both fascinatingly compelling and horrifyingly repulsive. Packlemerton's figure is particularly menacing since he represents the type of rogue who is capable of destroying virginal women like Nell.

Once she begins her job as Jarley's tour guide, Nell's presence has an immediate impact: "The beauty of the child, coupled with her gentle and timid bearing, produced quite a sensation in the little country place" (Dickens 250). The narrator continues, "Grown-up folks began to be interested in the bright-eyed girl, and some score of little boys fell desperately in love" (251). This proves, once again, that Nell's nubile attractiveness renders her susceptible to attack, and in spite of her success, Nell is still plagued by dreams of Quilp. He "was a perpetual nightmare to the child, who was constantly haunted by a vision of his ugly face and stunted figure" (252). However, she has much more to fear from an unexpected source that is terrifyingly close to her. One evening, after a long walk, Nell and her grandfather are forced to take refuge from a sudden rainstorm by spending the night at a pub. While they are there, Grandfather Trent finally reveals the secret he has been keeping from Nell for so long -- he is a compulsive gambler. His sudden interest in a game of cards frightens Nell "with astonishment and alarm [because] his whole appearance had undergone a complete change. His face was

flushed and eager, his eyes were strained, his teeth set, his breath became short and thick, and the hand he laid upon her arm trembled so violently that she shook beneath its grasp" (255). Grandfather Trent's reaction is strongly evocative of sexual arousal. G. Cordery, in "The Gambling Grandfather in *The Old Curiosity Shop*" says that there is a distinct possibility that "gambling is a symbolic substitute for sexual activity" (48), which makes Grandfather Trent's subsequent theft of Nell's money a "symbolic rape" (43). While it may stretch credulity to imply that Grandfather Trent is sexually attracted to his own grandchild, it is indisputable that his gambling does put Nell at risk, and is a tremendous violation of her innocence and trust. Nell's dismay over this situation causes her intense anguish because she thinks that she is the "cause of all this torture" (Dickens 259). This reaction is consistent with the behavior of incest victims; in fact, many of her subsequent behaviors are in keeping with the stereotypical responses to this type of abuse. Rest, which has been difficult for her prior to this incident, becomes virtually impossible now. The narrator's declaration that as a result of Grandfather Trent's gambling spree "Nell's little purse was exhausted" (261) takes on erotic implications in light of Cordery's argument. Nell's "purse" is inadequate for any type of activity, whether the activity is sexual, financial or emotional, and is particularly sensitive since the activity is visited upon her because of her own grandfather. The fact that Grandfather Trent's gambling companions are smoking is an eerie reminder of Quilp's lascivious smoking, and indeed, Nell thinks these men are "very ill-looking" since "They might get their living by robbing and murdering travelers" (264). However, greater troubles await Nell once she retires to her room to try to sleep.

Nell's budding sexuality has clearly awakened the interests of a wide variety of people, while her inexperience renders her incapable of understanding exactly what it is that she must constantly try to escape. She falls into "a broken, fitful sleep, troubled by dreams of falling from high towers, and waking with a start and in great terror" (264). Symbolically, Nell's sexual awakening promises to be a terrifying experience if it involves the feeling that she is falling out of control and into an uncomfortable, startling arousal. It is therefore understandable that termination of her sexual "sleep" looms like a horrific dream she cannot escape. Her imaginary fears are realized when a shadowy specter enters her room and begins "groping its way with noiseless hand, and stealing around the bed" (264). Like the stereotypical rape victim, Nell is too frightened to speak or cry out, and instead falls back onto her pillow "lest those wandering hands should light upon her face" (264). Nell is traumatized by the creeping, animalistic stealth of the intruder, and as soon as she is able, she makes flight to the only safety she has ever known -- her grandfather. Rather than offering her comfort and support, Nell's grandfather, who is "counting the money of which his hands had robbed her" (266) is finally revealed as the vilest of perpetrators. He has put his own selfish needs above the safety and comfort of his innocent, defenseless granddaughter, and from this point on, Nell will be unable to awake from the nightmare of her existence. The one person she has trusted the most, and has sought most ardently to protect, is the person who can, and indeed, who has, done her the most harm. He has utterly betrayed the intimacy of their relationship because "No strange robber, no treacherous host conniving at the plunder of his guests, or stealing to their beds to kill them in their sleep, no nightly prowler, however

terrible and cruel, could have awakened in her bosom half the dread which the recognition of her silent visitor inspired" (267). Nell has essentially been "sleeping" with an enemy whose own selfishly roguish desires will constantly compel her to continue her interminable journey as a Wandering Woman.

Like many victims of incest, Nell falls into a deep depression and seeks to absolve her abuser. She is terrified that her grandfather will repeat his nocturnal visit because "in [her] imagination it was always coming" (267). She rationalizes that her grandfather is not well, and that he has only her to comfort and protect him. Grandfather Trent's roguish, insensitive behavior has once again forced Nell to invert their roles and turn herself into his parent. As is also typical of incest victims, Nell fears that others will be able to sense the stigma of her private life. This fear is realized in her encounter with the inflexibly stern schoolmistress Miss Monflathers, who scolds her by saying, "'it's very naughty and unfeminine, and a perversion of the properties wisely and benignantly transmitted to us, with expansive powers to be roused from their dormant state through the medium of cultivation'" (272). Nell fears that Miss Monflathers has somehow sensed that her innocence has been shattered by her grandfather's perversion, and that she has somehow been naughty and unfeminine by inciting him to gamble. After all, Grandfather Trent has told her that "'it's all for thee, my darling'" (259). Nell is too inexperienced to realize that his compulsive gambling is a vice of his own cultivation, and that she has done nothing to rouse his interest in it from its "dormant state."

Grandfather Trent's gambling persists, and becomes a "constant drain upon [Nell's] scanty purse" (362); not only is it a financial drain, it is a physical, emotional, and

psychological drain that saps Nell's already delicate health. Even in her solitary "rambles which had now become her only pleasure or relief from care" (361), she remains depressed because gambling has wedged "a gradual separation" (362) between her grandfather and herself. This separation is, partially, a result of Nell's realization that "her own beloved grandfather embodies corruption, and, while she can flee from the malicious villains whose corruption she has conceptualized but has experienced only briefly in her dealings with Quilp, she cannot flee from her own grandfather" (Schiefelbein 28). The separation seems deeper and more sinister when Grandfather Trent becomes involved with a group of gipsies. John Reed, in *Victorian Conventions*, says gipsies were believed to be "outcasts, of an idle and thieving nature, and untrustworthy to any but their own kind" (364). Nell obviously fears that her grandfather's involvement with these nomadic, "untrustworthy" people signals the end of any chance she has of rescuing him not only from gambling, but also from a life where constant flight is a necessity. She watches in horror as the gipsies plot against her grandfather, and then runs "homeward as quickly as she could, torn and bleeding from the thorns and briars, but more lacerated in mind, and threw herself upon her bed" (Dickens 369). The tearing and bleeding are emblematic of Grandfather Trent's figurative rape of his granddaughter, while the lacerations to Nell's mind illustrate just how deeply she has been psychologically and emotionally scared. Grandfather Trent is gambling with her virtue and her innocence; losing money is a mere side effect of his addiction. Because he is both unwilling and unable to control his compulsion, Nell is becoming increasingly aware that she can not escape stigmatization. Because she has already forged a path as a Wandering Woman, it is no surprise that "The

first idea that flashed upon her mind was flight, instant flight" (369). Once again, Nell's sleep is disturbed, and she runs to her grandfather's side "Half undressed, and with her hair in wild disorder" (369). This description is frighteningly sexual, but it is clear that Nell does not intentionally make herself appear to be erotically aroused. Her disheveled outer appearance reflects the disarray her grandfather's gambling has wrought upon both her countenance and her psyche. Although she feels tainted and bruised, she is not at fault because she is patently unaware of her sexual attractiveness -- no one has explained it to her. The narrator constantly refers to Nell as a "child," even though almost everyone around her sees her nubile sensuality. She feels she has no recourse other than retrieving her grandfather and fleeing again, and she tells him they may must leave because, "'I cannot sleep, I cannot stay here . . .Nothing but flight can save us'" (369-70). Nell's determination to flee is a "search for safety" and "an attempt above all to elude the nightmare enemies" (Kincaid, *Dickens and the Rhetoric of Laughter* 87) whom she is certain are following her. Her daydreams of leading a better life with her grandfather by travelling through the countryside are shattered, and Nell must resume her journey as a Wandering Woman.

As they leave, Nell is tempted to look back. Not only is she looking back to make certain they are undetected, she is also looking back on her innocence and on her childhood. She has difficulty in controlling her terror of the stigmatizing impact of Grandfather Trent's behavior, and is only able to do so when she remembers that "they were flying from disgrace and crime" (Dickens 371). She also realizes that "There was no divided responsibility now; the whole burden of their two lives had fallen upon her"

(370). Nell is so fearful of being disgraced by her grandfather's gambling that she does not bother to tell Mrs. Jarley that they are leaving. It now becomes increasingly apparent that Nell will not be able to survive the trauma of her burgeoning sexuality; the narrator says she is like "childhood fading in its bloom" who is ready to rest "in the sleep that knows no waking" (372). In spite of her attempts to be a good daughter to Grandfather Trent, he has been unable to provide the protection and support she so desperately needs because of her vulnerability as a pubescent girl.

Eventually, fatigue overtakes Nell, and she falls asleep. Once again, she awakes to find a strange man watching her slumber. The nameless man and his partner offer to take Nell and her grandfather down the river to an unnamed location. Nell gives her destination no other distinction than saying it is somewhere in the West, which is the symbolic direction of death. Her journey now becomes reminiscent of archetypal journeys over the river Styx to Hades, and indeed, her life has taken on some of the same hellish, interminable qualities as the wanderings of Odysseus and Aeneas. However, unlike those ancient heroes, Nell will not have a glorious homecoming on earth. She will not be able to endure the unbearable stigma of having to run constantly to protect her grandfather and her virtue. It becomes increasingly clear that Nell's flight as a Wandering Woman will lead to her untimely death. She is already "tired and exhausted" (377) when one of the men on the boat insists that she sing to him as entertainment. For him, as well as for the other men on the boat, Nell's singing is as sweet and enticing as the Sirens' song, and it is just as likely to arouse their interest in her in other ways. Joan D. Winslow says this incident is reminiscent of Mrs. Quilp's ordeal "when she was forced to stay

awake all night while Quilp 'blaze[d] away' with his cigar. Both scenes, in fact, with their sense of forced reluctance, unrestrained indulgence, and physical exertion, suggest a sexual assault" (164). Miraculously, Nell and her grandfather are able to leave the barge unharmed, but what awaits them in the unnamed city holds little comfort. They cannot find anyone to help them, and are eventually forced to sleep outside in the rain. This exposure to the harsh elements of nature parallels Nell's physical and emotional exposure, and indicates that as the journey continues, it becomes less and less likely that she will ever find adequate protection.

Just as they are about to take refuge in a doorway, a mysterious stranger appears out of the darkness and offers to give them a meager sleeping place. The stranger, like both Mrs. Jarley and the old gentleman at the beginning of the novel, scolds Grandfather Trent for not making more of an effort to protect his grandchild: "'Do you know . . . how wet she is, and that the damp streets are not a place for her?'" (Dickens 382). However, Grandfather Trent is more incapable than ever of protecting Nell, and makes little, if any, effort to do so. Although the stranger is tender and kind to Nell, the place he takes her and her grandfather is a fiery furnace that looks eerily like a living hell. Nell sleeps comfortably, but awakes to find the stranger staring intently into the fire. He tells her, "'It's my memory, that fire, and shows me all my life'" (384). It is apparent that if Nell cannot find safety and rest, her life too will become like a burning hell of memory and regret that will ultimately consume her. Because she is so weary, both physically and emotionally, it is no surprise that Nell "soon yielded to the drowsiness that came upon her" (385). People who feel hopeless and are chronically depressed often sleep deeply for

long periods of time as an escape from their troubles, and Nell is no different. Her sleep, which has been disturbed so frequently, now offers protection she cannot find anywhere else. If she cannot stand to be sexually awakened, she can find refuge in the eternal sleep of death. As Nell and her grandfather rise to continue their journey, the stranger tells her that he has heard of, but never seen, cities where she can find rest. However, he warns her, "'Rough people -- paths never made for little feet like yours -- a dismal blighted way -- is there no turning back, my child!'" (387). Of course, there is no turning back for Nell. She is emotionally and physically spent by the stigma she has been marked with on her journey as a Wandering Woman, and she walks away from the stranger in an effort to "lead her sacred charge farther away from guilt and shame" (387).

As they head toward their new destination, Nell's deepening depression becomes more and more obvious. Her journey has taken a tremendous physical toil on her, and she "walked with more difficulty than she had led her companion to expect, for the pains that racked her joints were of no common severity, and every exertion increased them" (389). Grandfather Trent has evolved into a whining, petulant old fool whose entreaties that they take a different path make him irritatingly like a small child crying, "are we there yet?" while Nell exhibits an almost saintly patience in dealing with him. Her slumber becomes less troubled, partly because there is "nothing between her and the sky" (390). This, along with her decreasing appetite and "a dull conviction that she was very ill, perhaps dying," indicates that Nell will soon succumb to her depression and ascend into the heavens, rather than try to assimilate into a fully realized, sexual being. The trauma of her adolescence has been too deep, and the narrator makes it more emphatically obvious than

ever that Nell will not recover. In *Dickens and the Twentieth Century*, Gabriel Pearson contends that "Dickens protects Nell from sexuality by early sounding the mortuary note that is to keep her for ever a child" (Gross and Pearson 84-5).

Just as she is about to collapse from fatigue, Nell and her grandfather encounter the kindly schoolmaster. Nell immediately faints, and the schoolmaster admonishes her grandfather, "'You have taxed her powers too far, friend'" (Dickens 397). Under the schoolmaster's tender, fatherly care, Nell is able to rest soundly, and she is put at further ease when he tells her, "'I have a reason (if you have not forgotten it) for loving you'" (401). At last she has found someone whom she can trust as both a parent and a friend, and Nell lays down the burden she has had to solitarily carry. The schoolmaster's valiant offer to find Nell and her grandfather a place to live demonstrates to her that she can finally rest in the knowledge that she has performed her role as a good daughter by delivering her grandfather to a place that is free from temptation. Nell is deemed too ill to travel on foot, and is put into a carriage that will carry her to her new home. As she drowses in safety and comfort, the carriage becomes a living hearse that is carrying a breathing corpse to its final resting-place. Once they arrive in the village, Nell asks the schoolmaster to leave her on the steps of the church while he goes to make the final arrangements for his new job. Her utter fascination with the graveyard indicates that she is already prepared to give up the will to live as a way to end her travels as a Wandering Woman.

While Nell's carriage has taken her to a church where her adolescence will come to its premature end, the adolescent Jane is in a carriage that is taking her to the future her

maturity holds. Although she is excited and hopeful about what her future will bring, Jane also feels isolated and alone. She is full of "all sorts of doubts and fears" because "It is a very strange sensation to inexperienced youth to feel itself quite alone in the world, cut adrift from every connection" (Bronte 85). As she finishes her journey to her new job at Thornfield, Jane restates her need to please others when she hopes she will "[succeed] in pleasing" (86) Mrs. Fairfax. She is relieved to find that Mrs. Fairfax is a kindly woman who, rather than being her employer, is merely the housekeeper, and thus on an equal social plane with a governess. Jane is also charmed by her pupil, Adele, a vivacious child who is the ward of the mysterious and oddly absent Mr. Rochester. Jane quickly settles into the routine of life at Thornfield, which, with the exception of some unexplained laughter on the third floor, seems to be a thoroughly ordinary home. Because she is only a teenager, Jane quickly becomes bored since "restlessness was in [her] nature" (101). Her only amusement comes in the form of solitary walks when she lets her imagination conjure up images of a life "with all of incident, life, fire, feeling, that [she] desired and had not in [her] actual existence" (101).

After four mundane months, Jane has a chance encounter with a surly stranger while she is out on one of her walks. The stranger, who, unbeknownst to Jane, is her employer, Mr. Edward Rochester, has an accident moments after he passes her. She offers her assistance, and is somewhat taken aback at his brusque, almost rude response. However, Jane is accustomed to rudeness in others, and odd as it may seem, his querulous attitude sets her at ease because it is familiar to her. Victims of abuse often seek out abusers, not because they enjoy the abuse itself, but because it is a lifestyle they

know how to deal with. In fact, Jane says, "If even this stranger had smiled and been good-humoured to me when I addressed him; if he had put off my offer of assistance gaily and with thanks, I should have gone on my way and not felt any vocation to renew inquiries" (105). She further demonstrates her readiness to please this caustic character when he commands her to help him guide his horse. She says, "when told to do it I was disposed to obey" since he has told her that "necessity compels [him] to make [her] useful" (106). Although this interchange may seem small and inconsequential, it is, in reality, the benchmark for the rest of their early relationship; Rochester commands and uses Jane, and she willingly obeys. In him, she has found the "new servitude" she so ardently longed for at Lowood.

This chance encounter ignites an intensely smoldering passion between the two that will eventually lead to their mutual downfall, and to the fiery destruction of Thornfield Hall. Although this relationship has long been heralded as one of the most deeply romantic liaisons in all of literature, I contend that Jane and Rochester's early entanglement also has all the earmarks of an intensely manipulative, adolescent romance that burns too hotly not to cool down. After she leaves Rochester, whose true identity is still a mystery to her, Jane walks back to Thornfield, consumed by thoughts of what has just happened. It is necessary to remember that Jane is an extremely inexperienced eighteen-year-old girl who is trapped by necessity in a boring job in a household overrun with women. It is understandable that she would be stimulated by meeting a man -- any man -- particularly if that meeting took place at dusk on a moonlit evening, and if the man was in need of help that only she could provide. Jane is of an age when young girls

typically have crushes on virtually every male they meet. Since she lives in isolation, she will, of course, pin her romantic longings and sexual curiosity on the first male that walks (or rides) her way. Like many young girls, she is also willing and able to overlook a tremendous number of shortcomings, since many teenage girls suffer from the delusion that they can smooth out a "bad" boy's rough edges if he becomes sufficiently devoted to her. Rochester is the definitive "bad boy," and their ensuing relationship seems tailor-made for the paradigm of the Wandering Woman and her rogue, since Jane is able to adapt her need to be a good daughter into being a good servant to her new master.

Back at Thornfield, Jane learns that Mr. Rochester has arrived at home and that he wants to talk to her. Their conversation is a continuation of their rough initial interchange, and just like that first encounter, Rochester asks all of the questions, while Jane provides all the answers. She reveals that she is an orphan who has led an unsophisticated, rather solitary lifestyle at a girl's school. Rochester tells her he "should hardly have been able to guess [her] age" because her "features and countenance are so much at variance" (115). In this brief conversation, he has learned that there is no one to impede his pursuit of her if he desires to do so, while her youth and small physical stature imply to him that she is as inexperienced sexually as she is socially. He, however, has revealed little about his own life with the exception that he seems "changeful and abrupt" (118) to Jane. It is no wonder that her enigmatic employer immediately intrigues her. Both Rochester and Jane let romantic notions override their rational, common sense since "Rochester wants a wild, free thing who is absolutely virtuous, while Jane wants a worldly adventurer who will not threaten her innocence" (Hoeveler et al 128). Since she

knows so few facts about him, she can allow her romantic imagination to run wild with speculations about his true nature. In her mind's eye, Jane can fashion Rochester into just the sort of wicked, rebellious hero she would most like to fall in love with.

The intrigue is deepened over the next few days because Rochester virtually ignores Jane and Adele. When he does call Jane into his presence, he is idiosyncratically charmed by her blunt responses to his inquiries. He is openly flirtatious with her when he asks her if she thinks him handsome, and is a little taken aback when she honestly replies in the negative. Jane obviously thinks his behavior borders on inappropriateness since she tells herself, "Decidedly he has had too much wine" (Bronte 123) and "he seems to forget that he pays me" (125). Both of these statements, however innocuous, indicate that Mr. Rochester has crossed the lines of propriety in his casualness and forwardness with his new employee. Beth Kalikoff asserts that Jane's "stature as a governess grants him permission to begin a pursuit rather than a courtship" (359). This in itself indicates the potentially powerful, stigmatizing impact he can (and will) have on Jane. Rochester takes an almost perverse pleasure in guardedly revealing that he has led a life of debauchery, and seems bemused and almost irritated when Jane remonstrates him to repent. He tells her, "You have no right to preach to me, you neophyte, that have not passed the porch of life, and are absolutely unacquainted with its mysteries" (Bronte 127). This caustic response, along with his declaration that he is determined to live a life of pleasure, shows Jane that Mr. Rochester is indeed a "bad" boy who needs reforming. Not only would his reformation satisfy her desire to be a good servant, it would also help to fulfil her intense need to be pleasing and helpful to a parental figure. This, coupled with her ennui and her

innocently romantic longings, makes for a lethal combination that will lead to her stigmatization and to her ultimate journey as a Wandering Woman.

A few days later, Rochester tells Jane about his relationship with a French opera-dancer named Celine Varens. After he tells Jane the story of how Celine tricked him into thinking Adele was his child, Rochester asks her if it makes her jealous. Before she can respond, he answers for her: "Of course not; I need not ask you; because you never felt love" (132). He continues, "your soul sleeps; the shock is yet to be given which shall waken it" (132). Mr. Rochester has already indicated, ever so subtly, that Jane fascinates him. His declaration that she has not yet been "awakened" seems rather manipulative because it plants a seed in her young mind, and if she has not already entertained romantic thoughts about her employer, she will now. Rochester is almost heartless in the way he toys with Jane's guileless innocence. His ploy is obviously effective since Jane tells the reader that rather than being disgusted by what he has told her, she now feels that "his face [was] the object [she] liked best to see" because she "thought there were excellent materials in him; though for the present they hung together somewhat spoiled and tangled" (137). She adds that she "cannot deny that [she] grieved for his grief, whatever it was, and would have given much to assuage it" (137). The seeds of love, as well as of immature, albeit innocent, infatuation have obviously taken root in fertile soil. Jane is becoming convinced that her ability to be a good servant to Rochester will be sufficient reason for him to reform from his profligacy, while she has simultaneously revealed that she is receptive to fulfilling his demands, whatever they may be.

Like Little Nell, Jane's sexual awakening is marked by disturbed sleep. As she is trying to fall asleep after ruminating on the information Rochester has just confided in her, Jane is awakened by "a demoniac laugh" (138). She steps outside to see if she can find the person who is laughing, and quickly realizes that there is a fire in Mr. Rochester's room. Once she has successfully doused the blaze and saved her employer from a certain death, they look together at the remnants of the bed, which is "all blackened and scorched" (139). Not only does this fire foreshadow the one that will eventually consume Thornfield and its mystery, it is also emblematic of Jane and Rochester's passion, which is so hot that there is an imminent danger that they will be scorched by it both bodily and emotionally. She is left "in total darkness" as Rochester leaves her alone in his room while he goes to investigate the possible cause of the fire. Whether she is aware of it or not, she is in total darkness in more ways than one because Rochester's refusal to tell her the truth about the blaze endangers her on a number of levels. Although they have just survived a nearly fatal accident together, it is inappropriate for Jane to be left alone in her master's bedchamber, dressed only in her nightgown. It would certainly create a compromising situation for her if any of the other servants in the house were to find her there alone, because it would appear highly inappropriate for a scantly clad young woman to be found in the master's room. Jane is also vulnerable to attack if the arsonist returned to the room and found her alone and unprotected. Finally, the burning bed is an indication that Jane is not physically or emotionally mature enough to engage in an all-consuming, fiery relationship that would inevitably lead to her sexual awakening. Without consciously intending to do so, Rochester has risked stigmatizing Jane's precious virtue

by leaving her in such a vulnerable position. His request for her to keep this incident secret from the rest of the servants sounds suspiciously like a sexual perpetrator's demand that illicit activity remain hidden. Jane's lack of worldliness renders her essentially incapable of protecting herself from attack, whether that attack is on her person, her virtue, or her virginity. Because she has not had a parent to instruct her about the dangers of engaging in sexual activity, she does not, and indeed cannot, realize that this episode has the potential to stigmatize her by awakening her from her sexual "sleep." John Maynard says Jane may be "sufficiently warned of [the] incendiary possibilities of this encounter since she has 'a sleepless, feverish' hot night in her own bed" (107).

Jane is hopeful that her heroic efforts have forged a bond between herself and Mr. Rochester, and her ardent longing for him to pay a visit to the schoolroom is a testament to her growing infatuation with him. She also demonstrates her adolescence by showing her jealous suspicion that both Grace Poole and Blanche Ingram have won Mr. Rochester's favor. Jane is deeply disappointed to learn that her master has left Thornfield in order to spend time with the elegant and lovely Blanche and her friends, and remonstrates herself soundly for presuming that she might have become "a favourite with Mr. Rochester" (Bronte 149). She continues by telling herself, "It does good to no woman to be flattered by her superior, who cannot possibly intend to marry her; and it is madness in all women to let a secret love kindle within them, which, if unreturned and unknown must devour the life that feeds it" (150). Clearly, Jane has hoped that her devoted servitude would spark Mr. Rochester's interest in her and that he would, in turn, ask for her hand in marriage. Because she has been spurned before, Jane is able to turn her

disappointment into a renewed effort to be a sensible, good girl whose sole purpose is to please and support her master. However, it is this very desire to please that will nearly devour her because it makes her too willing to submit to Rochester's machinations.

After a brief absence, Mr. Rochester returns to Thornfield to host a house party at which the beautiful Blanche Ingram is the guest of honor. Like an adolescent girl with a crush, Jane is unable to squelch her jealousy toward the woman she supposes will be the future Mrs. Rochester. Absence has made her heart grow tremendously fonder: "I had not intended to love him; the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong! He made me love him without looking at me" (164). The more Jane has tried to deny her love, the more it has grown, even though she is aware that it would be highly inappropriate, as well as highly unlikely, that her wealthy employer would be interested in marrying his poor, homely governess. Her deepening infatuation with Rochester makes it exceedingly difficult for her to endure watching him court Blanche. Blanche has all the trappings of a good daughter and a good girl, but Jane can see through the illusion of ideal femininity Blanche pretends to possess. Jane says Blanche "was very showy, but she was not genuine; she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments, but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature" (174). Obviously, Jane feels that she herself is genuine, that her own mind is fine, and that she has a heart that is fertile and made for loyal and eternal devotion. Unbeknownst to her, this is precisely the reason Rochester has brought the vacuous Blanche into Jane's presence -- he is using her to manipulate Jane and to see just how deeply she loves him. This manipulation takes a

devious turn when Rochester disguises himself as a gipsy so he may spurn Blanche and ascertain the depth of Jane's devotion. Like Nell's encounter with the gipsies, Jane feels that this particular gipsy is untrustworthy because she seems to be trying to "draw [Jane] out" (190). Once Mr. Rochester removes his costume and reveals his game to Jane, she feels that he has done something that "was not right" (190). Indeed, his game seems like adolescent note passing, where the important question is "do you like me -- yes or no?" Right before Rochester takes off his costume, Jane slips into an almost hypnotic trance, and she has difficulty in discerning what has really happened. She says, "Where was I? Did I wake or sleep? Had I been dreaming? Did I dream still?" (190). Once again, Jane has the uncomfortable feeling that her sleep has been violated, and this time, her discomfort is accompanied by the fear that she has, in her dream state, inadvertently revealed things she would have preferred to have kept private.

Rochester assures Jane that she has been totally respectable and appropriate in responding to the questions he posed during his masquerade. Whether she has been or not seems of little consequence, because she feels that she is more loyally bonded to him than ever. When Rochester learns that Richard Mason has joined the party, he asks Jane how deep her devotion is to him. She tells him, "I'd give my life to serve you" (192). Jane has completely inverted her need to be a good daughter into utter and almost blind devotion to Mr. Rochester. It is easy to assume that this is because she has fallen deeply in love with him, but it is just as likely that her response would have been the same to any other master she had encountered. Jane's need to be pleasing and to be validated as a good daughter is so intense that she is willing to forgo trying to create a façade that will

indicate that she is performing within the bounds of propriety. She tells Rochester she would "Turn [people] out of the room" (192) rather than be thought disloyal, and her determination to serve him extends to her declaration that she "should care nothing about" (193) a sanction on him if one were to exist. Through these innocent declarations of her love and devotion, Jane has inadvertently let Rochester know that she is open to involvement with him on any level, whatever the risks, and this is precisely the information that he needs to put forth his roguish designs on her. Her innocence, coupled with her lack of parental guidance, renders her both vulnerable and susceptible to his stigmatizing desires, and will eventually lead to her expulsion from the "polite" society at Thornfield.

Jane goes to her bedchamber where she slips off into a blissful sleep, confident that she has adequately expressed her affection and undying admiration for Mr. Rochester, when she is suddenly awakened by a piercing cry. Instead of trying to go back to sleep, the ever dutiful Jane gets up, gets dressed, and sits "waiting for [she] knew not what" (195). Once again, Rochester summons her to a bedchamber to perform a secret duty that only she can execute. The scene she encounters is terrifyingly reminiscent of her enclosure in the red room at Gateshead -- Richard Mason is lying in a bed, bleeding profusely, clearly the victim of a vicious, animalistic attack. This is an ominous warning to Jane that what goes on in the privacy of bedrooms is vicious, bloody, and life threatening. The horror of the situation is intensified not only by the gore, but also by Rochester's refusal to let either Jane or Mason speak to each other while they are isolated together in the bedroom. Jane cannot possibly know what has taken place or why it has

happened, but it becomes obvious that if Rochester can prevent a man from revealing the secrets of Thornfield, he will have little trouble in keeping a small, inexperienced governess quiet. While he forces Mason's silence, Rochester expects Jane's because she has shown him that she is willing to do anything to serve him, and anything to restore him to propriety's good graces. Jane's naïvely romantic perspective clouds her judgement of her master's actions, and she tells him, "I like to serve you, sir, and to obey you in all that is right" (205). Clearly, Jane does not realize that it is impossible to do this since she has no idea if his actions are right or not, and this is precisely why she is so susceptible to his stigmatizing, roguish influence. His demand that the whole incident be kept quiet is a continuation of his previous request for secrecy, and intensifies the notion that his activities are illicit, and thus require concealment.

Apparently, Jane does have some subconscious anxiety about the need for secrecy and the appropriateness of her actions both prior to and after she has been called to nurse Mason. For seven nights her sleep has been disturbed by dreams of a child "which [she] sometimes hushed in [her] arms, sometimes dandled on [her] knee, sometimes watched playing with daisies on a lawn, or again, dabbling its hands in running water" (209). While this dream seems to invite critical speculation, one plausible interpretation is that the child represents Jane's dormant sexuality. Sometimes she seems to seek it with the intense desire and curiosity of a lustful adolescent, while at other times, her sexual curiosity seems to invite a type of danger that makes her feel out of control. In fact, according to Maurianne Adams, Jane's dreams express "her anxiety that she is not yet a complete adult but rather an incomplete child" (Wohl 169). Jane's adoration of Rochester

is almost uncontrollable because she does not understand all the ramifications of such a relationship, while he clearly understands all the secrets and the implications of deflowering an innocent young woman. Jane's curiosity about the secrets of Thornfield is emblematic of her curiosity about the secrets of sexuality, and both her curiosity and her dream indicate that she is susceptible to initiation into a part of maturity she is clearly unprepared to handle. Although Rochester is sensitive to Jane's vulnerability, his roguish intentions towards her are exacerbated by her slavish devotion to him.

When the romance escalates and Rochester proposes, Jane gladly accepts because she has no idea that her fiancé already has a wife who is locked away in Thornfield. Although she is overjoyed and anticipates a happy, fairy-tale ending to her relationship, Jane is too naïve and too absorbed in Rochester to realize that not everyone is as enthusiastic as she is. Mrs. Fairfax in particular is visibly troubled by the idea of a mere governess marrying the master, but Jane thinks it is just because Mrs. Fairfax thinks Jane has "forgotten [her] station" (Bronte 250) by agreeing to marry Rochester. In fact, this is one of Mrs. Fairfax's main objections to the match. She tells Jane, "Equality of position and fortune is often advisable in such cases; and there are twenty years of difference in your ages. He might almost be your father" (251). Of course, Jane's desire to be pleasing to a parental figure is an integral part of her attraction to Rochester, and it is also possible that she finds rebellious excitement in the differences in their respective positions and fortunes. However, Mrs. Fairfax's objections are more complex, and she tells Jane, "It is an old saying that 'all is not gold that glitters;' and in this case I do fear there will be something found to be different to what either you or I expect" (251). The housekeeper is

aware that Mr. Rochester's life is full of secrets and surprises, and that some of them could have the power to stigmatize Jane and facilitate her social "death." Even little Adele reveals that she senses there is something wrong in Jane's relationship with her guardian when she tells Rochester that Jane "is far better as she is" (253). Jane has one final, terrifying warning that she should not marry Rochester. The night before their wedding, Bertha, Rochester's insane first wife, sneaks into Jane's bedchamber and rips apart her wedding veil. John Maynard says "the ripping serves as yet another warning against the physical and psychic dangers of sex" (108). However, both Jane and Rochester are too wrapped up in the romance and excitement of their union to be able to be rational about impediments to it.

Once the truth about Rochester's marital status is revealed, Jane's stigmatization becomes complete. Although Jane knew nothing of Rochester's devious scheme, she is still marked by being involved with a man who attempted bigamy because her uncle has found out about the relationship, and has been instrumental in stopping the wedding. Once the initial shock has worn off, Jane's conscience tells her to "Leave Thornfield at once" (282). Rochester is unaware that Jane intends to leave him, and he proposes to take her away to the south of France where she "shall live a happy, and guarded, and most innocent life" (289). However, Jane realizes that this is not a possibility because she would, in fact, be a mistress and not a wife. While Rochester could take a mistress without arousing controversy, the same is not true for Jane, because the bounds of propriety will not permit an unmarried female to live with a man who is not her husband. She understands "the convention that cohabiting, even with the man she loves above all,

henceforth would make her a fallen woman, cursed by society" (Basch 171). Jane realizes that she will be irreversibly stigmatized if she agrees to Rochester's new proposal, and she becomes more resolute than ever in her determination to leave him. Not only does she fear public scrutiny if she were to succumb to his request to accompany him to France, Jane is afraid that Rochester's love for her will fade because "he would one day regard [her] with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated [his former mistresses'] memory" (Bronte 297). She cannot risk the damage to both her reputation and to her heart, and must protect herself by resuming her journey as a Wandering Woman.

Jane is heartsick over her decision to leave Rochester, and her dreams transport her to the misery of her life at Gateshead. These dreams reflect her current agony, which is "impressed with strange fears" (304). As in Nell's case, the revelations over Rochester's past have made Jane's life a waking nightmare that can be eradicated only through flight. She feels that her relationship with Rochester has been irretrievably ruptured, and that she is again, like the abandoned child the Reeds so cruelly expelled from their lives. Her sorrow is intensified because she feels she has failed as a good servant since she "had injured -- wounded -- left [her] master. [She] was hateful in [her] own eyes" (306). Because of this, Jane feels more parentless than ever, and she turns to "the universal mother, Nature" (307) as her only comfort. However, nature will not be as compassionate as Jane might have hoped, and the harshness of the elements to which she is exposed is indicative of her emotional and psychological exposure. Jane takes a coach as far as her money will allow, and then continues to wander aimlessly on the moors. At the end of her first day as a full-fledged Wandering Woman, Jane sleeps outside and hopes "that [her]

Maker had that night thought good to require [her] soul of [her] while [she] slept" (309). Her wish to die in order to assuage her suffering is reminiscent of Nell's own desire to die, and it is ironically compelling that Nell and Jane, both of whom have been frequently disturbed during sleep, now seek solace in a death brought on by slumber. Clearly, the threat of sexual awakening and its subsequent potential for stigmatic disfigurement has been too much for Jane, just as it was for Nell, and death seems like a comforting alternative to life as a Wandering Woman.

As Jane roams through the nameless town where her travels have brought her, her well-dressed figure awakens a cloud of suspicion. Her appearance, along with her need for food and shelter, makes Jane feel an intense "moral degradation" (313) because she feels she has "no right to expect interest in [her] isolated lot" (312). Because she is well-dressed, Jane fears that people will sense that the reason she has been reduced to begging is because she has done something morally wrong. Her appearance, therefore, is stigmatizing because the "disparity between her appearance and her actions . . .makes [her] a monster in the eyes of society, and she now sinks to even greater depths of humiliation and degradation" (Young 332). She is forced to spend another night outside, and her sleep is inevitably "wretched" and "broken" (Bronte 313) because she constantly has to move to protect her safety. The next morning, her sense of desolation and isolation is complete, and she longs for "the friendly numbness of death" (315). She wanders aimlessly, and after peering through a window at two sisters and their servant, knocks on the door and asks to be given shelter. The housemaid is suspicious of Jane, and tells her "You should not be roving about now; it looks very ill" (319). Jane's wandering has

stigmatized her because it has aroused speculation not only about her physical appearance, but also about her moral character. The housemaid's comment indicates that she knows that a proper lady would not be wandering around at night, knocking on strangers' doors and begging assistance. Eventually, Jane is given admittance into the home of Mary and Diana Rivers, whose brother is a clergyman.

Jane, like Nell, has found refuge within the confines of the church. However, their individual experiences have drastically different outcomes because Jane will be able to assimilate her experiences into a new life, while Nell will not be able to overcome the trauma of her adolescence. Nell befriends the sexton of the church, and spends an inordinate amount of time visiting both the graveyard and the tombs, where she feels "now she was happy, and at rest" (Dickens 462). Her determination to give up the will to live is apparent since she thinks, "It would be no pain to sleep amidst" (462) the other dead souls in the graveyard. Nell is tired of struggling, tired of learning secrets, and tired of the subsequent sorrow the truth has brought her. She now inverts her need to be a good daughter into her devoted attention to caring for the graves of the dead. The only thing that keeps her alive is the overriding fear that she will be forgotten. Once the schoolmaster tells her that '"There is nothing . . . no, nothing innocent or good, that dies, and is forgotten'" (417), Nell is able to begin her descent into death. Her grandfather's claim that she "would be a woman, soon" (475) is a reminder to her of the fear involved in taking the final steps into maturity, and helps in her determination to put an end to her struggles. Ironically, Grandfather Trent finally realizes his complicity in Nell's declining health, and as he does, he understands that she will never be able to embrace womanhood

and all it holds because she has become a living angel. During her decline, she takes on a spiritual quality because of "her warmth and the promise of redemption and new hope" (Polhemus 83) that her sweetness and purity bring to the old church. For Nell, the secrets of sexuality will have to remain secrets. She has been too frightened for too long to be able to embrace the sexual awakening that is a necessary step in undertaking the role of the idealized Victorian wife and mother. Laurie Langbauer contends that "Dickens' emphatic denial of Nell's sexuality suggests how powerful that sexuality is, [and] how much it [has kept] her character moving" (420). Nell's obsession with death grows daily, and as she looks into the well in the crypt beneath the church, she tells the sexton that "'It looks like a grave itself'" (Dickens 481). Clearly, Nell desires the eternal sleep that comes with death because it will enable her to maintain her child-like innocence, as well as her sexual purity. Robert Polhemus and Roger Henkle assert that "It seems crucial that Nell [dies] a virgin, unpolluted by sexuality" since "Her virginity [has been] ripe for exploitation" (81) throughout the novel. When she does die, the narrator says she is borne to her grave "pure as the newly-fallen snow" (Dickens 633). Nell's death gives her a saintly aura because she is, like the snow, frozen in time, and she will forever retain the sanctity of her virginity, which will never be tarnished. The secrets of sexuality and the continuous pursuit of a multitude of roguish characters have killed both Nell and her potential to grow into the stereotypical ideal of mature Victorian femininity.

Unlike Nell, Jane is ultimately able to unlock the secrets of sexuality and to assimilate them into her own life. The revelation that she is a cousin to the Rivers family enables her to transform her need to be a good daughter into being a good "sister."

However, Jane is almost stigmatized by the attentions of the morose St. John, who proposes that she join him in a loveless marriage because she is "formed for labour, not for love" (Bronte 384). Jane knows she cannot "receive from him the bridal ring, [and] endure all the forms of love (which [she doubted] not he would scrupulously observe)" (387). For the "passionate" Jane, this prospect has just as much power to stigmatize her as did Rochester's proposal that she become his mistress. In fact, St. John's proposal "imprisons her" to the extent that "she must revolt and even flee to survive" (Kadish 168). His proposal forces Jane to resume her journey as a Wandering Woman because she cannot marry a man she does not love, while she also understands that if they were "to work together in India unmarried [it] would 'fasten injurious suspicions on [them] both'" (Butery 128). When she hears Rochester's spiritual "call" to her, Jane feels compelled to return to her old master and to serve him in whatever capacity is available. She cannot deny the honesty and depth of her feeling for Rochester, and this, coupled with her earnestness in "serving" him, compels her return to her "master." Jane herself has been able to "master" the secrets of sexuality because of the "symbolic death" of her childishness and innocence "in her experience on the moors and her rebirth as an autonomous adult" (Hoeveler et al 61). She is also able to return because Rochester has been blinded and maimed, and she can now "fulfil the de-sexualized daughterly role of *service* to the helpless father" (Smith 144). Unlike Nell, Jane is able to end her journey as a Wandering Woman by assuming the idealized roles of wife and mother. However, the Jane and Rochester live on the outskirts of civilization and their virtual "isolation at

Ferndean eliminates any chance that Jane's social deficiencies might be exposed" (Butery 131).

Clearly, it is unnatural and unrealistic to try to hold children in stasis since they are often in more flux than adults are. Victorian society's obsession with hiding sex, coupled with its refusal to adequately educate its young women about the realities of sexual initiation has had damaging, long-range consequences for both Nell and Jane. The reactions of others indicate to each girl that something about them has changed enough to attract unwanted attention. However, their inexperience, together with the lack of parental support they receive, puts both Nell and Jane in a series of threatening, potentially stigmatizing situations that precipitate their individual journeys as Wandering Women, and ultimately lead to Nell's premature death. Mark Spilka concurs with this idea when he says:

> It seems clear that childhood itself had become problematic and conflictual realm in the nineteenth century; and if writers and readers alike turned to that realm from the commercial harshness and ungodliness of the adult world, and from the unbearably conscious guilts and tensions of marriage, seeking relief in childhood innocence, what they found there -- along with the emotional freshness they sought -- were childhood versions of the problems from which they fled. (Cox 169)

Jane and Little Nell lead childhoods which are anything but idyllic, and they stand as clear warnings that the need for change and for more flexible, realistic attitudes were a growing necessity in the Victorian age.

CHAPTER 3

WADING IN NEGATIVITY

While most critics agree that Miss Wade of Dickens' *Little Dorrit* is a lesbian, they disagree on the importance of her lesbianism and its contribution to the overall plot. In *Dickens and Women*, Michael Slater asserts that her sexual status is "of little moment" (371). However, I contend that Miss Wade's lesbianism is central to the novel's themes of literal and figurative imprisonment, and that her characterization illustrates an individual's role in the creation of what William Blake called "mind forg'd manacles." Indeed, Dickens himself said, "In Miss Wade, I had an idea, which I thought a new one, of making the introduced story so fit into surroundings impossible of separation from the main story, as to make the life-blood of the book circulate through both" (Reid 17). Miss Wade is a carefully drawn, enigmatic persona who is simultaneously seductively attractive and horrifyingly repulsive to the other characters. She remains a mystery to both them and the reader until she delivers her apologia entitled "The History of a Self-Tormentor," wherein she reveals the details of how she became a Wandering Woman. In this narrative, Miss Wade shows herself as a woman who has actively pursued alienation by cultivating qualities that are diametrically opposed to the Victorian ideal. These qualities include a persistently negative reaction to others and a conviction that she does not fit in anywhere. Rather than passively accepting her fate and conforming to society's expectations of women, Miss Wade takes control of her life and cultivates relationships

only with those individuals who will validate her negative world view and nourish her conviction that she has been wronged. Her relentless commitment to this goal, and her dogged pursuit of the young maid Tattycoram lead to her expulsion from "polite" society, and firmly establish her as a Wandering Woman. Her overwhelming need for control contributes to her decision to pursue a lesbian lifestyle, which, in turn, exacerbates the threatening qualities of her character and causes her to be seen not only as a threat, but also as a sexual deviant. The fact that she calls herself a "self-tormentor" in the title of her apologia indicates that Miss Wade's "prison" is one that she has actively created herself. While most critics focus solely on "The History of a Self-Tormentor," I contend that it is necessary to widen the scope of criticism on Miss Wade to include all the episodes in which she appears. Doing so clarifies not only her contribution to the imprisonment theme, but it also codifies her role as a Wandering Woman. In addition, the other, heretofore largely unexamined episodes, explain the impact that being a Wandering Woman has on the other characters, and on the novel as a whole.

The fact that Miss Wade would be interested in sex at all is problematic because the Victorians did not think women had any sexual drive -- for a woman to be interested in sex with another woman was double trouble. Kathleen Woodward, in "Passivity and Passion in *Little Dorrit*" states that:

> sexual feelings in women were regarded as not merely abnormal, but as an affliction; sexual desire was equated with sexual license, deemed deplorable, vulgar, and dangerous because, it was believed, it could lead to

> insanity. But to Victorians what was even worse than this, the turbulence of sexuality threatened the smooth functioning of the family. (141)

The other characters in the novel are both fascinated and frightened by Miss Wade's alternate sexuality, which shows how both they, and she, are imprisoned by society's restrictions. Her exile is a result of the menacing quality of her attitude, coupled with the fear that her behavior could spread and do harm to others. There is a distinct fear, particularly on the part of the Meagles family, who have already been harmed by her behavior, that her lifestyle might be contagious if it is not contained. The Victorians' rigid social code made few allowances for alternate lifestyles, and their intense fear of diversion from duty and morality demanded either conformity or censure. Ultimately, the infectious nature of Miss Wade's behavior creates intense dis-ease, and results in her expulsion from the community in which she is a manipulative, predatory participant.

In order to illustrate Miss Wade's role as a Wandering Woman, it is necessary to examine "The History of a Self-Tormentor," which gives the details of how she became a Wandering Woman, before studying the other episodes in which she appears. She begins her apologia by stating, "I have the misfortune of not being a fool. From a very early age I have detected what those about me thought they hid from me. If I could have been habitually imposed upon, instead of habitually discerning the truth, I might have lived as smoothly as most fools do" (Dickens 748). Clearly, Miss Wade is a skillful rhetorician who is a force to be contended with. She is declaring that since she is no longer innocent and naïve, she is no longer bound by propriety to behave as "proper" women do. As David Holbrook states in *Charles Dickens and the Image of Woman*, innocence "was the

cherished quality in the Victorian woman that inhibited her capacity to be effective and free" (78). Maintaining the appearance of innocence is imprisoning for the rebellious Miss Wade, and she continually finds ways to break free of its fetters. While her opening statement clarifies that she has a deep understanding of both what people articulate, as well as what they do not, it also suggests that she anticipates being deceived. Sarah Winter says Miss Wade's refusal to accept the "'fools' role of maintaining domestic fictions by giving or accepting deference" (247) includes her determined misreading of "swollen patronage and selfishness calling themselves kindness, protection, benevolence, and other fine names" (Dickens 757). Her hostility in dealing with others and her unwillingness to conform to conventional, "foolish," (i.e. traditional), modes of behavior are firmly established. Furthermore, Miss Wade's misreading of what she perceives to be condescension and patronage "always ultimately results in her departure and consequently her alienation" (Peters 189). All of these qualities contribute to her life as a Wandering Woman.

Miss Wade first aligns herself with the paradigm of the Wandering Woman by revealing that she is an orphan of modest means. Miss Wade, who at this point in the narrative is about twelve years old, has no known first name, which suggests that even those on intimate terms with her, like her "grandmother" or the other girls in the household, do not really know her. Even at this early stage in her story, Miss Wade's lack of a name alienates her from others, and illustrates that she keeps her real identity, her <u>real</u> self, hidden. Her illegitimacy is so painful to her that Carol Bock asserts "that much of her asperity derives from a painful consciousness of [it]" (115). Miss Wade, who

possesses a querulous, "unhappy temper," tries her best to provoke the girls into arguments, and is disappointed and enraged when they either refuse to participate, or apologize too rapidly. Her illegitimacy makes her feel inferior to the other girls, and she is seeking both parity and her "place" by trying to evoke a response. She views their reaction to her as condescending superiority and a type of "insolent pity" (Dickens 748). Even though she openly scorns the girls' treatment of her, she tries to create her own family by choosing one of them as her favorite.

Twelve-year-old girls are just beginning puberty, menstruation, and the awakening of sexual feelings; therefore, it is not surprising that Miss Wade's feelings towards this chosen friend have distinctly sexual overtones. Lillian Faderman, author of *Surpassing the Love of Men*, says that nineteenth century sexologists' perception of lesbianism included the idea that lesbians were not really women, and that "All [their] emotions were inverted, turned upside down" (240). Faderman continues by saying that "one common phenomenon appearing with almost uniform consistency in true inverts -- [is] the tendency of these women to have had girlhood crushes on other females" (243). This certainly describes Miss Wade's feelings towards her "chosen" friend. The memory of loving the girl makes Miss Wade feel "ashamed," presumably because there is something wrong with both her feelings and their intensity. Because she is uncertain about where she stands with the girl, whose name is Charlotte, Miss Wade is suspicious of Charlotte's every move. Indeed, Miss Wade echoes the perverse obsession of Browning's duke in her conviction that her beloved "could distribute, and did distribute, pretty looks and smiles to every one among them" (Dickens 748). Miss Wade's persistent

paranoia causes her to believe that Charlotte specifically attempts to "wound and gall" her (749), and her infatuation leads her both to mistreat the girl and to be punished for doing so. Although her obsession with Charlotte mirrors the obsession Browning's male characters have for their paramours, there is an important difference. While Victorian women -- and men -- experienced friendship more intensely and intimately than is typical in the twentieth century, close friendships in the nineteenth century did not necessarily connote sexual involvement. However, Miss Wade's obsession with Charlotte is clearly sexual, and indeed, Miss Wade expresses sexual interest only in women. Her jealousy is, according to Faderman, a common element in distinguishing "these relationships from ordinary friendships," along with her "anxiety to be together" with Charlotte and her "determination to conquer all obstacles to the manifestations of love" (246). This clarifies Miss Wade's intense need to control her relationship with Charlotte, while it also proves that her interest in the girl is sexual rather than platonic.

On one occasion, when she is allowed to go home with Charlotte, Miss Wade's truculent behavior and distrustful attitude lead to almost disastrous results. Miss Wade is "tormented" by Charlotte's friendly and open manner, and when, after a particularly trying day, she reproaches the girl one evening while they are in their shared bedchamber, their conversation replicates a lover's quarrel. She claims to have a perfect understanding of Charlotte's behavior and honestly believes the girl set out intentionally to make her jealous. In a stereotypically feminine response, Charlotte cries, while Miss Wade takes on the role of masculine comforter. The only emotions Miss Wade allows herself to express in this situation are those considered to be stereotypically masculine -- she is the jealous,

wronged lover and, subsequently, the tender, generous absolver. Again, Miss Wade sounds like one of Browning's characters in her desire to "plunge to the bottom of a river -- where I would still hold her, after we were both dead" (Dickens 749).

Miss Wade's desire for physical violence to both herself and her beloved is a result of what Patricia Juliana Smith calls "lesbian panic." In her work of the same name, Smith characterizes this panic as a literary, rather than psychological, theory. Lesbian panic is "the disruptive action or reaction that occurs when a character -- or conceivably, an author -- is either unable or unwilling to confront or reveal her own lesbianism or lesbian desire" (2). Smith goes on to say that the fear of discovery causes characters who are experiencing lesbian panic to do "emotional or physical harm to [themselves] or others" (2). Through the course of her apologia, Miss Wade's behavior fits this example. Smith says that eventually this behavior pattern leads to "the disadvantage or harm of herself or others" (3), which is certainly true for Miss Wade. Fear of discovery takes on almost hysterical proportions for Miss Wade, and leads to a rupture in her "obligation" to the Victorian ideals of duty, propriety and morality, and thus, as Woodward claims, makes her behavior immoral. Immoral behavior is stigmatizing in and of itself, and it lends itself to what Faderman says is the Victorian notion that the supposed immorality of lesbianism would inevitably lead to violence (241). Miss Wade's atypical behavior is a combination of her lesbianism, her hostility, her fear of discovery, and her lack of a stabilizing familial support system.

Miss Wade's "romance" with Charlotte eventually ends when Charlotte's aunt realizes that something is going on between the two girls, and resolves to put a stop to it.

Miss Wade overhears Charlotte's aunt telling her, "Miss Wade is wearing you to death, and this must not continue" (Dickens 749). Charlotte's aunt realizes that the relationship can not have a positive outcome, and that it might, if it were allowed to continue, have calamitous results. The aunt's statement can be viewed in two different ways: either she is literally saying that Miss Wade is wearing Charlotte down physically, or she could be talking about a figurative wearing "to death." Continuing a friendship with Miss Wade might lead Charlotte to emulate her destructive behavior, and thus ruin her reputation, rendering her "dead" to polite society. Charlotte can not risk this type of damage. Ironically, this is exactly what is happening to Miss Wade, and her social "death" will lead her to begin her journey as a Wandering Woman. Miss Wade seems almost triumphant in the validation she receives when Charlotte betrays her by revealing that Miss Wade has an "unhappy temper." As Woodward points out, for "a woman cursed with a 'bad temper' and a sexual nature, there is no cure and no place in Victorian society, no way out of the prison" (145). Miss Wade can use this as a basis for non-conformity, and can now justify the belief that she is just a pawn in a much larger, more sinister game. Charlotte absolves herself even further by telling her aunt that she was just trying to make Miss Wade "better," and is comforted by the aunt's warning that "there are reasonable limits, my dear love, to everything" (Dickens 750). Indeed, there are reasonable limits, but because she has no familial support, Miss Wade is unsure of what they are, and has no one to curb her obstinate devotion to going past them.

Miss Wade insists on going home to her "grandmother," and once there, demands to be sent away to finish her education. Because the woman is not actually related to Miss

Wade, she is either unable or unwilling to intercede and influence her behavior in the way Charlotte's aunt did with Charlotte. There is no loving family member who can or will rescue Miss Wade from her dangerous propensity for negative, destructive behavior. Miss Wade is forced, like other Wandering Women, to rely on her own judgement, skewed as it may be, and wandering becomes a continual cycle for her each time she goes past the "reasonable limits." Again, Miss Wade threatens physical violence to herself if her demands are not satisfied: "I would burn my sight away by throwing myself into the fire, rather than I would endure to look at their plotting faces" (750). Making this kind of statement is effective in a number of different ways. It allows Miss Wade to stay in control of a situation that is perilously close to spinning out of control, while it simultaneously allows her to shift attention away from the real problem. Her "grandmother" certainly believes her threat because Miss Wade's "unhappy temper" is a firmly established fact and the "grandmother" realizes that because she has no real familial attachment to Miss Wade, she is powerless to change it. Miss Wade's rhetorical skill shifts focus to what can be done to prevent her from harming herself, rather than on all the implications of her strong, consuming feelings for Charlotte.

Because she has destroyed the only "family" tie she had, Miss Wade is now susceptible to the poverty, exploitation, physical danger, and treachery that all Wandering Women face. This does indeed happen as she leaves her "grandmother" and makes her next journey into the working world, where she has become a governess. This situation is conducive to her feelings of persecution and alienation, because as a governess, she is neither a servant nor a member of the family. At her employer's home, Miss Wade carries

her feelings of rejection so far past the "reasonable limits" that she identifies even with the food, and will only eat "of the rejected dishes" (751). She thinks these actions are a "sharp retort" to her employer, and is triumphant in reporting that they "made me feel independent" (751). When her mistress confronts her and gently asks if either she or her family have done anything to upset her, Miss Wade blames her behavior on her "unhappy temper." However, the mistress senses that there is a deeper cause for Miss Wade's unhappiness, and tries to draw her out by telling her that Miss Wade was hired as a replacement for her husband's dead sister. Although there is nothing in the text to suggest that this is anything but implicit kindness on the part of her mistress and a desire to incorporate Miss Wade into the void left by her dead sister-in-law, Miss Wade is incensed over this. She thinks that both the children's nurse and the mistress have used the present situation to make her feel uncomfortable and alienated. She says, "I saw directly that they had taken me in, for the sake of the dead woman, whoever she was, and to have that boast of me and advantage of me; I saw, in the nurse's knowledge of it, an encouragement to goad me as she had done; and I saw, in the children's shrinking away, a vague impression that I was not like other people" (753). The family has unwittingly played into Miss Wade's own fears, and she has found more validation that others see her as different, which allows her to resume her wanderings, just as she did at school.

Miss Wade is hired as the governess of a fifteen-year-old girl who has very wealthy, socially prestigious parents. Their nephew is entranced by the beautiful Miss Wade, and although she tries diligently to repulse him, they are eventually engaged. Because her fiancé works in India, where they will live after the wedding, even her

marriage will lead to more wandering and isolation. Instead of being pleased that this young man admires her, Miss Wade chooses to focus her attention on the somewhat misguided idea that he admires her too much. She feels "as if he had bought me for my looks, and made a show of his purchase to justify himself. They appraised me in their own minds, I saw, and were curious to ascertain what my full value was" (753). Miss Wade fears not only the confining enslavement of marriage and motherhood, but also that her prospective in-laws' curiosity will lead them to discover the real truth beyond the beautiful façade, and that the reality will be shocking and revolting to them. In light of this, she makes a vested effort to conceal her real self from them, insisting that she "would have suffered any one of them to kill [her] sooner than [she] would have laid [herself] out to bespeak their approval" (753). Miss Wade's fear of discovery has led her to desire the physical violence entailed in "lesbian panic." She obviously fears the imprisonment of life as a part of this family; however, she does reveal that she genuinely loves her fiancé. Miss Wade's tender feelings for a male may be explained because she is a penniless orphan who, ostensibly, must marry for survival. It also appears that the young man is the first person to express sincere admiration for her, and it is understandable that Miss Wade, who is hungry for validation, might have succumbed, however briefly, to his charms. Her love for him may be a result of both his flattery and her gratitude for it. It is also part of her "lesbian panic" and her desire to conceal her true sexual orientation. She feels imprisoned by this emotion, partially because it puts him in control, and partially because his goodness makes her negative qualities stand out in relief. Miss Wade's intense focus on herself tells her that she will not be able to sustain a

marital relationship, and that she is incapable of adhering to the idealized roles of wife and mother that her marriage will demand. She is so miserable that she considers the alternative that has always worked for her in the past -- flight.

Miss Wade exacerbates the problem by willfully misreading her mistress's delight in discussing what her life will be like once she is married and in India. She believes her mistress is trying to point out what a surprise it is that a girl of no family, no station, and no income is making such a favorable, desirable match. Rather than responding demurely and with gratitude as would be expected of an unmarried Victorian woman, Miss Wade affects false humility. This makes the family feel uncomfortable, which is exactly what Miss Wade wants. If they are uncomfortable with her lack of gratitude, she is back in control. Again, there is no family member to lend guidance and support, or to warn her that her inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Fortuitously, the roguish Henry Gowan makes his entrance, and Miss Wade immediately feels as if he understands both her and her situation. Like Miss Wade, Henry is cold and is able to ascertain the most expedient way to make her feel uncomfortable. Her description of him is ominous: "He was like the dressed-up Death in the Dutch series; whatever figure he took upon his arm, whether it was youth or age, beauty or ugliness, whether he danced with it, sang with it, played with it, or prayed with it, he made it ghastly" (755). Her wish for physical violence is made flesh in Henry, and indeed, his presence marks the death of Miss Wade's opportunity to conform to the standard roles of wife and mother. Because he feeds into her own feelings of negativity and alienation, she soon begins to "like the society of

[Henry] better than any other" (755). Miss Wade subconsciously wants -- and needs -- the figurative death that an involvement with Henry will offer.

Henry Gowan, who is penniless, is an astute flatterer who uses his charms to coldly manipulate both Miss Wade and her fiancé's family. He seems to see Miss Wade as a commodity he can use for his own enjoyment because he "understands her insecurities and is thus able to exploit them in his own interest" (Bock 115). Miss Wade says that everything he says is "full of mockery" (Dickens 755), and that his condolences validate her feelings of inadequacy where her fiancé and his family are concerned. Her pointed use of the word "condolences" to describe Henry's remarks to her evokes images of the imminence of her social "death." What he says is acceptable to her because "[it] echoed [her] own mind, and confirmed [her] own knowledge" (755). She is delighted when Henry's attentions to her make her fiancé jealous, and she welcomes the rivalry. Although she does not admit it, she is like a trapped animal that has found its way out of a snare. While she does not verbalize a desire for violence in her relationship with her fiancé, pairing with Henry Gowan is violent because it will mean the destruction of her last chance at conforming to the Victorian ideal of femininity. Miss Wade is unable to be the submissive, passive girl that her husband would both expect and demand. She consistently reveals herself as perversely self-centered, which stands in direct opposition to the Victorian ideal of the selfless, meek, maternal woman. Miss Wade is imprisoned by her intense need to be center stage at all times. It would be utterly impossible for her to put either a husband or children before herself, and she is consummately aware of this, even if she does not verbalize it. Her lesbianism, coupled with her unwillingness to

conform to the traditional roles of wife and mother, makes her a sexual deviant, which, in turn, results in her expulsion from "polite" society.

Miss Wade's dalliance with Henry Gowan is enough to cause a rupture in her relationship with her fiancé. When her mistress suggests that her behavior has been inappropriate, Miss Wade responds by becoming confrontational. She demands to know why her mistress thinks that the mere suggestion that she change her behavior should be enough to make her do so. Miss Wade manipulates the conversation so that the woman feels that she is in the wrong for prevailing on Miss Wade's inferior birth and social status as a means of making her conform. Miss Wade uses her rhetorical skill to place "despicable constructions on the kindest intentions of those around her and unconsciously draws attention to the inaccuracy of her vision by insisting on her own perspicacity" (Bock 116). Miss Wade asks her: "Did she presume on my birth, or on my hire? I was not bought, body and soul. She seemed to think that her distinguished nephew had gone into a slave-market and purchased a wife" (Dickens 756). This statement reiterates Miss Wade's idea that marriage and motherhood are enslaving, and shows that she can not tolerate being trapped in this state. Her mistress responds by telling her that she has an "unhappy temper," which is the trigger Miss Wade has been waiting for. She launches into a hostile diatribe about the "injustices" she has had to endure at the hands of her mistress and "the despicable position of being engaged to her nephew" (756). Miss Wade's hysterical reaction and adept manipulation of language allow her to deflect attention from the real problem of her lesbianism. The relationship is irretrievably

ruptured, and Miss Wade's renewed alienation leads her to escape again into her wanderings.

Henry Gowan must also leave the household because his behavior has been scandalous and might damage the family's reputation. Because he has nowhere else to go, he follows Miss Wade into exile, where he continues to confirm the "correctness" of her behavior. He manipulates her feelings of insecurity by telling her "that he was not worth acceptance by a woman of such endowments, and such power of character" (756). Because she sees him as her intellectual equal, and because he is a fellow non-conformist, Miss Wade believes him. She says that Henry "amused himself as long as it suited his inclinations" (756), a statement which confirms that their relationship has been consummated. Henry's behavior establishes him as a rogue because he has gone beyond the bounds of propriety in stealing his friend's fiancée, and because he demands sexual gratification as recompense for rescuing Miss Wade from an untenable situation. Her sense of obligation to Henry allows him to demand sexual favors, and her unprotected, orphaned status ensures his unimpeded pursuit of her. Appearing to conform, even on the terms Henry demands, helps Miss Wade to avoid admitting her lesbianism. Her sexual liaison with Henry is a continuation of her desire for physical violence because she would be repulsed by physical intercourse with anyone, and might take a perverse pleasure in the self-flagellation she endures by submitting to it. Of course, consummating their relationship also destroys Miss Wade's virginity, which is the last viable commodity she has to offer a potential husband. Her relationship with Henry further stigmatizes her already damaged reputation, and his later abandonment of her gives her empirical

evidence that she has been wronged and misused. As a "fallen" woman, Miss Wade now has substantiation for her feelings of persecution and alienation. She feels that Henry's cavalier treatment of her justifies both her future behavior and her inability to conform.

Miss Wade has been an astute pupil of Henry's roguish instruction, and she now uses the information and experience she gained from him to become a rogue herself. She assumes stereotypically masculine characteristics as she asserts herself as an independent woman who, because of her stigmatization, no longer feels compelled to hide her true nature. Because of her relationship with Henry, Miss Wade "[understands] sexuality as a weapon of attack or self-defense" (Barickman et al 74). This deepens her alienation because those she encounters sense not only her sexual difference, but also her aggressive posture. This is overtly threatening because it is not typical behavior for a Victorian woman, and the other characters in the novel are uncertain about how to respond to her. Patricia Ingham, author of *Dickens, Women and Language*, says that the fact that Miss Wade has "sinned has no effect on [her] subsequent social status and it is clear from the time which has elapsed since [she] did so that it has not precipitated the usual decline and death" typically associated with "fallen" women (61). However, her involvement with Henry has resulted in her death as a socially acceptable person or a viable candidate for the traditional female roles of wife and mother. In addition, the other characters view her complete self-absorption and her monomaniacal devotion to her negative worldview as a definite decline in her mental health. Miss Wade's determination to "invert" the traditional roles by assuming a rogue's characteristics ensures that she will wander indefinitely.

Miss Wade now reveals that rather than leveling her anger at her former paramour, she has chosen to make Pet Meagles, who has married the worthless Henry Gowan, the object of her derision. Miss Wade's new role as a predatory rogue has caused her to travel far and wide just to get a glimpse of the unsuspecting girl, and she feels a perverse pleasure in the knowledge that Pet's marriage to Henry will bring Pet great unhappiness. While in pursuit of Pet, Miss Wade inadvertently runs into Tattycoram, whom she views as a worthy protégé. Miss Wade feels a strong identification with Tattycoram's position, which shares so many qualities with her own, and sees Tattycoram as the perfect means to obtain revenge on Henry, Pet, and the world at large. Miss Wade knows that Tattycoram's own "unhappy temper" makes her an ideal victim, and that the girl's own feelings of alienation and persecution will be open to the negative nurture that Miss Wade can willingly provide. She is, as Woodward claims, "particularly parasitic and sadistic in her desire to feed on the younger girl's 'bad' passions and [to] exert complete control over her" (144). Indeed, Miss Wade has chosen Tattycoram for precisely the same reasons Henry Gowan chose her. While Tattycoram has been unofficially adopted by the Meagles, she is, in fact, a penniless orphan who has already shown a tendency to rebel against the voice of authority. Miss Wade mistakenly thinks that she can "release the girl from her bondage and sense of injustice" (Dickens 757) by validating those feelings, and, as she closes "The History of a Self-Tormentor," she exults in her success. Alienation from "polite" society allows Miss Wade to function as a rogue because she no longer fears that her lesbianism will be discovered. She is now free to wander through the wilderness of London and to let her "unhappy temper" run rampant.

At this point, it is vital to discuss a fact that previous critics have overlooked -- this is a written confession. Interestingly enough, Dickens chooses to offer no further commentary on this perverse defense; in fact, Miss Wade does not appear in the novel for twelve more chapters. However, because this is a written, rather than a verbal explanation, Miss Wade's confession becomes a tangible, verifiable text that is not subject to interpretation by those whom she knows will read it. She does not have to risk being misquoted or misunderstood. Her apologia can be re-read as often as needed by whoever needs verification of her stance, her beliefs, and her reasons for behaving as she does. Writing her confession insures that its impact will not be diminished by the passing of time, and it also certifies that Miss Wade's expulsion from society is complete and indisputable. Her insistence on being the author of her own history confirms that she has "inverted" herself from the role of a passive feminine victim to the more active, masculine role of historian. Her apologia is a demand that she be heard and understood on her own terms rather than on those of a patriarchal storyteller who would inevitably try to re-write her confession (although ironically, she is the creation of a male author). The text thus becomes the fulfillment of Miss Wade's "lesbian panic" and her desire to inflict violence on herself. Now that she is socially "dead," she no longer has to conform to society's restrictions on female behavior. Her admission is the ultimate manifestation of her rhetorical skill, and Miss Wade is now a confirmed, confessed societal felon who is doomed to the exile of a Wandering Woman.

Now that Miss Wade's mindset has been explained, it is possible to backtrack to examine the impact her self-imposed imprisonment and dedication to a negative

worldview has on the other characters in the novel, as well as how this Wandering Woman functions in society. Because she has already broken the rules of propriety, she no longer has to struggle to conform, and this brings her a certain power and freedom that are intoxicating to her and confusingly threatening to those she encounters. Chance has played an important part in her "inverted" lifestyle, just as chance continually throws her in the path of the Meagles family. When Miss Wade enters the narrative in the opening chapters of the novel, she, Arthur Clenham, and the unsuspecting Meagles family have been quarantined together for several days to ascertain if any of them have been contaminated by the plague. This chance meeting throws the other characters into contact with a woman who is, unbeknownst to them, already infected by a hostile, negative thought process. Because Miss Wade enters the narrative as a Wandering Woman, she seems different from other women from the first moment she appears. She isolates herself, and she has "either withdrawn herself from the rest or been avoided by the rest -- nobody, herself excepted perhaps, could have quite decided which" (27). Her isolation raises questions about her status, and because she refuses to fully participate with the group, both her status and her personality remain ambiguous to the others. Although she is not forced to do so, she has already chosen to isolate herself from her fellow travelers, and she confuses them further because she makes it clear that she does not wish to be engaged in their company. This highlights the isolation that is common to the Wandering Woman, because Miss Wade separates herself from society even when she knows her stigmatized reputation is not apparent to others. Rather than actively participating in Mr. Meagles' conversation, she eavesdrops and enters the discussion only long enough to

comment on prisoners' attitudes towards their prisons. Her stance is cold in its hostility, and she is openly confrontational in her insistence that it is impossible to forgive imprisonment. Since she has created her own prison, her statement is an ironic contradiction to the open, forgiving attitude a Victorian woman was expected to cultivate. Without revealing her past, Miss Wade makes it clear that she has worked diligently to achieve her impenetrable stance: "'My experience,' she quietly returned, 'has been correcting my belief in many respects, for some years. It is our natural progress, I have heard'" (27). She has rationalized her past behavior enough to believe that it is "natural" and normal. She also reveals her belief that her role as a Wandering Woman and an "inverted" rogue are a correction of the idea that adhering to the traditional female roles is "natural." Because she offers no background on either herself or her "belief," her response is mysteriously cryptic to the company, and Mr. Meagles considers it "strong" and full of "malice." Indeed, this is not what any in the company seem to have expected from this darkly beautiful, yet overtly aloof young woman.

While it would be unusual for a young woman travelling alone to avoid the company of others, Miss Wade is no ordinary young woman. She delights in being contrary and confrontational. After her cool response to Mr. Meagles' rather innocent remarks, Miss Wade separates herself from the rest of the group, signaling by her body language that she prefers to be immersed in her own thoughts to being engaged in the group's conversation. She again spurns the Meagles when Pet, her unsuspecting nemesis, offers to have her father gather Miss Wade's mail, and expresses concern over who will meet the solitary young woman. Miss Wade's cold poise does not seem like a typical

response, and is rather startling to Pet. Miss Wade establishes herself as an independent woman who neither desires nor requires the company or good opinion of others. The narrator says that her demeanor seems to say, "I am self-contained and self-reliant; your opinion is nothing to me. I have no interest in you, care nothing for you, and see and hear you with indifference -- that it said plainly" (29). Donald E. Hall, in *Fixing Patriarchy*, says Miss Wade is "an anti-patriarchal separatist, her 'proud eyes' revealing early on her thorough distrust of men and her recognition of their threat to her self-containment" (124-5). Hall continues by saying that this quality is initially fascinating to the male characters, but that they eventually dismiss her because she is clearly unavailable. This attempt at dismissal will result in a threat to "an entire social structure"(124), specifically, to the Meagles household. Her disdain for others is a sharp juxtaposition to Pet's thoughtful concern and illustrates that Miss Wade does not care to be seen as a passive, helpless woman. She does little to hide her anger, which is atypical behavior for a Victorian female, while it does much in letting those in the quarantine know that Miss Wade is different, and that her presence is a danger to be avoided. She reveals her paranoia and presents a veiled threat by warning Pet that "'In our course through life we shall meet the people who are coming to meet *us,* from many strange places and by many strange roads . . . and what it is set to us to do to them, and what it is set to them to do to us, will all be done.'" (Dickens 30). This declaration has ominous and unsettling overtones because Miss Wade is implying that she may do something unpleasant. It also reveals Miss Wade's perception that she herself has been victimized by what others have "done" to her. She refuses to join the group, instead insisting that she prefers to "go [her] own way in

[her] own manner" (29). She sits looking at the water with her back to the group, and her face, even in repose, suggests that she is not a woman with whom people should either trifle or anger. Her status seems ambiguous, and as Brian Rosenberg says in *Little Dorrit's Shadows*, "Even the image of the reflected water, quivering and ephemeral, seems to capture something of the observer's difficulty in seeing and understanding Miss Wade" (64). Miss Wade has already experienced the alienation of being a Wandering Woman, and seeks to keep herself separate from the others. Her hostile attitude is viewed by the others as a disease that is likely to spread if it is released from the quarantine. This attitude is precisely what makes her so threatening. Indeed, Miss Wade has already gone her own way by devoting herself to a lifestyle that the narrator tells us is seen by the others as both "diseased" and "abnormal." The contaminating threat is intensified by Miss Wade's claim that danger may be coming "hundreds, thousands, of miles over the sea there; [it] may be close at hand now; [it] may be coming, for anything you know, or anything you can do to prevent it" (Dickens 30). She is suggesting that her attitude is contagious and that, like a germ, it is potent and invisible. Miss Wade intends to make the Meagles family feel uncomfortable, and is successful in doing so, while she simultaneously warns them of the imminent danger involved in cultivating a relationship with her. Her warning is, in actuality, more of a promise than a threat, and she offers it so that when it is fulfilled, she can remind them that they had been cautioned to leave her alone. Because she has assumed the role of the rogue, she does not mind making the Meagles family feel threatened and uncomfortable. She is paying more attention to her own needs and her own comfort than to the needs and comforts of others. Although most

Wandering Women feel victimized by their isolation, Miss Wade is in control of her alienation, and actively pursues it and uses it to victimize others.

She begins to spread the germs of her contagion in her conversation with Tattycoram, the Meagles' young ward. Miss Wade has already sought the girl out on two previous occasions, and has again found her in a petulant mood. Although Tattycoram shows she senses danger by expressing her fear of Miss Wade and her desire to have her leave, Miss Wade does show genuine interest in her, and admonishes her to have patience and to remember her inferior status as the Meagles' servant. However, as Miss Wade stands "with her hand upon her own bosom, looking at the girl, as one afflicted with a diseased part might curiously watch the dissection and exposition of an analogous case," (33) Tattycoram appears like an open wound, equally ready to receive either salve or germs. Unfortunately for Tattycoram, Miss Wade has now begun to view the young girl as open prey, and Tattycoram will not be able to escape the powerful infection that has presented itself to her. Like a parasite looking for a host, Miss Wade can and will insinuate herself into Tattycoram's life, contaminating it with her own hostility and negativity. By "inverting" her victimization as a Wandering Woman, Miss Wade has taken on the masculine qualities of the rogue, which is even more threatening to the other characters than her lesbianism is. Roguish behavior implies that Miss Wade no longer cares about her damaged reputation, while it simultaneously allows her to be the predator in her pursuit of Tattycoram.

A few weeks later, Miss Wade continues her pursuit of Tattycoram via correspondence, and meets with her outside a nearby church. When Tattycoram tells Mr.

Meagles that she has met Miss Wade, he expresses surprise. Not only does he have difficulty believing that the woman has pursued Tattycoram, he is equally baffled at her choice of meeting place because he can not fathom that a hostile woman like Miss Wade would want to attend church. He senses that her attitude and her unwillingness to conform to stereotypical female behavior would not allow her to either seek or affect Christian humility and forgiveness. While Mr. Meagles sees his home, his family, and his church as safe havens, he fails to understand that the sanctuary offered by both the Meagles and the church exists side by side with the evil of the outside world and the corrupting influence of Miss Wade. His innocence is ironic because his family feels the pervasiveness of Miss Wade's menacing attitude. Pet claims she can feel it through Tattycoram's touch, and is frightened and repelled by it, even second hand. The narrator says that Pet expresses this fear "half playfully," which suggests that she also is half in earnest. Tattycoram confesses that Miss Wade has offered her a refuge "if" she ever feels misused. While the use of "if" shows the effectiveness of Miss Wade's rhetoric, it also reveals how coldly manipulative she is. Miss Wade has already witnessed the girl's distress over the injustice she feels she receives at the Meagles' hands, and has carefully chosen a victim who she knows will be receptive to the seeds of infection. Since Miss Wade tenders her offer in written form, it becomes a tangible object that Tattycoram can re-read and ponder. Clearly, Miss Wade is unafraid of revealing her motives in a material, verifiable text, and she is inviting Tattycoram to join her as the author of her own life history. Like her apologia, Miss Wade's letter is an open declaration, and the Meagles view it as verification that Miss Wade is trying to recruit Tattycoram as a

potential disciple of her contrary, non-conformist lifestyle. Tattycoram, who has visible difficulty in controlling her temper, has obviously let the thought of escaping, even with a malevolent rescuer like Miss Wade, fester in her mind. In light of Tattycoram's confession about the contents of Miss Wade's correspondence, Pet again expresses her fear of the older woman: "Miss Wade almost frightened me when we parted, and I scarcely liked to think of her just now as having been so near me without my knowing it" (222). Even the thought of Miss Wade's presence rankles the family, and Mr. Meagles echoes his daughter's anxiety, along with his concerns about Tattycoram's potential to be overcome by it, when he says, "There's a girl who might be lost and ruined, if she wasn't among practical people" (222). While he is aware that Tattycoram is a prime candidate for contamination, he fails to see that her infection is imminent because Miss Wade, whom he sees as neither practical nor rational, is hovering nearby. Later in the evening, when Pet accuses Arthur of thinking of Miss Wade, he denies it quickly and emphatically. This is revealing on two levels -- the group is smitten with the intoxicating Miss Wade, however noxious she might be, and the thought of her is so contagious that both Arthur and Pet, who has admitted her preoccupation by accusing Arthur, have let the woman plague their thoughts. Miss Wade's presence is felt even when she is not present, and her lack of regard for her reputation or the sanctity of the Meagles family is, for them, an ever-present threat to their security. As a rogue, Miss Wade has the potential to make the orphaned Tattycoram another Wandering Woman. Tattycoram would thus stigmatize both herself and the family by her failure to conform to the accepted standards of behavior condoned by Victorian society.

When Tattycoram disappears, Arthur wonders if "that Miss Wade" could be involved. Arthur is attempting, through his use of the word "that," to objectify Miss Wade, and thus make her and her lack of regard for conformity seem to be a less imminent threat to Tattycoram. Although Mr. Meagles has the impression that she lives nearby, both he and Arthur are temporarily comforted by the idea that Miss Wade, and the danger she represents, is far away from them. He tells Arthur, "The very name of the street may have been floating in the air, for, as I tell you, none of my people can say where they got it from" (363). The fact that her address is "floating in the air" reiterates the notion that Miss Wade's personality is like a powerful, air-born pathogen. It also works to reconfirm her role as a Wandering Woman. Having no known, established address makes Miss Wade a nomadic, transitory predator who is able to spin her web in any available corner while she waits to snare her prey.

The images used to describe Miss Wade's neighborhood are ominously disturbing. The street itself is a "labyrinth" with buildings designed by "some wrong-headed person in some wrong-headed time" (364). This is a perfect place for the "wrong-headed" Miss Wade to live. All of the adjectives used to describe the street itself and the buildings on it connote instability, confinement, and danger: "barbarous," "horrors," "parasite," "cramp," "squeezed," "dunghills," "rickety," "dismal," "vulgar," "monstrous," "recluse," "distrustful," "wicked," and "fraudulent" (364-5). While these words are an apt reflection of both Miss Wade personally and of her state of mind, they can also be applied to the Victorian view of those who fail to conform. The street, like the state of mind, is twisted, ominous, and difficult to find, and indeed, the way to the house is "like a brick and

mortar funeral" (365) that leads to the death an involvement with Miss Wade entails. Because the very path to her home is like death, the description further refutes Ingham's contention that Miss Wade's "fallen" status has not brought on death or decline. There are bills hanging in the window of Miss Wade's house that look like a "funeral procession" (365) that advertise that there are rooms to let in the building. This suggests that there is room in Miss Wade's household for others to dwell in her negativity if they so choose. As they enter the house, Arthur and Mr. Meagles notice that the entrance is "confined" and "dark," and the way to the top of the stairs is faintly lit and difficult to find. This parallels Miss Wade's mindset in that her journey toward her perverted lifestyle has been a winding, circuitous, dimly lit path, and her alienation and her unwillingness to conform confine her. It is significant that the room where the two men find Miss Wade is airless, because she herself focuses on containing her dark, festering thoughts and waits to spew them out in situations where she knows the air will hold them.

The house itself, which is a jumble of unpacked suitcases and trunks, is neither settled nor comfortable. In fact, the narrator says that Miss Wade "might have established herself in an Eastern caravanserai" (366), which is indicative of her wandering, nomadic lifestyle. There are some faded articles in the room that are left over from the former tenant, and a vase is described as being "so clouded that it seemed to hold in magic preservation all the fogs and bad weather it had ever reflected" (366). The vase reflects Miss Wade's own desire to hold on to all the hostility and anger she has ever felt and to disseminate those feelings to whomever she encounters. This is an antithesis to the Victorian ideal of the comfortable, inviting home where all are made welcome, since

Miss Wade's interest in making people feel uncomfortable extends to her housekeeping. It also underscores her devotion to doing exactly the opposite of what is expected of her, and is indicative of Miss Wade's neglect of her duty as the keeper of hearth and home. Her living arrangement is unsettled and unhealthy, and her visitors are aware that inhabiting this "home" is not conducive to salubrious living.

When they find her, she seems little changed to Arthur and Mr. Meagles, and once again, her poise and antipathy are unsettling because they contradict the "normal" attitude of a Victorian woman. Miss Wade reinforces the power of her rhetorical skill by astutely manipulating words to make Mr. Meagles feel that he has implicated himself in some terrific crime by acknowledging that Tattycoram may have felt misused by both him and his family. Her composure is mesmerizing, and Mr. Meagles stares "at her under a sort of fascination and could not even look to Clenham to make another move" (367). The taint of Miss Wade's overt, predatory sexuality arises as Tattycoram enters the room "with her disengaged fingers plaiting the bosom of her dress, half irresolutely, half passionately" (367), which mirrors Miss Wade's body language in her initial encounter with Tattycoram. This is a decidedly sexual image, and as Miss Wade also hypnotizes Tattycoram, the girl's body language signals that she is wavering between open acceptance and outright refusal. Miss Wade steadily watches the girl, and through her calm composure shows Arthur and Mr. Meagles, that she is ruthlessly dedicated to pursuing "the unquenchable passion of her own nature" (367). The sexuality of Tattycoram's body language reaffirms that Miss Wade has successfully "inverted" her

role as a Wandering Woman into that of the rogue, because the danger of Tattycoram becoming a Wandering Woman herself is imminent.

Miss Wade reveals her monomania in the way she manipulates Tattycoram, and shows how she has perverted her "natural" maternal instincts by nurturing negative values in this petulant young girl. In Tattycoram, Miss Wade is seeking to resolve the lack of parenting she received as a child. Because she combines her perverted maternal instincts with her apparent sexual attraction to Tattycoram, their relationship takes on an incestuous element. Conversely, Tattycoram's strong desire to have a familial attachment, along with her confusion and anger about her orphaned status, make her particularly susceptible to her living arrangement with Miss Wade, and also to the older woman's persuasive suggestion. Miss Wade describes what life will be like for Tattycoram if she embraces convention and acquiesces to Mr. Meagles' "condescension" in reclaiming Tattycoram: "You can be, again, a foil to his pretty daughter, a slave to her pleasant willfulness, and a toy in the house showing the goodness of the family" (368). Rather than focusing on the positive things Tattycoram can gain by a new association with the Meagles family, Miss Wade is giving an ominous warning that things will not only be the way they used to be, but will, in fact, be worse. She is predicting that Tattycoram will feel just as downtrodden and outcast as she had before, if not more so, and that she will again lose her name and her identity. Miss Wade also warns that a liaison with the Meagles requires her to remember her illegitimate birth, and indeed, Miss Wade is incapable of forgetting her own birth and the lack of status she has had to suffer for it. In fact, as she describes the humiliations that await Tattycoram, Miss Wade might as well be

speaking about herself. Her manipulative rhetoric is effective enough to secure the exact response she wants from Tattycoram, who expresses her own "lesbian panic" when she declares that she would "die sooner" than go back to the Meagles (368).

The violence of Tattycoram's response incenses Mr. Meagles, and he openly acknowledges the subversive quality of Miss Wade's tutelage. He is aware that her grip over the girl is so strongly corrupting as to render Tattycoram incapable of recognizing Miss Wade's misinterpretation of the Meagles' intentions toward her. Mr. Meagles is disturbed both by the intensity of Miss Wade's hostility, and by her intense composure. Certainly, Victorians believed it was abnormal for a woman to express rage. To be poised while doing so would be considered impossible because Victorians believed that women were, by nature, more openly emotional than men. Arthur and Mr. Meagles thus see Miss Wade as being masculine in her ability to subdue her emotions and in her determination to win and dominate Tattycoram. Her attitude is confusing to Arthur and Mr. Meagles, because they do not know how to cope with a masculine, aggressive female. Miss Wade is aware of Mr. Meagles' harsh judgement and does not care, because in her role as a Wandering Woman, she sees through the status quo, and is no longer reliant on the opinions of men, even if it means that her own judgement is neither wise nor correct. Mr. Meagles feels the intensity of Miss Wade's dedication, and recognizes it as something that is threateningly and overtly sexual. The narrator's description of Tattycoram reflects the sexual overtones of the encounter -- she has "rich colour," "quick blood," and "rapid breath," (369), all of which are indicative of sexual arousal. Because Miss Wade has assumed the role of the rogue, she will eventually demand sexual compensation for

"rescuing" Tattycoram. Both Miss Wade and Mr. Meagles are intensely aware that they are in a power struggle over who will be the dominant force in Tattycoram's life.

Miss Wade's pride in this situation is so evident that Mr. Meagles can no longer stand by without commenting. His response to her is vehement: "I don't know what you are, but you don't hide, can't hide, what a dark spirit you have within you. If it should happen that you are a woman, who, from whatever cause, has a perverted delight in making a sister-woman as wretched as she is (I am old enough to have heard of such), I warn her against you, and I warn you against yourself" (370-1). Mr. Meagles' speech implies that he is aware of Miss Wade's alternate sexuality, and that he is certain that it will lead to violent, disastrous results. Because Miss Wade's relationship with Tattycoram is centered on women and not on men, it "[disturbs] the binaries ordering mid-Victorian definitions of health, sanity, and social stability" (Hall 125). It also illuminates the perilous existence of orphans, who, because they have neither guidance nor support from parents, are unusually susceptible to "sinister influences" and "unnatural forces" (Adrian 94). This is a defining characteristic of the Wandering Woman and is true whether she has been corrupted by sinister influences inside or outside the confines of Victorian society. It is certainly true for Tattycoram -- and for Miss Wade -- because they have both been exploited by the traditional boundaries of Victorian society. Mr. Meagles is cognizant that part of Miss Wade's "perversion" is to spread her wretchedness, as would a missionary on an evangelical quest, and that Tattycoram is particularly susceptible to Miss Wade's proselytizing. Tattycoram turns a deaf ear on Arthur's plea that she listen to Mr. Meagles and not to Miss Wade, and her reaction takes on sexual overtones: she has a

"bosom swelling high" and her efforts to cover her ears result in "confusedly tumbling down her bright black hair" (Dickens 371). While the image of a woman "taking down her hair" is definitely sexual, the adjective "confusedly" suggests that Tattycoram is uncertain of what she wants. Miss Wade continues to be calmly composed, and her poise, as well as her body language, demonstrates to Arthur and Mr. Meagles that she is in control of this situation. She puts her hand on Tattycoram's neck and later, puts "that repressing hand upon her own bosom" and eventually, puts "her arm about [Tattycoram's] waist as if she took possession of her forevermore" (371). All of these gestures underscore the physicality of their relationship and the ominously "repressing" effect Miss Wade has on Tattycoram. They also reconfirm Miss Wade's role as an "inverted" rogue who expects sexual compensation as a means of revenge for all the wrongs she has suffered herself. The narrator goes on to say "there was a visible triumph in [Miss Wade's] face when she turned it to dismiss the visitors" (371). Miss Wade is the victor in this situation because she has aroused the passions of Mr. Meagles and Tattycoram, while calmly controlling her own emotions.

Miss Wade claims that she has forged this friendship with Tattycoram because of the commonality of their individual backgrounds. She tells Mr. Meagles, "[Tattycoram] has no name, I have no name" (371). Miss Wade, who sees herself as a truth seeker, believes that she has given a liberating voice to the orphaned, "misused" Tattycoram. She continues, "[Tattycoram's] wrong is my wrong. I have nothing more to say to you" (371). Miss Wade thinks that she and Tattycoram have done nothing wrong, and in truth, she thinks, she and the girl are the injured parties. Arthur and Mr. Meagles sense that Miss

Wade is using her relationship with Tattycoram as a means of revenge for all the injustices Miss Wade herself has had to suffer. What Miss Wade fails to realize is that Tattycoram does have a name. While Tattycoram is a corruption of the girl's real name, Mr. Meagles reminds Tattycoram that they both know that "[he] meant nothing but kindness when [he] gave it to [her]" (368). Tattycoram's name is an affectionate term of endearment to Mr. Meagles and is, therefore, far different from possessing no name like Miss Wade. Miss Wade warns Tattycoram: "You can have your droll name again, playfully pointing you out and setting you apart, as it is right that you should be pointed out and set apart. (Your birth, you know; you must not forget your birth)" (368). This rhetorically effective statement reveals how Miss Wade feels about her own namelessness and illegitimacy because since she has never known her real parents, she is uncertain whether or not her last name belongs to her. Both her uncertain parentage and her nameless state have made her feel alienated, and she projects those feelings onto Tattycoram. While she may feel a certain amount of jealousy over the girl's pet name, Miss Wade sees Tattycoram's nickname as an implication that conforming to so-called "normal" modes of behavior requires giving up one's identity, and results in even more alienation.

Soon after this incident, Miss Wade flees with Tattycoram and disappears from view. Although Arthur has not actively set out to find either Tattycoram or Miss Wade, when he inadvertently spots them one evening, he seems secretly glad to be able to covertly pursue the mysterious woman under the pretense of concern over Tattycoram's fate. He is reminiscent of men who are trapped by the overpowering, sexual gaze of

Medusa. Although Miss Wade does not possess phallic tresses, her gaze is powerful because of its masculine assertiveness and its utter refusal to succumb to the amorous advances of men. While Donald Hall comments on both Medusa's and Miss Wade's powerful gaze (111), he does so separately, without seeming to adequately connect the two with each other. Perhaps Hall and other critics have failed to make this connection because Dickens himself uses Gorgon imagery only in describing Arthur's mother. However, the symbolism extends to Miss Wade because she is, like Mrs. Clenham, another powerful woman in Arthur's life. Ultimately, Miss Wade's mesmerizing power over Arthur and the other male characters in the novel is equivalent to Medusa's power. This is precisely why she is so compelling -- and so threatening -- to them. Arthur knows that Miss Wade can, like Medusa, turn him to stone, but still feels powerless to turn away. Actually, because Miss Wade has "inverted" herself as a rogue, Arthur is in danger of stigmatizing himself by associating with her. He follows her down a series of "dark" alleys under the pretense of wanting to assist Tattycoram, who has been "misguided" in aligning herself with Miss Wade. This indicates his discomfort in acknowledging that his real reason for following her is his overwhelming attraction to the "dark" qualities of her personality. He is amazed to see her enter Mr. Casby's house, and is determined to learn more about this enigmatic woman. Mr. Casby tells Arthur that he does not address Miss Wade as "Miss," thus indicating that he does not feel that this nameless woman is entitled to a title. Arthur claims to want information about Miss Wade because her "influence [on Tattycoram] is not considered very salutary" (605), but he is driven more by his own overwhelming curiosity than by a need to "save" Tattycoram. He tells Mr. Casby that he

knows "nothing of her" even though he's "seen her abroad, and [he] has seen her at home" (606), which reiterates the idea that Miss Wade is effective in concealing her real self from others. Casby tells Arthur that she lives "mostly abroad," which reaffirms her unsettled, transitory lifestyle. He also reconfirms her "unhappy temper" by telling Arthur that Miss Wade "writhes under her life. A woman more angry, passionate, reckless, and revengeful never lived" (607). This statement reveals the imprisoning power of Miss Wade's anger and shows that she is unable to free herself of it.

Casby continues by raising the specter of Miss Wade's illegitimacy. He tells Arthur, "She is somebody's child -- anybody's -- nobody's. Put her in a room in London here with any six people old enough to be her parents, and her parents may be there for anything she knows" (607). Arthur later learns that Casby acts as a kind of guardian to Miss Wade and holds her money in trust for her. Although the money is hers for the asking, she is often reluctant to request it, presumably because it makes her feel subservient to do so. Casby could require Miss Wade to compensate him for his patronage in some way, which makes him another rogue character. Although he does not exact sexual compensation, Arthur assumes Casby is behind the interaction that Arthur has just seen take place between Miss Wade and the roguish Blandois. Casby's assistant, Pancks, warns Arthur to be careful in dealing with Miss Wade because he himself would not risk an involvement with her unless "I had a lingering illness on me, and wanted to get it over" (608). Miss Wade has totally assumed the role of life in death, and all entanglements with her, however innocent they may seem, will lead to termination of life

because of the stigmatizing effect she has on others and the deathly, infectious quality of her behavior.

Later in the novel, Arthur continues his pursuit of the elusive Miss Wade in order to see if she has information on a mysterious box of papers that belonged to Blandois. The neighborhood where she lives in Calais is just as run down as the one where she lived in London, but this time the narrator applies terms of death to the house itself, rather than to the street alone. The house's "dead" items include: "a dead wall," "a dead gateway," a doorbell that produces "two dead tinkles," a door that is on a "dead sort of spring," "some creeping shrubs, which were dead," and a "little fountain in [the] grotto," which is dry (738). The dry grotto is the symbolic equivalent of Miss Wade's inability to reproduce life in a positive, life-affirming manner, since she has refused the role of mother and has also failed in her "attempt to reproduce herself and her desires through Tattycoram" (Winter 248). She has successfully inverted herself into a human blight on nature that leaves death and destruction in its wake. Arthur's request for information leads him to a dead end because Miss Wade insists that she has no knowledge of Blandois, and maintains her contempt of names. She says, "What can I have to do with my knowing or not knowing any name? I know many names and I have forgotten many more" (740). However, Miss Wade has not forgotten that she is nameless, and she "hopes" Arthur has not sought her out because he wants to encourage Tattycoram's return to the Meagles, where she is "bereft of free choice" (740). Ironically, it is Miss Wade who is bereft of free choice because she tells Arthur that she spends most of her time inside this "dead" house "devouring [my] own heart" (741). While Miss Wade may have

thought that having no name and no title would be liberating, she has ironically discovered that being socially dead is just as imprisoning as conformity is. In fact, her "dead" house has become a coffin where she lives an uncomfortable life-in-death, and where her only diversion is ruminating on the past. Because she is tired of being misunderstood and because she has nothing better to do, Miss Wade has taken the time and trouble to write her apologia, and she will eventually take this opportunity to hand deliver it to Arthur.

Miss Wade's "inversion" is complete in her reaction to Arthur. She asks him if his manner toward her has "softened," which suggests that he is taking on a softer, more feminine manner in dealing with her. In order to get Miss Wade to cooperate with him, Arthur has to persevere "in his endeavor to soften her scornful demeanour" (741) by trying to match his rhetoric to her own. This is a type of role reversal because Victorian females were expected to use "softening" words and tones of voice in placating angry men. The inversion is intensified by Miss Wade's ability to bring "the blood into Clenham's cheeks" (742), which implies that Arthur has been sexually aroused by Miss Wade's calm composure and her implacable gaze. Miss Wade maintains control of the situation by using her powerful rhetorical skills to play on Arthur's own guilt about dealings with Blandois. She tells him, "if I cared for my credit . . . I should regard myself as heavily compromised by having had anything to do with this fellow. Yet he never passed in at *my* door – never sat in colloquy with *me* until midnight" (742). Furthermore, she tells him that being involved with Blandois was "worth my while, for my own pleasure – [it was] the gratification of a strong feeling" (742). This shows that Miss Wade

has completely inverted herself into the rogue's role because she is unashamed of using others, particularly others of the opposite sex, for her own pleasure. She furthers this idea by figuratively raping Arthur. As she denies knowing anything in particular about Blandois, she takes "cruel pleasure in repeating the stab" (742). The image of piercing Arthur with penetrating words is decidedly sexual, and he "[smarts] under these cool-handed thrusts, of which he had deeply felt the force already" (743). Because Arthur does not know how to handle Miss Wade's "inverted" hostile behavior, he feels embarrassed and ashamed in her presence. Her anger is so compelling and so "remarkable for being so much under restraint" that she uses it like Medusa's gaze, and it "[fixes] Clenham's attention and [keeps] him on the spot" (744). She is thus like the Gorgon in her ability to "paralyze, engulf, and emasculate" (Showalter, "Guilt, Authority, and the Shadows of *Little Dorrit*" 39). As is typical in rape, the act itself is not about sexual desire, but is, instead, about Miss Wade's hostility and her need to control and dominate everyone in her life.

Miss Wade's "unhappy temper" has caused her once again to go beyond the "reasonable limits." Before he leaves, Arthur sees Tattycoram, and he instantly senses that things are not going well between the two women. He thinks "each of the two natures must be constantly tearing the other to pieces," (746) which echoes the prediction made by Charlotte's aunt that Miss Wade wears people "to death" and that "this must not continue" (749). Although he does not verbalize it, Arthur attributes this to Miss Wade's "abnormal" lifestyle and to the Victorian notion that lesbianism inevitably leads to violence. He gets ocular proof of this hypothesis as he watches Miss Wade and

Tattycoram engage in a lover's quarrel that is reminiscent of Miss Wade's arguments with Charlotte. Like Charlotte's aunt, Tattycoram realizes the stigmatizing effect Miss Wade's tutelage has had on her. Although she comes to this conclusion without parental guidance, she thinks she can not return to the Meagles because of her stained reputation, and Tattycoram shows a type of inverted "lesbian panic" by telling Miss Wade that she "will not be quite tamed, and made submissive" (746). Conformity to the Victorian ideal is the only means of escape open to Tattycoram, and Miss Wade knows and fears that Tattycoram is considering fleeing from life as a Wandering Woman. Both women show that they are not cherishing traditional female roles as they ought to because each "proudly [cherishes] her own anger; each, with a fixed determination, [tortures] her own breast, and [tortures] the other's" (747). Miss Wade has fully embraced the "dark spirit" within her that Mr. Meagles warned her to avoid. In her relationship with Tattycoram, Miss Wade has expression without inhibition, and she must be a controlling, intimidating, victimizing rogue in order to maintain her position.

Arthur's visit to Miss Wade leaves him feeling exposed and uncomfortable. While he needs Blandois' papers in order to suppress damaging information that will implicate his mother's duplicity in Little Dorrit's story, Miss Wade needs to give other papers to Arthur to reveal her *raison d'être*. Although Miss Wade makes it clear to Arthur that she has felt compelled to tell him her story for some time, she still makes him beg her to give him her letter of explanation. Mr. Meagles' prediction that Miss Wade "[doesn't] hide, can't hide, what a dark spirit [she] has within [her]" (370) has come to fruition. Once Arthur is in possession of "The History of a Self-Tormentor," Miss Wade no longer has

anything to hide. Because she refuses to conform or to apologize for going past the "reasonable limits," she has nothing to lose by exposing herself to Arthur and the world at large. There is no way out of the prison Miss Wade's life has become, and her wandering will continue because it is too late to return to the "reasonable limits."

The didactic purpose of Miss Wade's life as a Wandering Woman is revealed in Tattycoram's return to the Meagles. She tells Mr. Meagles, "I have had Miss Wade before me all this time, as if it was my own self grown ripe -- turning everything the wrong way, and twisting all good into evil. I have had her before me all this time, finding no pleasure in anything but keeping me as miserable, suspicious and tormenting as herself" (915). Critics have made much of the sexuality of this statement, as well as the implication that Tattycoram and Miss Wade are *doppelgangers*. Tattycoram's statement is revealing in another way, in that it illustrates that misery is a choice, and that it is the only choice presented by and available to Miss Wade. Living the life Miss Wade has chosen will result in a "ripening" of anger and resentment, and a consequent "ripening" of alienation. Miss Wade makes her last appearance in the novel as Mr. Meagles implores her to turn over Blandois' papers. She is obstinate in her refusal to do so, even though she does not know what is in the mysterious box Blandois left in her possession. She is thus like the mythical Pandora because hostility, resentment and anger are like a plague that she is ready to release on the world, and she is unwilling to relinquish the box because it is like the anger she is unwilling to give up. Ultimately, Miss Wade's anger holds her prisoner, and she has no hope to ever be able to escape it.

While Tattycoram is "freed" by her willingness to conform to Mr. Meagles' admonishment that duty will set her free, her freedom comes with a price. She will have to suffer the death of her independence and her anger by becoming the type of woman the Meagles and Victorian society expect and demand, rather than what she may have envisioned for herself. John Reid contends, "Contrary to Dickens' intention, the complacent finger-wagging sermon makes us feel that Tattycoram has come back from the fire into the frying-pan" (40). Tattycoram has, essentially, traded one prison for another, which is shown in her "closing great burst of distress" in promising "I hope I shall never be quite so bad again, and that I shall get better by very slow degrees" (Dickens 915). Getting "better" will be a slow, arduous process for Tattycoram, and it will place its own confining limitations on her.

Tattycoram's life is neatly tied up. However, Dickens does not tie up Miss Wade's story, and instead leaves her to wander the earth indefinitely. Her life is like an endless, inescapable workhouse and an emotional, spiritual poorhouse. Her debt is non-conformity, and the bill will never be paid. While she may have initially thought that her refusal to conform was a liberating means of escape, she has been imprisoned by it and her negative outlook will do nothing to help her effect a release. Because she does not fit the limiting stereotype Victorian society demanded, she also defies their intense need to categorize. Miss Wade thus comes to represent the emerging modern woman the Victorians were so afraid of, and she is an "[enemy] of the convention of the bamboozling system" (Barrett 211). She is forever "trapped within herself, cut off from self-knowledge" (Lapinski 84) and "the reader is invited to pity the misguidedness,

loneliness, and 'waste' of her manless life" (Hall 125). Dickens does not need to show the reader that Miss Wade is punished, because her behavior within the confines of the text shows that she will continue to punish herself. Her life as a Wandering Woman ends with her spiritual, emotional and societal death, all because she refuses to live "as smoothly as most fools do" (Dickens 748).

CHAPTER 4

SHE'S FALLEN AND SHE CAN'T GET UP

Victorian fiction is full of fallen women, from Lady Honoria Dedlock of Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, to Hetty Sorrel of George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, to Tess Durbeyfield of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The overwhelming amount of critical attention paid to the fallen woman renders her one of the most popular archetype in nineteenth century fiction, and it is in this character that the Wandering Woman paradigm comes to its fruition. Mary Poovey observed "that the historical tradition associating all women with the first fallen woman, Eve, the 'Mother of our Miseries,' was reinvigorated as the Victorian period's madonna-harlot dichotomy" (Logan 6). Poovey continues by saying, "the contradiction between a sexless, moralized angel and an aggressive, carnal magdalen was therefore written into the domestic ideal as one of its constitutive characteristics" (6). The fallen woman is a natural outsider who qualifies herself as the ultimate Wandering Woman because she cannot conform to the limiting, restrictive codes of behavior that the majority of Victorian society so ardently endorsed. Part of this code stipulated that women must be maternal while maintaining an asexual, madonna-like aura. The code also demanded that women be selfless "angels of the house" who focused all their energies on making their families in general, and their husbands in particular, happy and comfortable. As long as sexuality was constrained by the sanctity of marriage,

it was considered acceptable; the moment it fell outside those bounds, it was deemed as illicit and immoral. Magdalens stood in direct opposition to the madonna/angel because their sexuality troubled propriety's standards of behavior. As shocking as magdalens could be and often were, their status was less shocking than the absolutes that required an unmarried non-virgin to be labeled "fallen." In order to embrace the totality of her existence, a woman has to fall -- in fact, even a so-called "good" woman had to be sexually active in order to achieve the Victorian ideal of domestic, maternal bliss.

Deborah Anna Logan, author of *Fallenness in Victorian Women's Writing* poses an important question: "What happens when unmarried women bear illegitimate children (an 'unnatural' act) toward whom they exhibit 'maternal instinct' (promoted as 'natural,' but only in 'good' women)?" (7). The answer is that these women are inevitably villainized and punished not only for bearing children out of wedlock, but also for having the audacity to feel maternal toward their offspring. This has a tremendous impact on both Tess and Lady Dedlock. Although Tess loves her baby, she names him Sorrow, which is indicative of the sorrow his conception brings to her life. Lady Dedlock thinks her baby is born dead; unbeknownst to her, her child lives and is made to feel the sorrow of her conception throughout her young life. Both of these instances go against the traditional ideals of Victorian motherhood, which was supposed to bring unsurpassed joy and fulfillment to women. If Tess and Lady Dedlock suffer for loving their children, they at least gain a measure of sympathy for expressing their "innate" maternal instincts. Hetty's unintentional "murder" of her child is an absolute negation of her maternity, and she is soundly punished for suppressing her "natural" role. Critics have often used the

unsanctified maternity of Tess, Lady Dedlock and Hetty as evidence of their individual moral failure, and also as verification of woman's propensity to succumb to temptation. While Hardy obviously intends Tess, his "pure woman faithfully presented" to be a sympathetic portrayal of a fallen woman, Dickens and Eliot appear to be less sympathetic and more ambivalent towards their magdalens. Hetty has been attacked for "her lack of principle" (Karl 271), while Lady Dedlock's icy outward appearance has been misinterpreted as reflective of her inner psyche. However, I contend that by showing how each of these women is affected by the stigmatizing impact of being a Wandering Woman, a more compassionate portrait of them appears, particularly for Lady Dedlock and for Hetty. In order to do this, we must change our focus from their maternity, and instead concentrate it on the factors that precipitate their expulsion from "polite" society.

As we have seen with both the child-woman and the sexual deviant versions of the Wandering Woman, the fallen woman variant is also either a literal or a figurative orphan. Lady Dedlock's marriage to Sir Leicester stirs the curiosity of the "fashionable intelligence" since "a whisper [went] about, that she had not even family" (Dickens 7). Her lack of family makes her a wanderer from the moment we meet her. There is an implication that Lady Dedlock is a gold digger who has used her "pride, ambition, [and] insolent reserve" (7) to make a successful, wealthy match to a man who has a long and distinguished lineage. Her lack of "family" also indicates that the uncertainties about her background make it impossible to predict her actions, past, present or future. The narrator tells us that Lady Dedlock wanders from "place" to "place" and that "her movements are uncertain" (6). While this seems to be a mere reporting of the wandering she undertakes

to relieve her ennui, it is also indicative of the fluidity of her social standing. A person of no "family" has no "place" in genteel society. Thus, Lady Dedlock's cold mask of utter boredom has its origins as a means to avoid detection. If she moves often enough because of her feigned boredom, she can avoid the possibility that her humble origins will be discovered. Of course, "Her boredom hides an intense concentration on her own past" (Miller 198), and this is part of the reason she maintains it. The narrator's revelation about Lady Dedlock's "pride" and "ambition" also cast suspicion on her, especially since the ideal Victorian woman was supposed to have pride and ambition for her husband and her family, rather than for herself. The fact that Lady Dedlock's pride and ambition are apparent to the "fashionable intelligence" indicates that she has had a lack of parental guidance. Ostensibly, a parent would have warned her that these qualities are admirable and desirable in men, but not in women. Because she has not had this type of support, Lady Dedlock has had to use her own intuition and judgement, however misguided they may have been, in shaping her own life.

Hetty is also introduced as a wanderer; the narrator calls her "that poor wandering lamb Hetty Sorrel" (Eliot 30). Her name itself is an indication of her wandering since sorrel "is the name of a bitter herb such as the Israelites were to eat at Passover to remind them of the bitterness of their captivity and desert wandering -- and Hetty is soon to begin a bitterly lonely 'wandering'" (Carpenter 41). The narrator uses this image by saying, "there are some plants that have hardly any roots" (Eliot 132), and if this is true, it stems from Hetty's status as an orphan. Although she lives with her Uncle Poyser and his wife, they treat her more as a lodger than as their niece and surrogate daughter. This is

painfully obvious when Hetty and Dinah, Mrs. Poyser's niece, arrive home late one evening. While Mr. and Mrs. Poyser engage in adult conversation with the serious and selfless Dinah, they barely address Hetty unless it is to give her orders. While Hetty seems indifferent to this treatment, it is likely that she has learned to accept her uncle and aunt's disapproval since it is their usual reaction to her. Their neglect is also obvious in their reaction to Adam Bede as a potential suitor for Hetty since they "might have viewed the subject differently if Hetty had been a daughter of their own, [but] it was clear that they would have welcomed the match with Adam for a penniless niece" (85). If Hetty is like a rootless plant, it is less her fault than it is her aunt and uncle's. At seventeen years old, Hetty still needs the support and guidance of parental figures. In fact, Mason Harris argues "that the Poysers fail in their 'parental responsibility' to Hetty who remains 'childishly dependent'" (Logan 101). Since she does not receive the loving attention she needs, she has become detached from her adopted family and has become fully invested in her narcissism. Her tendency to lavish love and attention on herself is a direct result of Mr. and Mrs. Poyser's inability to love her like a daughter. As Barry V. Qualls asserts in *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction*, Hetty is "utterly -- and unknowingly -- soulless: she has no models, no myths of *living* which pull her beyond her own vision in the mirror and force her to acknowledge her connection with her fellows" (146). Logan seems to agree with this assessment since she contends that "Hetty's lack of 'maternal instinct' and filial gratitude results from her never having been nurtured herself" (102). Dinah is the only "family" member who tries to connect with Hetty in any significant way, and Hetty is superficially aware of Dinah's kindness to her. The narrator says

"Dinah has never said anything disapproving or reproachful to Hetty during her whole visit to the Hall Farm" (Eliot 121). Dinah, who, at twenty-five is a young girl herself, is the only member of Hetty's "family" who seems to understand the potential danger of her rootlessness. E.W. Thomas understands the peril of rootlessness; he says, "Parents and guardians, by neglecting to train the young . . . allow themselves to grow up with vain notions of themselves, and false ideas as to their happiest course through life" (Logan 105). This is certainly true of the life Hetty will carve out for herself.

Tess lives with her parents, but they are incapable of taking care of their teenage daughter. Tess's father, John Durbeyfield, is drunk when he is initially introduced, and his intoxication is the source of intense embarrassment for her. Not only is she worried about his dissipation, Tess is also concerned about his health, particularly since her mother has told her that the doctor has expressed his concerns about John's health. The doctor has told Joan Durbeyfield that her husband "mid last ten years; [he] mid go off in ten months, or ten days" (Hardy 17). Joan clearly does not think of this as much of a threat since she is able to join her husband in the local pub where her daily life "no longer stood as pressing concretions" (18). The Durbeyfield's irresponsibility toward Tess and her siblings has far-reaching consequences for their eldest daughter. Because John is too "ill" to go to market, Tess is elected to go for him since the sale of the beehives will ensure the family's financial security for the next few months. On the way, there is an accident that fatally wounds the family's only horse. Tess takes total responsibility for the incident, and in fact, "nobody blamed Tess as she blamed herself" (28). She mistakenly thinks of herself as a "murderess" and "as the one who had dragged her parents into this quagmire"

(28-9). Her parents do nothing to dispel this notion, and consequently, Tess allows herself to be manipulated into paying a visit to her rich "relations." Her parents' inattention to her care and well being puts her in a vulnerable position since she is "at this time of her life . . . a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience" (12).

Tess, Hetty, and Lady Dedlock are each put at an immediate disadvantage because of the lack of familial support they receive. Hetty and Lady Dedlock seek the security of the financial protection they can attain by making an advantageous marriage, while Tess's parents manipulate her guilty conscience into making her solitarily carry the burden of her family's monetary welfare. At this point in their individual narratives, these women are vulnerable because of their naïveté and inexperience. These factors work together to make them susceptible to poverty, exploitation, physical danger, and the general treachery of the world. The unprotected status of the Wandering Woman makes each of these women an ideal target for the rogue, since her lack of parental protection and her need for financial support ensures the rogue's unimpeded pursuit of her.

The Wandering Woman and her rogue typically have a sexual relationship that leads to her expulsion from "polite" society. While Lady Dedlock did have this type of relationship with Captain Hawdon, she has another rogue with whom she does not have a sexual liaison. Mr. Tulkinghorn, the family attorney, emerges as a rogue who has the power to stigmatize her by revealing her past, and this power has even more potential for damage than does her previous relationship with Captain Hawdon. The narrator tells us that Mr. Tulkinghorn "is surrounded by a mysterious halo of family confidences; of which he is known to be the silent depository" (Dickens 8). He becomes suspicious one

day when Lady Dedlock drops her mask of boredom long enough to inquire who has copied the legal document he is reading aloud. When she subsequently faints, he becomes intrigued, and as the novel continues, he becomes relentless in pursuing the truth about her secret. When Tulkinghorn sends her a message that he has seen "the person who copied the affidavit in the Chancery suit" (117), her immediate reaction is to flee. She asks Sir Leicester to stop their carriage because she "'should like to walk a little,'" and her distress is obvious since she "alights so quickly, and walks away so quickly" (118). Lady Dedlock is startlingly aware that Tulkinghorn has the power to expose the imperfections she has so carefully masked with a perfect exterior, and that if he does, she will be forced to leave Sir Leicester and the "boring" life she has so carefully cultivated. When Tulkinghorn tells Lady Dedlock that the affidavit writer is dead, she is very careful to ask him if there is "'any clue to anything more'" (126) about this man, and Tulkinghorn tells her "'there were no papers'" (126). She obviously hopes that this is a sign that there is no written proof of her former relationship. However, for the next few days, "each evermore watches and suspects the other, evermore mistrustful of some great reservation; whether each is evermore prepared at all points for the others, and never to be taken unawares; what each would give to know how much the other knows" (127). Clearly, Tulkinghorn is a threat to Lady Dedlock, and she lives in continual dread that he will expose her secret.

Part of Tulkinghorn's power over her is the mystery surrounding his motivation in pursuing her. His satisfaction in making her feel uncomfortable is patently obvious when, without using names, Tulkinghorn tells the story of Lady Dedlock's fall. He tells Sir

Leicester about a woman who "'had in early life been engaged to marry a young rake -- he was a captain in the army -- nothing connected with whom came to any good. She never did marry him, but she gave birth to a child of which he was the father'" (435). This revelation leads to a confrontation between Tulkinghorn and Lady Dedlock, and Tulkinghorn is impressed with the "'power [she] has to keep [her] raging passions down'" (437). This helps to dispel the idea, perpetuated by both the narrator and by literary critics, that Lady Dedlock is a cold, passionless woman. Maria Nicholls agrees that Lady Dedlock is not passionless, and that "the tragedy that overcomes [her] is due to her passionate nature" (39). It becomes clear that Lady Dedlock has had to force herself to maintain a cool exterior in order to hide her fiery, passionate nature. Nicholls says that "This is the [real] tragedy of her life, both to deny the love she felt and to go through life unwilling to give love or trust to anybody, including the man she married for the wrong reasons" (40). Tulkinghorn's admission that "'The power and force of this woman are astonishing!'" (Dickens 437) lends credence to this idea, since he is aware that she is using all her power to maintain her composure. He tells her that his "'sole consideration [is] Sir Leicester's feelings and honour, and the family reputation'" (441) because if Tulkinghorn were to reveal her secret, "'the fall of the moon out of the sky, would not amaze [Sir Leicester] more than [her] fall from [her] high position as his wife'" (44).

Although it may seem unlikely that Tulkinghorn is sexually interested in Lady Dedlock, Geoffrey Carter suggests that that is precisely what Tulkinghorn intends since "he triumphs when, after his final sadistic maneuver, [Lady Dedlock] is forced to come to his bedroom" (Cox 147). Carter continues: "Although a man 'severely and strictly self-

repressed' and imperturbably emotionless throughout the book to this point, we are told that now 'the blood has not flushed into his face so suddenly and redly for many a long year' as when he realizes that Lady Dedlock has come to his room, for now 'he has conquered her'" (147). Lady Dedlock offers to leave Chesney Wold in order to save her husband's reputation, but Tulkinghorn refuses this offer. Lady Dedlock cannot live in this untenable situation where she feels as if she is "tied at the stake" (Dickens 441) since Tulkinghorn will divulge neither why he tortures her nor when he plans to reveal her secret. The attorney emerges as the character that is truly cold, and he is like an animal waiting for the perfect moment to snare and kill his prey. However, Lady Dedlock will not wait that long. She is aware that her husband "'is devoted to [her] almost to infatuation'" (440), and because he has always treated her kindly, she would rather undertake a journey as a Wandering Woman than risk damaging Sir Leicester's reputation in the community by waiting for Tulkinghorn to make his move.

While Lady Dedlock offers to give up all her worldly possessions in order to save her husband, Hetty Sorrel hopes to gain worldly possessions by snaring Arthur Donnithorne as her husband. In spite of this, "Hetty's ambitions are quite guileless, being limited to the symbolic possession of fine lace and white stockings; what Hetty really wants is the trousseau, not the sexual responsibility it represents" (Logan 97). In many ways, Hetty acts as a rogue to Arthur, particularly since she looks at him with "dark eyes [that] hid a soft roguishness under their long lashes" (Eliot 73). However, it is difficult to feel sympathy for someone who uses someone else as casually as Arthur uses Hetty. After their initial meeting, Hetty is captivated by his appearance; she thinks about his

"white hands, [his] gold chain, [his] occasional regimentals, and [his] wealth and grandeur immeasurable -- those were the warm rays that set poor Hetty's heart vibrating" (83). The narrator has already told us that Hetty has a "false air of innocence" (73) which stems, in part, from her awareness "that people liked to look at her" (84). She is aware that Arthur "would take a good deal of trouble for the chance of seeing her" (86), and she begins to pin her "silly imagination" (87) on him. Mr. Irwine recognizes the potential for damage if Arthur pursues Hetty, and he warns his protégé that he will "spoil [Hetty] for a poor man's wife" (88) if he continues to pursue her. However, Arthur is too young and inexperienced to realize that his "innocent" attentions have the potential to do permanent damage, and his carelessness, coupled with Hetty's narcissism and her romantic desire for luxury, are a powerful and dangerous recipe for disaster. One day, as they stand gazing at one another, "something [falls] to the ground with a rattling noise; it was Hetty's basket; all her little workwoman's matters were scattered on the path, some of them showing a capability of rolling to great lengths" (114). While this seems like an innocent, meaningless accident, it has ominous overtones. Hetty's "basket" is emblematic of her reproductive capabilities -- once she loses her virginity to Arthur, her subsequent pregnancy will make a "rattling noise" in the community, while their indiscretion has the potential to roll "great lengths" because of the damaging consequences of motherhood without matrimony.

Hetty is naïve enough to believe that Arthur's attentions mean "he must love her very much," which, of course, to her mind means "he would want to marry her" (129). Like many teenage girls, Hetty thinks her sexual relationship with Arthur is the

equivalent of an informal marriage proposal. He, however, does not feel this way since he thinks that "if he should happen to spoil [her] existence for her, [he could] make it up to her with expensive bon-bons" (107). Neither of them realizes just how expensive a "bon-bon" her lost virginity really is. Because she has no fortune, the only thing Hetty has to offer a future husband is an intact virginity and a spotless reputation. Therefore, Arthur's insistent rationalization that their affair is "not after all, a thing to make a fuss about" (146) is the catalyst that precipitates Hetty's downfall. Her chastity is not a mere "bon-bon" -- rather, it is her most important, and really her only, possession. Although Adam has no idea how far the affair has gone, he realizes, better than Arthur does, the potential for damage implicit in such a liaison, even if it is, as Arthur insists, merely a flirtation. Adam tells Arthur:

> I don't know what you mean by flirting . . . but if you mean behaving to a woman as if you loved her, and yet not loving her all the while, I say that's not th' action of an honest man, and what isn't honest does come t' harm. I'm not a fool, and you're not a fool, and you know better than what you're saying. You know it couldn't be made public as you've behaved to Hetty as y' have done without her losing her character. (252)

Unfortunately, the relationship has escalated far beyond mere flirting, and Hetty's reputation has already been damaged beyond repair. Her pregnancy will ensure the complete and utter destruction of her character.

Hetty's romantic dreams of marriage to Arthur are shattered when he, at Adam's insistence, writes to her and breaks off their relationship. In putting the end of their affair

into writing, Arthur unwittingly writes Hetty's future as well, since his belief that he cannot marry "beneath" him, leads to Hetty's life as a fallen woman. His unwillingness to do this in person shows a lack of courage, as well as a lack of self-control, since he is afraid that he will be unable to resist temptation if he is in her presence. This makes his roguish actions less than admirable, and puts him in a patently unsympathetic light. The letter sends Hetty into paroxysms of grief, and she thinks of "[running] away that very morning" since "[hers] was not a nature to face difficulties" (282). Hetty is aware that if anyone were to discover her secret "they would think her conduct shameful" (283). As her pregnancy progresses and becomes more difficult to hide, she does not know "where to turn for refuge from swift-advancing shame; understanding no more of this life of ours than a foolish lost lamb wandering farther and farther in the nightfall on the lonely heath" (305). Arthur's desertion has left Hetty with few choices, and indeed, she almost sleepwalks through her life after he breaks with her. In fact, she neither intentionally nor consciously undertakes her journey as a Wandering Woman. Rather, instead of going to see Dinah as she had planned, Hetty begins wandering because "She only wants to be out of the highroad, that she may walk slowly, and not care how her face looks, as she dwells on wretched thoughts" (306). She knows that her body will soon betray her "miserable secret" and that "she must run away; she must hide herself where no familiar eyes could detect her" (307). Her status as a fallen woman will soon be visibly apparent, and because she has no one to turn to for comfort or support, she must pursue refuge in becoming a Wandering Woman.

Tess's relationship with her rogue is much more violent and more sinister than either Hetty's or Lady Dedlock's. Because of her guilt over the horse's death, Tess allows herself to be talked into going to visit her rich "relatives." Her "cousin," Alec d'Urberville, clearly has more than a casual interest in her, even from the first moments of their initial meeting. Critics have made much of the way Alec "forces" Tess to eat the strawberries that have been "forced" to ripen early because they contend that it is an indication that he will later "force" her into having sex with him. While this certainly has validity, I contend that there is another person who has a hand in Tess's first fall. Tess's mother, Joan, acts as a surrogate rouge to her daughter by dressing her up as a girl would dress up her doll. Because Joan is aware of her daughter's beauty, she attempts to make Tess look even more beautiful and thus, more tempting. She is aware that Tess's white dress "imparted to her developing figure an amplitude which belied her age, and might cause her to be estimated as a woman when she was not much more than a child" (Hardy 40). Joan's roguish intentions toward her daughter are made even more explicit by her declaration that "if [Alec] don't marry her afore he will after" (43). Thus, Joan has effectively sold her daughter into prostitution because she understands that the rakish Alec will not be able to resist Tess's voluptuous beauty, which will ultimately lead to Tess's sexual initiation.

Tess's relationship with Alec is the ultimate version of the Wandering Woman's liaison with her rogue. Alec manipulates Tess by constantly telling her that he has done something to help her family financially, and because she knows the dire straits her family is susceptible to, she feels guilty and uncomfortable about refusing. There has

been endless critical speculation about whether or not Alec rapes Tess in the Chase, or whether Tess is a willing participant, and it is unlikely that this mystery will ever be satisfactorily resolved. However, what seems to puzzle critics most of all is why Tess stays with Alec after he "rapes" her. I contend that her reaction after the "rape" is typical of most rape victims in that Tess, whom we already know has a tendency to blame herself for every misfortune that befalls her, feels that she is somehow culpable in her own violation. It is also possible that Tess feels that it is useless to refuse any further sexual overtures; after all, there is no way to regain her virginity because this intangible commodity that is so overvalued in women can never be replaced once it is lost. Tess's feelings of guilt over the "rape" are obvious; she tells Alec: "if I had ever sincerely loved you, if I loved you still, I should not so loathe and hate myself for my weakness as I do now!" (65). It would be wrong to underestimate the damage Alec has done to Tess by forcing her sexual awakening, and she will certainly be stigmatized because of it. However, his admission that "I was wrong -- I admit it" (65) makes him honest, even if it does not make him honorable, in his intentions towards her. He also promises Tess that "I won't be bad towards you again" (65). For all his bad qualities, Alec does have genuine feeling for Tess, which is obvious when he bemoans the fact that Tess will "never love [him]" (66). However, Tess can bear neither to live with a man she does not love nor to stay with him as his mistress, and she undertakes her journey as a Wandering Woman as a means of ending this stigmatizing, traumatizing phase of her life.

Tess's overwhelming feelings of guilt about her fall have an impact on her attitude toward the baby that she has as a result of her relationship with Alec. Motherhood, for

her, does not bring any of the joy and fulfillment that the Victorians assumed was a natural consequence of childbirth. On the contrary, the other fieldworkers sense Tess's ambivalence toward her child. One of them says, "'She's fond of that there child, though she mid pretend to hate en, and say she wishes the baby and her too were in the churchyard'" (76). This statement is validated by Tess's determination to baptize her baby in order to secure his "proper" burial. The vicar's resistance to accepting Tess's baptism of her baby as the equivalent of a church baptism is an ominous omen of the double standard that Angel will enforce upon her. Obviously, maternity has not been a blessing for Tess because it has marked her both as a fallen woman and as a blasphemer against church doctrine. She has thus been stigmatized by both the sexual fall Alec has forced upon her, as well as by the spiritual fall the vicar has imposed upon her because of his inability to separate himself from propriety's strictures. After the death of her child, whom she aptly christened Sorrow, Tess resumes her journey by travelling to Talbothay's dairy farm. Her resilient ability to go on with her life in spite of adversity is one of the factors that has made Hardy's creation a critical darling.

Tess has no idea that Angel Clare, who looks and acts like a celestial being, will be the man who will make her suffer a stigmatization that is more heinous and more unjust than anything Alec d'Urberville ever contemplated subjecting her to. The narrator's statement that as she travels to Talbothay's "Tess really wished to walk uprightly" (88) has a dual meaning. Not only is she hopeful about her new life at the dairy, but she wishes to put the past behind her and live a moral, "upright" life. However, the lactating cows at Talbothay's are a reminder that Tess, who has just buried a child, is, in all

probability, still lactating herself. She is always conscious that her past is a real part of her history, and although she tries to go on with her new life, she has an intense need to accept responsibility for what has happened to her.

Just as Tess stands out because of her beauty, Angel stands out because it is obvious that he is not a farmer. One of the girls tells Tess, "he is quite the gentleman-born" (96). In many ways, Angel is not what he appears or pretends to be, and this is the reason he has the power to stigmatize Tess so deeply that she will be unable to recover from it. Angel seems to see himself as a rebel of conscience because he tries to "evince considerable indifference to social forms and observances" (98). Part of his rebellion is his rejection of his parents' "untenable redemptive theolatry" (97), and his decision to pursue farming rather than preaching is his way of breaking from their dogmatic approach to life. Whether he is cognizant of it or not, Angel also seeks rebellion in choosing Tess, a simple dairymaid of a humble family, as his wife instead of the more "appropriate" Mercy Chant, who is "of a very good family" (138). Angel's hypocritical pretensions have a broad range of targets -- he scorns virtually everything his family does because he thinks his "simple" lifestyle is more pure and more Christian than their devotion to dogma is. While he considers himself to be a social "rebel," Angel ultimately reveals himself as a strict and unforgiving adherent of society's mores.

Angel's hypocrisy has damaging, irreversible consequences for Tess. Although she tries on many occasions to tell him about her past and her fallen status, he refuses to believe that she has anything serious to tell him. On their wedding night, Tess is relieved when Angel confesses that he has had a past sexual liaison. When Angel tells her that her

own confession "'can hardly be more serious'" (190) than his own, she responds, "'No, it cannot be more serious, certainly . . . because 'tis just the same!'" (190). However, Angel cannot view Tess's relationship with Alec as "just the same" as his romp with the unnamed older woman because he is more bound to traditional propriety than he can comfortably acknowledge. Angel tells Tess, "You were one person; now you are another" (191), but it is really Angel himself who is another person because he cannot and will not view Tess's past misfortune with the openness that he claims to use in all his other views. Because of this, Angel emerges as one of the worst (if not the worst) villains in literature. His moral superiority and pomposity are an infuriating indication of the Victorian double standard that ignored men's peccadilloes, while it condemned women's. Angel does not understand, as indeed, society often does not, that a woman's purity and innocence can transcend mere physicality. When a sleepwalking Angel carries Tess to the churchyard while saying, "'Dead, dead, dead'" (207), Hardy is suggesting that what should really be dead is the outdated idea that a woman's virtue is irrevocably linked to her virginity. Tess realizes that Angel's reaction is tied to conventional morality, and she tells him, "'It is in your own mind what you are angry at, Angel; it is not in me'" (194). However, Angel cannot escape the vile taint of his hypocrisy, and he and Tess decide to separate. Thus, Angel is directly responsible for Tess's expulsion from "society," and it is his incredible inability to see the similarities in their experiences that causes Tess to begin her lonely journey as a Wandering Woman.

Maternity that has not been sanctified by marriage has made Lady Dedlock, Hetty, and Tess into fallen women, while the suspicion that each of them has committed

murder helps to propel their individual destinies as Wandering Women. Long before she is suspected of Tulkinghorn's murder, Lady Dedlock finds Esther to reveal that she is her mother and that she thought Esther died shortly after her birth. Lady Dedlock has, apparently, long harbored the belief that once the "sin" of her "fallen" virtue was discovered, she would have to pay a terrible penalty. As Virginia Morris asserts, "Once the truth has been discovered -- [Lady Dedlock's] capacity for passionate love . . .she can no longer maintain the arrogance that sustains her" (65). She confesses her readiness to wander for her "sins" when she tells Esther, "'I must travel my dark road alone, and it will lead me where it will. From day to day, sometimes from hour to hour, I do not see the way before my guilty feet'" (Dickens 386). Rather than condemning her mother for being a "fallen" woman, Esther is full of forgiveness. In her narrative, Esther reports what she told Lady Dedlock: "'I told her -- or tried to tell her -- that if it were for me, her child, under any circumstances to take upon me to forgive her, I did it, and had done it, many, many years. I told her that my heart overflowed with love for her'" (386). This is not really the type of response Lady Dedlock has anticipated. In fact, she has cultivated her icy exterior, in part, to protect herself from the type of disdain and recrimination she feels she deserves for giving birth to an illegitimate child. Her warm, impassioned response to Esther's kindness shows that Lady Dedlock has had to work diligently to achieve the coldness that masks her fiery psyche. In fact, F.S. Schwarzbach claims that Lady Dedlock's real sin has been "cutting herself off from her deepest emotions, particularly her love and maternal affection" (165). While she feels it necessary to "be proud and disdainful everywhere else" she feels free to be "humbled and ashamed" with Esther "in

the only natural moments of her life" (Dickens 387). All of Lady Dedlock's natural warmth is visited upon Esther during their brief encounter, and elsewhere in the novel, she extends her need to show her maternal inclinations in the tenderness she shows to Rosa, her young maid. Lady Dedlock tells Esther that she has taken great pains to hide her guilt, and that she is "conscience-stricken, underneath that mask!" (388). The only way Lady Dedlock has been able to escape the shame of her past has been by "murdering within her breast the only love and truth of which it is capable!" (388). Clearly, Lady Dedlock's "mask" has been a carefully cultivated affectation of frigidity and utter boredom, and she has maintained this haughty stance in order to cover the guilt, remorse, and pain of the disappointments and mistakes of her youth. The venerable Dickens scholar J. Hillis Miller said, "Lady Dedlock is entirely enclosed within her own suffering . . .Her present is a frozen and solid form of [her] past" (189). During her encounter with Esther, the icy exterior Lady Dedlock has so carefully maintained slowly melts, and she is aware that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to continue to project her air of frigid indifference.

While she is surprised by Esther's readiness to forgive her past indiscretions, Lady Dedlock also does not expect the forgiveness of her husband. Once she is under suspicion of Tulkinghorn's murder, she leaves Chesney Wold in order to protect Sir Leicester's name from "dishonour and disgrace" (Dickens 387). However, Sir Leicester is more understanding than anyone might have expected and is ready to forgive her for all her past offenses. His love for her is abiding and intense, and as he collapses from shock, "He sees her, almost to the exclusion of himself, and cannot bear to look upon her cast down

from the high place she has graced so well" (563). Of course, Lady Dedlock is unaware of her husband's feelings because she never returns to Chesney Wold. She is determined to save the reputations and feelings of those she loves -- Sir Leicester, Rosa, and Esther -- by undertaking the life of the Wandering Woman. Lady Dedlock is convinced that the truth of her past is an insurmountable obstacle and that "there is no escape but in death. Hunted, she flies. The complication of her shame, her dread, remorse, and misery, overwhelms her at its height" (574-5). She prefers wandering and death to the possibility of continuing not only her own suffering, but also the suffering and pain that will be felt by those whom she holds dear.

It is ironic that as Lady Dedlock's frosty façade melts, the temperature outside where she is wandering becomes more intensely cold and icy. J. Hillis Miller observed: "The process of Lady Dedlock's dying after her freezing mood has broken is mirrored in nature itself in the melting snow which lies everywhere that night" (203-4). The narrator tells us that "she is not a hard lady naturally . . .But [she has been] so long accustomed to suppress emotion, and keep down reality; so long schooled for her own purposes, in that destructive school which shuts up the natural feelings of the heart" (Dickens 571). As she wanders, she is finally able to vent her long dormant emotions, and she writes a series of impassioned notes to Esther wherein she reveals that she will "die of terror and [her] conscience," and that by doing so, she "shall disgrace [Sir Leicester] least" (612). As Esther and Inspector Bucket continue their pursuit of Lady Dedlock, they are told that her journey and her despair have had an enormous impact on her appearance. Although Lady Dedlock was known for her immaculate good grooming, she now looks "O so wretched!

that if you had seen her . . .you'd have given her half-a-crown" (613). Lucia Zedner, author of *Women, Crime, and Custody in Victorian England*, reports that "an article in the *Cornhill Magazine* (1866)" stated that "when a woman gets to be utterly careless of her personal appearance -- personal cleanliness -- you may be sure that she is careful for nothing else that is good" (28). Because she feels that it is futile to beg for forgiveness, Lady Dedlock has transformed herself into someone whose very appearance denotes not only her lack of care for her personal well-being, but also a need for compassion and absolution. Ironically, although she knows she is being followed, she has no idea that it is because she has been cleared of Tulkinghorn's murder, and to a full pardon of all her sins by her husband. However, Lady Dedlock's inability to believe that anyone could absolve her of her guilt propels her journey as a Wandering Woman, and Esther and Inspector Bucket discover, too late, that she has already died while lying on Captain Hawdon's grave. The fear of facing the stigma of being a fallen woman has literally killed Lady Dedlock because she has punished herself more severely than anyone else would have or could have done. As Geoffrey Carter asserts, "The death that Dickens gives to Lady Dedlock is a terrible surrender to the myth that a fallen woman had better die than live" (Cox 148). Her unusual first name, Honoria, is indicative of her determination to uphold the honor of her husband's name, just as she is "deadlocked" into pursuing the fate of the Wandering Woman.

While Lady Dedlock is incapable of understanding the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation with Sir Leicester and Esther, Hetty is incapable of understanding the gravity of her impending pregnancy. As she travels toward Windsor in pursuit of Arthur,

Hetty's naïveté causes her to perceive almost every conversation as an accusation. Like the typical Wandering Woman, Hetty is certain that others can perceive her stigmatized status just by looking at her. As she talks to a coachman about securing a passage to Windsor, she becomes convinced that "this coachman must know something about her" because she is incapable of understanding "that chance words could happen to apply closely to her circumstances" (Eliot 310). Like many young girls who find themselves facing an unwanted pregnancy, Hetty wishes that her current life were just a bad dream from which she could awaken to "find that all the feverish life she had known besides was a short nightmare" (311). This is not the case, and she knows that the only future for her is a "hidden life" that will be "mingled with shame" (311). In spite of this, Hetty is still just a teenager, and as such, she has a tremendous willingness to believe that if she is able to find Arthur, everything will turn out all right. This determination to carry on in the face of adversity is combined with an overwhelming sense of dread and shame, and it is no surprise that Hetty contemplates suicide several times during her journey as a Wandering Woman. Interestingly enough, the method of suicide that is most appealing to her is drowning. In this way, Hetty can subconsciously satisfy her narcissistic nature because she can, like Narcissus, follow her own beautiful reflection to a watery grave. Reva Stump claims that Hetty's vision "extends, as it always has, no further than her mirror. She neither looks inside herself, nor outside herself, but only at her external appearance, at her own self-pitying face" (26). For all of the time that Hetty has spent gazing at herself in mirrors and smooth, reflective surfaces, she still has not glimpsed into the depths of her soul.

As she wanders on, Hetty steadies herself by "fixing on some tree or gate or projecting bush at the most distant visible point in the road as a goal, and feeling faint joy when she [reaches] it" (Eliot 312). This statement is vaguely reminiscent of the wanderings of Oliver Twist's young mother on her journey to the workhouse, and is a grim foreshadowing of the interminable walking poor Fanny Robin undertakes in Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Hetty's beauty and her demure appearance attract attention as she travels, and "for the first time in her life [she] wished no one would look at her" (313). The longer her travels last, the more desperate she becomes, and "instead of having found a refuge she had only reached the borders of a new wilderness where no goal lay before her" (316). Once Hetty discovers that Arthur is not in Windsor, any goal she may have had is lost in her panic over how to decide her fate. As she wanders, she has the feeling that "no one could deliver her from the evils that would make life hateful to her; and no one, she said to herself, should ever know her misery and humiliation" (321). The threat of exposure is harsher to Hetty than her exposure to the elements of nature is, and the stigma of being known as a fallen woman seems to be a far worse fate than does wandering indefinitely.

As she continues on her journey as a Wandering Woman, Hetty, like Lady Dedlock, takes on a disheveled appearance. A man she encounters tells her, "Anybody 'ud think you was a wild woman, an' look at yer" (325). Her lack of care towards her appearance, along with her need for intensely deep slumber, is indicative of her growing depression and desperation. Reva Stump makes the following observation about this incident: "That such a lowly peasant shepherd should condemn Hetty for her actions, and

above all her appearance, is an indication that, as she now is, she would be unacceptable to any human community" (33). Stump continues, "On the symbolic level it might be said that the shepherd's function is to show Hetty, by his rejection of her, the importance of getting back on the highroad which would lead back to her proper place in her own community. His condemnation of her is an indication that her life outside her community will be no more pleasant that that from which she sought to escape" (34). Hetty's fear that her secret will be exposed is so intense that she feels "it was a dread to which she felt chained" because if she confesses to someone, eventually "other people must know, and she could no more rush on that shame than she could rush on death" (Eliot 326). Hetty's hope dwindles, and it is really no surprise when Adam discovers that Hetty has been arrested because she is suspected of infanticide. Although critics have claimed that Eliot paints a sympathetic portrait of Arthur, this is negated by Adam's impassioned condemnation of his former friend's actions. Adam says,

> It's *his* doing . . . if there's been any crime, it's at his door, not at hers. *He* taught her to deceive -- *he* deceived me first. Let 'em put *him* on his trial -- let him stand in court beside her, and I'll tell 'em how he got hold of her heart, and 'ticed her t' evil, and then lied to me. Is *he* to go free, while they lay all the punishment on her . . . so weak and young? (343)

Adam's obvious anguish over Hetty's fate is an apt indicator that Eliot held Arthur just as culpable as she held Hetty, and is "evocative of the growing condemnation of the double standard" (Basch 261). Adam understands that it is Arthur's impetuousness that has precipitated Hetty's fall from grace, and that Arthur's capricious treatment of Hetty has

had damaging consequences not only for Arthur and Hetty, but also for the Poyser family and himself.

One of the most troubling elements of Hetty's alleged infanticide is that she refuses to acknowledge that it took place, and as Mr. Massey tells Adam, "she's gone on denying she's had a child from first to last" (Eliot 359). However, her behavior is consistent with the reactions of many teenaged mothers who persist in the notion that pregnancy is something that happens to other people, not to themselves. Because she has been unable to come to terms with her condition, it is understandable that Hetty feels little attachment to her newborn baby. In fact, as Virginia Morris states, "Eliot's point is that the crime [of infanticide] is not unnatural; rather, it is the all too natural consequence of Hetty's personality in the context of her environment" (79). During her conversations with Dinah, Hetty does confess to abandoning her baby, and even to feeling as if she "seemed to hate it" (Eliot 379). While she is incarcerated, Hetty's demeanor indicates the depths of her depression; she "looked as if some demon had cast a blighting glance upon her, withered up the woman's soul in her, and left only a hard despairing obstinacy" (361). Her frigid exterior masks her inner pain, however, and although she is unwilling to admit her crime to anyone else, she finds comfort in Dinah's compassionate understanding of her. In spite of her admission that she did make a conscious decision to abandon her baby, the baby's subsequent death is more of an unintentional result of its exposure than it is a cold-blooded, premeditated murder. Hetty's naïve desire to return home is revealed when she tells Dinah, "And then the little baby was born, when I didn't expect it; and the thought came into my mind that I might get rid of it, and go home

again" (378). She also confesses that she was not able to go through with killing her baby, and that she hoped "perhaps somebody 'ud come and take care of it and then it wouldn't die" (379). Hetty has clearly been negligent of her baby's safety, which makes her responsible for its death, but rather than intending to murder her child, she obviously thought that she could just leave the baby, forget the whole incident, and return home. Society has a marked inability to view infanticide with anything but contempt because it is deemed "unnatural," and Hetty is sentenced to hang for her crime.

Although Arthur eventually arranges to have Hetty's sentence overturned, she is still ostracized from the community and transported to Australia, and she later dies while making a journey back to England. Arthur's punishment is hardly as severe as Hetty's, particularly since his only real punishment is to voluntarily and temporarily give up being the squire of Hayslope. As Adam so aptly puts it, the wrong Arthur has done to Hetty "can never be undone" (Eliot 354), and Hetty will never be the same. After Hetty has left for Australia, Arthur and Adam meet alone in the woods, and Adam tells Arthur, "There's a sort o' damage, sir, that can't be made up for" (390). Although Arthur assures Adam that he grieves over Hetty's fate too, his "punishment" is self-imposed and therefore, far less stigmatizing than Hetty's. Not only does she suffer the pains of being a fallen woman, but she must also bear the stigma of failing to have any of the "natural" maternal instincts Victorian women were assumed to naturally feel. Indeed, part of the reason Hetty is judged so harshly for her crime is that her "fallenness is distinguished by her apparent lack of 'maternal instinct' much more than by [her] illicit sexuality" (Logan 93). Dorothea Barrett asserts that the severity of Hetty's punishment, coupled with "the narrator's lack of

sympathy for [her] defeats its apparent purpose: it wins readers to Hetty perhaps more than a gentler treatment would have done" (Logan 124). Barrett's claim helps to refute Margaret Homans' almost absurd declaration that Hetty's culpability makes her an "expendable character" (Miller et al 27). As Francoise Basch has pointed out, the conclusion of the novel makes Arthur and Hetty's punishments terribly unequal. After all, "Arthur returns to the scene of his crime, it seems forgiven," while Eliot "by the means of providential death destroys Hetty's chance of reintegrating with her community" (261). This refutes Tom Winnifrith's claim that "Arthur Donnithorne suffers almost as much as Hetty," as well as his assertion that "Eliot cannot be accused of subscribing to the double standard" (51). The lack of equality in Arthur and Hetty's punishments and suffering is a clear illustration of the Victorian tendency to readily accept a double standard in the treatment of sexually active males and females.

If Hetty's exile and punishment seem overly severe, then Tess's punishment for her persistent refusal to deny her past seems even more harsh, particularly since she has voluntarily confessed her "sin." Angel cannot overcome his traditional morality because "With all his attempted independence of judgment this advanced and well-meaning young man, a sample product of the last five-and-twenty years, was yet the slave to custom and conventionality" (Hardy 221). He and Tess agree to part so that he can see "if [he] can bring himself to bear" (212) the truth of her past relationship with Alec. Angel's admission that "If [Alec] were dead it might be different" (204) is an eerie foreshadowing of the steps Tess will eventually take to escape the stigma of her tainted past. As he leaves for Brazil, Angel shows the utter hypocrisy of his nature by propositioning Izz

Huett. By asking Izz to do what will be perceived as "wrong-doing in the eyes of civilization" (225), he is asking her to undertake the very kind of life he found so despicable in Tess. This is one of the reasons that it becomes more and more difficult to view Angel's actions with any sympathy, and it is also a major factor in his emergence as the real villain and the real rogue in the novel.

Tess begins her life as a Wandering Woman, taking work wherever she can get it, and once she and Angel separate, she is always in motion, wandering from place to place. As she is travelling, she encounters a man who recognizes her from her days at Alec's home in Trantridge. The only escape for "her hunted soul" (231) is flight, and she runs as quickly as she can to avoid the embarrassment and stigma of her past. However, as Jeffrey Sommers contends, "for Tess the impulse to flee has seemingly moved into her subconscious along with an accompanying fear that flight cannot work" (164). Dale Kramer seems to agree with Sommers; he says Tess "is driven from point to point, pursued by the 'scandal' of being separated from her husband, by her own need for punishment, by a combination of grief and loyalty directed at Angel, and finally by her family" (83). Just as Hetty fervently hoped to be reunited with Arthur, Tess hopes that Angel will send for her and that all will be forgiven. Tess is also like Hetty in her desire to prevent people from noticing her beauty. She covers her head with a cloth and cuts off her eyebrows as insurance "against aggressive admiration" (Hardy 233). This self-mutilation is an effective means of disguise, and it is also indicative of Tess's self-loathing, particularly since her beauty has become a type of stigma because it "is a temptation to men that places her in almost constant danger" (Higgins et al 98). In spite

of the injustices she has had to suffer, Tess still blames herself for everything that has happened to her. In her mind, she is utterly deserving of the hard, miserable, perilous life of the Wandering Woman. The longer she continues in this lifestyle, the more difficult it becomes, and Tess has to work more diligently in increasingly worse conditions just to stay alive.

Her decision to travel to Emminster to ask her in-laws if they will help her contact Angel leads to her permanent downfall as a woman that cannot escape the life of the Wandering Woman. Tony Tanner, in his brilliant article "Colour and Movement in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*," says, "At the end of this journey there is nobody at home and there follows the incident of Tess losing her walking boots, another physical reminder that the walking gets harder and harder for her" (232). While there, she sees Alec, and it takes no time for him to begin pursuing her again. Although she denounces his false piety by reminding him of the "harm [he's] done [her]" (Hardy 256), her overriding feelings of guilt soon resurface. No sooner has she blamed him for her current pitiful condition than "there was revived in her the wretched sentiment which had often come to her before, that in inhabiting the fleshly tabernacle with which nature had endowed her she was somehow doing wrong" (257). Alec plays on Tess's guilt by telling her that she is a "temptress" and that "surely there never was such a maddening mouth since Eve's" (268). Alec is aware that the most effective way to manipulate Tess is to offer to help her family, and this is precisely what he does. Like the typical Wandering Woman, Tess is in desperate need of financial aid, and when her father dies, the rest of her family is left homeless and destitute. Because she believes that Angel has

permanently abandoned her, Tess feels that her only recourse is to join Alec. Ellen Rooney contends, "Many circumstances conspire to drive Tess back to Alec, not least among them her final acquiescence to the view that a physical change, the loss of her virginity, is the definitive experience, in effect the meaning, of her life" (Higgins et al 109). As is typical of the Wandering Woman's rogue, Alec will demand, and receive, sexual compensation for his offer of physical and financial protection. Tess's resignation to this lifestyle is obvious as she tells Alec, "'Whip me, crush me; you need not mind those people under the rick! I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim -- that's the law!'" (275). Tess is aware of the finality of her fall, and in her return to Alec, she gives up her valiant fight against the unfairness of propriety's "laws." She thinks "Never in her life -- she could swear it from the bottom of her soul - had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these harsh judgments had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently?" (295). As Jeffrey Sommers has observed, "Tess is hounded by society because she has violated one of its cherished beliefs: that women should be chaste in a way not necessarily required of men" (162). Tess has finally realized that she will have to appear to play by the rules, even if she cannot fully understand them.

In spite of the fact that Angel has had time to rethink his reaction to Tess's past, his change of opinion has come too late, and is a vital component in her ultimate fate as a Wandering Woman. Although it would be incorrect to underestimate the damage Alec has done to Tess, he has, at the very least, been honest in telling her that the reason he wants her to return to him is because his interest in her is sexual. Unlike her dealings with

Angel, Tess can understand what it is that Alec wants, and although it may repulse her, she is able to deliver the desired return. Dale Kramer's assessment of Alec agrees with this claim. Kramer says, "An attempt to place Alec fairly must acknowledge that he looks upon Tess as a sexual object, although being willing to marry her, and in being believably contrite at the worse deed he had done, his view of her is more encompassing and disinterested than the view of others" (54). Thus, Alec is less of a rogue and a villain to Tess than Angel is.

When Angel does return to find her, he is a changed man, both physically and psychologically. He realizes that he has been far too harsh in judging her past mistake, and he tries diligently to make amends. However, as Tess stands before him dressed in finery, it is difficult to have sympathy for him because it is his own hypocrisy that has driven her into a life that is tantamount to prostitution. As Tess tells Angel that Alec has "won [her] back to him" (Hardy 313), Angel realizes that he is not the only one who has changed. He sees that "his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers -- allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will" (314). Even in her stasis at Alec's hotel, Tess's mind and spirit are on the continual journey of the Wandering Woman.

Unfortunately, Tess blames all of her misery on Alec because he has "'made [her] be what [she] prayed [him] in pity not to make [her] be again!'" (315). Angel is just as guilty of this crime as Alec is, however, and we might almost wish that Tess had stabbed both of them instead of just Alec. When she runs to Angel to tell him that she has murdered Alec, Angel finally realizes the "strength of her affection for himself" because

it "had apparently extinguished her moral sense altogether" (319). This seemingly means that Angel is finally able to understand that Tess's past actions were not the result of a faulty morality, but of a purer nature that transcends the laws of propriety. Although Angel is genuinely tender to Tess in the days that follow, it is difficult to believe that he could not have done more to help her escape detection. After all, they pass at least six days at the mansion where they temporarily hide, and although the days are idyllically filled with love and passion, they might have been better spent in helping Tess leave the country and certain death. She is clearly in no frame of mind to think rationally, and it is up to Angel to think of a logical route of escape. Of course, they do not, and as they leave the mansion and head north, they stop at the ancient pagan pillars of Stonehenge. Critics have paid great attention to this scene, and it is ironic that these pillars that pre-date history seem to represent the mystical and arbitrary pillars of morality Tess has so inadvertently toppled. Her subsequent hanging for Alec's murder makes Tess a figurative offering to the gods of propriety she has so ardently tried to appease throughout the novel. Byron Caminero-Santangelo claims that "Tess's death is particularly disturbing because she is the only character who could be held up as a moral exemplar. Because of her awareness of and sensitivity to injustice and her desire to combat cruelty and misfortune she has more capability than the other characters to act justly" (59).

The fallen woman is the most poignant version of the Wandering Woman paradigm because she is the character who most fully illustrates the injustices of Victorian morality. Although we may think that we in our modernity have escaped such double standards, we need only to look at any recent event involving a man and a woman

to see that women still carry the taint of Eve's fall from grace. Because of their prudery, many Victorians were unable to accept the idea that a woman could be sexual and still be moral. Of course, women like Lady Dedlock, Hetty, and Tess were made to suffer for this idea, and the death of their virginity leads to their social "death"; literal death is only a matter of time. The fact that all three of them accept their deaths is an indication of the depths of their morality, since all three feel that they deserve to die. Tess is the most evocative illustration of the dichotomy inherent in the madonna-harlot paradigm because she simultaneously conforms to and refutes Victorian ideals of femininity. She is beautiful, self-negating, maternal, and utterly devoted to her worthless husband, and yet at the same time, she is a fallen woman who eventually commits murder to escape the torture of the stigmatizing life of the Wandering Woman. Perhaps what Tess, along with other fallen women, is trying to escape is what Freud called "a state of bondage" (Lloyd Davis 10) that existed between a virgin and the man who deflowered her. Freud believed that this set "up the future of a relationship based on dominance. At the same time, the demand for virginity is a masculinist attempt to survey and control a woman's past" (11). Because of their individual pasts, Tess, Lady Dedlock, and Hetty pose a threat to the patriarchal order, and they must die to pay for this sin. These women are a clear illustration not only of the double standard many Victorians either endorsed or ignored, but also of the perilous, uncomfortable, and emotionally vacuous life of the Wandering Woman.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Studying the Wandering Woman paradigm allows us to formulate a new archetypal figure who offers important and exciting ways to re-examine Victorian literary figures. By understanding how the Wandering Woman bridges the gap between the "angel of the house" and the New Woman of the *fin de siecle*, we can more accurately understand how Victorian authors reflected a growing paranoia about the changing roles of women. Ironically, in an age that was named for a female monarch, there was a pervading fear that women would wander away from their "duty" and their "natural" role as wives and mothers. The panic over this was obviously on the mind of the authors of the age, and "in presenting sexual relationships as a central area of conflict, Victorian novelists were, in fact, concentrating on the most fundamental arena of crisis and change in their culture" (Barickman et al 7).

Wandering is the symbolic equivalent of the difficult life path women in the nineteenth century often faced if they failed to stay within the limiting bounds of propriety. Although the Wandering Woman's journey may seem like a mere variation of the traditional bildungsroman, it is not for a variety of reasons. The least of these is, as Jeffrey Sommers so aptly put it, because the bildungsroman "is not a real possibility for women because of the limited alternatives offered them by society" (160). The Wandering Woman is reminiscent of Eve in her expulsion from paradise, and literal wandering through the wilderness, whether it is in the country or in the city streets, is an

essential element of the paradigm. Although the typical hero of the bildungsroman often undertakes his travels as the result of some slight indiscretion he has committed (or has been suspected of committing), he is not continually punished for his "sin." However, the Wandering Woman always carries the blame for her "error" against conventional morality, no matter how long her journey lasts. Because of this, "concealment and the urge to self-destruction become the motivating forces" (Stump 30) that propel her on her lonely path. Her nomadic lifestyle inevitably arouses suspicion, and this, coupled with the stigma of her "sin," makes it impossible for the Wandering Woman to return to her former life. This increases both her isolation and her desperation, and she becomes convinced that her error is so heinous that reconciliation is impossible. Unlike many heroes of the bildungsroman, the Wandering Woman never experiences a sense of fun or adventure. Instead, the unrelenting privation and the pervading fear that her secret will eventually be revealed ensures that her wandering will be interminable.

Russell Goldfarb, author of *Sexual Repression in Victorian Literature*, has impressively analyzed the situation of women in the nineteenth century. He says,

> The Victorian woman became a living embodiment of sexual sanctions. She was perhaps more alienated from her own sexuality than any man because she had a constant role to play as moral guardian of her society, her relations, and her home. She stabilized the Victorian family, which was the single most important unit in preserving the order of nineteenth century England. To help support her in a difficult and important role, society exaggerated her virtues and developed codes

of behavior to protect those virtues. The aggregate of those codes defines Victorian prudery. (41)

Sue Bridehead of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* suffers the effects of this prudery perhaps more than any other female character in Victorian literature. Although she is apparently sexually frigid, Sue has been able to endure Jude's physical attentions, and has become a loving, caring mother to their children. Ironically, her lack of interest in sex is exactly the type of attitude many Victorians endorsed as "proper." Sue, who wants to rearrange her Bible to suit her tastes, who wants to have the freedom to own and appreciate "pagan" art, and who views the idea of a marriage that lasts "till death do them part" as absurd, is the embodiment of the New Woman. Yet, she is also a Wandering Woman because her refusal to live according to society's rules forces her expulsion from "polite" company. The death of her children and her penitent return to Phillotson are a harsh warning that women should not try to break the "rules" or to deviate from propriety's strictures, no matter how limiting and rigid they may be.

Deborah Anna Logan, author of *Fallenness in Victorian Women's Writing*, observed that women clearly suffered from the "sexual double standard, which demanded female chastity (a 'moral' standard) while promoting the tradition of male sexual activity prior to marriage as necessary to men's health" (18). Not only did women have to adhere to this idea, they were prevented from knowing about sexuality because of the pervasive idea that "sexual ignorance in women [protected] their sexual innocence, and the less women [knew] about the taboo subject of sex the purer they [would] remain" (18). Wandering Women, particularly if they fall into the child-woman variant of the paradigm

like Jane Eyre and Little Nell, suffer because of this idea. As Mark Spilka contends, they also suffer because of the persistent demand that "women [take] on moral and religious roles formerly assigned to churchly figures: mothers and sisters were seen as saints and angels, vessels of spiritual perfection, guardians of religious and moral certitudes which flourished nowhere else" (Cox 167). This is, indeed, a tall order for a mere mortal to maintain, and it seems almost inevitable that women would be unable to fulfill it. It is little wonder, therefore, that Victorian writers manifested this anxiety in their texts and sent so many of their female characters on the path of the Wandering Woman.

Sexuality, whether it has been expressed or not, is the stigmatizing force that drives the Wandering Woman to engage in her endless movement. This goes against the ideal of passivity in women, which was a quality Victorians both admired and hoped to cultivate in females. Wandering Women cannot afford to be passive because they have no one to protect them from the unbearable stigma they face. This is ironic since succumbing to the physicality of their being renders women human. However, this works against the Victorian notion that women were "angels" and therefore, somehow not mortal. This suggests the troubling possibility that women may indeed be sexual beings who need and desire the ability and opportunity to step out of the traditional role of keeper of the hearth and home. In fact, "far from celebrating her role of wife-mother [the Victorian woman] often seemed to suffer it and, at the same time, do her best to go beyond it towards greater freedom of action" (Basch 269). This means that many women are not content with merely living for and serving others. It also means that the sexual mores of the nineteenth century were a danger to women because they prevented them

both from knowing about and fully celebrating their sexuality in any way that fell outside the perimeters of "acceptable" behavior. Therefore, "the home for the nineteenth century may have been a refuge, a place of peace, but it was also in many ways, a prison, a place of crippling fear and suffering, that inflicted permanent damage on its inmates" (Trudgill 64). The Wandering Woman suffers "permanent damage" to her reputation, as well as to her emotional welfare, because she is unable to conform to archaic, unrealistic modes of behavior that are almost impossible to live up to. The story of the Wandering Woman is not, then, a type of coming of age story, but is, rather, the story of the end of an age. Viewing characters as Wandering Women is not a means of merely categorizing them, but is instead an attempt to more fully understand some of the anxieties brought on by the changes of the Victorian age.

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have limited opportunities. Wandering Women always carry a stigma because of their "illicit" sexual relationship, are isolated because of this, and never experience a sense of fun or adventure during their journey. The Wandering Woman suffers permanent damage to her reputation, as well as to her emotional welfare, because she has been unable to conform to archaic, unrealistic modes of behavior. Her story is not, then, a type of coming of age story, but is, rather, the story of the end of an age.