Redefining Womanhood: The New Woman and The Doll/Man-Woman Dichotomy in Late Victorian Literature

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the New Woman's struggle to find a place within a society that could not entertain the concept of independent femininity. To Victorians, to be female was to be dependent, and therefore the idea of a woman who chose self-sufficiency over marriage was baffling. Period authors struggled to reconcile this enigmatic figure in their works, but developing endings proved difficult. Many writers married off their heroines to men who required them to compromise traits that made the women problematic—traits such as independence or a desire to know oneself beyond one's role as wife or mother. Heroines who refused to suppress these aspects were rejected from society, existing as pitiful, isolated figures.

A study of New Women heroines in three works—George Egerton's "The Regeneration of Two," Grant Allen's *The Type-Writer Girl*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*—reveals that the primary concern for many women was losing one's own identity through marriage. When we consider Victorian femininity, we often think of the Angel in the House/Fallen Woman trope, which divides women into two categories: the virtuous wife and the corrupted whore; there is no place for women existing outside of this bifurcation. Yet these are not the actual but merely the perceived struggle at the heart of womanhood. Rather, the true choice for women was either marriage and sublimation of self, or self-actualization through financial independence. Because of this dichotomous understanding of femininity, women could choose only one role—either wife and mother, or "odd woman." Victorian society could not imagine the role of "working wife" or "working mother" because such roles blurred sex distinctions to an unfathomable degree. The New Woman

brought to light the true crisis affecting women for centuries, namely that to be a part of acceptable society, a woman must sacrifice the most important part of herself—not her virtue, but her individuality. As she became an increasingly acceptable pop culture image, the figure of the New Woman functioned as a gateway to an acceptable alternative role for women.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION 1

II. CHAPTER II: TWO HARPS IN HARMONY: EGERTON'S NEW MAN, NEW WOMAN, AND A NEW MARRIAGE IN "THE REGENERATION OF TWO" 15

III. CHAPTER III: THE AMBIGUOUSLY-GENDERED NEW WOMAN: GENDER FLEXIBILITY WITHIN MARRIAGE IN STOKER'S *DRACULA* 35

IV. CHAPTER IV: IN SEARCH OF THE "NEW MAN": REFIGURING MARRIAGE IN GRANT ALLEN'S *THE TYPE-WRITER GIRL* 57

V. CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION 73

VI. WORKS CITED 76

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

My thesis deals with the figure of the New Woman in late Victorian England. The New Woman was a literary construct of the 1880s and 1890s that represented both feminists' hopes for what women could become, as well as society's fears of how liberation might corrupt women and destroy society. Chris Willis has noted that despite the various transmutations this construct underwent during the fin-de-siècle, few authors were successful in writing happy romantic endings for their New Woman heroines—endings that neither leave the heroine isolated, nor require her to sacrifice her independence.[1] I posit this failure stems from the inability of Victorians to re-envision marriage as a union that could accommodate a new femininity. With such decidedly demarcated gender roles, the conception of marriage was too inflexible to allow for the emerging gender flexibility the New Woman introduced. A New Woman heroine could not remain progressive if she subordinated herself to her husband, yet subordination was central to Victorian marriage. As a result, even if a writer created a New Man for his or her heroine, few writers could imagine what this new union would look like. Just as society initially had no place for the New Woman, it also had no place for the "New Marriage" that she sought to bring about.

The family was the foundation of Victorian society, and women were charged with preserving this unit through purity, sweetness, patience, and morality. Wives were

[1] See "'Heaven Defend Me from Political or Highly-Educated Women!': Packaging the New Woman for Mass Consumption."

responsible for creating sanctuaries for their hard-working husbands, places of respite where men could recharge before returning to the whirlwind of trade, industrialization, and burgeoning globalization. The business world was a dirty, treacherous place that depleted men, and their wives were dutifully called on to restore them before sending them out into the world again (Black LI). On the practical side, women were also managers, superintending the resources their spouses earned by regulating servants, budgeting, and maintaining a certain station and quality of life (Black 96). Further, specific values needed to be imparted to children so that they knew their place in the world, and this, too, was a mother's job. British imperialism was justified by emphasizing the civilizing force of British rule in savage places; thus, boys needed to be brought up understanding their role in upholding and expanding the British Empire, while girls needed to be groomed to become the gentle wives who would inspire and cultivate the morality that legitimized imperialism (Ledger 67).

The highest standard Victorian women could aspire to was that of the Angel in the House—the ultimate wife and mother. While Victorians viewed women as delicate, innocent, and vulnerable, it was also believed that such women were the lynchpin in English society; women were inherently designed for marriage, which held society together (Hartnell 466). Yet as the Nineteenth Century closed, more and more women were remaining unmarried. Due to wars abroad and colonialism, many British men were far from England as they expanded the empire (*Anarchy* 21). The dearth of marriageable men in Britain created a surplus of marriageable women, some of whom were unable to find husbands. Other women remained single because they chose not to marry. Marriage laws in the Nineteenth Century effectively denied women legal status as citizens: any

property women owned became their husband's property upon marriage and was retained by the husband in the rare case of divorce; any children born of the union became the husband's property; and women were denied the right to vote (Black XLII). In an ideal world, this seemed for the best. After all, it was the husband's duty to provide for his wife, and the husband, being the more educated of the two, would be better positioned to make decisions regarding their joint property. Further, being both educated and involved in society (through work, commerce, and trade), he would know best how to vote to represent himself and his mate politically. If the man of the house was the upstanding, faithful husband he should be, then his wife should be more than happy to cede herself to him in exchange for his protection and devotion.

The reality of marriage, however, did not always live up to this romanticized Victorian vision. No laws were in place to protect women from abusive husbands, nor were there laws to prevent a husband from squandering his family's money on drinking or gambling.[2] Further, the strict expectation of chastity to which women were held did not extend to men, and the rise of sexually transmitted diseases became a major concern for wives who both were infected by their husbands and bore infected infants (Nelson xi). It was not until 1857 that women could sue for divorce, and even then, very few divorces were granted to women. Further, if granted a divorce, a woman was left with no income or property, and was forced to forfeit her children to her husband (Black XLII). If a woman married and found her husband unsatisfactory, she had no practical remedy for her situation. For women, entering into marriage was both a necessity and a risk—one which some women could not bring themselves to take.

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[2] The lack of recourse for abused wives is central to Anne Brontë's 1848 novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and was an important aspect of John Stuart Mill's argument in his groundbreaking *On the Subjection of Women* of 1869.

As a result of women who were unable or unwilling to marry, a strange new figure emerged in Victorian society—that of "redundant" or "odd" women, a term applied to unmarried middle class females (*Anarchy* 21). In a society that defined masculinity largely by its ability to work and provide, and femininity by its dependence and necessity to be provided for, unmarried women created a crisis in the Victorian understanding of gender. These women had the same needs as other women—a need for food, clothing, and shelter—but they lacked a husband to provide for them. Unless their fathers or brothers were willing to support them, they were forced to support themselves. Further complicating the issue, these women were of a high enough class to be concerned with maintaining their gentility (20). While women had worked in Britain for centuries, it had always been women of lower classes who were working lower class jobs. However, redundant women needed genteel occupations. Few such positions were available to women; the position of governess was open to those women lucky enough to have some degree of education, as was the position of schoolteacher, but these were not easy jobs, nor were they without their own perils.

The Industrial Revolution created new jobs that had not yet been coded as either masculine or feminine and were thus open to both men and women. In particular, the typewriter opened new doors for women, largely due to advertising by manufacturers, which relied heavily on sex appeal to sell their product (Keep 405). As women poured into the workforce near the end of the century, society necessarily began questioning its conceptions of gender identity. Simultaneously, after centuries of writing about their inadequate position in society, women were finally beginning to organize and petition for certain rights. Feminists of the 1880s and 1890s were not, however, a cohesive group,

being divided into a handful of factions who each emphasized certain rights or ideals that they believed were the most important issues facing women (Nelson x). In 1894, Sarah Grand, one of the leading purity feminists—a group who advocated for male chastity and educating women concerning the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases—published the essay "The New Aspect of the Woman Question," wherein she explained that the aim of feminism was to fully develop the good in both women and men, and that woman should, with her superior morality, lead man to be better than what he had hitherto been. This new calling would require a "New Woman" who was up to such a task (142).

The writer Ouida, who wrote against many of the changes feminists promoted, first used the phrase "the New Woman" to refer to the incarnation of feminist ideals for womanhood, borrowing the term from a line in Grand's essay (Ouida 154). Once named, the idea of a forward-thinking, independent woman caught fire in the periodical press, which was split in their depiction of New Womanhood. Opponents of feminism mocked the construct mercilessly. In particular, magazines such as *Punch* published satiric cartoons depicting the New Woman as either an overly-masculine woman who (by contrast) feminizes the men around her, or as an unattractive spinster who snubs male companionship for the sake of books she barely understands[3]. Similarly, the *Pall Mall Gazette* was known for its depiction of feminist leaders as grim matrons who abused men for failing to meet absurd standards of behavior.[4] Overall, most antagonists of feminism never took these women very seriously; the message of Sydney Grundy's play *The New Woman* was that the cure for unruly women was a husband—a belief held by many of feminism's opponents (Nelson xiv).

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[3] "What It Will Soon Come To." *Punch* 24 Feb. 1894.
[4] "By an Unregenerate Male." *Pall Mall Gazette* 16 May. 1894.

The figure of the New Woman was swiftly adopted by mass market writers who took advantage of the New Woman's popularity to help boost their sales. While many of these writers did not have blatant political agendas, some critics argue that their fiction did transform the image of the New Woman as frumpy and awkward to youthful, competent, and sexy, and presented watered-down feminist views in a non-threatening way (Willis 64). New Woman fiction was a hot commodity, and writers soon streamlined her image to almost a checklist of characteristics: youthful; pretty; an avid bicycler; a graduate of Girton College (the first college in England to allow women to not only attend, but to actually take a degree); and in possession of secretarial skills such as typing and shorthand (Willis 54). The fictional New Woman was fun and exciting—she roamed cities alone, living a glamorous life of adventure and romance that most middle class women actually only dreamt of.

In truth, this romanticized presentation of working life was far from the reality most real New Women lived. As expected, many working women suffered discrimination and harassment at the hands of their employers (Keep 412). Further, most earned a bare subsistence. Women were able to enter the workforce largely because they were willing to work for significantly smaller wages than men, but as a result, many hardly made enough to feed and house themselves. The Victorian belief in family first led to laws that capped salaries and limited promotions for women in an effort to discourage women from abandoning marriage altogether, which, it was believed, they would do if able to live comfortably by their own means (Keep 411). Such a rejection of marriage, if it became widespread, would lead to the dissolution of the family and in turn undermine the foundation of society. Additionally, the virtue of women who worked alone with men all

day became suspect (Keep 416). Would these women seduce men from their faithful wives, destroying existing families as they refused to create new families of their own? How could working women fit into society? Was there a legitimate place for such women? Yet the reality of working life did not squelch the fun of fiction, and New Woman novels were all the rage, continuing far into the Edwardian Age, and, arguably, appearing in modified forms in such contemporary works as the Nancy Drew series.

Although the New Woman was enormously popular in the press from the 1880s until the beginning of the 1900s, no serious criticism addressed the vast body of New Woman literature written during this period until the publication of Ann Ardis' *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* in 1990, which was the first text to address these works as a distinct body of literature. That same year, Elaine Showalter published *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, which explores the changing perceptions of sexuality and gender identity at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Showalter argues that as the Nineteenth Century closed, gender roles throughout British society were fluctuating, causing enormous anxiety. Multiple movements collided during the fin de siècle, resulting in a crisis of sexual identity for many Victorians. Psychologists were delving into the human mind, and most frighteningly of all, into human sexuality. The assertion that women, like men, possessed sexual desires and were capable of sexual pleasure called into question the existence of the asexual Angel in the House. Characteristics, such as sexual desire, which were once coded as masculine, were suddenly both masculine and feminine (*Anarchy* 20). Into this gender confusion came the New Woman. How would women in the workforce change the Victorian family, the cornerstone of society? Would women choose working over lives as wives and mothers?

Would the New Woman serve as a better helpmate to men by being stronger, and thus further strengthening her husband and children? Or would she unsex men just as she herself was unsexed? Ultimately, Showalter's work explores the ways in which the New Woman defied placement in Victorian society by undercutting Victorian expectations concerning the basic desires of women.

Similarly, Sally Ledger has also explored the problematic placement of the New Woman in Victorian society, citing the non-unity of early feminists as one of the causes of this failure to create a niche for the working woman. The majority of early feminists still advocated that wifehood and motherhood were the best roles for women, and that women should only work if necessity dictated. Thus, even among feminists, the working woman was not completely accepted, serving as a figure of pity and desperation rather than one to be emulated. Ultimately, her ideal fate would be to give up New Womanhood for the comforts of family life (Ledger 9).

For many contemporary readers, this return of the New Woman to domesticity seems extremely conservative; her flight from independence into the protective arms of a husband seemingly undermines her feminism. As Willis has noted, some of these protagonists spend their entire story proving themselves superior to the male lead, only then to settle for an ill-suited marriage to him. Other heroines lose their men to more traditionally feminine women, and the most unfortunate commit suicide (Willis 56). It is curious that as ubiquitous as the figure of the New Woman was, writers, whether in support of or opposition to feminism, seemed unable to imagine a happy ending for her.

In chapter two, I will present a reading of George Egerton's 1894 short story "The Regeneration of Two," wherein Egerton presents a new dichotomy by which to

understand women—a dichotomy based not on society's perception of women, but on the actual experiences of middle-class women. She divides women into two categories—the "doll," a term she coined herself, and the "man-woman," a term applied to those feminists who rejected sexual intercourse as a way of boycotting marriage (Ledger 96). Dolls are those women theoretically poised to become the Angel in the House; they are uneducated, flirtatious, and bent on finding the wealthiest husband they can (Egerton 194). However, in order to be pleasing to suitors, they suppress their individuality, attempting to become the faceless, idealized wives they are taught that men want. Those women who resist this sublimation of self fall under the title of "man-woman," a derogatory term often used to describe the New Woman. These women sought to preserve their individuality, which they feared would be subsumed in marriage. In order to remain autonomous individuals, they resisted marriage, instead seeking education and careers—considered masculine endeavors—as a means both to financial independence and to self-actualization.

When Egerton's protagonist falls in love with a man, the doll/man-woman choice is the reality she is faced with; she can either choose to marry, thereby giving up the life she has created for herself, along with all of her personal interests, in order to adequately serve her husband, or she can deny herself the companionship and sexual gratification of a relationship in order to continue what has become her life's work—helping fallen women. Fortunately for the protagonist, her lover is an enlightened New Man who agrees to a free-love arrangement. Such an arrangement breaks the doll/man-woman dichotomy, allowing Fruen to have the companionship and sexual gratification of marriage, while not requiring her to sacrifice her roles beyond that of wife. Without a legal union, Fruen and

the poet are free to negotiate a relationship that meets the needs of both, and this negotiation breaks the bifurcation between wife and working woman. But it is only through this kind of honest discussion and acceptance, Egerton suggests, that the New Woman is able to fulfill her potential as wife and as fully-realized individual.

This search for the New Man is often the central tension of New Woman fiction, as women are torn between their desire for relationships and their inability to maintain personal independence in traditional marriages. Yet the New Man is an ill-defined figure. Often, as Elaine Showalter has noted, he is an artist, but this is not always the case (*Anarchy* 49). Many times he is also somehow disempowered, as in the case of characters such as *Jane Eyre*'s Rochester, who must be made nearly helpless in order to surrender authority to the protagonist. However, what is consistent with New Men figures is that they redefine relationships with their lovers in unique ways. These relationships are not based on traditional expectations of gender, but are personalized to meet the needs of the two individuals in the relationship without sacrificing the autonomy or individuality of either party. The New Man allows his lover to fall along the doll/man-woman spectrum rather than relegate her to one role at the exclusion of the other. Importantly, this conclusion relies on the protagonist's ability to find a New Man; without a mate who is willing to participate in a non-traditional relationship, no happy ending would be possible for the New Woman.

Chapter two will address Grant Allen's little-know novel *The Type-Writer Girl*, published in 1897. Allen's story follows New Woman Juliet Appleton—another woman caught in Egerton's doll/man-woman dichotomy—through her misadventures as a working woman in London. Juliet's narration is deceptively lighthearted, masking a

difficult existence made nigh impossible by her forced interaction with traditional Victorian men in a non-traditional setting—the workplace. Juliet's relationships with her coworkers and fellow anarchists illustrate the impossibility of marriage between a New Woman and a traditional Victorian man; each set of men that she encounters reduces her from fellow human to commodity, either through actively preventing her self-actualization, or through the distinct sexual threat that they pose to a young, single woman. Juliet's youthful desire to discover herself, combined with her inability to relate to her conservative coworkers, drives her toward the Man-Woman end of the spectrum. Although she admits her desire for romance, she continually rebuffs the overtures of the men around her, recognizing that to yoke herself with one of them would require her to suppress those things she loves most about herself—her curiosity, intellect, and sense of adventure. Because she refuses to be a doll, society automatically labels her a man-woman, continually denying her the male companionship she longs for.

Eventually Juliet meets Mr. Blank—whom she terms "Romeo"—a man who is the antithesis of the masculinity she has previously encountered in the text. Romeo appreciates Juliet's intelligence and encourages her on her path to self-actualization and independence. Further, while he is attracted to her, Romeo's romantic gestures are flattering in that they acknowledge Juliet's individuality and humanity, never reducing her to property in the way that traditional masculinity does; he views her as a partner in life rather than a servant. Their relationship is mutually beneficial, each encouraging and building up the other. Allen's text presents us with a model for what marriage should be—a relationship that fosters rather than stifles the independence and individuality of

both parties, but which is ultimately smothered by tradition, represented by Romeo's Angel in the House fiancé, Meta, and his obligations to her.

Just as tradition squelched anything too progressive—such as the relationship between Romeo and Juliet—society's expectations of decorum inhibited exploration of alternative male/female relationships, which will be the subject of Chapter 4. As much as critics belittled the New Woman, either by romanticizing her or by completely dismissing her, the construct had an interesting way of revealing some of society's insecurities and questions about itself; Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula* explores many of these very questions. Most current criticism labels Mina as "New Woman-like," arguing that she adopts the best traits of both the New Woman and the Angel in the House. But to understand the function of the New Woman in Stoker's text requires more than merely measuring the degree of her feminism; we must expand our focus from the female characters to include the male as well.

Perhaps the most interesting man in the novel is Jonathan Harker. While Lucy and Mina explore their sexuality through their encounters with Dracula, most of the male characters remain upstanding Victorian gentlemen, only revealing any sexual desire through their marriage proposals to Lucy. Yet Jonathan investigates his own sexuality as thoroughly as do the women; just as the women's sexuality is awakened by Dracula, so, too, is Jonathan's desire for experimentation. Jonathan is only able to get in touch with his feminine side because his wife, Mina, is very much in touch with her masculine side. Her ability to usurp the role of husband from her feminized mate preserves the ever-important Victorian family throughout the text, no matter the biological sex and assumed gender of the "husband" and "wife."

Although it is still largely a conservative relationship, the Harkers' marriage introduces a flexibility wherein each partner takes on the responsibilities he or she is best equipped to handle, regardless of his or her biological sex. While Jonathan is not truly a New Man, the way he embraces this progressive versatility is a step away from traditional masculinity and marriage toward the kind of relationship the New Woman seeks. Similarly, this gender flexibility allows Mina to develop herself in ways unavailable to the traditional Victorian wife. While Mina is still caught in the Angel/Fallen Woman dichotomy, with the novel's male characters battling Dracula for control of her sexuality, her gender ambivalence provides her greater freedom in Egerton's doll/man-woman dichotomy, allowing Mina to be the doting wife in one scene, but the educated, working woman in the next. This movement is possible because of Jonathan's willingness to fluctuate between masculine and feminine responsibilities as well.

A study of New Woman fiction indicates that happy romantic endings for New Woman heroines were inconceivable for the contemporary Victorian audience because such endings violated the binary-based understanding of gender underpinning fin-de-siècle culture. In turn, such a failure exposes a mislabeling of the conflicts central to Victorian womanhood; while on the surface Victorians concerned themselves with the Angel/Fallen Woman dichotomy, the actual choice before women was not to be chaste or fallen, but rather to be self-sufficient or dependent. Self-sufficiency brought with it freedom, but also self-imposed isolation, whereas dependency provided companionship and a family, while requiring censorship of the self. Egerton's piece illustrates that the dichotomy the Victorians attempted to use to understand women actually had little to do

with the significant life choices available to women at the time—an idea supported by the recurrence of Egerton's dichotomy in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Grant Allen's *The Type-Writer Girl.* It was this black/white understanding of masculinity and femininity and the relationship between the two that made it impossible for Victorian society to accept the more gender-flexible, equal partnership that the New Woman demanded. Only through a more complex understanding of femininity—through converting the doll/man-woman dichotomy to a continuum—could a writer create a believable happy ending for the New Woman.

Chapter II

TWO HARPS IN HARMONY: EGERTON'S NEW MAN, NEW WOMAN, AND A NEW MARRIAGE IN "THE REGENERATION OF TWO"

"I belong body and soul to myself; I will live as I choose, seek joy as I choose, carve the way of my life as I will" (Egerton 241).

George Egerton's 1893 short story collection, *Keynotes*, was a phenomenal success. In fact, it proved so successful that publishers John Lane and Elkin Mathews named their new line of New Woman fiction after her collection, as her work had become synonymous with the New Woman and feminist ideals. However, her second collection, *Discords*, was received much less favorably, and although she remained a literary staple, none of her subsequent collections, novels, or plays ever met the same success as her first effort. By the 1930s, she had largely fallen out of favor; by 1948, critics like Ruth Middlebrook would assert that Egerton's contemporaries "overestimated her artistic propensities," and their praise of Egerton she found "humorlessly exaggerative" and "absurd" (145).

Interest in Egerton's work was revived principally by the publication of Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, wherein she emphasized the importance of Egerton's work. Since then, scholarship on Egerton has grown immensely, with many labeling her as "proto-modern" largely because of her episodic rather that linear plots and the interiority of her narratives. The realism which she portrayed through her protagonists is celebrated by critics such as A.R. Cunningham, who claims that Egerton's stories paved the way for "a more realistic characterization of women in fiction to match their increasing social emancipation" (186). By far, most critics hail her open discussion of

female sexuality,[5] whether through her exploration of elaborate fantasies or the active pursuit of actual encounters; Egerton's work made matter-of-fact the notion that women could be motivated by sexual desire as readily as men could be. This frankness created a new and interesting dynamic between Egerton's female characters and the male characters who seek but often fail to understand them.

"The Regeneration of Two" is the last story in Egerton's second short story collection, *Discords*. The story revolves around two unnamed characters, a woman known only as "Freun"—or "madam"—and the wandering poet she meets. During their initial encounter, both mourn how society has constructed marriage so that it makes love within marriage almost an impossibility. To counter society's version of marriage, Fruen and the poet must construct their own society that will allow them to define their relationship on their own terms. It is only by pursuing a purpose beyond her lover—a notion contradictory to the Victorian ideal of the Angel in the House, who lived solely to please her husband—that Fruen is able to become those things the poet most desires in a wife, and it is only by not becoming a wife (in the legal sense) that Fruen is able to maintain the alternative society she creates. It is by transcending society that both Fruen and the poet are able to find fulfillment in a romantic relationship.

It was the Romantic poets Wordsworth and Coleridge who in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* defined the poet as a sort of prophet, a man in the world but not of it. The poet was intended to bring a special knowledge to humankind, to make the familiar seem new so as to reveal special truths to the reader (Wordsworth 596). To touch his audience,

[5] See Maria Dolores Herrero Granado's "George Egerton's "Wedlock": Unlocking Closed Doors, Searching for Key of One's Own" and Sally Ledger's *The New Woman* for discussions of how Egerton broke with traditional presentations of femininity as well as how she departed from traditionally feminine writing forms.

the poet must live between two worlds; he must be familiar enough with society to understand its inner workings, yet outside of society enough that he can objectively critique what he finds therein. Such is the role of the poet in "The Regeneration of Two." Like so many prophets, his message is a call for drastic cultural change; specifically, his message regards the rites surrounding courting, marriage, and sex. However, his comprehension of society's problems is incomplete until he meets Fruen. The poet presents the masculine side of the situation, but he must encounter the feminine side, too, before he—or the reader—can truly comprehend society's problems and pose viable solutions; a complete understanding can only be had by the New Man and New Woman working in tandem. Their analysis of marriage reveals volumes about the disjuncture between what Victorians thought marriage should be and the reality of what marriage was, both for women and for men.

The poet is critical of women, who he believes are playing a passive role in the overall corruption of society. He declares, "it is women, not men, who are the greatest bar to progress the world holds" (Egerton 197). His first criticism is that women are rejecting the important role of motherhood. He declares that in an ideal world, "Salvation lies with the women and the new race they are to mother." The current rulers of the world are politicians and religious men. Motivated by power and money, they breed strife by fashioning dictates that protect their own power, make themselves richer, and constrain the rest of mankind. Constraint leads to frustration, dissatisfaction, and violence, as well as the unequal relationship between men and women. But through motherhood, women have the power to change society. Uncorrupted, women are motivated by love and the desire to nurture. In the hands of such women, the world would look very different

because good mothers would raise loving, nurturing children who would be motivated by kindness and generosity (192). But if women continue rejecting motherhood, then there will be no salvation for anyone; no new race will rise up to correct society's faults.

Even worse, women themselves have become contaminated, rejecting the idea of marriage for love and instead using marriage as a means to accrue power and wealth for themselves, just as corrupt male leaders do. The poet explains that he sought a mate for himself, but was unsuccessful:

> I found no woman, to whom, if I had said: "Love is a divine gift, it is the strength of the game of life! Come with me, work with me, be the mother of my children to come, let us try to live…in like freedom for the development of the best in each of us," who would have placed her hand in mine…sure of herself. (193)

The poet seeks a wife for the sake of companionship and mutual self-development. He longs for a woman who will nurture the best in him, just as he will nurture the best in her. Such a relationship is established by mutual respect and a desire for the company of one's partner, yet the women he encounters marry for the very reasons he decries; marriage is to them as much a commercial enterprise as it is to men.

The poet divides women not into the traditional Angel/Fallen Woman dichotomy, but introduces a new dichotomy of the "man-woman" and the "doll." The "man-woman" refers to women who refuse to marry and claim to have no sexual desire. Because the man-woman rejects marriage altogether, the poet spends less time describing her, yet her faults are important to understanding the way that marriage fails within the poet's society. While the doll makes sexual love everything, the man-woman makes sexual love nothing.

The doll, through manipulation, raises the value of her sexuality, which she then sells for baubles, making actual affection worth far less than trinkets (190). But by completely denying her sexuality, the man-woman suppresses her ability to love a man at all and makes motherhood impossible; she refuses to be either wife or mother (197). As a result, the poet perceives her to be absent of affection, an unnatural a creature.

Dolls are motivated, like political and religious leaders, by their love of power. They use their sexuality to manipulate men; manipulation is the only way they know how to interact with the opposite sex, and they are incapable of interaction based on love. Further, dolls are exceptionally vain, conniving to find the wealthiest husband they can, selling themselves in marriage to "the one who can pay the most for trappings to set her off" (104). Because beauty equates to power, such women reject motherhood, afraid of losing their figures and thereby the sexual power they hold over men. To the poet, dolls are all image with no substance, merely a "mask with sawdust at the back of it" (193).

The poet explains that marriage, as it is practiced by dolls leads to "a heart robbed of all healthy feelings by false conceptions, bad conscience, and a futile code of morality" (189). He describes courting as a literal marriage market where "I was surrounded by women; some just crossed girlhood, some alluring in the ripeness of womanhood, some old." The variance in age suggests that the struggle to find a husband remains the same regardless of age and experience; older women play the same games and use the same tactics to win men that younger women do. Marriage becomes the universal purpose of womanhood, both in youth and in old age, and women are as invested in the business side of marriage as are men; the poet describes how women in the market unsettle him as they slip their hands "under my arm or searc[h] my pockets" to feel the depth of his wealth

rather than the depth of his soul (195). Marriage becomes nothing more than a game of posturing, prinking, and primping as a means to gaining wealth and power.

But Fruen presents another side to the man-woman/doll dichotomy, acknowledging that such a dichotomy does indeed exist, but calling into question the role men play in creating both types of women. Fruen asserts that the man-woman is a natural result of the way in which men respond to women. For much of the Victorian period, the idea of female sexuality or sexual pleasure was disputed. Female innocence was admired, and intercourse was understood as something women withstood in order to please their husbands and become mothers (*Anarchy* 20). Women who expressed sexual desire were perceived as unnatural, much as Lucy Westenra of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was monstrous for her insatiable lust expressed in her wish to marry three men at once. Fruen argues that forcing women to ignore their desires for so long has resulted in a monster of the opposite kind:

> and the desexualized half man, with a pride in the absence of sex feeling, reckoning it as the sublimest virtue to have none, what is she but the outcome of centuries of patient repression? Repress and repress—how many generations has it gone on? You must expect some return for it. (199)

Years of sexual repression have made some women uncomfortable with their own sexuality, Fruen explains, which they must deny for fear of being unfeminine or becoming corrupted, for sexual desire, if not kept in check, could easily transform a chaste woman into a fallen woman, with no harm befalling her male sexual partner (199). Sexual desire is not only unfeminine, but potentially dangerous for Victorian women. The

Victorian binary understanding of acceptable women—the Angel in the House and those aspiring to be Angels—and unacceptable women leaves no place for mistakes. Even fallen women who are portrayed as victims of unregenerate male predation cannot successfully rejoin society, but instead suffer death or are banished to colonies.[6] Untamed sexual desire leads to a woman's doom.

But beyond mere repression, there is some logic in the denial of sexuality, for society dictates that female sexuality must be contained within marriage. Certain factions of feminists advocated rejecting marriage on the basis of three arguments:[7] first, marriage as it was constructed by law was inherently unfair to women, requiring complete servitude to men who were often unkind masters. Because women were poorly educated, they often chose bad husbands and were bound in miserable marriages. Second, these feminists regarded sexual intercourse as demeaning, but also risky; until men were willing to remain faithful to their wives, intercourse was likely to lead to deadly disease and diseased offspring.[8] And finally, marriage required a woman to put her husband's needs above her own (*Anarchy* 22). To be a good wife, a woman must consider her own desires only after those of her husband and children, impeding the self-actualization that feminists advocated.

Just as the man-woman is a result of the way men treat women, so, too, is the doll. After hearing his criticism of women, Fruen asks the poet,

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[6] Consider the fate of Charles Dickens' Nancy from *Oliver Twist* or Little Em'ly of *David Copperfield* as prime examples.

[7] For an in-depth analysis of these arguments, see Ledger's *The New Woman*.

[8] Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins,* published in 1893, was one of the first novels to directly address venereal disease. Its most prominent themes are the issues of male chastity and the dangers posed by male promiscuity.

> And don't you think…that you are rather hard on—us dolls? …You are hard on us…for perhaps we are merely the playthings of circumstances…We have been taught to shrink from the *honest* expression of our wants and feelings as violations of modesty, or at least good taste. (Egerton 198, italics mine)

Dolls are not deceptive by nature, Fruen explains, but are made to be so against their natural desires. Women, she argues, resort to dishonesty out of desperation (199). If women are dependent on men to sustain them, and men choose only pleasing women, then it is to be expected that women will go to whatever lengths are necessary to be deemed pleasing, whether that requires wearing a corset and makeup,[9] or devoting themselves to a husband who promises to provide for and protect them. She takes the poet's complaint about women's concern with their appearance and flips it into a complaint against men's desire for certain appearances—"And our powder and our paints!" she demands. "Aren't they rather tributes to the decay of chivalry in your own sex? It's not to woman but to pretty woman man pays deference" (199). Dolls, Fruen asserts, develop only as an act of self-preservation, the result of a society that actively keeps women dependent on masters who may or may not actually choose to care for them.

And regarding children, she continues, both dolls and the man-woman resist motherhood for good reasons: dolls must maintain their looks, especially their figures,

[9] It is interesting to note the way in which corsets and makeup become emblematic of both deception and repression. In his quest for a worthy mate, the poet longs "to probe under the surface of her 'makeup'…to get at the woman under that infernal corset" (188). Fruen's corset "press[es] her like an iron hand; she is shamed to the depths of her soul" after realizing that she has participated in the corrupt society the poet lambasts (196). Importantly, once Fruen rejects her corset, she becomes larger, stronger, and more capable, as well as more desirable (244).

since it is their looks which are their greatest source of power—a source of power they do not wish to cede to an infant who will drain their energy and further constrain their lives, as well as permanently transform their bodies (199). As for the man-woman, she lives for self-edification, not the edification of children.[10] The man-woman seeks self-actualization, while motherhood as defined by society would require the man-woman to make her husband and children the sole focus of her life (199). The doll and the man-woman are still very much at the whim of men, and each seeks a degree of control over her own life, dolls through their beauty and the man-woman through knowledge. Children are simply another impediment to these women claiming a modicum of control over their lives.

But the most important impediment to happy marriages is not the construction of either the doll or the man-woman, but the development of a deeply-conflicted female nature. The central tension in this story derives from the female characters' desire for companionship, children, and a sense of "home," which society restricts to married women only. However, marriage is confinement for the women in the text. Egerton's female characters are torn between their longing for companionship and motherhood, and the freedom they must sacrifice to have these things:

> Perhaps we too have our lonely hours, hours in which we ask ourselves what it is we need to complete us? Perhaps we seek a key to the enigma of our own natures, we try man after man to see if he hold it. …One layer in us reverts instinctively to the time when we were just the child-bearing

[10] A good example of the man-woman is the governess Miss Prism, from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Miss Prism is so engrossed in her own writing that she mislays the infant she is caring for, placing her manuscript in the pram in place of young Jack/Earnest, thereby literally displacing motherhood for self-actualization.

> half of humanity and no more, waging war with the new layers that go to make up the fragile latter-day product with the disinclination to burden itself with motherhood. (198)

Under their powders and fine clothes, beyond their books and rational dress, Egerton's women simply want to reclaim what she and the poet agree women were born to be—loving, genuine, and maternal. Fruen adheres to a surprisingly conservative understanding of femininity; it is relationship between men and women—a relationship that leads to exploitation on the part of both parties—that needs reform. For Fruen, financial independence allows women to choose makes who will bring them companionship, family, and a home. But to gain the things that these women yearn for, how much of their personal freedom must they sacrifice? And is such a sacrifice worthwhile? Fruen suggests that it is not, for sadly, while marriage is the only socially acceptable avenue to these goals, a husband does not necessarily guarantee those things the women seek. Because women feel the need to suppress their true selves in order to attract men, and because men feel cynical regarding female deception, people are not searching for love in marriage. Yet love is the only thing that will assure women find the companionship, sense of home, and even the sexual gratification that they seek.

Fruen confesses to her maid, Aagot, that her marriage was mostly dissatisfying: "I married without understanding anything about it; I never cared for the master. He just came when I was in one of my affectible [sic] moods, and I was too ignorant to understand why I felt like that" (168). Nothing in her upbringing prepares her to choose a proper mate nor to be a wife, and Fruen marries with hopes that are only ever disappointed, partially because, kept ignorant by society, she does not know what to

reasonably expect from marriage, and partially because she never knows her husband as anything more than a kindly master; between them there exists no deeper affection. "He was good to me, without understanding that I had anything more in me," she says of her husband (168). But there are unplumbed depths to Fruen's soul, and places in her heart untouched by mere kindness; she says, "I am like a harp that has lain away until the strings are frayed, and no one ever called out its deepest music" (170). Despite sharing what should be the most intimate relationship of their lives, neither husband nor wife possesses the degree of understanding or sympathy for the other that Egerton's women—and the poet—seek. Fruen's marriage is a dismal failure, leaving her without companionship or children, and certainly without a home. Her marriage is the result of the very lack of love that the poet describes. Her account reveals that this lack of love is not for want of ability or desire to love, but for ignorance of what should be the proper relationship between men and women. Fruen's relationship with her husband was exactly what society dictated it should be, yet it left her feeling terribly dissatisfied.

Fruen is not alone in her disenchanted view of marriage; her maid, Aagot, also struggles with trying to meet her own needs without losing something of herself. Aagot is resistant to the idea of marriage, explaining that she does not want a husband because the only man she ever loved died many years before, shortly after proposing. When she decides to marry the widower of her late cousin, Fruen asks her if she will be satisfied marrying him. Aagot responds, "I think so, Fruen; I don't want a husband—I should hate it. …I just want…children." She explains that "[the widower] is a cripple, he got a stroke, and he has three little children. I love the children…and you see—he is quite helpless" (170).

A helpless husband is the best kind for Aagot. In a conventional marriage, Aagot would be forced to cede control of her life to her husband. However, the man she is marrying is incapable of ruling her, leaving her with her personal autonomy intact; in fact, an interesting role reversal will occur wherein the husband will become dependent on the wife as protector and provider. Additionally, since the cripple is "quite helpless," it can be assumed that Aagot will not be required to have intercourse with him, which allows her to remain faithful to the memory of the man she actually did love. Fruen says of sex that "[i]t's all horrid unless one has what some one calls 'the white fire of love' to burn out the animalism, to consecrate it in a way" (170). By marrying an incapable cripple, Aagot is spared this "animalism" and finds an alternative way to become a mother without subjugating herself as a wife or sexual partner. Yet while Aagot is able to cobble together the home and children she longs for without sacrificing her personal freedom, her solution is imperfect because she is still denied the companionship of the husband she longs for. Aagot's marriage becomes like any other marriage the poet despises—a deal brokered on what each partner can offer the other; Aagot can take care of the cripple, and he will give her the children she desires, but there is still no affection or companionship within this marriage.

While society dictates that a wife's whole existence should be tied up in her husband, in practice such forced devotion drives love from marriage. Fruen explains that "philanthropy is a masculine attribute; you don't find woman as a rule lavish her affections on man in the abstract. Love narrows rather than broadens her" because traditional marriage requires complete devotion to a husband to the exclusion of all else (166). It is not that women are naturally less philanthropic than men, but that society

requires women to limit the focus of their philanthropy to those within the domestic sphere, i.e., a woman's immediate family. Reflecting on this idolatrous relationship, Fruen complains that "she has seen too many marriages not to know that every woman . . . chafes at the narrowness of the horizon that is simply confined to attending to one man's needs" (248). Such devotion, while lauded by society, drains the vigor from Fruen's life; at the story's outset, Fruen is "a disillusioned woman of the world" who wants to scream with frustration and boredom (165). Having just lost her husband, her life is now meaningless and empty. Such emptiness plays upon her physically, as she possesses "a look of delicate strength" with a "bored expression," and "her skin has an anæmic tinge, and…looks shriveled like a waxen flower with the first touch of wilting over it" (164). Fruen's "delicate strength" is a strength taxed by severe ennui, and her youthful appearance is marred by the premature conclusion of her life's purpose. However, remarriage, which would give her life a new purpose, will simply repeat the dissatisfying relationship that left her empty before. Recognizing the proprietary nature of marriage, Fruen, after her husband's death, felt "a fierce inward whisper of exultant joy that I belonged to myself again" (168). She is not interested in marrying a second time and reflects that she enjoys the company of young men "until they want to be more than a pastime; then, if they persist, I hate them. I am jealous of myself." Fruen does not want to serve anyone else, but wants to do something meaningful to her, declaring, "I *want something for myself!*" (167). Even if she is to love another man, she will love him at the expense of possessing herself, something she is unwilling to do. However, having spent most of her life devoted to one man, she now does not know where to seek a new life's

purpose. She cannot return to what she has just escaped, but she does not know what else there is in life; thus she is caught in a frustrating bind.

The only happy "marriage" in the text is the union between the poet and Fruen, and it is not a traditional nor socially-sanctioned marriage at all. Both feel confined by society's labels and mandates for relationships. While they love each other deeply, they fear that submitting to the roles they are assigned as husband and wife will destroy the love they have for one another, and therefore they reject legal union in favor of a freer arrangement that will allow them to define their own roles. Two aspects of this free arrangement make the poet's and Fruen's relationship "new." First, through their relationship they actively seek to correct the power imbalance inherent in traditional marriage; because Fruen has her own income, she the poet's equal rather than his subordinate. Second, both parties are able to retain individual autonomy in this relationship; Fruen maintains her role as the head of a shelter for fallen women, and the poet is free to continue wandering Norway as he seeks inspiration. Maintaining their own interests is the only way that either man or woman will be able to please both self and partner.

After his encounter with dolls, who marry men only for their money, the poet might well be wary of women. However, when he encounters Fruen for the second time, he realizes painfully that "he is dependent on his pen, on his sheaves of verse that look so bonny in the growing and bear so little corn for daily bread;" his meager and uncertain income makes him loath to propose as he feels he has nothing to offer a wife (237). In contrast, Fruen has begun her own business and is wealthy enough that bachelors in the neighborhood frequently stop by "with a keen appreciation of the comfortable income of

the lonely Frue" (211). This reversal in wealth is non-traditional and liberating for both: the poet knows that whatever his relationship with Fruen, she enters into it for love of him rather than for his material offerings, and Fruen's ability to support herself gives her the power to choose a companion rather than being forced to accept the best provider regardless of compatibility. Since neither partner is financially dependent on the other—each is responsible for his or her own needs—both man and woman assess each other using a new standard of measure; instead of assessing the poet's income, Fruen listens to his life's story. As he speaks, "she is weighing her life as it is, as it may be, with possible sorrows and joy deliberately in the balance, and…she chooses her course" based on the man she find the poet to be (245). She selects him based on his character, choosing to share her life with him because what he adds to her life outweighs the emotional strain of a relationship. Such a choice is only made possible because other factors, which society deems more important than love, have been removed from the prospect of choosing a mate; since the issue of money is made irrelevant, man and woman are freed to pursue a relationship built on mutual attraction and affection, on mutual respect and love.

While Fruen "knows that marriage with him will bring her a measure of happiness such as she has never held before…she is not willing to go into old-fashioned bondage" (248). As he is recovering from illness, Fruen tells the poet, "I belong body and soul to myself; I will live as I choose, seek joy as I choose, carve the way of my life as I will" (241). But according to law and custom, Fruen will be forced to surrender her own will to that of the poet if they marry. Yet without the law to bind her to his will, she retains the power to dictate her life for herself.

Importantly, a more liberal arrangement will allow her to continue with what has become her life's purpose—providing work and shelter for fallen women. In her mission "she has found scope for the varied sides of her nature" (212). And no matter how exhausting her service to these women might be, "[t]here is a sense of power in directing it…[and] [s]he is justly proud of her success" (209). Her life's work has healed her; whereas she was sickly and weak when merely a wife, she is now "stronger and bonnier each time" the villagers see her (205). In fact, she is so changed after finding a mission for herself that the poet fails to recognize her when they are first reunited. When she reveals her identity to him, he exclaims, shocked, "but, dear lady, I cannot stop looking at you, it is so strange. You have grown, I believe. Your bust is fuller, your hips….You look so strong, so capable . . . it is wonderful—*I begin to fear you!*" (244). The poet recognizes that this new purpose is good for Fruen, making her a healthier, happier individual. Further, he reflects to himself that he is proud of what she has become—his dream woman come to life. Yet these changes leave him fearful, for he recognizes, just as Fruen does of herself, that "no love will ever satisfy her wholly; it will never be more than one note" in her life (246). Both Fruen and the poet realize that for her to remain the woman she has become—the wonderful, empowered woman the poet now adores—she must remain attached to this other aspect of her existence that gives her life direction and meaning. Marriage to the poet and the requisite forfeiture of her mission would destroy what the poet loves most about Fruen.

It is not Fruen's relationship with the poet, but her work with the fallen women of her community that fulfills her womanly desires for children and a home. The unwed mothers and their children act as Fruen's children; during Christmas, Fruen reflects that

"[t]here will be no regular work until the New Year has gone, and it is just at such times her people need looking after" because it is during periods of inactivity that their lives are hardest to bear and temptation to their old lives is strongest (216). To counteract this temptation, Fruen acts as a mother, guiding the fallen women on the morally-upright path. It is Fruen's "children" and the community she has constructed that create a sense of "home" as well. This is a safe place where vulnerable people find protection; in fact, Fruen physically expells a man from the grounds when he harasses the first girl that she takes in (205). Here, the weary find rest. As this makeshift family gathers for Christmas celebrations, Fruen's "heart warms as she looks round her big kitchen, filled with people all dependent on her in some way, and she steps forward into the light to be greeted by the cooing of the children" (215). Although highly unorthodox, Fruen has created a home and family independent of a husband, and through this community she has found maternal fulfillment—a maternal fulfillment that is uplifting rather than draining because it is founded on love, not obligation to a husband who desires an heir. These are children Fruen has chosen as her own out of affection for them.

Fruen's mission not only benefits her, but the poet as well, for here he finds the sense of "home" that he has longed for. On their first meeting, he relates his expectations of women:

> I seek in nature what I failed to find in [woman]. I lay my heart on the brown lap of earth, and close my eyes in delicious restfulness. I can feel her respond to me; she gives me peace without taxing me for a return. I sought that in woman, for I thought to find her nature's best product, of all things closest in touch with our common mother. I hoped to find rest on

> her great mother heart; to return home to her for strength and wise counsel… (197)

Like Fruen, the poet's expectations of women are quite conservative by modern standards—a woman should provide safety, support, and comfort. With his wife, a man should be at ease, unafraid to reveal his weaknesses or injuries. He longs for a level of trust that will allow him to open himself fully without fear. What makes the poet new is his recognition that serving a husband cannot be a woman's sole purpose; in fact, it is Fruen's haven—her purpose beyond her lover—that provides exactly the environment the poet seeks. Not only does it shelter unwed mothers and illegitimate children, but it creates in Fruen the strength to provide the poet with that which he longs for. Fruen's work with these women and children has made her into a woman who can protect and nourish her lover in the way he needs her to.

Ironically, it is only by pursuing a purpose beyond her lover that Fruen is able to construct those things the poet most desires from a wife, and it is only by not becoming a wife that Fruen is able to maintain this home. Egerton's "The Regeneration of Two" suggests that society is too steeped in tradition to foster healthy relationships between men and women. People focus on creating the relationship that society dictates rather than constructing the relationship that suits both parties. Finding the New Man is only half the battle for women seeking something different. To truly find a fulfilling relationship, New Women will have to find men who are willing to help them reconstruct society from the ground up, beginning with the foundation of Victorian society—marriage and the family. It is only by transcending our understanding of "marriage" that the New Man and New Woman are able to reconstruct male-female relationships on the

basis of a human connection—a basis that fosters love and nurturance on the part of both husband and wife.

What Egerton's New Man realizes during his reunion with Fruen is that a free woman has much more to offer her lover than a woman who is bound by custom. Whereas tradition dictates that a man should be his wife's entire life, the poet acknowledges the need women have for other relationships and interests. Fruen and the poet are able to put love back into romantic relationships by freeing women from society's doll/man-woman dichotomy that originally made romantic love impossible for both sexes. When women like Fruen are not made to choose between *either* marriage *or* a purpose beyond marriage—when they are given opportunities to develop interests beyond merely serving as wives—women become better wives. By removing the metaphorical corset of society, the poet allows his lover to reach self-actualization, and rather than rejecting her role as lover and mother, Fruen returns to him as a stronger, happier woman, and most importantly, a woman capable of love. It is only through freedom from the doll/man-woman dichotomy—through a more complete understanding of femininity—that the New Woman can find her own happy ending.

One benefit Fruen and the poet have over other New Women heroines is that they create their own society—a society that has already failed to meet Victorian standards for decorum because it is populated by fallen women and drunkards. Within this new society, Fruen is able to break from traditional feminine roles while still finding acceptance from her society. As we will see in chapter two, this is not the case for Juliet Appleton, another New Woman who must continue living in a society whose thinking is not as advanced as

her own and therefore continually forces her to choose between the doll/man-woman dichotomy.

Chapter III

IN SEARCH OF THE "NEW MAN": REFIGURING MARRIAGE IN GRANT ALLEN'S THE TYPE-WRITER GIRL

"He appreciated me, I appreciated him; surely, if marriages are made in heaven, we two were moulded for one another. Not alike, but complementary" (Allen 121).

Grant Allen is undoubtedly best known to critics as the author of the scandalous 1895 novel *The Woman Who Did*. The novel's protagonist, Herminia Barton, who questions the institution of marriage, chooses to live with but not marry the man she loves. Allen's story sparked incredible controversy, prompting many writers to pen their own responses.[11] At the time of its publication, critics found *The Woman Who Did* scandalous, arguing that it was indecent and would surely lead young women astray. However, modern critics usually read this as a conservative novel, emphasizing that Herminia's life illustrates the ways in which marriage laws actually protected women and their children in contrast to free love arrangements that left women with no recourse should men abandon their responsibilities. The infamy of *The Woman Who Did* has long over-shadowed Allen's second, more conservative New Woman novel, *The Type-Writer Girl*, published in 1897; in fact, the latter text has received almost no critical attention to date. Yet this second novel has as much to say about gender relations in the 1890s as any other text of the time.

Grant Allen's *The Type-Writer Girl* is an interesting study in the way that traditional Victorian masculinity forces women to choose between being a man-woman

[11] Among the most influential responses are Victoria Crosse's *The Woman Who Didn't* and Lucas Cleeve's *The Woman Who Wouldn't*.

or a doll. Because traditional masculinity is an impossible match for the New Woman, she must either choose to be a man-woman, living a life of independence and isolation, or she must become a doll and live a life of servitude. The New Woman's only hope for escape from this dichotomy is to find an enlightened man—a New Man—who can comprehend a femininity beyond this spectrum. Throughout the novel, Allen's protagonist, Juliet Appleton, encounters a series of men as she struggles to support herself in London. Her encounters with the men at the law office of Flor and Fingelman's and at the anarchist community of Pinfold demonstrate how traditional masculinity is intellectually inferior to Juliet, holding her back from further self-development. Additionally, unreformed masculinity poses a sexual threat that reduces the New Woman to an animal or a commodity, removing any opportunity for love or romance. It is not until she meets Mr. Blank, her "Romeo," that Juliet finds a "New Man"—a man who is able to comprehend the complex blend of masculine and feminine traits that make Juliet the extraordinary woman she is. In contrast to her coworkers and the anarchists, Romeo pushes Juliet to challenge herself, leading to further independence and self-actualization, and he values her as a thinking companion, never losing sight of her humanity and equality. The relationship Allen presents is, in some ways, quite conservative—Juliet makes Romeo a better man just as an Angel in the House would be expected to do. Yet because Juliet herself has been improved through education and work, she is able to improve Romeo that much more than an Angel would. However, Romeo—and other men—must be willing to allow a woman to improve herself, and learn to respect her abilities, before they can expect her to improve the men around her. What sets Romeo's

and Juliet's relationship apart is Romeo's willingness to allow Juliet to flourish, knowing that in turn he will reap the benefits of her growth.

Throughout the text, Juliet emphasizes that intellect is one of the most appealing aspects of a man. Already this aligns her with the man-woman; just as the man-woman seeks knowledge, Juliet seeks knowledge not only through education but through her mate. When Juliet encounters two men at lunch one day, she is instantly drawn to them, remarking that, "It was a pleasure to hear *educated* men speak again. And their talk was full of interest." Notably, it is the Cambridge-educated political economist who was "the better-looking of the two" (36, ital. mine). Similarly, she makes a point of mentioning that Romeo attended both Eton and Oxford, where he graduated with honors (76). Juliet repeatedly links verbal skill and intelligence. In contrast to the dry legal language of Flor and Fingelman's, Juliet is drawn to Romeo all the more forcefully once she has accidentally read his poetry. She "[a]t first…noticed only the rare richness of the language, the many-faceted words, set like jewels" which her uneducated friend Elsie cannot comprehend, but which delight her (96). Romeo's poetry, full of classical allusions, is poetry for the erudite, not for the common man, reflecting both his education and creativity, and setting him on par with Juliet, who alone in the text can understand and appreciate his work.

But just as important as being educated himself, Romeo not only acknowledges but celebrates Juliet's intelligence. When first she applies to his office, Romeo gives her a difficult test: "The passage, chosen of set purpose, was full of Greek names and rather recondite words of technical import. I saw he had selected it as a test of knowledge as well as speed." Despite the complexity of the passage, Juliet says, "I wrote rapidly and

well—more rapidly, I think, than I had ever before done" (77). It is the challenge of the work that pushes Juliet to perform at her best; she revels in the opportunity to use her mind as well as her hands, which raises her above the level of automaton into the realm of thinking, creating individual. By recognizing and utilizing her education, Romeo is helping Juliet to reach her full potential. In place of the mind-numbing drudgery of Fingelman's office, Romeo gives Juliet challenging, and thus more fulfilling, work. Further, he highly praises her success at that work, stating that the work is beneath her abilities (78). Once he is aware she has read some of his poetry, he then expands her role from secretary to personal assistant, soliciting her advice on his writing (98). His elevated diction and the creativity of the work itself are thrilling for Juliet; this is everything that law was not—imaginative, challenging, and rewarding.

Romeo challenges Juliet to develop in her personal life as well as in their professional life together. Eventually Romeo suggests that Juliet try her hand at a creative piece of her own. After initial hesitation, she completes a piece that Romeo then seeks to publish for her, yet Juliet mistrusts his opinion as she is aware of his growing feelings for her, so she submits her work elsewhere. To her surprise, the work is as good as Romeo said, and she is paid twelve guineas (101). In this way not only does Romeo's encouragement move Juliet to explore her own creativity and empower her through assisting her to develop her own voice[12]—thereby further moving toward self-actualization—but it affords her greater economic independence. Romeo departs from the text's other men by fostering rather than restraining Juliet's financial self-sufficiency. More importantly, rather than inhibiting her intellectual growth, he utilizes it to the

[12] Much has been written on the relationship of women and their writing. See Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* for a thorough discussion both of how writing helped women shape their identity, as well as the role of women writers in the wider literary culture.

benefit of both Juliet and himself, something that none of the text's other men are able to do; the other men all actively seek to quash Juliet's intelligence. Female intellect makes her foreign, and they do not know how to relate to a woman who is above servitude.

Juliet's second job (with Romeo) is quite different from her first because it is less intellectually stimulating. Desperate for money, Juliet is delighted at the novel's onset to be hired by the law office of Flor and Fingelman, a situation wherein she is the only female office worker. However, Juliet quickly loses enthusiasm for her job, which she finds intellectually stifling. At Flor and Fingelman's, she is surrounded by men who are less educated and less creative than herself. Further, the work she performs is repetitive, and her coworkers are no more stimulating than her work. Here she finds no outlet for her higher faculties, and the whole setting diminishes her from human to machine. When she eventually leaves Flor and Fingelman's, she explains that, "The aforesaid office failed to respond to the party of the first part" (35); in short, she has not failed the position, but the position has failed her. The redundancy of the work leaves many of her skills untapped, and the monotony of the position proves to be more intimidating than the prospect of being unemployed with no money and little work experience.

The intellectual disparity between Juliet and her coworkers becomes apparent through the men's discussions—both the topics of discussion as well as how they are discussed—and Juliet's commentary on them. For instance, she remarks that her coworkers "spoke freely of the ladies of the music-hall," a liberty they take because the subjects of their discussion are female and thus inferior to themselves. However, as they disparage these women[13] for speaking publicly, the men themselves speak "with peculiar

[13] "Ladies of the music hall" could refer to lower-class performers, but by this point it was becoming increasingly common for middle-class women to lecture on various causes such as women's rights or social

London variants on the vowels of our native language," their accents exposing their own lack of education. Yet it is not their accents but the "inanity" of the conversation which makes Juliet grateful for the constant noise from her typewriter, which she uses to block out their voices. Similarly, as her coworkers ramble on about racing, Juliet muses that they could not "have distinguished between a fetlock and a cannon-bone" (34). We do not know whether Juliet would be better suited to make this distinction, but presumably her knowledge of appropriate terminology indicates a level of understanding at least equal to that of her coworkers. Interestingly, Juliet calls the men "diligent *students* of a daily journal in the interest of *manly* pastimes" (34, ital. mine). Her assertion that these men are *students* of *manliness* calls into question their masculinity, an issue further made questionable by Juliet, a woman, proving herself an equally adept student of manly pastimes. Here, Juliet blurs the lines between what should be masculine and what should be feminine. Typically knowledge is considered a masculine attribute, yet Juliet holds the knowledge in this situation, making her more manly than her male coworkers. The intellectual inferiority—or dare we say effeminacy of their intellect?—makes these men repulsive to Juliet.

Further, although she begins her career with no previous work experience, Juliet not only has the skills necessary to perform her job, but her skills surpass those of her employer. She declares Fingelman's writing style "execrable" both because it is unimaginative, but also because it is unclear and therefore impractical (33). The chief clerk is right, of course, when he explains to Juliet that legal language must be very precise, but it is important to note that Juliet resents the lifeless legal style because it is

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reform issues such as prison reform or child labor laws. These women would have had varying degrees of education depending on many factors.

formulaic and boring, not because it is beyond her ability. In fact, in her resignation letter, Juliet proves her superior mastery of legal style by not only adopting the language she has found so dry, but by adroitly fusing it with her own enlivened language to create something new that meets both her needs and the needs of her employer—an entertaining and serviceable compromise (37). If anything, Juliet bemoans legal language because it is too easy for her; the monotonous "click, click, click" of her typewriter makes her feel like the unthinking "machine that I was"[14] (35). Further, her style, deemed silly by her employers, proves successful by the publication of her story, the very text we are reading. Flor and Fingelman's continually impedes Juliet's creativity as it limits her to repetitive work that makes her a mere copy machine—the human predecessor to Xerox.

Juliet flees Flor and Fingelman's hoping to find both equal treatment and refuge from the monotony of office work, but her stay at an anarchist settlement proves even less successful than her work as a law secretary. Anarchy promises freedom from a society that refuses to accept the femininity of an educated woman, yet Pinfold is no more stimulating than Flor and Fingelman's and proves just as limiting. The comrades are even less sophisticated than the barristers and law clerks, and the work they have Juliet perform is manual labor, a further step away from the intellectually-stimulating work she craves. And just as the men prove less sophisticated than Juliet's former coworkers, they also prove even more conservative in their understanding of gender relations.

Her disappointment begins when she first meets the leader of the anarchists, Rothenburg. Juliet describes Rothenburg as "a pallid, anaemic [sic] young man with a

[14] Clarissa J. Suranyi addresses the fusion between typewriters and their machines, as well as Juliet's attempts to distance herself from her Barlock, in the introduction to the 2004 Black edition of *The Type-Writer Girl*.

high narrow forehead, watery restless eyes, thin yellow hair, and twitching hands…an eager-hearted ineffectual enthusiast—a man born to failure" (46). As Juliet becomes more acquainted with Pinfold, we begin to understand that Rothenburg himself barely grasps the ideas he espouses; most of what occurs in Pinfold is merely mindless repetition of concepts beyond the understanding of its participants (53). Juliet recalls that Rothenburg occasionally will "give vent some deep philosophical speculation which a child of ten might have considered profound" (53), yet despite his "shallow brain…by comparison [with the others he] was an intellectual Titan" (51). It is only by Juliet's knowledge that she is able to communicate with any of the comrades, none of whom speak English besides Rothenburg; she speaks German and French (48), which allows her to cross the language barrier and communicate with all of the comrades. However, merely bridging their language gap makes little difference for Juliet, as her communication with the comrades is little more than telling stories to them and their children; they have no mind for anything more substantial, thus Juliet is denied opportunities to exercise her intellect; to do so would make her both an outsider and unfeminine.

Whereas Flor and Fingleman's made Juliet a man-woman for her intellect, Pinfold makes her a man-woman for both her her intellect and her physical strength. At Flor and Fingelman's, white-collar work such as typing made one a peer; at Pinfold, blue-collar farming makes one an equal. As she works in the fields, Juliet explains that she, being "tolerably tall for a woman," is as large as any one of the "undersized town-bred working men of the skimpy order" (49). She is capable of working as hard as any of the male comrades, and she proves to understand gardening better than they (53). Juliet is not a

delicate, dependent doll, but is both able and determined to serve as an equal among the men. Her failure to be helpless and delicate calls into question her femininity. Since the male comrades are attracted to her, they try to make her a doll by preventing her from working in the fields, but what might be deemed as chivalrous does not sit well with her, for whom "[a] certain sense of honor made me work my hardest." Ignoring sex, Juliet wears her gender-bending rational dress into the fields and "labour[s] like a man" while dressed like a man (54)—a scene which, when considered in light of the effeminacy of the comrades, blurs the lines of gender to a highly unsettling degree. Although she attributes their leniency toward her to their recognition of her class (54), she also acknowledges the role her gender plays in their decision to lighten her work load, for she states, "If I joined their clan at all I must join on equal terms. I am all for the absolute equation of the sexes" (53). The comrades perceive their actions as gentlemanly, but by preventing Juliet from working they are preventing her from achieving a sense of honor and significance in the community, as well as denying her the right to be both strong and feminine. They attempt to reinstate her as a doll by resigning her to chores coded as domestic.

Just as dolls are limited to domestic chores, they are likewise contained within domestic spaces. It was Victorian men who were expected to be explorers, while women remained at home. Following this model, the men of Pinfold attempt to limit Juliet's mobility by seizing her bicycle. The bicycle represented to late Victorian women freedom, physical independence, and a sense of personal control that had been denied them by other modes of transportation.[15] Clearly, this is the case with Juliet; on the way

[15] See Sarah Wintle's "Horses, Bikes and Automobiles: New Woman on the Move" for a discussion of various modes of transportation and the way in which they became gendered during the Victorian Era.

to the commune, as she rides through the countryside, she exclaims, "How light and free I felt! …A woman on a bicycle has all the world before her where to choose; she can go where she will, no man hindering" (42). Yet at Pinfold, Juliet encounters many men who attempt to hinder her freedom, and she is justified in her trepidation because joining the anarchists is similar to entering into marriage. First, joining the commune requires her personal property to become joint property. Second, becoming a comrade requires a sacrifice of personal freedom. Her bicycle symbolizes both personal property and freedom (in that it provides enhanced mobility and thus enhanced autonomy), both of which must be relinquished to someone else's control in order for her to be accepted into the community. As her property is subsumed by the community, so, too, is her status as an independent individual.

The men of Pinfold transform Juliet from a woman to a dowry, her property proving to be more important than herself as a person and the companionship she can offer. This transformation attempts to force Juliet back into the type of commercialized marriage that Egerton's protagonists lambast—the type of marriage that effaces love and personality for the sake of wealth. When Juliet steps outside her cottage door for the first time, she sees a group of anarchists waiting for her to teach them to ride her bicycle; it is suggested, however, that the men wait only because Juliet's dog prevents them from seizing her property (50). This scene foreshadows Juliet's show-down with the comrades at the end of her stay with them. When she announces her wish to leave, the repulsive Léon tells her that the bicycle must stay with the community, as it became communal property on her entering their settlement, similar to the way in which women would

forfeit property they brought into a marriage upon divorce from their husbands.[16] Again, Commissioner Lin intervenes, protecting Juliet's property, and at his threat, the men back down, Rothenburg then soliciting Juliet to stay while simultaneously eyeing her vehicle greedily (57). Juliet reflects that from the beginning of her stay with them, the men seemed as interested (if not more so) in her property as they were in her (50). Not only is their attempted appropriation of her property a violation of her independence, but losing her bicycle would prevent (or at least greatly forestall) Juliet's return to London, inhibiting her return to a self-sufficient lifestyle. In this sense, the anarchists pose a greater threat to Juliet than do the men of Flor and Fingelman's. Not only do the anarchists further limit her opportunities for intellectual growth and stimulation, but they actively seek to check her physical independence as well. For Juliet, Pinfold is not one but many steps away from the intellectually-challenging, humanizing relationship that she seeks.

Perhaps what most decidedly sets Romeo apart from the text's other men is the respect with which he treats Juliet. To Romeo, Juliet is a person with her own needs and desires, rather than a doll—a toy to be played with, then put down, or to be displayed. The men of the law office and Pinfold respond to Juliet's beauty and availability (as a young, single woman) with a predatory hunger; the overall playfulness of Juliet's narrative undercuts the serious level of physical threat posed by these men. It is not that Romeo perceives Juliet as an asexual man-woman, ignoring her sex and beauty, but he acknowledges them in a way that makes her feel appreciated rather than objectified. In place of the auctioneer's gaze Juliet is subjected to at Flor and Fingelman's, Romeo's

[16] See Jane E. Lewis' "Women clerical workers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" for a discussion of how the entrance of women into the workforce changed property and political rights.

"glance was one of mute respect and sympathy" (82). And while he does examine her person, "he was unobtrusively observing my dress and appearance," Juliet recalls, "not as Ahasuerus [Fingelman] had done, like a cross between an Oriental monarch and a horse-dealer, but like a gentleman of keen insight, accustomed to take things in at a glance without disconcerting the object of his scrutiny" (76). Romeo assesses Juliet as a person, taking into account her mind as well as her body, allowing her to be beautiful and feminine while also being strong and educated.

In his job advertisement, Romeo asks for "a lady type-writer" rather than the "type-writer (female)" that Flor and Fingelman sought. By affixing the word "lady" to the job title, Romeo is giving the position a sense of respectability that it has been denied throughout the text, indicating he accepts that a genteel woman can also be educated and self-sufficient. This acceptance is reinforced when Juliet must pick up her typewriter and he offers to call a carriage for her. Romeo offers to call a carriage out of his concern that he might be inconveniencing Juliet, not his disbelief in Juliet's ability to carry the typewriter, nor out of his fear that her carrying her machine would be unfeminine. Further, he insists on acquiring a typewriter that she can use in place of her own, explaining that his office must not impose wear and tear on her personal machine, which would be a great expense to her in maintenance costs (80). What a great contrast from Flor and Fingelman, who expect Juliet to provide her own typewriter, which she is forced to carry herself!

Because Juliet muddies her coworkers' understanding of femininity, they continually try to reinscribe her in the role of doll—a more familiar role and one they can relate to—by sexualizing her. It is not the inferiority of her coworkers, nor the tedium of

her work, but the sexual threat her employer poses that causes Juliet to abandon her first position at Flor and Fingelman's. From the moment that Juliet first enters the law office, she is blatantly objectified. While it has been established that Juliet possesses the abilities and skills to obtain the position of type-writer, her qualifications have little to do with her being hired, and her employers make no pretense to it being otherwise. When Juliet first arrives at the office to apply to their advertisement, the men ask how many words per minute she types, but she recalls that the man who addressed her "ran his eyes over me as if I were a horse for sale," and when he expresses satisfaction with her, she understands his words to refer "more to my face and figure than to my real or imagined pace per minute." The interview becomes reminiscent of a literal marriage market when she is asked if she owns a machine to work on; that she possesses her own Barlock typewriter, a kind of dowry, makes her that much more appealing to her new employer (30). Juliet is hired for what she can offer her employer—a bit of property and her sexual potential.

The law clerks in the office sexualize Juliet in a way her behavior does not warrant, making her sexuality something she must deny by adopting the role of the asexual man-woman. In projecting this sexuality onto Juliet, the clerks deny her the chance to be the Angel in House—who should elicit feelings of admiration, magnanimity, and purity, whereas Juliet elicits feelings of impure lust—thus removing her from the Angel in the House/Fallen Woman dichotomy. When Juliet is first introduced to Fingelman, she is made subject to the male gaze, a scene which is the first of many wherein Juliet is exhibited by men to other men for their approval. Whereas Romeo gazed at her politely and in private, the men of the law office make public their examination of her with complete disregard to how this might heighten her discomfort.

As she is paraded by the chief clerk, she recalls that the he "waved his hairy hand towards me as if to show me off to the man at the table. I felt disagreeably like Esther in the presence of Ahasuerus," who "inspected me in turn" (30). While the men of the office lambasted the ladies of the music-halls for brashly presenting themselves to the public, they feel no shame or hypocrisy in exhibiting a female coworker in similar fashion. Further, it is not just that Juliet is being paraded in front of a man to be judged, but that she is blatantly being judged in a way that reduces her to less than human status—"He perused me up and down…as if he were buying a horse, scrutinising my face, my figure, my hands, my feet. I felt like a Circassion in an Arab slave-market. I thought he would next proceed to examine my teeth (31)." It is only after Juliet has passed Fingelman's physical inspection that he asks her to demonstrate her shorthand and typing skills, making it painfully obvious to her on what grounds she is actually being hired.

It is understood by the men that as a doll, Juliet is not expected to perform her job well; her primary function in the office is to evoke admiration. Fingelman asks his chief clerk's opinion on Juliet, perhaps indicating that he is not fully satisfied, arguing that she is only the first woman interviewed for the position, and implying that more attractive women might apply for the job. However, the clerk contends that hiring her will save time, and Juliet realizes that she owes her employment not to her own merits, but to a man who values her as an office fixture as much as an employee, and who will not hesitate to exact a form of repayment from her later, as happens when he asks her to accompany him to the theater (31). If the initial job advertisement's insistence on a *female* type-writer for the position did not alarm the reader, then this "interview" surely does. The role of type-writer for Flor and Fingelman is not just to take dictation and type

letters, but to arouse and to please the office workers, just as Esther's role was to arouse and please Ahasuerus. Like Esther, Juliet is reluctant and eventually the sexual threat from her coworkers drives her from her job. She recalls that "[Fingelman] had not as yet ventured anything rude to me, but I scented prospective rudeness in the way he watched me come in and out…I fled from his oily face" (35). Because of the discomforting sexuality projected onto her, Juliet flees Flor and Fingleman's, and with it she flees her own sexuality; she is made to choose the role of man-woman as an escape.

Juliet finds Pinfold even more sexually threatening than Flor and Fingleman's; likewise, she again denies her sexuality, aligning herself with the man-woman, in an effort to protect herself from male sexuality. Upon her arrival, Juliet says that Rothenburg presents her to the anarchists in a way comparable to her presentation to Fingelman, both introductions leaving her feeling exposed and dehumanized—"I realised now that I was set to perform the part of Vashti before a whole court of critical anarchists" (48). The difference between her introduction to Fingelman and her introduction at Pinfold is as simple as the difference between singular and plural; whereas Juliet was presented to one man at the law office, she is presented to a whole community of threatening men at Pinfold—as she is introduced to the comrades, "[e]ach man drew himself up and stroked his chin with the very air of a Romeo" (48). Her admittance into the commune is based on the two types of property she brings to the group—her bicycle and her availability as an attractive, unmarried woman—a doll. If Flor and Fingelman valued Juliet for providing her own typewriter, reducing her to a commodity, then the men of Pinfold likewise reduce her to a body, a sexual commodity. Soon each man tries to draw Juliet into private talks in secluded areas in attempts to court her (55), leading Juliet to seek

asylum in the company of other women such as Mrs. Pritchard (56). Their threatening pursuit forces her to actively avoid the company of men, just as the man-woman does.

Juliet refers to her attempted suitors as “Fausts,” suggesting that their actions are particularly sinful, and she explains that she takes comfort once again in the presence of her dog, an excellent bodyguard (56). Her use of the word “bodyguard” and the necessity of staying close to other women indicate a level of physical threat that the overall playfulness of Juliet’s narrative seems to undercut. However, this threat is reinforced through the character of Léon, a repulsive and particularly intimidating member of the commune. Léon horrifies Juliet in a way that the other men do not, perhaps because he most blatantly imperils her personal freedom by leading both attempts to seize her bicycle (50, 57), but also because he presents the most forceful sexual threat of all the men. Juliet recalls that “he had the habit when he spoke to you of coming up very close and breathing in your face, so that his protruding lips almost seemed to touch you” (50). But what makes Léon so truly terrifying is Juliet’s inability to object to his almost touching her—“I had an irresistible impulse to say to him, ‘Take, oh take those lips away!’ only, I knew if I did he would not understand, or if he understood he would misunderstand me” (51). Juliet realizes that even if she refuses him, Léon will not accept her refusal because he cannot believe that she would object to his advances. This disregard for a woman’s choice undermines Juliet’s right to her most important property—her own body and her own sexuality.

What is equally as threatening, however, is the implication that this is a free-love community. On Juliet’s first day with the anarchists, Rothenburg tells her that she “must not form an idolatrous attachment to any one of the comrades to the exclusion of the

others" (49). Coupled with one of their mottos, "Free Thought, Free Affection" (52), one can take the phrase "to the exclusion of the others" to mean that whatever Juliet offers to one man must be offered to all men in the community equally, be it her bicycle or her body. While some nineteenth-century feminists were involved in free-love communities, these were a minority; greater numbers of women either aligned themselves with the likes of Sarah Grand and the sexual purity campaigns, or rejected heterosexual sex altogether as an act of female subjugation. Such a free-love community would have been radical even for a New Woman like Juliet.[17]

When Juliet has continually rejected the overtures of the comrades, they send Rothenburg to her, complaining that she pays them no attention, that she shows no "camaraderie" (56), and insisting that she "amalgamate freely with us. We want no women who decline to fraternise" (57). Importantly, the men want no *women* who decline their advances, implying that their expectations of a man would be different, i.e. less sexual. Juliet declares that Rothenburg and the other men "expected too much of me" in this regard, and she leaves the anarchists with her virtue threatened, but intact (56). Again, by sexualizing her, the men make it impossible for Juliet to achieve status as an Angel. By insisting on sharing her as they would any other property, they reinsert her into the commercialized marriage that Egerton's protagonist resists. In such a union, there is no potential for the loving human connection that Juliet seeks, and thus she resists by suppressing her own sexuality.

Romeo, it would appear, is the perfect complement for Juliet. By acknowledging her femininity as well as her intelligence and independence, he liberates her from the

[17] Sally Ledger's *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* gives an excellent overview of the various feminist factions at this time, as well as a more thorough discussion of feminism's relationship to free-love and other alternative lifestyle movements such as homosexuality.

doll/man-woman dichotomy; because he can accept the varying sides of her personality without labeling them masculine or feminine, he does not force Juliet to choose one role or the other. He is intelligent enough to challenge her and appreciates her creativity and education in a way no other man in the text has. Further, he is respectful and non-threatening; in all of their interactions, Romeo elevates Juliet to equal status as a thinking, feeling, creating human, rather than reducing her to a machine or a commodity. As he confesses his love for Juliet, he celebrates the modern aspects of the New Woman, setting them in contrast to those of the inferior Angel in the House:

> You know me and you understand me. But Meta, dear little soul, she seems to me like a child. I cannot share life with her. I can only take care of her. You have originality, initiative…Look how you loved and appreciated my verses! Your criticism, your help, were of infinite use to me. … Whereas, when I gave Meta my book she read through, and then kissed me. 'How clever of you, you dear boy, to be able to write verses!' Would *such* a help be meet for me? (120)

It is Juliet's knowledge, depth of understanding, and independence—those traits that traditional masculinity could not understand—that make her an equal partner for Romeo. Just as Meta cannot improve Romeo's poetry because she has not been constructed to be able to understand it, similarly she cannot improve Romeo because she lacks the necessary intelligence and understanding to advise him. Romeo recognizes the value of a woman with more than the two-dimensional depth of a doll; educated, intelligent Juliet has already done for Romeo what Meta will never be able to do precisely because she is all that Meta is not.

Romeo, as the New Man, has performed the same function for Juliet. He knows her as a person, not merely a machine, commodity, or dowry, as the novel's other men do. To him, Juliet is his partner, an individual in her own right, rather than a subordinate or addendum to himself. The two construct a relationship built on mutual respect. It would appear that our New Woman sits on the brink of her own happy ending.

There is but one complication to Juliet's love-interest—Romeo is engaged to Meta, not Juliet. Romeo swears that he no longer loves—or can love—Meta, and at first Juliet believes that if that is truly the case, then he should leave Meta. A woman deserves "[t]he whole man…body, soul, and spirit—or else nothing!" she declaims (123). It would be as unfair to Meta as it would be to Romeo for the two to wed if Romeo would never be able to care for her as a husband should. Yet Juliet's mind changes when she encounters Meta in a church and hears the story of how she and Romeo grew up together. "[Y]ou would think that the years must count; the years must count!" Meta cries (128). Juliet realizes that Meta has done what society expects a doll to do—she has made Romeo the sole focus of her life. If Juliet leaves Romeo, she will have her career as a typewriter and her thirst for adventure to sustain her, but Meta has nothing—no hopes, no interests—outside of her fiancé.

When Juliet repeats Meta's cry that the years must count, she is acknowledging that Meta has given the best and only thing she has to offer Romeo—her Angelic devotion. She then decides that she must respect Meta's gift by returning her fiancé. Much of the concern surrounding the New Woman was that she was both aware and unafraid of her own sexuality. Unlike the shrinking Angel in the House, who dreaded becoming the Fallen Woman, the New Woman, it was feared, would destroy Victorian

society by seducing husbands from their faithful wives. And indeed, Juliet's physical description,[18] as well as her repeated references to herself as Carmen, suggest that she might well steal Meta's fiancé. Yet when she repeats Meta's cry, "The years must count," she is acknowledging not only Meta's investment, but Romeo's obligation to her. The failure is not with Meta or Romeo, but with the system that produces dolls like Meta who are unable to support themselves.

Ultimately, Juliet chooses loyalty to Meta's investment over personal satisfaction. Although she is the New Woman, Juliet recognizes the Angel in the House as her sister, the two being linked by their common capacity for love and devotion, and, like all women, their common struggle to find the love of a worthy man. Juliet writes, "I was fighting now the battle of my sex. … I knew I was fighting the common battle of womanhood" (133). Juliet is concerned for Meta's welfare, recognizing that while she is able to support herself, poor Meta is as unfit for work as inept Elsie, the struggling typist Juliet cares for. While Meta and Elsie are sharply divided by class, they are indistinguishable from one another when it comes to their ability to support themselves. Both are dolls—uneducated, unskilled, and only fit for a marriage of dependency. As Juliet says, the only thing that keeps Meta from becoming and Elsie is those around her who possess money and are willing to support her. Romeo is Juliet's hope for happiness, but he is Meta's hope for survival.

Allen presents readers with a well-matched New Woman and New Man. We see through their relationship just what the relationship between men and women could be if both parties were free to develop the best in themselves. Juliet's relationship with Romeo

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[18] Even in contemporary times, fair women are still depicted as innocent, helpless maidens, while large, dark women are considered to be more sexually ravenous and dangerous to men.

is ideal both for him and for herself, especially when compared with Romeo's relationship with Meta. But this union cannot happen because society as a whole has yet to be transformed; society is still producing ineffectual women like Meta and Elsie, dolls who are fragile and need protection. Weak women like Meta and Elsie would be vulnerable to the old, predatory masculinity of men like those who work at Flor and Fingelman's or live at Pinfold. Juliet, however, is strong enough to resist the danger old masculinity poses, even if she is unable to free herself from the doll/man-woman dichotomy they force her into.

The Type-Writer Girl suggests two things: first, the novel emphasizes the importance of healthy relationships for the New Woman in order for her to find complete happiness; just as Egerton's protagonist needed the poet to liberate her from the doll/man-woman dichotomy, so, too, does Juliet need a New Man to accept her before she is free to be both female and self-sufficient. And second, the text suggests that the final hurdle for the New Woman will not necessarily be finding the New Man, for the men Juliet encounters all recognize her worth over the other women in the text. Rather, the New Woman's final hurdle with be raising her weaker sisters to a level of self-sufficiency that allows the New Woman to embrace love when she finds it without injuring those who rely solely on marriage for existence. Until unmarried women like Meta and Elsie can find a place in society—until society ceases producing dolls—it will be the responsibility of the New Woman to be "like a man to her" and ensure her wellbeing (127). The point at which women are no longer dependent on marriage as a means of livelihood, Allen seems to suggest, is the point at which marriage can become a partnership like that of Romeo and Juliet, entered into purely on the basis of love.

By continually producing the ineffectual Angel in the House, society makes necessary Juliet's sacrifice for Meta. Along with new freedoms come new responsibilities for the New Woman, and as with any change, the constraints don't disappear, but merely change. But it is not just women who are constrained by society's traditions; as we will see in chapter three, men, too, are confined in gender roles, and emerging feminism is one tool that makes possible greater flexibility in gender roles. This flexibility in roles is an important step toward healthy, balanced relationships for New Woman heroines.

Chapter IV

THE AMBIGUOUSLY-GENDERED NEW WOMAN: GENDER FLEXIBILITY WITHIN MARRIAGE IN STOKER'S *DRACULA*

"When the Professor had done speaking my husband looked in my eyes, and I in his; there was no need for speaking between us" (Stoker 210).

As New Woman criticism has grown in the last two decades, a vein of scholarship has emerged exploring *Dracula*'s response to the figure. Published in 1897, the same year as Allen's *The Type-Writer Girl*, critics probe the question of whether Stoker presents a mostly positive or negative reaction to the shifting gender roles of fin-de-siècle culture. Often critics attempt to answer that question first by determining which character is intended to represent the New Woman, and most assign that label to Mina. Critics such as Charles Prescott, Grace Giorgio, and Matthew Brennan argue that Mina is Stoker's embodiment of the New Woman, focusing on Mina's journal writing as a way to interpret her character. Prescott and Giorgio explain that "writing represents for Mina an attempt to establish a strong sense of self, which in this charged historical moment carries the political resonance of the New Woman" (490). They cite her journalistic detailing of events, which aligns Mina with the emerging female journalists of the day, whom she states she intends to consciously mimic as she records incidents for her husband (Stoker 56). Brennan expands Prescott's and Giorgio's idea of Mina developing a sense of self, arguing that the entire novel is concerned with the development of her and Lucy's psyches. This quest for self-discovery, especially through writing, was very characteristic of the early feminist movement. Brennan states that "Dracula destroys Lucy through her lack of self-knowledge . . . She does nothing to develop [the] self-reliance or

independent identity" that would have enabled her to resist him, while Mina, in spite of the men around her, is able to establish and assert her identity as part of her resistance to the Count (3). Such a reading necessarily understands the text as supporting women's need for intellectual growth and opportunities for working outside of the home, and must be understood as supportive of at least some characteristics and values of the New Woman. However, I feel this interpretation is too generous, ignoring the novel's anti-New Woman ending wherein Mina gives up writing and working to become a wife and mother. Further, Jonathan even says of Mina's writing—the transcribed journals and newspaper clippings—that they are "nothing but a mass of typewriting" and not enough proof to convince anyone of their experience; in short, her writing comes to naught (Stoker 326).

Jean Lorrah insists it is Mina's marriage that makes her so progressive because she marries on her own terms, entering into an equal partnership (34). While Lorrah makes excellent points, again, her argument ignores important and decidedly conservative aspects of Mina's character and marriage. I agree most with Carol Senf, who argues that Mina is merely New Woman-like. She explains that as "an educated woman with a career, Mina should be comfortable with certain qualities often associated with the New Woman," yet she "rejects both the forwardness and the sexual openness of the New Woman writers" ("Stoker's Response" 35). Senf explains that the novel draws connections between assertive female sexuality, a characteristic of the New Woman, and lack of maternal feeling ("Monstrous" 41). Overall she concludes that "Stoker seems to ally himself and his heroine with a more traditional kind of woman"—the kind of woman that Mina becomes in the novel's concluding scene ("Stoker's Response" 37).

However, claiming that the text contains no New Woman does not negate the issue that *Dracula* is a response to the New Woman, or at least to the anxieties and questions that the New Woman raised in late Victorian society. To understand how *Dracula* responds to these changing gender roles, it is important to shift our focus slightly from the women in the text to the dynamics between the male and female characters, in particular Jonathan and Mina. Valerie Sanders explains that the rigidity of gender demarcation in Victorian society created tension and curiosity that could be most safely explored within the family—specifically within brother-sister relationships (136). While gender reversals among literary characters are fairly commonplace, she argues that nineteenth-century writers specifically used role reversals among siblings as a way for characters to escape gendered positions within a family (and their inherent restrictions and responsibilities), as well as a way to express forbidden aspects of themselves. This same principle applies to the Harkers' marriage. Through Jonathan, Stoker investigates masculinity, constructing, if not a New Man, then a "New Man prototype." Jonathan is "new" in that he questions traditional conventions of masculinity and femininity, allowing his wife to become more independent, assertive, logical—in short, masculine and thus more New Womanly—while he gives himself up to his own femininity.

As Jonathan continually usurps feminine roles, Mina is forced into masculine roles, becoming a "husband" to her husband. Jonathan's break in the division between male and female gives Mina greater freedom within the doll/man-woman dichotomy. The novel's characters may insist on Mina's femininity, celebrating her as a loyal wife and nurturer, yet she simultaneously performs masculine actions throughout the text. Mina's gender flexibility is never completely accepted by the men—who continually place her in

the traditional Angel/Whore dichotomy, and for whom the Harkers' gender instability causes anxiety—but unlike Allen's Juliet Appleton, the men accept and even celebrate some of Mina's gender-crossing behavior. What Jonathan's gender fluidity reveals to readers is the masculine dissatisfaction with highly demarcated gender roles—a dissatisfaction often attributed solely to middle- and upper-class women. It is not merely women like Mina and Juliet who are caught in the doll/man-woman dichotomy; men as well struggle as they attempt to define their own masculinity against an inaccurate and rapidly changing definition of femininity.

However, the degree to which Stoker succeeds with restructuring gender roles is doubtful. Mina is at her most progressive only when Jonathan is at his most feminine, thus instead of reworking male-female relationships, Stoker merely reverses them. Rather than extending the paradigm of a masculine-feminine spectrum of gender, Jonathan's jaunts between the two further emphasize a dichotomous understanding of gender, raising powerful and deep-seated fears about the fundamental differences between male and female. Rather than each character possessing both masculine and feminine traits, Stoker emphasizes that specific traits are masculine, while others are feminine; when Jonathan is masculine, he contains only masculine traits, whereas once he has become feminine, he loses all of his feminine traits. Yet the realization that people of both sexes might flip from masculine to feminine as readily as does Jonathan questions the idea that men and women are fundamentally different in easily defined ways. These fears are alleviated not by restructuring society, but only by the completion of the conservative familial tableau that closes the novel—a retreat into the familiar and safe Victorian family with a chaste wife, a loving child, and a strong husband and father. Ultimately, *Dracula* is a

conservative novel. Mina is New Womanly only in response to her husband's femininity, and the concluding tableau suggests that traditional gender roles are best. Yet this conservative relationship is worth exploring because of the presence of this surprisingly enlightened gender fluidity, which even if it does not earn the Harkers the title of New Man and New Woman, is a progressive step toward the kind of personalized relationship sought by the New Woman in that it liberates both from the responsibilities society assigns them based on sex and instead allows the couple to define for itself the roles of husband and wife based on each party's greatest natural ability.

It is not only through the characters' actions that one may read Jonathan and Mina as literary cross-dressers; rhetorically, Jonathan is continually cast as feminine through a majority of the text. Readers will note that once Jonathan leaves Castle Dracula, he is from then on described in feminine terms. When first we see him together with Mina, he is described by the nun who cares for him as having "won all hearts by his sweetness and gentleness," which are the very adjectives so often used to describe Lucy Westenra (95). And regularly when present with the other men who make up Van Helsing's band of vampire-slayers, Jonathan has a knack of disappearing into the background, overshadowed by the decidedly more masculine characters such as Arthur Holmwood, Dr. Seward, or the American Quincey Morris. In contrast, Mina is continually described in both masculine and feminine language. Van Helsing repeatedly emphasizes her masculine intellect, saying, "She has *man's brain* [sic]," but counterbalancing her intellect with her feminine compassion by adding, "and *woman's heart*" (207, ital. mine). Again, we see Mina presented as not quite masculine, yet not wholly feminine.

Further, Jonathan, who as the opening narrator was poised to be our protagonist, once emasculated by Dracula, forfeits his narrative authority until the final chapter, when he describes the tableau that celebrates the restoration of contemporary, conservative gender codes. Until his masculinity is restored, Jonathan relinquishes narrative authority to the novel's more assertive characters with a feminine modesty. Conversely, Mina narrates most of the novel, and that which she doesn't directly narrate—such as the newspaper clippings and excerpts from other characters' diaries and letters—she still arranges into narrative form. In a very unfeminine way, Mina shapes the novel much more so than her husband. As Brennan states, perhaps Mina's narration is her most New Womanly act of them all, for it enables her to write herself to the center of the text, and it is her analysis of the evidence she gathers that drives the plot. It is through her narration that Mina wields the most power at any point in the novel.

Notably, while Jonathan (the man) narrates, gender roles are stable, fixed as they should be in traditional Victorian society. The women are feminine, and the men, including Jonathan himself, are masculine, with no grey areas. In a sense, narration is a masculine act in that it is public—no one narrates except to an audience—and it is powerful because the narrator of a text has authority to influence the audience's interpretation. However, once Jonathan becomes feminized, he cedes narrative authority to Mina, obscuring gender roles until the end of the novel, when Jonathan again takes up his narrative duty and gender identity is restored.

In many ways, *Dracula* is a quest for this gender regularity. Jonathan begins the story as an average man, but through his encounter with the count, he becomes emasculated; Dracula allows Jonathan to become effeminate, and Jonathan revels in the

opportunity to explore his feminine side. Curiously, when Jonathan recovers his masculinity, it now surpasses that of a normal man. This change can be represented by a comparison of the two instances in which Jonathan strikes Dracula, the first blow being dealt in the castle right before Jonathan's escape (54). While captive in Castle Dracula, Jonathan strikes the Count with a shovel, but barely breaks the skin, leaving only a small scar. This wound must be contrasted with the deathblow Jonathan ultimately deals Dracula at the novel's climax; once Jonathan's masculinity has been restored, so, too, is his masculine strength, which enables his second blow to destroy Dracula. Mina recalls how in their final encounter with the Count, Jonathan transforms from a shy, nervous, girlish man into a powerful masculine force:

> I could see…Jonathan…and Quincy…. Nothing seemed to stop or even to hinder them. Neither the leveled weapons or the flashing knives of the gypsies in front, or the howling of the wolves behind, appeared to even attract their attention. Jonathan's impetuosity, and the manifest singleness of his purpose, seemed to overawe those in front of him; instinctively they cowered aside and let him pass. (324)

Jonathan's newfound masculine focus and determination exceed that of a normal man to the point that it inspires awe in those around him. In contrast to his earlier self, he is now not only powerful, but he is more powerful than his companions; his force even exceeds that of Quincey Morris, quite possibly the most masculine character in the text,[19] for Jonathan survives their battle with Dracula while Quincey dies from a wound inflicted by the gypsies. And importantly, Jonathan inflicts Dracula's fatal wound. Mina says, "…on

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[19] Stoker casts Quincey as an American cowboy, an emblem of strength, independence, and manliness. As Elaine Showalter notes, men like Theodore Roosevelt, who worked outdoors as bold explorers, became the ultimate symbols of masculinity (*Anarchy* 10).

the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan's great knife. I shrieked as I saw it shear through the throat" (Stoker 325). Mina shrieks, a stereotypically feminine and somewhat uncharacteristic action, in response to Jonathan's powerful, masculine violence; once Jonathan has recovered his masculinity, Mina is able to recover her femininity, performing feminine actions such as shrieking that were denied to her while Jonathan was feminized. Further, it is not until Jonathan's masculinity has been restored that he is able to head a complete family by fathering not just a child, but a son (327).

Mina, too, becomes more decidedly feminine once the characters' original gender roles are restored. Mina began the novel as a single, working girl; her status both as single and working woman created initial gender ambiguity in her character—an ambiguity heightened throughout the novel as she becomes progressively more masculine. Ultimately, however, her femininity is made as secure as is Jonathan's masculinity when they produce a child. Mina concludes the text as the epitome of Victorian femininity: the dependent (as she no longer works to support herself), silent (as she has ceased narrating the text), passive wife and mother. Perfect wifehood and new motherhood seal her as feminine, an idea that is reinforced by Jonathan's return to his position as husband and father.

While it is initially tempting to read Mina as a damsel in distress, as Suzanne Dixon notes, Jonathan actually plays the role of the novel's gothic heroine, which is the first instance of his "cross-dressing." Mina may be an innocent young woman pursued by a vengeful, supernatural predator, yet it is Jonathan who is held prisoner in Castle Dracula, an experience that leaves him feminized until the Count is defeated—an act which restores all characters to their biological sex. Following in the footsteps of

numberless other gothic heroines, Jonathan desperately writes to his fiancé in a secret code (shorthand) that only they share in the hopes that she will rescue him, as he is unable to rescue himself (Stoker 37). Much of his time in the castle is spent waiting for a rescuer to arrive and yearning for Mina's comforting presence. This inaction and longing is much more in line with a distressed damsel's actions than those of a masculine hero. Finally, Jonathan does muster the courage to attempt an escape, climbing down the castle wall and entering Dracula's crypt. Once there, he seizes a shovel and attacks the Count, but his best effort proves weak as the shovel merely nicks the vampire's forehead, leaving an irritating but unimpressive wound that, importantly, barely *penetrates* the Count's flesh. In a novel so rife with sexual imagery and so concerned with the penetrator and the penetrated, readers must note Jonathan's symbolic impotence in his inability to penetrate Dracula's body, especially in contrast to Dracula, with his enhanced ability to penetrate (Stoker 54).

Unlike Jonathan, Mina proves to be quite assertive, especially for a Victorian woman, acting the part of the gothic hero to Jonathan's gothic heroine by rushing in to save her lover from the villain. Because Jonathan is held captive in Transylvania, she is forced to travel to Hungary alone in order to retrieve her sick fiancé. Readers will remember from his diary that this is a treacherous, frightening journey that was difficult even for Jonathan to complete, yet according to her diary, she encounters no problems along the way (Stoker 99). Upon arriving at the hospital where Jonathan is being kept, Mina arranges for them to be married; as Lorrah notes, "Although Jonathan had proposed to her much earlier, and they are engaged, it is Mina who sets the date and makes all the arrangements" because Jonathan is too incapacitated to do so (33). She then conducts

their return trip to England, where she establishes their home as she nurses Jonathan. At this point, Mina has become the head of their small family, shepherding Jonathan through the trials they face, her husband following meekly. Mina's audacity and independence should align her with the man-woman, yet it is her devotion to Jonathan that prompts her journey, and such wifely devotion is more in keeping with the doll. However, dolls never lead, instead following and serving their husbands. The strange fusion of wife with New Woman creates a spectrum for Mina to move along, allowing her to be both doll and man-woman as necessity dictates, and often embodying both simultaneously.

If Jonathan's physical passivity does not make readers question his masculinity, then his sexual effeminacy certainly should, just as Mina's assertiveness makes readers question her femininity. Victorian men were expected to be the sexual aggressors in a relationship (*Anarchy* 10), yet Jonathan proves to be uncomfortably passive when presented with opportunities to assert himself. When Jonathan disregards Dracula's warning, falling asleep in a strange wing of the castle, it is he who is almost ravished by three female vampires who wait to penetrate him with their phallic fangs.[20] Already feminized, Jonathan anticipates the experience with a mixture of excitement, guilt, and fear more expected from a chaste girl than an experienced man. He describes the nearest woman as possessing "a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive" (Stoker 42)—repulsive partly because Jonathan cannot bring himself to accept his attraction to her, just as a proper Victorian woman would be expected to deny her own sexual desires. Yet the desire is there; Jonathan recalls that he "closed [his] eyes in a languorous ecstacy [sic] and waited—waited with beating heart" (43). Not only is

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[20] Elizabeth Signorotti's "Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*" further explores *Dracula*'s use of fangs as a phallus that empowers female characters to penetrate male characters.

Jonathan awaiting a very sensual encounter, but he revels in his passive role in the encounter; he is no sexual aggressor bent on asserting his manhood, but instead enjoys being steered by a more forceful (and likely more experienced) partner. Jonathan's anxiety is characteristically feminine, yet it is also very masculine in that he recognizes he is crossing a gendered line that compromises his understanding of himself both as male and heterosexual.

Conversely, as Dracula's prime target, Mina is enabled to take an active—even if resistant—role in what would be considered taboo sexual activity. During Dracula's second attack on Mina, when he forces her to consume his blood, she does not hover on the verge of consciousness and wait for Dracula to act—as her husband does—but she forcefully tries to resist (247). Because of her resistance, as well as what she is resisting—male sexuality in the form of the Count—it could be perceived that Mina is gravitating toward the man-woman end of the spectrum, but Mina is again adopting a masculine role in the absence of a real male. Traditional gender roles call for Jonathan to be Mina's protector, yet during this attack Jonathan's consciousness is suppressed as Dracula preys on his wife. Because of Jonathan's failure, Mina must become more assertive to protect herself.

Beyond mere sexual passivity, Jonathan is also feminine in that he plays the roles of the protected rather than the protector, and the possession rather than the possesser. In a society that understood femininity as innocent and vulnerable, men were called on to shield the women around them from whatever threats might be encountered. Yet it is Jonathan who needs protection, not his wife. While locked in Castle Dracula, Jonathan finds a rescuer in the Count, who frees him from the clutches of the vampire women, but

further feminizes him by objectifying him. To Dracula and the women, Jonathan is a not a person with his own desires and needs, but a source of pleasure and sustenance, and a potential slave, as indicated by the Count's enraged cry, "This man belongs to me!" (43). Like any other property, he can be seized, traded, or stolen, as illustrated by the way that he changes hands among the other characters; he is kidnapped by Dracula, nearly stolen by the vampire women, and even Mina seeks to repossess him. Like any property, Jonathan's value is relative. For instance, when Dracula provides a substitute victim to the vampire women, a mere child takes the place of a man (44), reducing Jonathan in status just as legally women often shared status with children and the mentally handicapped.[21] In Castle Dracula, Jonathan has no citizenship and his status is dependent on his legal owner, just as a woman's legal rights and status in Victorian England depended on the men in her life—first her father and then her husband. As Jonathan is stripped of his adulthood and citizenship, he is forced into the position of contemporaneous women. In Castle Dracula, the rules of Jonathan's world are turned upside down as biological sex takes a backseat to sexuality and assertiveness; those with the potential and desire to penetrate (via fangs) possess power whether they are masculine or feminine.

Unlike Jonathan, Mina, in typically masculine fashion, proves to be her own best protector through her zealous compilation, organization, and distribution of knowledge. Despite their best efforts, the men's slow acquisition of information, as well as poor communication, prevent them from saving Lucy. They exacerbate this mistake by expelling Mina from their company—an ill-fated attempt at protecting her that leads to

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[21] See Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* for how the status of women changed throughout the Nineteenth Century.

her victimization by Dracula (225). Mina's knowledge becomes her own best protection; it is she who first uncovers the threat they are battling against, allowing the men to take proper precautions that will lead to Dracula's downfall. And beyond being her own best protection, Mina proves an adept protector for Van Helsing's band, particularly Jonathan. After Dracula's most harrowing attack upon her, in which Mina is forced to consume his blood as he consumes hers, Jonathan awakens from a stupor and attempts to rush outside and apprehend the Count. Despite her own distress, Mina "saw some danger to him; instantly forgetting her own grief, she seized hold of him and cried out," preventing him from leaving the safety of Van Helsing's Eucharist, which initially drove Dracula from the room (248). For Mina, knowledge is power—the power to protect herself and her family. This scene exposes the artificiality of any gender-based dichotomy; in protecting her family, is Mina adopting a masculine role, or is she acting as the Angel in the House, a decidedly feminine role? In a traditional Victorian family, this would prove a dilemma, but the Harkers' flexibility provides a protector regardless of gender; the Harker family does not succumb to external threat simply because the husband is temporarily incapacitated.

Like Jonathan, Mina's value changes throughout the text, but her value increases while Jonathan's decreases; the more masculine Mina becomes, the more valuable she is, just as Jonathan becomes less valuable as he becomes more feminine. Surprised and delighted with Mina's intelligence, Van Helsing praises her, claiming "[s]he has man's brain—a brain that a man should have were he much gifted" (207). In fact, Van Helsing is so impressed with Mina's abilities that he makes her the secretary of his group, thereby acknowledging her abilities and their value to his cause—"we unconsciously formed a

sort of board or committee. Professor Van Helsing took the head of the table…. He made me sit next to him on his right, and asked me to act as secretary," Mina writes in her diary (208). It is Mina who is given the seat of honor on this board, indicated by her sitting on his *right* side, a seat traditionally reserved for highly esteemed or trusted assistants. Further, she is the only member who has earned her admittance; all of the other members were admitted based on biological sex. As a woman, the men wanted to exclude her (as they eventually try to do), but as an ambiguously-gendered reporter and secretary,[22] Mina's value surpasses that of even the most decidedly masculine characters.

Jonathan's propensity to fainting is perhaps his most damning feminine characteristic. Fits of fainting and hysterics among middle-class women reached their peak during the 1880s and 1890s, but it is Jonathan who succumbs to the decidedly feminine ailment rather than his wife.[23] When he and Mina encounter Dracula in London, Jonathan turns "very pale, and his eyes seemed bulging out…half in terror and half in amazement" (155). Since his return, Mina has been watching him closely and she remarks that she is "always anxious about Jonathan, for I fear that some nervous fit may upset him." Mina recalls "that if he had not had me to lean on and to support him, he would have sunk down" (155). Yet when Mina finds herself in situations equally as harrowing, rather than lose consciousness as her husband does, her awareness seems heightened. During Dracula's first attack against her, for instance, despite the Count's soporific power, Mina is able to recall specific details such as the billowing mist that pours into her room despite her window being closed. More importantly, she retains her ability to reason—a typically masculine trait—which allows her to use the details she

[22] See Morag Shiach, "Modernity, labour and the type-writer," for how the typewriter and secretarial positions, as gender-neutral positions, created career opportunities for women.
[23] See *The Female Malady* for more on the role of madness in the Victorian construction of femininity.

recalls to piece together what has happened to her. It is then that she decides that the two red eyes she sees are "such as Lucy told me of" and "thus that Jonathan had seen" (228). One would expect the delicate Victorian wife to yield to her fear, but as Jonathan is already incapacitated by his fear, someone else must step forward and confront the evil oppressing them. Jonathan proves to be weaker and more in need of protection than his hardy wife, and, thus, it is Mina who moves into the position of husband, maneuvering to protect their small family from the outside world that threatens.

Ultimately, *Dracula* proves to be a conservative text when examining the presentation of gender roles within. It prescribes a return to a traditional dichotomous understanding of gender as a remedy for the anxiety created by changing gender roles. However, the text is significant to our understanding of the shifts in gender identity of the period in that, through the gender reversals that exist through most of the text, the anxiety and frustration of existing within safe, conventional roles is revealed, helping to explain the gender disruption at the Nineteenth Century's close. Further, *Dracula* brings to light the dissatisfaction with gender throughout society, not simply with a select group of middle-class feminists; men, too, according to Stoker, were struggling with the confinement they faced in masculine roles. Through Jonathan Harker, Stoker suggests that the strongest man is the one who has had the opportunity to investigate the feminine, who has sought shelter in the role of "female" while protected by a "husband."

Of course, Jonathan's exploration of the feminine would be impossible without his ambiguously-gendered wife, who is able to become masculine while Jonathan is feminine, but who willingly forfeits her masculine power when Jonathan's wanderings are complete. This leaves Stoker's New Woman in the decidedly un-feminist position of

still serving as a tool for men; the New Woman, being stronger, smarter, and better educated than an average woman, does not necessarily warrant equality—she is celebrated for her return to the feminine as both wife and mother—but also serves a purpose in society, that purpose being to morph and adapt to the needs of her husband.

Finally, what we see emerging from even such a conservative text is a new sort of marriage arrangement. The relationship between Jonathan and Mina, while still built on a dichotomous understanding of male and female, possesses a flexibility that is remarkably progressive in that it allows for gender ambiguity in a society that disallows such blurring of gender lines. By making irrelevant the doll/man-woman dichotomy—or rather, by accepting the multi-faceted nature of femininity—this flexibility leads to the self-actualization sought by feminists, but for both husband and for wife.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Victorian society's inability to accommodate a marriage built on equality problematizes the way in which Victorians analyzed the role of women in their society. The traditional Angel in the House/Fallen Woman dichotomy fails as an analysis of the female experience in Victorian society because it ignores the actual concerns of real Victorian women. Fin-de-siècle literature reveals that the primary concern for many women was that of losing one's own identity—on a legal as well as a philosophical level, and literally as well as figuratively—through marriage. When we think about the Victorian understanding of femininity, we automatically think of the Angel in the House/Fallen Woman trope, which divides women into two categories: the virtuous wife, and the corrupted (and corrupting) whore; there is no place for women who exist outside of this bifurcation. Those female characters who fall must be removed from society as there is no grey area allowing them to continue operating within their normal lives; they are shunned as though diseased, the belief being that these women will lead other women astray, and thus they either perish or are removed to colonies, preserving the virtue of England's women. This is the choice most Victorian authors present women with—the choice of chastity or corruption.

Yet these are not the actual choices women struggled with, but instead merely the perceived struggle at the heart of womanhood. Rather, the true choice laid before women was either to marry and sublimate the self, or to attempt to achieve self-actualization

through working and supporting oneself. Because of the dichotomous Victorian understanding of femininity, women could choose only one role—either independent woman or dependent wife. If a woman chose to be a wife, then she could potentially be a lover and mother; if instead she chose to work, she must forfeit her sexuality and maternal instincts. Likewise, a woman who chose to work operated—at least in theory—as a fully-realized, autonomous individual, subject only to her own whims and desires, yet she was debarred from the companionship and security offered by marriage and family life. Victorian society could not imagine the role of "working wife" or "working mother" because such roles blurred sex distinctions to an unfathomable degree.

The figure of the New Woman did not suddenly emerge during the 1880s, nor did the concerns that necessitated her development. Female dissatisfaction with the state of marriage and acceptable roles for women has been documented as far back as the fourteenth century, when Christine de Pisan began writing her defenses of women (Kelly 9). The writings of proto-feminists such as Anne Bradstreet, Margaret Cavendish, Mary Astell, and Aphra Behn reveal a history of discontent and calls for reform, and many of the Brontës' heroines—Jane Eyre, Lucy Snowe, and even Anne's oft-forgotten Agnes Grey—exhibit key characteristics of the New Woman. What makes the New Woman of the fin-de-siècle significant is the way that she ruptured the artificial dichotomy Victorians used to understand femininity—and, by extension, masculinity, family, and society itself. The New Woman brought to light the true crisis affecting women for centuries, namely that to be a part of acceptable society, a woman must sacrifice the most important part of herself—not her virtue, but her individuality. As she became an

increasingly acceptable pop culture image, the figure of the New Woman functioned as a gateway to an acceptable alternative role for women.

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