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Queen Victoria's Shadows

A Dissertation Presented

by

Anthony Teets

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Victoria's Shadow Queens

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This dissertation discusses how Victorian writers, artists, and critics represent historical queens as shadows of Queen Victoria. Focusing on Victorian representations of four queens—Catherine de Medici, Mary Stuart, Queen Elizabeth I, and Marie-Antoinette—this project seeks to establish a literary genealogy by showing how British writers drew upon historical interpretations of dead French and English queens to express psychological ambivalence, political anxiety about female monarchy, national, confessional difference, and complex sexual and erotic dimensions. Rather than approach these queens as historical persons, this dissertation concentrates on the literary, figural, and spectral qualities that translate unevenly across cultural, religious and historical lines. The dissertation uses interdisciplinary methods drawn from history, psychoanalysis, and feminism to examine how Victorian writers relate their representational strategies to novels, dramas, visual texts, and historiographies in which the queens are sources of sensation, fascination, English moral exceptionalism, and spectacle. The mix of canonical and non-canonical writers recasts the familiar images of these queens in a new light and brings unfamiliar and long forgotten writers into the discussion. In examining how these cultural texts work against the grain of more canonical texts, the dissertation shows how they have the potential to unsettle what it is thought is known about Victorian attitudes toward female monarchy. Finally, I argue that it matters that Queen Victoria is on the throne because she casts her shadow over these cultural texts while they are being produced and consumed.

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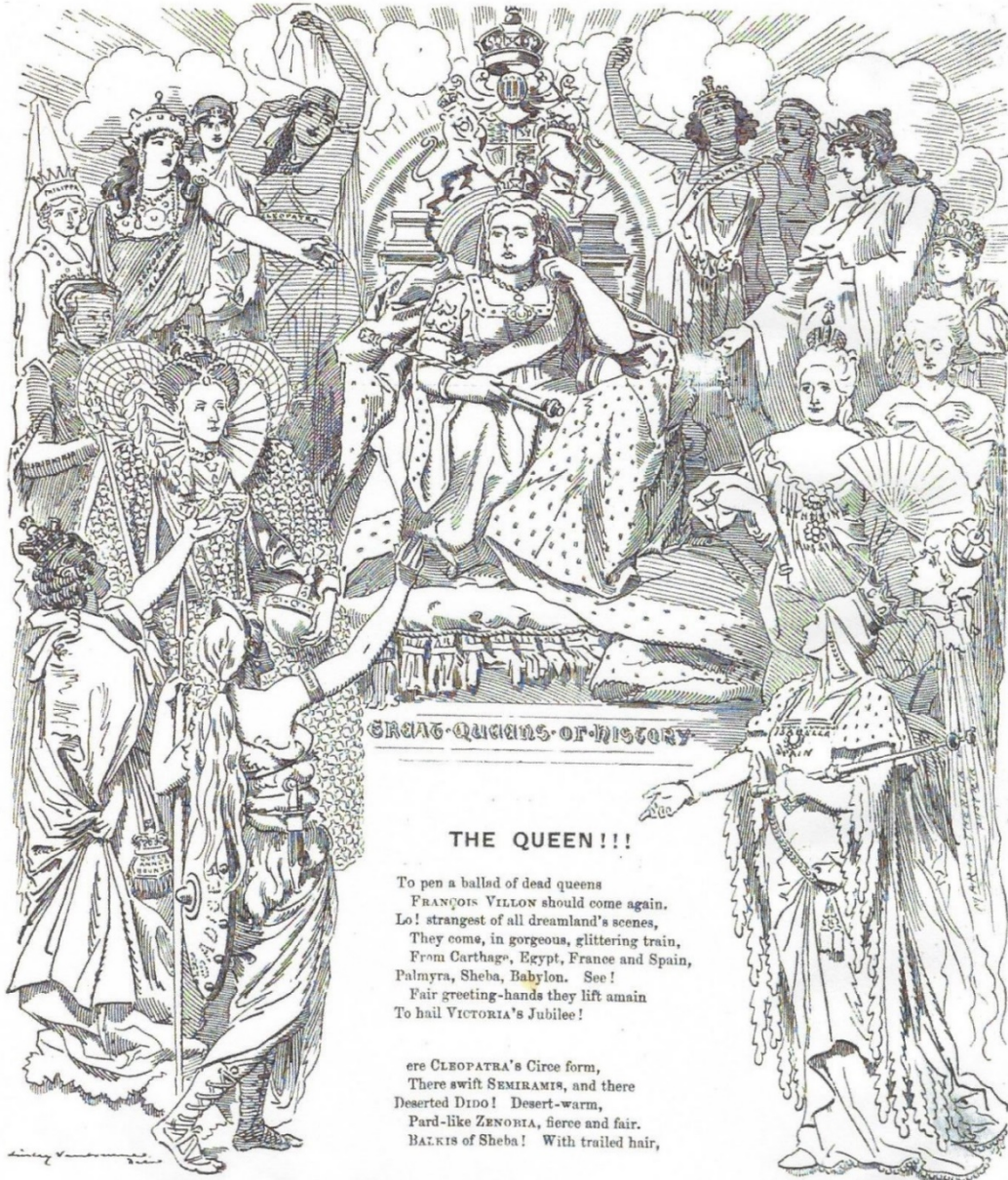
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Frontispiece



GREAT-QUEENS-OF-HISTORY

THE QUEEN!!!

To pen a ballad of dead queens
 FRANÇOIS VILLON should come again.
 Lo! strangest of all dreamland's scenes,
 They come, in gorgeous, glittering train,
 From Carthage, Egypt, France and Spain,
 Palmyra, Sheba, Babylon. See!
 Fair greeting-hands they lift amain
 To hail VICTORIA'S Jubilee!

ere CLEOPATRA'S Circe form,
 There swift SEMIRAMIS, and there
 Deserted DIDO! Desert-warm,
 Pard-like ZENOBIA, fierce and fair.
 BALKIS of Sheba! With trailed hair,

With firm-gript lance and gesture free,
 BOADICCA! And ANNE—strange pair!—
 To hail VICTORIA'S Jubilee!

Hainault's PHILIPPA, EDWARD'S bride,
 The brave she-lion ELIZABETH,
 MARY, MARIA the Austrian's pride,
 That lovelier MARIE, wed to death,
 JOSEPHINE, CATHERINE, she whose breath

Wafted COLUMBUS o'er the sea!—
 Earth's host of great queens mustereth
 To hail VICTORIA'S Jubilee!

God save the QUEEN! So shout her peers,
 Great shades from earth's long history,
 Who greet VICTORIA'S Sixty Years,
 And hail her Diamond Jubilee!

Preface

“Great shades from earth’s long history: Linley Sambourne’s “Great Queens of History”

Queen Victoria sits like the rotund figure of the sun and the moon in Linley Sambourne’s diamond jubilee cartoon for *Punch* (1897).¹ While shadow queens are summoned from world history to celebrate her sixty years of rule, regaled in imperial dress, Victoria’s robes of state cascade from underneath her majestic body as she displays her crown and scepter. Posed with her finger at her chin, Victoria, marmoreal and impervious to the encroaching spectral queens, is pensive and reflective.² The iconographical context of this illustration beckons a ghostly array of celebrated and infamous queens from the past to haunt Victoria as she presides in the manner of an empress who rules over the dead. Of the sixteen queens surrounding the throne, only five were rulers who historically occupied Victoria’s position, while the remaining eleven are also mentioned geographically in the accompanying poem: “Great shades from earth’s long history, / Who greet Victoria’s sixty years,” have “come, in grotesque, glittering train, / From Carthage, Egypt, France and Spain / Palmyra, Sheba, Babylon” (289).³ The poem suggests that, rather than confining his selection of queens to the island nation, Sambourne’s visual imagination travels back in time and out across the empire, adding through its inclusion of ancient queens, an erotic dimension to imperialism (289). But the draftsman who created this tableau, was a middle-class

¹ Edward Linley Sambourne (1844-1910) became *Punch*’s chief cartoonist in 1901. For his career as an amateur photographer and cartoonist see Postle (2001), Suleman (2001), McMaster (2008), Popple (2001), Paxman (2010) and Smith (1999).

² According to his diary entries for the year 1897, Sambourne began drawing images of the queen in February. The first mention of “Queens of History” appears in the entry for Tuesday, May 25. On the next day he writes: “finished drawing of Great Queens of History at 6:00 sent it off by boy” (“Diaries” 36).

³ Clockwise from the bottom right they are: Boadicea (d. 60 or 61), Queen Anne (1665-1714), Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1601), “Bloody” Mary I (1516-1558), Philippa of Hainault (1314-1369), Zenobia of Palmyra (240-275), Dido (legend), Cleopatra (69-30 BCE), Semiramis of Assyria (legend), an unidentified queen, Queen of Sheba (Biblical), Joséphine de Beauharnais (1763-1814), Marie-Antoinette (1755-1793), Catherine the Great of Russia (1729-1796), Holy Roman Empress, Maria-Theresa of Austria (171-1780), and Isabella I of Castille (1451-1504). According to Sambourne’s diary, the names of the queens were added on Thursday July 1, 1897, twelve days after publication.

amateur photographer and family man from Kensington, who employed lower class models to pose naked for his designs.

Judging from Sambourne's idiosyncratic practice of drawing from real nudes, this illustration's arrangement and its commemorative occasion, prompts a reflection on the problems of royal representation.⁴ Outwardly, Sambourne was a well-respected professional and conforming social figure, yet, as art historian Martin Postle has shown more recently, he also kept a well-hidden secret double life with his female models who often posed for his camera in explicit pornographic positions (23). Yet Sambourne also used a photograph of his own mother Frances Linley to illustrate a jubilee cartoon of Queen Victoria in 1887; a problem that emphasizes the awkward position of many middle class Victorian artists who turned to family members and lower class models in order to stimulate their imaginative capacities for creations of a nobler subject matter (32).⁵ Not only did Sambourne make his upstairs bathroom double as his dark room, but evidence from his photographs show that he brought several female models into his wife Marion's morning room, posing one naked young woman on her tea table, and another in the wife's favorite chair (Postle 23). The fleshliness of some of the queens posed around Victoria raises questions about the erotic lives of his royal subjects and their secret parallels to his models. The sexually-charged positions of Sambourne's ancient queens undoubtedly raised eyebrows as well. Together, these foreign queens represent in visual terms what writers over the nineteenth century articulate in literature; in fact, Sambourne embeds a distinct reference to the artistic underworld in the second line of his poem. When I first

⁴ A similar problem haunts Henry James's short story "The Real Thing" (1892) in which an artist employs a genteel couple to pose for his paintings. Though appropriately named Major and Mrs. Monarch, the artist realizes that it was precisely their touch of nobility that impaired his art, and he returns to his former lower class models Oronte and the Cockney Miss Churm. See James (1893) 1-41.

⁵ Sculptor Alfred Gilbert also used his own mother as a model for the jubilee statue of the Queen at Winchester (Hawksley 230).

encountered this illustration, late in writing this dissertation, I was immediately struck by the complex relationship between image and text that it presents. In particular, the poem inserted beneath the image calls for a Victorian poet who could write verse like the medieval French poet Francois Villon.

“To pen a ballad of dead queens” writes the poet, “François Villon should come again” (289). By invoking Villon’s memory, Sambourne’s poem suggests the need for an artist who could bring out a darker and even criminal side in queens. There were many poets available to fill the role of penning such a ballad. The line might beckon the ghost of Dante Gabriel Rossetti who had died in 1882. Rossetti’s “The Ballad of Dead Ladies” (1869), a translation of Villon’s *Balade des dames du temps jadis* (1461), includes a sinister line about a legendary wicked Queen who lured the medieval philosopher Jehan de Buridan and other unsuspecting young men to her castle for carnal pleasures, only to have them killed. In Rossetti’s translation of Villon, it was this naughty Queen: “Who willed that Buridan should steer / Sewed in a sack’s mouth down the Seine” (Lang 52). Sambourne may have enjoyed reading such poetic justice as he engaged in his own chicaneries at home.⁶ Francois Villon may have enjoyed the depths of royal depravity, but closer than Rossetti stylistically, as Sambourne undoubtedly knew, was Swinburne. Swinburne, whose poetic appetite for lurid scenes involving misbehaving queens is notorious, luxuriates in their presence, and as the favorite poète maudit of decadent poets, he might have been an indirect reference in Sambourne’s invocation of Villon.

⁶ On the evening of May 18, 1897, Oscar Wilde was released from Reading Gaol after serving a sentence of two years with hard labor for the crime of “gross indecency.” Wilde’s play “Salome,” which was performed in Paris the year before Victoria’s jubilee, evoked the specter of Queen Herodias, whose lust for the head of St. John the Baptist makes her a haunting queen, and Wilde became an instant celebrity in Paris.

As the unofficial poet laureate of decadence, Swinburne represents decadent poetry's rebellion against conventions.⁷ He would draw on Villon to summon a general revolt against middle-class Victorian prudence, prudery, and all of the domestic values embodied in Victoria's reign. In his unfinished "Essay on Villon" (1863), Swinburne writes that "over every page in the metrical biography of Francois Villon, poet, pimp, and pickpurse, the extended arm of his native gibbet casts the significant shadow of its fond beckoning hand" (Swinburne "New Writings" 183).⁸ In the essay Swinburne claims that Villon is the "poet laureate of all villainies" (183) and dedicates a poem to "Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name" (Lang 387). This invocation recognizes that it takes such a figure as Villon to unravel the complex process of symbolization which makes royalty so out of the common person's reach. Swinburne's invocation of the medieval criminal poet is also perceptive, and a haunting reminder of the shadowy side of royalty that according to him, only the lowest subject can process. It should be obvious that by invoking Villon, Sambourne is selecting from the right crowd of poets to craft a ballad for his "Great Queens of History."

Sambourne had drawn Swinburne in caricature for *Punch* on more than one occasion in the nineties. As a contestant for the position of poet laureate, Swinburne appears repeatedly as a candidate, even though his previous poetic output warned that in the praise of royalty he was, to say the least, a political nonconformist.⁹ In Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* (1866) for example, the "Masque de Bersabe" is Swinburne's medieval miracle play hosted by the biblical character of King David in honor of the Queen of Bathsheba. There the poet processes biblical and mythical queens, all of whom could play a cameo role in Sambourne's constellation. Herodias,

⁷ When Alfred Tennyson died in 1892, the position of poet laureate was open for election. In 1895 Oscar Wilde referred to Swinburne as being "already the Poet Laureate of England" ("Letters" 463 n.1).

⁸ See Nick Freeman (2005) and Michael Freeman (2000).

⁹ See Savory and Marks 174-179.

Aholiba, Semiramis, Cleopatra, and nineteen other queens and concubines announce their names and carnal desires as they strut across the star-studded page. In another of his poems, “*Laus Veneris*,” Swinburne praises the goddess Venus while inviting the reader to stare into the gaping pit of a Dantesque inferno where “The ladies that were queens of fair green land, / Grown grey and black now, brought unto the dust, / Soiled without raiment, clad about with sand,” are shades and ghosts condemned to the poet’s hell (*Poems and Ballads* 185-188). In hell, Swinburne’s queens are represented as shadows of the earth’s “fair green land” now “grown grey and black” by their distance from the sun, and “brought unto dust” by the passing of time and destroying flames.

Sambourne’s illustration, like Swinburne’s poem, suggests that his queenly ghosts are social creatures with an eagerness to climb to higher positions; some of the queens appear above Victoria’s throne. Six of the ancient and mythological figures who are scantily clothed with their bodies darkly shadowed, are shown above Victoria, while among the historically verifiable queens below, only “bloody” Mary and Queen Anne’s faces are shadowed. According to the norms of royal representation, Victoria, who occupies the highest position in the nation should never appear below any of her subjects, yet in the illustration the draftsman takes liberties with this procedure, perhaps intimating that their queenly stature would allow for this lapse in official protocol. Sambourne’s erotic imagination roams freest in the figures of Cleopatra and Semiramis, who appear with their breasts exposed and their arms raised in provocative gestures. Boadicea’s shield resembles a breast with an enlarged nipple, while the multiple folds in neighboring Queen Anne’s cloak suggest her fecundity. Likewise at the very top of the illustration, the billowing clouds blocking the sun’s multiple penetrating rays form into bulbous shapes, resembling shapely female forms.

The tableau drips with sexual innuendoes which suggests that, far from being below Victoria in royal status, the oldest queens inhabiting the loftier spheres perversely invert the norms of Victorian hierarchy. Located at the intersection between subjectivity and the historical, shadow queens are productive metaphors for thinking through the relationship between life and death, past and present, highest and lowest. The process of becoming a criminal may not be the same as that of becoming a queen, but in these imaginative expressions, antithetical concepts rub shoulders as they are grouped in metonymical contiguity. Arranged around Victoria, Sambourne imagines the historical queens as participating in an act of homage, yet they each have their own individual histories and records as female monarchs. The arrangement requires that some of their individual queenly properties and characteristics be thought, not separately, but through Victoria.

Absent from the illustration are two queens who feature in the first two chapters of this dissertation as Victoria's darkest and lightest shadows. Catherine de Medici and her daughter-in-law Mary Stuart, as I argue, represent respectively what might be referred to as the darkest umbra and the penumbra phases of Sambourne's "great shades from earth's long history" (289). Darker than "bloody Mary," the Italian Catherine symbolizes the massacre of St. Bartholomew, an event that eclipsed England's relations with France from the infamous date of 24 August, 1574. Catherine remained for three centuries, an English literary symbol for female tyranny and crime, a blot on the history of French queens, and a dark shadow in the English imagination.¹⁰ By contrast, Catherine's protégée Mary Stuart, fuses almost imperceptibly, as will be shown, into Victoria's symbolism. Swinburne, whose work looms large in this dissertation, published his drama on Catherine de Medici and was writing "Chastelard" (1865) the first play of his trilogy

¹⁰ See Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* (1593), George Chapman's Jacobean *The Tragedy of Bussy d'Ambois* (1603-1607), John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee's *The Duke of Guise* (1683), as well as the poems, paintings, operas, and novels discussed in chapter one.

on Mary Queen of Scots while composing a host of poetic lines in *Poems and Ballads* (1866) dedicated to femme fatales and evil queens.

To some it may seem counter-intuitive to suggest that in a period named after Queen Victoria and in which her image is so pervasive, her presence could have a shadow. Yet Sambourne's illustration draws on the metaphor of the shade to cast even the greatest of English historical queens as a revenant. Elizabeth's shadow standing at the right and just below Victoria's exalted throne, shows an unhappy Gloriana with her insect-like gauze wings holding her massive orb. On the next page of *Punch* after Sambourne's cartoon, Mr. Punch celebrates the diamond jubilee by remembering that in the early years of Victoria's reign she was the new Elizabeth: "V is for Victoria, 'the Bess of Forty-one'" (290). Modernity has darkened Gloriana in the light of Victoria's glory, and Mr. Punch declares that "now, fifty-six years later, everybody is drawing comparisons between Victoria and that earlier great English queen Elizabeth, whom she has rivalled in glory, and surpassed both in all womanly excellence and in length of reign" (290). The century came to its close with Elizabeth, the former pearly and peerless queen without shadow, is now cast in Victoria's shade.

Sambourne's illustration also unambiguously summons the image of a political martyr in his tragic ghost of Marie-Antoinette. Standing on the far left with her arms crossed over her breast as if she were perpetually lying on the Guillotine's plank, "that lovelier Marie, wed to death" (289). This figure evokes one of Charles Dickens's most powerful dream visions. In *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), the narrator sees, back through the distance of time, an executioner holding the hair of Louis Capet's beheaded wife "which had had eight weary months of imprisoned widowhood and misery, to turn it grey" (283). The figure cites Edmund Burke's

rhetorical apotheosis of the suffering queen as a royal spectacle as well as Carlyle's victim of revolution.

With all eyes on Victoria how could nineteenth-century writers countenance the notion of any other queen symbolically inhabiting or sharing her space? Though today it may seem odd to many that Victoria could possibly be a source of erotic fantasies, her subjects often manifested amorous behavior and even confessed private infatuations with her. In 1840, Dickens writes to a friend that he is "raving with love for the Queen—with a hopeless passion whose extent no tongue can tell, nor mind of man conceive" ("Letters" II: 25). Dickens's early obsession with Victoria, though only an elaborate joke, nevertheless reflects the culture's larger fascination with the spectacle of a young female monarch. Resembling a voyeur, Dickens writes of sneaking into Windsor Castle and spying on the Queen in her private chambers, thrilling with the titillation, yet prostrate with love.

Dickens's fantasy is not unlike Sambourne's photographic eye, which on one hand reveres Victoria's majesty and power, and on the other, allows secret erotic sides to emerge. A similar vigilant eye, appears in Dickens's mid-century short story "Lying Awake" (1852), in which the narrator, suffering from insomnia, lies in bed with "eyes wide open" while Victoria appears in a phantasmagoria with a common street vagrant named "Winking Charley" (159). Envisioning the Queen "attired in some very scanty dress, the deficiencies and improprieties of which have caused her great uneasiness" (161), Victoria's eroticism titillates the authorial persona's nocturnal vision. As he moves into the next phase of his dream association, the narrator becomes ambivalent as he casts Victoria down from a lofty tower to the street, and into a jailhouse. "Her Majesty" he writes, "is no stranger to a vault or firmament, of a sort of floorcloth, with an indistinct pattern distantly resembling eyes, which occasionally obtrudes itself on her

repose” (161). Metonymically, the “floorcloth” stands for the lowest social classes who are only capable of looking up at the queen from the ground. Drawing from the biblical allusion to heaven’s “vault and firmament,” Victoria is thrust even lower in rank as she is next imagined keeping company with the murderers George and Maria Manning who killed their lodger Patrick O’Donnell and were hanged in 1849. Along with the vagrant Winking Charley, Dickens’s Villon-like narrator includes the queen in this shadowy company: “It is probable that we have all three committed murders and hidden bodies” (161). Dickens’s leveling of Victoria with the common criminal is an act of the imagination not unlike Sambourne’s arrangement where she appears with “bloody” Mary, Semiramis, and Catherine the Great. Though all of Sambourne’s queens have their own stories, the illustration suggests that they have come “to hail VICTORIA’S Jubilee!” From the highest to the lowest, the tragic, erotic, criminal, imperious, and honored queens of history, crystallize around Victoria’s multi-faceted symbolism on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee.

Introduction: Victoria's Shadow Queens

This dissertation explores Victorian representations of historical queens as projections of ambivalence and anxieties about Queen Victoria. Using the metaphor of the shadow as a critical methodology, I explore the gaps and discontinuities that haunt Victoria's reign as British writers and artists processed symbols of queenship. Focusing on representations of four historical queens—Catherine de Medici, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth Tudor, and Marie-Antoinette—this project seeks to establish a literary genealogy concentrating on these queens as literary shadows with figural, and spectral qualities that translate unevenly across linguistic, cultural, religious, and historical lines. The four queens set the parameters and limits of my study while the premise of my argument is that they all figure as shadows of Queen Victoria. The individual chapters explore a mix of canonical and non-canonical writers, a structure allowing me to recast my constellation of historical queens into a new light; bringing unfamiliar and long forgotten texts into the discussion while at the same time emphasizing Queen Victoria's immense imaginative sway.

I. "*Shadows only of royalty*": *Historical Queens in the Victorian Imaginary*

I wish you to see that both well-directed moral training and well-chosen reading lead to a possession of power over the ill-guided and illiterate, which is, according to the measure of it, in the truest sense, kingly; conferring indeed the purest kingship that can exist among men: too many other kingships (however distinguished by invisible insignia or material power) being either spectral, or tyrannous; — spectral—that is to say, aspects and shadows only of royalty, hollow as death, and which only the 'likeness of a kingly crown have on': or else—tyrannous—that is to say, substituting their own will for the law of justice and love by which all true kings rule.
—John Ruskin, "Of Queens' Gardens" (1864) 69.

I take the term shadow from the opening section of John Ruskin's influential essay "Of Queens' Gardens," where he addresses a group of Manchester women on the meaning of royal symbolization while referring to a spectral image of kingship with "aspects and shadows" of

royalty (68-9). As an art critic, Ruskin knew a great deal about shadows and how they operate in a patterned relationship with a body that is the source of light casting its varied forms on objects. Yet in applying the shadow metaphor simultaneously to the monarchy and the gendered sphere of domesticity, Ruskin emphasizes the amorphous and genderless aspects of these shadow figures from the past. For Ruskin it is not only the kings and queens of the past who haunt the present, but specters of “ill-guided and illiterate” subjects also threaten the “well-directed moral training” of the nation (69). Though Ruskin uses the metaphor of the shadow to address tyranny and misrule, he does not mention Queen Victoria, neither does he countenance literature on the historical queens her subjects were producing for mass consumption. This dissertation addresses the telling oversight in Ruskin’s essay by focusing on the literary symbols of the shadow queens he ignores.

Ruskin indicates that in their misguided appropriation of the insignia of royalty, Victoria’s subjects have failed to understand the relationship between symbols and what they symbolize. True kingship for Ruskin is neither spectral nor shadowy.¹¹ He establishes the role of rulers by reference to what he deems a true etymology: “Rex et Regina—Roi et Reine—‘Right-doers’” (89). Kings and queens should be both figures of light and proper examples of right rule.¹² According to Ruskin, all of Victoria’s subjects must learn this lesson so that they can understand their place in the social life of the nation.¹³ Crowning wives as domestic queens, Ruskin asserts that their homes and hearths are as royal palaces, and he claims that “wherever a

¹¹ Ruskin draws on Milton’s anti-monarchical rhetoric in *Paradise Lost* (II: 673) when evoking shadows of royalty who only “likeness of a kingly crown have on” (69).

¹² Ruskin’s uncanny doubling of the words “spectral” and “tyrannous” stands beside its uncanny counterparts in “kingly,” “crown,” “royalty,” and “rule.” The essay never clearly articulates what this “hollow as death” spectral shadow is.

¹³ Ruskin was asking the middle class women of Manchester to rule and to assume their duties of sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision, but he does have a negative shadow figure in mind; one of his “idle and careless queens” who leave “misrule and violence to work their will among men” (90).

true wife comes, this home is always around her. The stars only may be over her head; the glow-worm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot; but home is yet wherever she is” (78). These domestic queens are England’s true sources of light, and their beauty “cannot be too powerful, nor shed its sacred light too far” (78-9). Earlier in the essay when chiding those who hold “foolishly wrong” notions about the gendered spheres, Ruskin also draws on the metaphor of shadows in rejecting “the idea that woman is only the shadow and attendant image of her lord” adding for emphasis, “as if he could be helped effectively by a shadow” (70). In the combination of “shadow and attendant,” Ruskin uses his artist’s understanding of how a shadow operates as a complementary to light, while recognizing that an object is determined as much by the shadows it casts as by its substance and singularity. Though shadows are transient and insubstantial, for Ruskin they are crucial to the way objects are seen as they change in the moment.¹⁴ By grouping the word shadow with attendant, Ruskin draws the line between aesthetic appreciation and the way he regards women’s subordination to men. But in overlooking Victoria and omitting reference to any historical queen, the essay falls short of grounding its lofty ideals in anything real.

In assessing Victorian literature about historical queens, my claims rest on the importance of Victoria’s reign as her shadow falls on Victorian literary, historical, and visual representations of historical queens. I am arguing that Victoria’s substance stands behind the dead historical queens but that their shadows fill out her character. While focusing on Victorian figurations of these historical queens, this project seeks to establish a literary genealogy by placing each queen in dialogue with Victoria. In this way I resist a totalizing view of Victoria’s status as a queen regnant and offer instead, a series of discontinuous and competing literary, visual and historical

¹⁴ See Weltman (2007) 41, and Bloomer (1985).

representations. The way I conceptualize historical queens as shadows is by drawing on the productivity of the metaphor as it appears in Ruskin's essay. To call historical queens shadows may seem obvious because the patriarchal structure of Victorian gender ideology was entrenched in misogyny, yet Ruskin uses the metaphor of the shadow to open up the possibility of differences in representation. In his mythopoetic discussions of queens, Ruskin sees qualities and differences that are not obvious in other monolithic Victorian stereotypes of women in power. Partially inspired by Ruskin rather than approaching the queens as historical persons, my work concentrates on their symbolic, figural, and spectral qualities that translate unevenly across linguistic, cultural, religious, and historical lines. The mix of canonical and non-canonical writers recasts a familiar constellation of French and English queens into a new light and brings unfamiliar and forgotten writers into the discussion. Moreover, by stepping outside of the literary canon to explore texts that are no longer read, I find new questions to ask about Victoria.

Though Ruskin's mythography may have been empowering and even ennobling to Victorian women and men, other writers and artists drew upon historical interpretations of dead French and English queens to express ambivalent feelings and political anxieties about Victoria. When novelist Anthony Trollope reviewed *Sesames and Lilies* for *The Westminster Review* (1865), he noted that in Ruskin's essay, "the queens' gardens in question lie round neither Buckingham Palace nor Windsor Castle" (633) while declaring that the book's opinions of the "general duties of women in England, are simply rodomontade" (635). Duly praising the essay's "surpassing beauty" and "charm of exquisite verbal music," Trollope nevertheless adds the proviso "that nothing is to be learned from them by any woman living or about to live" (635). Trollope's attitude anticipates the views of his character Lady Carbury, whose fictional *Criminal Queens* features in the opening chapter of his novel *The Way We Live Now* (1874). In Trollope's

satire on literary puffery, anachronism, and hypocrisy, Lady Matilda Carbury's sensational historiography assembles queens from the past to her literary tribunal. In her moral indignation, Lady Carbury accuses and judges each queen of committing horrendous crimes, but above all, for having "consented to be playthings without being wives" (98).¹⁵ Here are the queens that Ruskin leaves out of his essay. The ostensible purpose of Trollope's novel, as he later claims in *An Autobiography* (1883), was to expose the vices and dishonesty of the seventies (354). Yet by opening with Lady Carbury's *Criminal Queens*—which produces a list of nine female monarchs deemed guilty of corruption and various crimes—Trollope incorporates their symbolism into his novel at a period when Republican clubs were proliferating around Britain.¹⁶ Through Lady Carbury, Trollope provides an alternative figuration to Ruskin's idealized queens, offering an account much closer to the historical narratives so pervasive in the period. I argue that the figuration of criminal queens, is only one example among many through which nineteenth-century writers were able to put back into the queenly equation, aspects and shadows not countenanced in Ruskin's philosophy. In this grammatical configuration the two distinct terms "criminal" and "queen" offer a stark contrast, the same connotation of the highest and lowest realms of social existence realized in my frontispiece from Sambourne's illustration "Great Queens of History."¹⁷ Drawing on Lady Carbury's array of historical queens, I argue in this

¹⁵ Almost a decade after his novel was published Trollope comments in his *Autobiography* (1883) that "Lady Carbury's literary efforts are, I am sorry to say, such as are too frequently made" (356).

¹⁶ The first years of the decade witnessed the formation of eighty-five Republican Clubs as antimonarchical sentiment reached a crescendo, and though it is not my purpose to examine Trollope's politics, the association of queens with corruption gives voice to widespread anxieties about Victoria (Taylor 80-109).

¹⁷ Where Ruskin's literary figures are drawn from Sir Walter Scott's novels, Shakespeare, Dante, and Greek myth, Linley Sambourne's illustration of dead queens shares more with Trollope who allows only real ancient and historical queens to gather around Victoria's throne.

dissertation that their symbolism operates as a touchstone for measuring the psychological impact of representations on Victoria's perceived darker sides.

Whereas the opening lines of Ruskin's essay voices ambivalence by conjuring royal shadows, Trollope's satire lends another productive, if perverse critical insight on the century's literature about queens. Understood psychologically, Ruskin's essay and Trollope's fiction initiate a set of questions about how Victoria's symbolism stood in relation to the queens her subjects discussed. Sambourne's illustration crowns this dissertation, but Ruskin and Trollope serve as bookends. These two authors hold very disparate views on queenship, and when read side by side, they provide a larger framework for discussing the multiple ways Victorians explored shadow queens in their literary production and consumption.

II. *Queen Victoria: Critical Engagements and Contexts*

The metaphor of the shadow has often been invoked in critical discussions of historical queens. As literary figures or tropes that embody aspects of female monarchy, Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth appear as shadows of Elizabeth and Catherine de Medici, while Clytemnestra and Medea at times embody the darker sides of Mary Stuart or Marie-Antoinette.¹⁸ Because this dissertation focuses on Victoria as the royal figure who casts her shadow on the literature of her period, and because I consider how an entire constellation of historical queens can be read in her shadow, this section examines critical literature about her imagery.¹⁹ My intervention in the larger scholarly discussion about figurations of queenship in Victorian literature begins with the

¹⁸ See Julia M. Walker's *The Elizabethan Icon, 1603-2003* (2004) where all of the chapter's titles include the word "shadow." See also Walker (1998), Morris (1969), Samet (2003), Lewis (2001), Shrank (2010), and Bindman (1989).

¹⁹ Though Victoria has also been considered as a shadow of the nine-day queen Lady Jane Grey and Catherine of Aragon. For Catherine of Aragon see Georgianna Ziegler's essay "Re-imagining a Renaissance Queen: Catherine of Aragon among the Victorians" in Levin (2003). See also Rosemary Mitchell's "The Nine Lives of the Nine Days Queen: From Religious Heroine to Romantic Victim" (Felber 2007).

critical work published by scholars who focus on Victoria. The critics examined here offer representations of Queen Victoria that resist totalizing statements about her pervasive presence while establishing a critical distance from normative historical and biographical approaches. Adrienne Munich's interdisciplinary framework in *Queen Victoria's Secrets* (1996) for example, dismantles Victoria's status as a domestic icon, and one of the starting points for my dissertation is her claim that this queen's "symbolic images collect and collide during her long reign and beyond it to our moment. Fascination with Queen Victoria's life continues to produce new biographies, each one claiming to capture an essential truth" (Munich 12). The keywords here for my project are "symbol" and "fascination," two of the critical tools I use to understand the symbolic process at work in the construction of Victoria's shadow queens. Whereas Munich's book explores the multifaceted and often contradictory symbolism of Victoria's excessive dimensions as monarch, mother, widow, an erotic young woman, a frumpy dresser, a dominatrix, and even a dog, critic Gayle Houston presents Victoria in light of her symbolism as a writer. In *Royalties, The Queen and Victorian Writers* (1999), Houston considers the contradictions engendered by Victoria's status as a female monarch exploring the "intertextuality of Victoria and Victorian writers," and specifically "the gendering of the professional writer, as well as the dynamics of the feminization of the age" (3). In my readings of literature on historical queens, I consider the impact of Houston's claims about the "connection between political and literary representations" (4). Female Victorian writers such as Lady Caroline Norton, Dinah Craik, and Margaret Oliphant turned to historical queens for both negative and positive sources of female literary agency. While competing with the widely-disseminated negative views of female monarchs they found in literature by Carlyle and Froude, these female authors take Victoria into consideration as a positive source of influence. I consider how the literature these women wrote

about historical queens played a significant role in shifting the dominant gender ideology from the female as housewife, to the newly empowered “literary queen” of Ruskin’s national garden (4).

Ruskin’s views of female empowerment are slippery, and they should also be balanced in reference to negative and critical appraisals of his work, lest he too should be considered as a Victorian monolith. Trollope’s dismissive review which referred to the essay’s ideals as “rodomontade” (635), provides a much needed antidote to Ruskin’s ideals, and Margaret Homans’s deconstructive study *Royal Representations: Queen Victoria and British Culture, 1837-1876* (1998) shares a similar distrust within a feminist framework. Homans examines the textual play of absence and presence in Victoria’s variegated symbolism. In chapter two of her book, Homans turns to Ruskin’s essay noting that “the conspicuous absence of queens represented as actively wielding power in the texts they inhabit suggests Ruskin’s aversion to queenly political power and his need to evacuate from the term queen any referent in historical monarchy” (73). Homans is certainly correct about the “conspicuous absence of queens” in the essay, but rather than singling out Ruskin’s “aversion” to female monarch, I argue that his text is symptomatic of widespread anxieties about powerful females, and that his invocation of the metaphor of shadows is more complex than it first appears.²⁰ While claiming that Ruskin’s “interpellation of multiple Victorian queens seems both to respond and to confirm Victoria’s absence,” Homans adds that “for Victoria’s powerful presence to be vitiated through her multiplication would then in turn disable the claim that she is an enabling, empowering model when she is reproduced in the fiction about women that abound in the period” (72). This insight propels my thesis that Victoria is casting her shadow on multiple queens, but I also build on

²⁰ Homans writes that in December 1864 “the British public imagination was engaged with particular acuteness in the project of creating new Victorias to replace the one missing for three years” (Homans 70).

Homans's suggestion that Victoria both embodied and performed the various contradictions her position assumed as a private and a public monarch.

Particularly useful for my argument that Victoria's expansive shadow falls on historical queens, is Homans's reading of Victoria's reluctant proroguing of Parliament in 1866, five years after the death of Prince Albert. She claims that the grieving Victoria "does not fail to perform; rather she dramatically performs, in her own person, her reluctance to perform" (64), an idea that I flesh out by turning to Victorian accounts of Mary Stuart's abdication and execution.²¹

Considering the absence of historical queens in Ruskin's essay, I also concur with Homans that by excluding images of queens whom Victorians feared as negative and dangerous examples of female monarchy, he paradoxically evacuates the term "queen" of any power.²² Historical queens are the shadowy figures that lie outside of his argument and beyond his queens' gardens, and I claim that they need to be addressed. Nevertheless, Ruskin's attentiveness to shadows in the opening lines of the essay suggests a starting point because the metaphor is complementary rather than exclusionist. Though Homans, like Ruskin, does not discuss historical queens at any length in her book, her claim inspired this dissertation's project of shedding light on Victoria's shadows.

In their discussions of Catherine de Medici, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth and Marie-Antoinette, Victorians introduce complex allusions to typology (Carlyle), the "feminine principle" (Swinburne), philology (Kingsley), and abstract concepts derived from obscure etymologies (Ruskin). In cases where Victorian authors derive terms from classical *topoi* and myth, I have

²¹ Along with Homans's representation of Victoria's absence and presence, I also consider Elaine Hadley's argument in *Melodramatic Tactics* (1995), that Victoria "ultimately deployed the melodramatic mode in her theatrical progressions through London" during the jubilee celebrations (6).

²² According Homans, Ruskin counters the negative shadows from the past by a process of multiplication in which he selects female characters from the works of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Sir Walter Scott to provide endless models of female agency who operate under Victoria's influence.

relied on myth criticism to tease out obscure references. In her study of Ruskin's mythology of gender and queenly mythographies, Sharon Weltman examines how "Victorians often turned to myth when seeking ways to express gender or sexual possibilities that their own time or culture or religion disallowed" (4). In particular, Weltman shows how Ruskin mobilizes the powers of queenship to shape culture and subvert gender norms.²³ Victorian myth-making is also the central theme of Nina Auerbach's *Woman and the Demon* (1982), and though she does not discuss historical queens, she is aware that "actual queens and queenly women proliferate in literature and art" (36) while subdividing these royal mythical figures into visible and hidden queens. Auerbach's discussion of fascination and the role of the face as a symbol of demonic female power in the Victorian imagination complements my readings of historical queens as shadows.²⁴

Finally, in each chapter I include short fragments from Victoria's own writing to consider the ways she recorded her private sentiments about historical queens. Though it would be impossible to say that her subjects were consciously following her opinions, her voice adds new dimensions to each queen's symbolism. My use of biographical materials resists one-dimensional views of Victoria's significance even as I consider how often her opinionated, sentimental, melancholic, and melodramatic journal and diary entries can be. Biographer Lynne Vallone's study of Victoria's girlhood in *Becoming Victoria* (2001) offers the best antidote to the rhetorical gravitas and serious approach of official biographies.²⁵ Commenting on Elizabeth

²³ In particular Weltman's discussion of Jane Harrison's matriarchal mythography has been useful in exploring novelist Charlotte Yonge's superimposition of the Demeter and Persephone myth onto Mary Stuart and her counterfactual daughter. I have also relied on Antony Harrison (1979; 1987), Margot Louis (1990; 2009), Cynthia Eller (2011), and Eric C. Brown (1999) for explanations of Victorian myth-making.

²⁴ Auerbach shows that the familiar myth of an infantilized Victorian womanhood is only one side of the coin. On the shadow, or obverse side is the irrepressible demon.

²⁵ I draw on many official biographies of Victoria including Esher and Benson (1912), Longford (1964), Weintraub (1987), Charlot (1991), and St. Aubyn (1992).

Langford's opinion that "biography is too important to become a playground for fantasies," Vallone claims that "we may desire biographies to deliver direct access to unmediated lives, but that biographers 'fantasize' their subjects seems hardly debatable" and "the fact that every biography tells the story of its author as well as its subject is one of its chief pleasures" (xvii). My inclusion of Victoria's reactions to places where historical queens lived, to visual representations of queens, and to her opinions about them draws on Vallone's insight about the relationship between fantasy and biography. The same approach to fantasy applies to my use of Lytton Strachey's psychological and biographical studies *Queen Victoria* (1921) and *Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History* (1928). Strachey's views on both of these queens, provides key insights for my theoretical engagement with shadow queens, but I argue that the power of his approach resides in his keen sense of what it meant to live under Victoria's rule.²⁶ Moreover, Strachey sometimes echoes opinions about Queen Elizabeth from the collective biographies of Victorian female historians such as the Agnes Strickland published.

During Victoria's reign the fashion for writing collective biographies of historical queens emerged as a literary phenomenon. Though my chapters are primarily concerned with the way queens function as literary symbols, I provide introductory sections explaining how these biographies worked in tandem with novels and other literature to construct the way historical queens functioned in the Victorian sphere of collective memory. In these sections I consider the ways that female historians such as Strickland countered and at times reinforced the views of the patriarchal historians James Anthony Froude and Carlyle. Lynette Felber's collection of essays in *Clio's Daughters: British Women Making History, 1790-1899* (2007) explores how female

²⁶ The Bloomsbury enclave extends to Virginia Woolf, James and Alix Strachey as well. Strachey's Freudian approach to historical figures drew Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic attention in his theoretical formulation "il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel," discussed in chapters one and three.

historiographies of queens “allows interrogation of gender roles by contesting the conventional separation of women’s private and public lives” (18). Similarly Alison Booth in *How to Make it as a Woman: Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present* (2004), concentrates on “prosopographies” of queens noting that in these collective biographies “Victoria never appears as a bad queen. Rather than exemplifying the temptations of wealth and power or the vulnerability of her sex, Victoria demonstrates judicious discipline and domestic virtue” (Booth 253).²⁷ Booth’s study emphasizes how the Victorian prosopographies set Victoria apart from the other queens.

In all of the above mentioned studies Queen Victoria variously functions as an overdetermined symbol, a writer; the representation of royalty performing contradiction, and a myth-engendering female in the Victorian imagination. Each of these critics in turn creates a particular constellation of Victoria’s powers while considering different aspects of her reign. By contrast, not much has been written about the way Victoria’s image changes when viewed from the vantage point of foreign queens, specifically the ways they held power as regents, consorts, queens in exile, and queens regnant.²⁸ In *High and Mighty Queens*, Carole Levin, Debra Barrett-Graves, and Jo Eldridge Carney claim that

stories of earlier women often had as unmentioned shadows the parallels with the contemporary sixteenth-century queens. But while the debate over Queenship reflected questions about the nature of womankind in general, for women who actually held power,

²⁷ *How to Make it as a Woman: Collective Biographical History from Victoria to the Present* (2004).

²⁸ Recent studies of the political symbolism of medieval and early modern periods have shown how Victorians were active in recuperating and documenting the lives of these “she-wolves.” Several examples of scholarly work from a feminist lens include Helen Castor’s *She Wolves: The Women who Ruled England before Elizabeth* (2010), Norton (2008), Wellman (2013), Hopkins (2002), and Dixon (2002).

there was another kind of issue at work: how to establish and maintain authority as a woman in power. (Levin 4)

What these scholars observe about sixteenth-century women in power applies even more forcefully in the Victorian period when historians such as Froude and Carlyle manipulated and treated the anti-gynocratic rhetoric found in John Knox's "First Blast" as historically-verifiable truth and sound moral precedent. In my presentations of these historians I show how their male anxieties about female power surface through representations of Victoria's shadow queens, but also how this sentiment spills over into anti-monarchical and republican thought.

As I argued earlier, in deploying the metaphor of shadows, Ruskin's dialectical method juxtaposes the dark historical record of kings and tyrants with Victoria's queenship. Published only four years after Prince Albert's death at the beginning of Victoria's prolonged period of mourning, Ruskin's essay provides a political context for thinking about her queenship. In counseling the women of England to become queens, Ruskin seizes on Victoria's silent abdication as the occasion to mobilize an imagined community of women who will fill the void opened by the queen's withdrawal.²⁹ Victoria's absence from the public should be considered in the context of how historical queens appear in anti-monarchical literature. In *'Down with the Crown': British Anti-Monarchism and Debates about Royalty since 1790* (1999), historian Antony Taylor reconsiders Victorian anti-monarchism claiming that it "fulfilled an important social and cultural function within radicalism," and that such negative images "could be interpreted in a series of subversive and unconventional ways to ridicule and deride, rather than to praise and adulate royalty" (17-18). By reconsidering republicanism, Chartism, and

²⁹ See Homans (1998) 72, and Weltman (1998) 114.

Cromwellian radicalism, Taylor suggests that these political influences were widely read. I argue that anti-monarchical sentiment focusing on Victoria helped to shape representations of historical queens in texts by Carlyle, Dickens, Froude, and Swinburne. Though Taylor overlooks literature about foreign queens, he provides a useful reconsideration of the scholarly claim that Victorian republicanism offered the single greatest challenge to the monarchy.

Finally, my argument that Victoria generates and casts shadows on representations of historical queens must consider the vexed problem of periodization. The terms “Victorian” and “Victorianism” have recently become one of the embattled zones of contemporary thought on the period in question. Because this dissertation’s claims have to do with the monarch and her subject’s perceptions of her reign in light of historical queens, my use of the term Victorian is specific and a necessary category for this study. John Lucas, Joseph Bristow, and other critics who dismiss the term “Victorian” as a period designator have argued that the term is useless in addressing the expanse of the long nineteenth century.³⁰ As I argue, these critics often overlook equally valid reasons for keeping Victoria in the term Victorian. In arguing for the importance of overlooked Victorian literature about queens, I draw on feminist critical interventions that support the idea of keeping Queen Victoria central to studies of the period.³¹

III. Royal Genealogy and Spectrality: Theory and Method

In developing my claim that historical queens represent Queen Victoria’s shadows, I trace a genealogy of anti-monarchical thought in Victorian literature which uses symbolism of queenship to inform the reading public of past royal abuses and to cast shadows on royal

³⁰ See Lucas (1998, 2000, and 2001), Bristow (2004), Armstrong (2001), and Pollock (1994).

³¹ See Curtis (1966), Shires (1992), Homans (1998), Langland (Homans and Munich 1997), Langbauer (2000), and Hewitt (2006). Elizabeth Langland splits the term “Victorianism” from “Englishness” as analytic concepts, which is an important point I raise in chapter three when considering the Victorian coining of the term “Elizabethan.”

predecessors. I place Victoria in dialogue with her shadows by tracing the genealogy of their constellation as a form of spectrality. This dissertation combines Foucault's method of genealogy with feminist, psychoanalytic, performance studies, art history, and political theory to find an interdisciplinary language to talk about monarchy. Victorian accounts of historical queens often labeled these women as criminals, and this opprobrium raises the question of how such cultural perceptions were even possible.

i. Criminal Queens: Foucault's Royal Genealogies

In what ways do Victorians project negative images about Victoria through their representations of shadow queens? My method asks questions about the cultural dynamics and structures of thinking that allowed so many Victorians to write consistently horrific and hysterical accounts of queens such as Catherine de Medici, Elizabeth I, Mary Stuart, and Marie-Antoinette. One answer to the intriguing and suggestive question of queenly criminality lies in the predictable answers that traditional Freudian psychoanalysis would yield, namely, penis envy (Electra complex), frustrated ambition (Lady Macbeth), revenge for rape (Judith of Bethulia), or castration anxiety (Medusa). However fascinating such explorations can be, and I do use psychoanalytic explanations, my larger claim does not rely uniquely on these Freudian paradigms, but rather thinks through the problem of how such ideas keep surfacing in Victorian cultural representations. What was it about Victoria's presence on the throne that led so many of her subjects to bring forward representations of female monarchs as criminals?

One way of looking at this problem is to focus on how literary representations participate in the larger culture's definitions of the two categories of royalty and criminality. Michel Foucault introduces the concept of a "royal genealogy" in lecture four of *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975* (96) to trace the uneven development of French anti-

monarchical thought back to the pamphlet literature that circulated in the French public sphere during the revolutionary period. He asserts that “with the Revolution and especially after 1792, the theme of the kinship or possible connection between the criminal and the sovereign is found in a much more pointed, violent, and immediate form” than it had in the previous history of the ancien regime (93).³² In Jacobin literature, Foucault observes that “all human monsters are descendants of Louis XVI” (95), and while Jacobins were busy coding their legal arguments into law, popular pamphlets, theater and caricature pointed to the monstrous origins of royalty. In their attempts to justify regicide, the Jacobin leadership inverted the hierarchies of the *ancien regime*, creating grotesque fabrications about the origins of their former oppressors. In particular, Foucault asserts that “the human monster crystallizes around Marie-Antoinette” whose foreign birth exemplified for pamphleteers, a “wild beast with regard to the social body of the country in which she reigns” (97). Drawing attention to a peculiar narrative contained in A. R. Mopinot’s *Effrayante histoire des crimes horribles qui ne sont communs qu’entre les familles des rois* (“The frightening history of horrible crimes found only among the families of kings” [1793]), Foucault finds here a “genealogy of royalty,” an account of the descent of royal figures. According to Mopinot’s history, kings and queens evolved from primitive hunters who

transformed themselves into wild beasts and turned against those they were protecting.

They in turn attacked the herds and families they should have been protecting. They were the wolves of mankind. They were the tigers of primitive society. Kings are nothing else

³² In *Discipline and Punish* (1995) Foucault elaborates on Ernst Kantorowicz’s study of medieval political and theological theory *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957) claiming that “in the darkest region of the political field the condemned man represents the symmetrical, inverted figure of the king” (29). In *Abnormal* however, the king and queen are derived from “effective” histories of monstrosity and predatory animals (tigers and hyenas) which he traces into nineteenth-century discourses of the abnormal.

but these tigers, these hunters of earlier times who took the place of the wild beasts prowling around the first societies. (97)

Mopinot's history covers multiple sites of inversion as the royal figures become animals and devour those they are supposed to protect. In an astonishing leaping from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, Foucault claims, that "these [royal] figures of monstrosity, of sexual and cannibalistic monstrosity, were the points of organization, the starting points of all legal medicine" (102). In the second half of the nineteenth century, discursive practices of psychiatry and criminology identified and derived modern forms of aberrant and asocial behavior from this earlier derisive literature on royalty.³³

Citing later nineteenth century cases of criminals and shadowy figures inhabiting "the borders of psychiatry," Foucault even finds a place in his genealogy for the legendary Jack the Ripper, who "had the advantage of not only disemboweling prostitutes but of probably being a relative of Queen Victoria, bringing together the monstrosity of the people and the monstrosity of the king in this blurred figure" (102). Though his associations appear outrageous, I argue that Foucault is not being disingenuous or naïve, rather he is pointing to the discursive practice which allows for such connections to survive.³⁴ The larger point Foucault makes here is how these "effective histories," or genealogies return in later discursive practices of criminal anthropology, as when the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso creates the category of the "atavistic born criminal" in *The Female Offender* (1895). Lombroso claims that "history has recorded the

³³ Foucault's "genealogy of royalty" connects the "moral monster" (meaning the monarch as tyrant) and the revolutionary people: "The monster is no longer the king but the revolutionary people who are the mirror image of the bloodthirsty monarch" (Foucault 98).

³⁴ Foucault continually reasserts the speciousness of spurious accusations against royal figures. See Stowell (1970) who claimed to have identified the infamous Jack the Ripper as none other than Queen Victoria's grandson, Albert Victor, the Duke of Clarence. In the 1970s, Stowell's risible accusation quickly migrated into popular myth, and though Foucault does not mention Stowell, his point is an important one because he draws attention to how the criminologist's efforts at detection sometimes lead them (erroneously) straight back to royalty.

mingled immense cruelty and lust of women who have enjoyed royal or popular power,” providing as instances the Roman matrons “Agrippina, Fulvia, Messalina, down to Elizabeth of Russia, Théroigne de Méricourt, and the female cannibals of Paris and Palermo” (149). Among these examples Lombroso includes an empress of Russia and a female revolutionary leader showing that he is not specifically interested in incriminating royalty. As Foucault would have it, Lombroso’s discourse draws on the same genealogy previously found in Jacobin literature. Indeed, when Lombroso considers Catherine de Medici in *The Female Offender*, he concludes from an analysis of her handwriting that she is a “born criminal” (130).

Foucault’s genealogical method attends to the gaps, disruptions, and discontinuities in historical records, and I expand on his notion of “genealogies of royalty” by associating it with what Lynn Hunt calls “the standard comparison” (“Eroticism” 120), also derived from pamphlet literature in which “wicked” queens of history form constellations of anti-monarchical thought.³⁵ In Hunt’s “standard comparison,” queens appear as if they were beads on a rosary. Before Marie-Antoinette, as the comparative litany goes, there was Messalina; Agrippina, Queens Fredegund, Catherine de Medici and Mary Stuart.³⁶ Each queen appears only slightly different from the next, and thinking about one queen barely changes the way one thinks about another queen. Whereas Foucault writes of a Jacobin genealogy of royalty, Hunt observes a similar genealogical method at work in the Jacobin’s “horrific transformations of the queen’s body; the body that had once been denounced for its debauchery and disorderliness becomes in turn, the dangerous beast, the

³⁵ Foucault and Hunt both mention Louise de Keralio’s *Crimes des Reines de France* (“Crimes of the Queens of France” 1792) published by Louis Robert Prudhomme which traces Marie-Antoinette’s crimes back to Catherine de Medici. Katherine Crawford observes that the Jacobins compared Marie-Antoinette to Catherine: “the revolutionaries had to destroy the potent tradition that Marie-Antoinette represented. The modern Médicis had to be the last of her kind” (198), and “on October 16, 1793, Marie-Antoinette became a specter of the past in which queen mothers as regents protected not just their sons, but the institution of monarchy itself” (199).

³⁶ See Lynn Hunt’s article “The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette” (1991). See also Pierre St-Amand “Terrorizing Marie Antoinette” (1994) which provides an analysis of Marie Antoinette’s “impossible image” as the queen becomes “the scandal of representation itself” (St-Amand 391).

cunning spider, the virtual vampire who sucks the blood of the French” (123). The monotony of these invidious comparisons in Jacobin pamphlet literature return in the second half of the nineteenth century in both criminology and sexology. Thus the German sexologist Krafft-Ebing would draw on a similar list for his examples of sexual perversions in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886):

In history there are examples of famous women who, to some extent, had sadistic tendencies. These Messalinas are particularly characterized by their thirst for power, lust, and cruelty. Among them are Valeria Messalina herself, and Catherine de Medici, the instigator of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, whose greatest pleasure was found in having the ladies of her court whipped before her eyes. (88)

What Krafft-Ebing identifies in Catherine de Medici’s supposed sadistic perversions had already appeared in Swinburne’s play “The Queen Mother” (1861) which, as I argue in Chapter one, is an example of Victorian anti-monarchical literature. Swinburne and other Victorians wrote narratives of wicked queens that are literary genealogies of royalty, and my readings show how these spectral figures haunt the sites of Victorian discursive practices such as psychiatry, criminology, and sexology. Both Foucault and Hunt draw attention to literary genealogies proliferating and intersecting with popular myth and fable to disparage the image of royalty. But as I argue, the Victorians were adept at drawing their own configurations of historical queens to voice ambivalence. Foucault’s insight offers a method for understanding the connection between Jacobin and Victorian anti-monarchical discourses that endure throughout Victoria’s reign.

ii. Spectral Constellations

It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.

—Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, [N3,1], 463.

While Foucault's genealogical method helps me to understand how Victorian writers often situate shadow queens in discursive practices of royalty and criminality, Walter Benjamin's similar conception of a nonlinear history of spectral and phantasmagoric images enables a complementary method for reading Victorian representation of shadow queens. Eager to break the continuum of history he finds in totalizing narratives of progress found in nineteenth-century historiographies, Benjamin, like Foucault, turns to the revolutionary Jacobins for his inspiration. In "Theses for a Philosophy of History," Benjamin writes that

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled full by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]. Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with a now time which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood the revolution.

("Illuminations" 261)

Unlike Foucault, Benjamin is not interested in tracing a series of discursive practices back to murky origins in Jacobin anti-monarchical pamphlets. Rather, in this passage, his conceptualization of fashion as a way to disrupt "homogeneous empty time" (261) and "leap into the past," is reminiscent of Victorian historical methods which likewise disrupt the continuum of history.³⁷ By rejecting the sequential ordering of history, Benjamin's method makes the past,

³⁷ Carlyle and Swinburne both re-produce history dramatically, as something that should be seen, and in their representations of queens they emphasize visibility and fashion. For Carlyle's historical method see Davis, Mirzoeff (2002 and 2006), Schoch (1999), and Tarr (1982). In a letter to his mother which he wrote while composing "Chastelard," Swinburne explains that he had been researching an inventory of Mary Stuart's gowns which "showed

present, and future inform each other. What I draw from Benjamin's method is first, the way he conceives of history as breaking and interrupting linear time through the visual, and second, his theory of images and fashion. Benjamin's treatment of fashion resonates with the ways Victorians resurrect historical queens while at times refashioning them in Victoria's image. Likewise, at the top of Sambourne's visual history of progress in the jubilee illustration, Queen Victoria presides as the cynosure of culture and civilization, while her spectral shadows are images of time fashioned in distinct periods of the past. On the other hand, Sambourne buries a second perverse message by suggesting that, whereas Victoria is characterized by a progressive narrative culminating in the ever advancing civilized order of imperial Britain, the other queens are shadows of her refinement. In Benjamin's terms the shadow queens would form a constellation.

Benjamin's historical materialism considers what historicism's progressive narrative leaves out: the marginalized, the fragmentary, and the debris left over from the wreckage of time. He gives the term "constellation" to this abstract notion of historical fragments, and his historian focuses on the debris left by the catastrophe of history, and "grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one" ("Illuminations" 263). Benjamin's historical project is also complementary to the ways Victorians resurrected historical queens as fragments from the past, sometimes as negative stereotypes (Catherine de Medici), and in other instances as lost and tragic histories (Mary Stuart and Marie-Antoinette), or memories of past glories (Elizabeth I).³⁸ In the literature I study, the shadow queens burst into the Victorian present,

she had an eye for painting" ("Letters" I: 35). For a discussion of Benjamin's thought on fashion and its relation to history, see Brevik-Zender (2011).

³⁸ In Carlyle's radicalism, Froude's anti-gynocratic history, and Swinburne's complex blend of Jacobite loyalism and republican poetics, each writer brings fragments of the lives of queens into their discussions as they work out their political thoughts.

flashing on the horizon powerful images of female monarchy that trouble the period's dominant gender norms. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin announces the critical enterprise his attention to images and fragments realizes: ““To educate the image-making medium within us, raising it to a stereoscopic and dimensional seeing into the depths of historical shadows”” (458). Though Benjamin is quoting from another critic here, his method of using images to evoke the past as spectral constellations informs my project as well.³⁹

In order to bridge the gaps between Foucault and Benjamin's methods, I draw on sociologist Avery Gordon's notion in *Ghostly Matters* (2008), that the present is always haunted by the past through what is left out, what disappears, and what is marginalized. In her sociological method Gordon asserts that “the ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life” (8). Drawing on Gordon's notion of a “dense site” where social life joins history and subjectivity, I turn to feminist psychoanalysis to explore anxieties and ambivalence that Victoria's subjects express in their literature about these queens. In the literature under review here, Victorian representations of shadow queens evoke not just personal but also cultural ambivalence. Each queen generates an emotional response that predominates in the Victorian sphere of public memory registering as affect.

Gordon suggests an additional way to account for the incessant and almost compulsory return of the shadow queen in Victorian narratives. Where Benjamin describes a dialectical process of filling the present with the past through literary montage and blasting, Gordon observes that “blasting might be conceived as entering through a different door, the door of the uncanny, the door of the fragment, the door of the shocking parallel” (66). Complementing

³⁹ Benjamin quotes from Rudolf Borchardt's *Epilegomena zu Dante* (1923). Benjamin's citation practice here and throughout *The Arcades Project* announces its spectrality through his willingness to be haunted.

Benjamin's historical method, Gordon draws on Freud's notion of the uncanny (conceived as the repressed content of personal history) in order to expand on psychic haunting as a social phenomenon. Thus she writes that the experience of the uncanny should involve "the willingness to follow ghosts, neither to memorialize nor to slay, but to follow where they lead, in the present, head turned backwards and forwards at the same time" (57). Whereas Gordon's suggestion of a head turning in both directions evokes the temporal directionality of Benjamin's Angel of History, facing the past while being blown into the future by the storm of progress, the manner in which she emphasizes the social uses of the uncanny insists on the psychic dimension of haunting as well ("Illuminations" 257).

Finally, in *Queer/Early/Modern* (2006) cultural theorist and critic Carla Freccero, like Benjamin and Gordon, provides a way to conceive of spectrality as both a psychoanalytic and a historical method. She writes that "psychoanalysis affords the possibility of producing a fantasmatic historiography" as "the mode through which subjects live not only their histories, but 'history' itself, to the extent that history is lived as and through fantasy in the form of ideology" (4). Freccero claims that we should attend to the way haunting produces social effects, and her notion of a fantasmatic historiography allows me to explore the ways in which Victorians recreate dead historical figures that speak to their own present realities.

iii. "Genealogies of Performance": Joseph Roach

Though the Victorian historiographies, periodical literature, dramas and novels under review in my chapters largely represent middle-class values and loyalist sentiments, by placing these in dialogue with art historical (exhibition practices) and performance studies (cultural acts of memory), my readings emphasize the points at which ideology is always haunted by the past it places under erasure. Just as Foucault's evocation of "genealogies of royalty" accounts for

discourses appearing in the revolutionary period and returning in the second half of the nineteenth century, performance studies theorist Joseph Roach traces “genealogies of performance” by attending to “disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publically enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences” (26). I borrow from Joseph Roach’s concept of “surrogation” in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996) where he proposes that “performances so often carry within them the memory, of otherwise forgotten substitutions—those that were rejected and, even more invisibly, those that have succeeded” (5). His claim that communities perpetuate the memory of their dead through surrogation enables me to assert that Victoria’s shadow queens likewise provide substitutions of authority figures allowing her subjects to recover lost histories of female power.⁴⁰

Surrogation is also useful in my examination of art historical paintings which gesture to Victoria’s shadow queens, allowing them to survive in a new environment through collective memory. Like Roach, I emphasize the unevenness and discontinuities such genealogies engender. Each of my chapters opens with a discussion of Victorian portraits of queens which complement my readings of their symbolism. Victorian art exhibitions performed history by resurrecting these female monarchs from the past at times to celebrate the glories of a past Golden Age (Elizabeth I), or to boast of how the civilized and modern Victorians have progressively overcome tyranny and despotism (Catherine de Medici). The Royal Academy which once housed historical paintings of shadow queens in exhibitions for royal eyes to see, disbursed these portraits into museum storage units, and through a process of attrition, what was once performed as national memory now lies forgotten in the shadows. Rather than constructing

⁴⁰ Roach’s reading of Sir Richard Steele’s eulogizing of the actor Thomas Betterton as a “shadow king, a visible effigy signifying the dual nature of sovereignty” (74) is particularly useful for my thinking about Swinburne’s project of resurrecting dead queens such as Catherine de Medici and Mary Stuart to re-present and create substitute Victorias.

a black and white image of Victoria, my concentration on historical queens shows how she casts her shadow on the art, literature, and culture of her reign. Where Gordon uses the term “ghostly matters” as an expression of the way in which substance fills in the insubstantial, my related use of the term shadow provides color, shades, and hues.

iv. Terminology: Sensational, Fascinating, Exceptional, and Spectacular Queens

In my readings I concentrate on affective responses such as Victorian discourses of sensation, fascination, the exceptional, and the spectacular yield. These terms appear in the chapter titles and serve as ways to read individual Victorian subjective responses to the shadow queens within a social framework. Beginning with the adjective sensational, which the *OED* defines as “aiming at violently exciting effects,” in the 1860s it became a descriptive term which applied to multiple experiential theories in Victorian poetry, fiction, and culture. A connotation of the term is “calculated to produce a startling impression, and in the first chapter I investigate how representations of the “criminal queen” Catherine de Medici tap into a range of discourses concerning female abjection, madness, and sensational reportage ranging from royal scandals to premeditated murder.

One connotation of fascination is a fixation upon an image, or as the *OED* defines the verb form: “to attract and retain the attention of (a person), by an irresistible influence.” Victorian representations of Mary Queen of Scots almost always describe some variant of the term fascination to account for the dialogue between her bewitching aura and those whom she fascinates. The affective transaction between fascinated and fascinator is created through a process I borrow from Walter Benjamin. According to critic Ackbar Abbas, “Benjaminian method gives fascination itself a critical role. He sees in fascination not a will-less affect, not the response of last resort, but a willingness to be drawn to phenomena that attract yet do not submit

entirely to our understanding” (51). In Chapter two, this idea of a willingness to attend critically to the attracting phenomena initiates my theoretical intervention as I explore Victorian art and literature about Mary Stuart.

While the terms sensational and fascinating contain both positive and negative connotations, the “exceptional” as it is used to describe the Virgin Queen Elizabeth I, is auto-antonymic in that it contains both the idea of greatness and the abnormal or aberrant. Using this term to explore the way Victorians express ambivalence about Gloriana’s unconventional symbolic virginity, I show how her shadow contrasts with Victoria’s public embrace of conventional gender ideology. Victoria never liked Elizabeth, and preferred her rival Mary Stuart, but she also was known to pity the Queen Consort Marie-Antoinette whose memory she evokes in her journal entries. In chapter four, the term spectacular conjures the specter of Marie-Antoinette as a spectacle of suffering royalty.

My use of these terms is not meant to reduce all Victorian representations of each queen to a simple formula, but rather to provide a theoretical context, to provide a technical language, and to set the parameters for my discussions. In Helen Hackett’s review “Dreams or Designs, Cults or Constructions: The Study of Images of Monarchs” (220), she cautiously suggests that “somewhere between and among psychoanalysis, political, and aesthetic criticism there must be a language to talk about images of monarchy. Many studies have made important contributions to the vocabulary, yet there still seems to be more thinking to do” (816). Such is the aim of this dissertation in exploring a limited selection of Victorian literature about historical female monarchs and focusing on the ways their writings were shaped under Victoria’s shadow.

Situating the queens within the Victorian sphere of collective or public memory, in each chapter I provide an overview of historiographical, popular, and critical literature that reflects the

social and political relevance of each queen to the evolving contexts of Victoria's reign. Though the chapters do not follow a strict chronological organization, in each case I provide the relevant historical context in which the discussion can unfold. I stress the importance of both psychoanalytic and historical interpretations and how their distinct methods are mutually informing and imbricated in analysis rather than mutually cancelling.

IV. Chapter Outline

Turning now to scholarship on the shadow queens discussed in each chapter, critical engagements with each queen will follow in the order in which the chapters appear. Beginning with Catherine de Medici, we can gauge the importance attached to the historical period of her regency from a series of letters Victoria's uncle, King Leopold I wrote to his niece in 1833. Advising Victoria on what her readings in history should include, King Leopold writes: "What I most should recommend is the period before the accession of Henry IV of France to the throne" (49).⁴¹ What I wish to stress here is not just that Victoria knew about Catherine's black legend in the history of queens as detailed in Sully, but that Leopold was stressing the importance of her knowing that history. In recommending the Duc de Sully's *Memoirs*, which follows events in France leading up to the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, Leopold cautions Victoria about the indelicate material in the memoirs, and tells her to have Lezhen read with her. Catherine de Medici's symbolism is connected to the motifs of the Bad Mother and Evil Stepmother of

⁴¹ Leopold's letters advise the princess to pay close attention to history; that "our times resemble most those of the Protestant reformation; then people were moved by religious opinions, as now they undoubtedly are by political passions" (Esher and Benson I: 48-9). The history in question is Maximilien, Duc de Sully's (1560-1641) *Memoirs*, translated in 1781. Princess Victoria also comments with regard to an extract Leopold had sent her about the reign of Queen Anne, that it showed her "what a Queen ought not to be" and begs him to let her know "what a Queen ought to be" (50). Biographer Erickson describes the memoirs as "an education in ruthlessness, deviousness, political and religious cynicism—in short, they taught Victoria much about human nature in high places" (48).

popular myth and fable, and Leopold's caution regarding her history is consistent with the opinions of historians, novelists, and visual artists who gave shape to the cultural memory of this queen on the eve of Princess Victoria's accession in 1837.⁴²

Though Catherine's presence in Victorian literature is significant, contemporary criticism has largely overlooked her dark figure. In their novels and plays Victorians frequently invoked Catherine's spectral symbolism as a political tyrant, and this is due to their perception that a woman's intervention in politics is always disastrous.⁴³ In chapter one I discuss Queen Catherine de Medici's symbolic function as a tyrant and "criminal queen" in Swinburne's plays "The Queen Mother" published in 1861, his unpublished burlesque about Victoria, "La Soeur de la Reine," and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's sensation novel *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). Victorian literature embodies the "sensational Catherine" as a counter-queen to Ruskin's circumscribed queens, enabled to rule their gardens so long as they recognize the limits of their sphere. First, the chapter traces a genealogy of Catherine de Medici's symbol as a haunting presence in Victorian literature and culture. The opening section provides readings of Eugene Delacroix and Joseph Hornung's two paintings which depict Catherine calmly staring at the severed head of the Huguenot leader Admiral Coligny. I argue that Catherine is uncannily doubling as Victoria's darkest shadow queen. Catherine's symbolism evokes for Swinburne, the archetypal imagery of the Terrible Mother and a specter I explore by reference to Lacan's psychoanalytic figure of the *vagina dentata*, by which I examine how other Victorian writers address, through Catherine, their

⁴² Sully's *Memoirs* include long descriptions of the character of the Queen Mother. Even as a princess Victoria would have been familiar with the history of the Wars of Religion and the gradual transition from the Valois to the Bourbon dynasties. For the importance of the *Memoirs* to Victoria's training see Vallone (2001) 153.

⁴³ Historian Margriet Hoogvliet likewise claims that "During her lifetime, Catherine very actively led political affairs, but she could only legitimize her governing role by presenting herself either as a mother to her sons and to France, or as a modest widow without any political aspirations. These two arguments, motherhood and widowhood, proved to be highly effective" (129).

anxieties about female authority. Catherine's symbolism emerges in sensation fiction, and I trace how the figure of this "bad mother" relates to the ever-shifting image of Victoria as she passes from a domestic icon to the widow. Catherine's symbolism in literature, art, and in the periodical press repeatedly vilifies her as an interfering queen regent who grasps for power through her children.⁴⁴ As a shadow queen however, Catherine de Medici is less of a predictable character than a spectral figure who displaces multiple anxieties about Victoria's domesticity.

Swinburne maps Catherine's symbolism on to Victoria as the historical return of the repressed, while her evil symbolism as a murderess in Braddon's sensation novel relates to cultural anxieties about Queen Victoria's mourning. Catherine's image eclipses that of Queen Victoria as mourning turns into melancholia. Braddon's "counter-queen" Lady Audley raises questions about how the mourning Victoria could be implicated in the rhetoric and figuration of the sensation heroine. As my readings show, when read together as sensation writers, Swinburne and Braddon challenge the view that Queen Victoria may be safely relegated to the sidelines of Victorian literature as a "domestic icon."

In an 1839 diary entry on a difference of opinion with Lord Melbourne: "Talked of poor Mary of Scot's execution, which M. said Elizabeth delayed too long, for that her ministers had been urging it... Talked of poor Mary. 'She was a bad woman,' said Lord M., 'she was a silly, idle, coquettish French girl.' I pitied her" (Viscount Esher I: 219). Victoria, already two years on the throne, cast her sympathies with the niece of Catherine de Medici. Princess Victoria knew her history lessons well enough to have formed an opinion, and she sided most definitely in favor of the Queen of Scots. Victoria revered Mary Stuart as her ancestress and publically displayed her affection through her ceremonial performance of state duties. I expand in particular on

⁴⁴ See Crawford (2004).

Sophie Gilmartin's claim in *Ancestry and Narrative in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (1998) that Mary Stuart figured in Victorian novels not only as Victoria's ancestor queen, but as part of a "matriarchal mirror" in which female writers saw their own image reflected through a royal genealogy (56). Whereas mirrors refract and multiply images by reflection, shadows are metaphors for a very different process. Shadows multiply through the objects that cast light on a surface; they call attention to time, death, and the processes of historical memory.

Critic Jayne Elizabeth Lewis's *Mary Queen of Scots: Romance and Nation* (1998) by contrast to Gilmartin, argues that the Victorians were fascinated by Mary, but also that "to the extent to which the Queen of Scots stood as Victoria's enigmatic and fascinating other woman was the extent to which she permitted those fascinated by her to love culturally and historically alienated parts of themselves" (181). Here the metaphor of the shadow reappears through the idea of "alienated parts" that are displaced onto Mary. I build on this idea in Chapter two by tracing how Victorian men and women used the Scottish queen in reacting to Victoria's prolonged mourning and her silent abdication of duties of State. Gilmartin and Lewis discuss the impact of Mary Stuart's symbolism on the way Victorians viewed their own queen. In my chapter however, I claim the reverse, that it is Victoria who is casting her shadow on Mary. Whereas Gilmartin binds Mary and Victoria through blood lines and a "sartorial genealogy," Lewis focuses on the affective bonds generated through fantasy as a cultural and historical "fantasmatic" (Lewis 191).⁴⁵ Both of these scholarly works assist me in the process of exploring how the Victorian concept of fascination transitioned from a transitive to an intransitive form of affective response in texts about Mary Stuart.

⁴⁵ In *Gender, Genre, and Victorian Historical Writing* critic Rohan Maitzen also claims that Elizabeth and Mary "highlighted the inadequacy of standard Victorian categories for discussing the complexities of historical experience" (172).

When Victoria adapted Mary Stuart's cap as her official mourning attire, she inspired a cult of mourning that was widely emulated by her subjects. The bonnet, associated with Victoria's mourning, appears in portraits by Laslett John Pott and Richard Herdman representing Mary on her way to execution; the former in the guise of a Great Mother, the latter as a gothic princess. My readings of these paintings trace a genealogy in which Mary's motto "in my end is my beginning" promises an eternal and haunting return. Expanding on my discussion in chapter one of Ainsworth's novel *Crichton*, I trace Mary's symbolism as a gothic princess as it relates to the event of Victoria's accession. Through their narratives of Mary's captivity, exile, trial and execution, Victorians use fascination to describe contradictory emotions. She is alternatively the symbol of chivalric devotion, the erotic and dangerous femme fatale, and finally the mythical figure of motherhood and mourning. My political reading of Mary as a femme fatale in Swinburne's play "Chastelard," counters other popular Victorian representations of the martyred and victimized queen. Mary's "crimes" are diminished as her image binds to Victoria, and I discuss how, through her perpetual grief and mourning, Victoria casts her shadow on literary portraits of her ancestress.

Finally, complicating Swinburne's Mary with a reading of matriarchal mythology and Charlotte Mary Yonge's historical novel *Unknown to History* (1882), I trace these shadows in order to comment on aspects of Victoria's queenship that she either consciously modeled on Mary or that others perceived. Charlotte Mary Yonge's historical fiction has received relatively little attention in the discipline of English Literature, making the title of her novel, *Unknown to History* (1882) an almost autobiographical eponymy. *Unknown to History* is a novel about adoption. It is the quest of a teenage girl, Cicely Talbot to find her real mother, who turns out to be none other than Mary, Queen of Scots. I am interested primarily in the subject position

Yonge's historical novel articulates. In my reading I suggest that the figure of Mary Stuart functions as a combination of myth and history as she embodies both the lost mother and the mother who has lost her child. I claim that Mary's shadow becomes a permanent specter haunting the image of Victoria throughout her reign.

Whereas Victoria favored Mary Stuart, she famously expressed her dislike of Queen Elizabeth, writing to Lord Rosebery during her Golden Jubilee celebration, "I fear I have no sympathy for my great predecessor, descended as I am from her rival Queen, whom she so cruelly sacrificed" (Esher III: 341). Victoria's reaction to Elizabeth was inspired by Rosebery's gift of a miniature watercolor by Nicholas Hilliard, and the chapter follows with a discussion of David Wilkie Wynfield's historical portrait of *An Incident in the Life of Queen Elizabeth* coupled with popular print illustrations placing Victoria in dialogue with the ghost of the good Queen Bess. Whether or not they consciously imitated Victoria's opinions, her subjects expressed ambivalence about Elizabeth's "exceptional" status as the Virgin Queen. Drawing on the contradictions embodied in the adjective exceptional, I show how Elizabeth enabled Victorians to represent her as a sexually aberrant female; a senescent and lonely coquette; powerful and yet indecisive, both lending and deriving her greatness through her male subjects.

Elizabeth was directly compared to Victoria in periodical literature by Margaret Oliphant, Dinah Craik, and in Lady Caroline Norton's *Open Letter to the Queen* (1855). In my section "Elizabeth in Her-Story" I discuss how these female writers represent Elizabeth as a female monarch who could only haunt Victoria as a poor example of "womanhood," and a disturbing gender anomaly. Turning to the three Victorian patriarchs Carlyle, Froude, and Kingsley, the chapter discusses how the term "Elizabethan," as coined by Carlyle, initiates the Victorian narrative of the hero by invoking the specters of Elizabeth's sea-dogs. In their "Great man"

narratives Carlyle and Froude re-construct the Elizabethan past by promoting Elizabeth's male subjects. In the process they switch their allegiance divesting the exceptional Elizabeth of her powers and lending them to a masculine narrative of the Elizabethan seafarer's moral exceptionalism. In his adventure historical novel *Westward Ho!* (1855) Kingsley initially follows this masculine fantasy of an Elizabethan brotherhood, yet his treatment of Elizabeth's status as Virgin Queen betrays deep-set anxieties about gender difference. His seafaring heroes are distanced from Elizabeth as his fiction ultimately embraces a female figure who is more like Victoria. In turn Victoria casts her shadow on all these texts about Elizabeth by embodying the motherly and queenly figure her great predecessor failed to become.

Critical literature on Marie-Antoinette has rarely noted similarities between her and Victoria, yet critics Robert Tracy and Linda M. Shires have argued that Marie-Antoinette appears frequently as a spectral figure of royal suffering which surfaced in both loyalist and anti-monarchical Victorian literature (Tracy). Linda Shires explores the doubled figures of the "unnatural" revolutionary maenads in Burke, Carlyle, and Dickens to ask why Victorian representations of Marie-Antoinette matter when countenancing Victoria's contradictions as a female monarch. For Tracy, who refers to Marie-Antoinette as a "Victorian icon," she appears as a figure whose "vulnerable beauty" makes her "the victim of political and sexual outrage" (326).

In Chapter four I explore texts by Dickens and Carlyle to discuss the cross-Channel spectacle of Marie Antoinette as the embodiment of Victorian anxieties about irresponsible queenship and male benevolent chivalry. Focusing on multiple connotations of the adjective "spectacular," the chapter traces a literary genealogy of Victorian texts that follow Edmund Burke's celebrated apotheosis in which Marie-Antoinette figures at the center of a "spectacle of royal suffering" (Burke "Correspondence" III: 219). The words spectacle (a show), and specter

(a ghost) share a common etymological root in the Latin 'specere' which means "to see." When referring to Marie-Antoinette as a specter I consider both the fact that she is Queen Victoria's spectral shadow and that Victorian attempts to re-present her do so in the form of a spectacular exhibition of British "sentiment, manners, and moral opinions."⁴⁶ In Victorian representations of Marie-Antoinette, it is this predominantly Burkean specter that returns. As a cynosure and spectacle the Victorian icon of Marie-Antoinette is a complex literary symbol with facets including girlish frivolousness, the tragic victim of political terror, but also a source of that terror. Drawing on my readings of paintings by Edward Matthew Ward and Alfred Elmore, I trace Marie-Antoinette's contradictory symbolization by considering how Victorian artistic representation constructs a shadowy figure cast in the likeness of Queen Victoria.

As a queen consort, the historical Marie-Antoinette is blamed for her dismissal of courtly etiquette and her role in the Diamond Necklace Affair. My discussion of Burke's apotheosis is followed by a discussion of Victoria's struggle with Sir Robert Peel and the Tory's over the political incident known as the Bedchamber Crisis. Though idealized by Burke, she was demonized in eighteenth-century French and British pornographic pamphlets and occasionally furnished the young Queen Victoria's Tory opponents with examples of poor leadership qualities. More than any other Victorian author, Carlyle brings out these various sides of Marie Antoinette in his essay "The Diamond Necklace Affair" and *The French Revolution* both published in 1837 just before Victoria ascended the throne. Reading Carlyle's *The French Revolution* as a literary text, I will pay close attention to the character of Marie-Antoinette while drawing on what I see as Carlyle's career-long casting of Queen Victoria as an infantilized woman or a non-entity.

⁴⁶ For Derrida, "a specter is always a revenant. It begins by coming back" (Specters of Marx 11). For a different but not unrelated discussion of Marie-Antoinette as a specter, see Terry Castle's article "Marie Antoinette Obsession" (Goodman 199-238.)

Carlyle discusses Marie Antoinette as an ethereal visual spectacle but his political analysis renders her a political disaster because of her girlishness and her “want of etiquette.” Focusing on how Carlyle’s treatment of Marie Antoinette directs the “eye of history” on this shadow queen, I argue that Carlyle, like Edmund Burke before him, makes Marie Antoinette a spectacle of history while remaining blind to Queen Victoria. Reading Carlyle’s work allows me to comment and compare it to Ruskin’s prominent and popular image of queenship in “Of Queens’ Gardens.” Carlyle’s blindness to Victoria diminishes her role as a queen in his writing.

Finally, I turn to Dickens’s novel *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) to examine Lucie Manette who resembles a middle-class version of Marie-Antoinette as the Angel in the House. I discuss Dickens’s relationship to Edward Matthew Ward’s portrait of the imprisoned French royal family in the context of several descriptive passages in the novel. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the opening chapter of *A Tale of Two Cities* where Dickens uses parallel structure to consider the past in terms of the present. Dickens urges his readers to make comparisons between the past the present by thinking about the symbols of monarchy.

Studying what Victorians wrote about each of these queens offers a way to think about differing perspectives of Victoria’s monarchy. Beginning with literature and artistic representations of Catherine de Medici’s dark symbolism, Victoria appears as a tyrant and oppressive presence which Swinburne approaches with alternating humor and horror. Mary Stuart’s fascinating charms and status as a maternal figure creates contradictions in her symbolism that should be thought through Victoria’s transformation from mourning widow to a melancholic. The exceptional Queen Elizabeth I is no less contradictory as a symbol of great political achievement and a dismal failure in her private life. Finally, Victorian representations of Marie-Antoinette’s symbolism recalls Victoria’s failures to transition between private

domesticity and public spectacle in the earliest years of her reign. Yet the Bourbon queen's tragic fall and execution should also be read in light of the way Victoria's subjects were ambivalent about revolution and political change. In short, these chapters show that it is not possible, or perhaps desirable, to sum up Victoria's myriad representations. Each queen offers a different way to think about royal representation as it oscillates between ambivalence and anxiety. Instead of constructing Victoria's image as a unified and singular monolith, this dissertation considers the role of ideology as it is lived in fantasy. In their imaginations Victorians transform their queen in ways that expose their peculiar ideological positions regarding royalty. As Sambourne's fantasy commemoration suggests in both image and text, "strangest of all dreamland's scenes," Victoria's shadow queens "come in gorgeous, glittering train" to re-consider, but also to "hail Victoria's Jubilee" (289).

Chapter One: The Sensational Catherine de Medici

I am hot only in the palms of my hands,
Do you think, sir, some of these dead men,
Being children, dreamed perhaps of this? Had fears
About it? Somewhat plucked them back, who knows,
From wishing to grow men and ripen up
For such a death to thrust a sickle there?

—Algernon Charles Swinburne, “The Queen Mother,” 5.3.

I am afraid that I have been tempted into too great length about the Italian Catherine; but in truth she has been my favorite. What a woman! What a devil! Pity that a second Dante could not have constructed for her a special hell. How one traces the effect of her training on our Scotch Mary.

—Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* (1874), 8.

I. Catherine de Medici’s Shadow of Tyranny

In Victorian literature Catherine was a symbol of tyranny unleashed from the past and always threatening to reappear in the Victorian present. As a figure of feminine terror who unleashed the Parisian mob to complete the massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day, for the Victorians Catherine became inseparable from the bloody violence of that historical moment. This section explores her symbolism first by turning to paintings that place her in the seat of terror as a phallic woman, then by tracing her dark shadow in novels, historiography, periodical literature, and the press. In the epigraph cited above from Anthony Trollope’s novel *The Way We Live Now* (1874), Lady Carbury takes great delight in castigating Catherine. Though the novelist is certainly being ironic in his depiction of Lady Carbury who, like Catherine, is a mercenary mother, the epithet of the “criminal queen” was already a recurrent trope for women who dared to step outside of dominant gender norms. Swinburne’s Catherine, even more than Trollope’s criminal queen, is the personification of the tyranny and a maternal nightmare. She asks her

henchman in the first epigraph above, if the dead bodies, victims of the massacre, could have dreamed of the fate they were allotted.

i. Portraits of Catherine de Medici

A sensational image of the Queen Mother Catherine de Medici contemplating the severed head of the French Huguenot noble Admiral Coligny haunts London's Royal Academy exhibition of 1839. The Swiss artist Joseph Hornung painted this monstrous representation of Catherine on a magnificent canvas standing seven feet tall and five feet wide (fig. 1). Behind the queen stands a soldier dressed in full armor. His hand rests on the severed head of the slain Coligny, his gaze oriented toward this object of horror. Sitting calmly in her chair, Catherine's eyes stare away from the horrific object before her while the excessive material of her dark velvet mourning weeds threatens to leak out of the frame. In Swinburne's play "The Queen Mother," the black widow awakens from a nightmare and asks her soldier: "Do you think, sir, some of these dead men, / Being children, dreamed perhaps of this?" (5. 3). A shadow of tyranny and religious intolerance conjured from the historical past; Catherine is a symbol of the monstrous feminine and the phallic woman haunting the Victorian's imaginations.⁴⁷ Catherine's spectral presence in the Royal Academy offers a cautionary tale.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the phallic mother see Gallop (1982). For the connection between the "spectral other" and the "phallic mother" see Ian (1993).



Figure 1.1. *Catherine de Medici considering the Head of Coligny*. Joseph Hornung ca. 1839, Rath Musée, Geneva.

In her *Tales of the Reformation* (1846), mid-century writer Anne Maria Sargeant fantasizes the same scene in the portrait, writing that “the head of the venerable Coligny was sent to Catherine de Medici, who, like a second Herodius [*sic*], gazed with fiend-like pleasure on the work of destruction she had wrought” (Sargeant 137). Sargeant perpetuates the myth that

Catherine lusted after Coligny's head. "Some historians say" she writes, "that [the head] was subsequently sent to the king of Spain, others that it was conveyed to the Pope" (Sargeant 137). Speculation intensifies the sensational for Sargeant, but as Catherine holds the fascinated spectator's gaze in Hornung's painting, her double is Herodias who lusted after the head of John the Baptist. A source of horror and repulsion, Catherine's reputation contains elements belonging to the experience of the uncanny and the return of the repressed.⁴⁸

A similar painting appeared in the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1869 as part of the Rev. Charles Townshend Bequest (fig. 2). Attributed to Eugene Delacroix and titled *Catherine de Medici with the Head of Coligny*, this painting is only a diminutive nine inches tall and eight inches wide. Its smaller size anticipates a stronger reaction as it pulls the Victorian spectator close to examine the scene of horror (Pope-Hennessy 88). Sitting alone in her royal closet, Delacroix's frenzied Catherine de Medici leans forward, hovering over the head of the Admiral, and bringing it close to her body in an act of possession.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The legend of Herodias and her daughter Salome haunts the late nineteenth-century, but the image of the decapitating castrating mother emerges frequently in Victorian representations of Catherine de Medici. Catherine's supposed thirst for the head of the Admiral Coligny was perpetuated in Voltaire's epic poem *La Henriade* (1723), and though subsequently disputed by French historians, the legend is noted by Lord Bougham and Vaux in his *Lives of Men and Letters* (1845). See Henri Menu's *L'Expédition de la Tête de l'Amiral Coligny à Rome* (1896) for a historical refutation of literature propagating the macabre legend.

⁴⁹ Pope Hennessey traces the provenance of the second portrait to Eugene Delacroix suggesting a tentative date of 1826-27. Unsigned, the painting entered the museum's collection in 1868 bequeathed by the Rev. Chauncey Hare Townsend (No. 1381-1869). Pope-Hennessy claims that "there can be little question that it would have at once been identified as a characteristic work by Delacroix, for it contains those mannerisms most typical of Delacroix's handling, the grey shadow on the flesh of the seated woman, the trick of gathering up the ends of drapery into one circular sweep of paint, and the very individual simplification of the figure on the crucifix combining to place its authorship beyond dispute" (Pope-Hennessy 88).



Figure 1.2. *Catherine de Medici with the Head of Coligny.* Eugene Delacroix ca. 1830, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The recurring fantasy in these images recalls the iconography of the widow Judith holding the head of Holofernes as described by Freud, who in his essay “The Taboo of Virginity,” claims that “beheading is well-known to us as a symbolic substitute for castration; Judith is accordingly the woman who castrates the man who has deflowered her” (*SE XI* 207). While there is no suggestion in Delacroix’s portrait that Catherine’s castrating agency retaliates against “the man who has deflowered her,” the absence of a mediating figure in the composition constructs a different power of horror. Where Freud minimizes the political value of Judith’s castrating gesture by subordinating the narrative to a virgin’s revenge, this painting suggests that the queen is in full command. Because she possesses Coligny’s severed head, Catherine is fantasized as a monster of a different order. She has perpetrated this crime with her own hands, and her wide eyes and penetrating gaze seems to turn the hoary-haired head into stone. The Queen Mother’s Medusan powers are serving her well. Delacroix’s Catherine uncannily anticipates the aged widow Queen Victoria decades before she would come to resemble the figure seated here. The portrait’s uncanny sense of déjà vu elicits a double take as it suggests a figurative substitution and a collapse of difference.⁵⁰

Hornung and Delacroix’s portraits of Catherine and Coligny haunt the Victorian art world and raise questions about the “trace” they have left behind.⁵¹ The Delacroix portrait of Catherine remains in storage at the Victoria and Albert Museum while the Hornung portrait is in storage in

⁵⁰ It is ironic that Catherine de Medici was born in 1519, exactly three hundred years before Victoria. More reproductive than Victoria, Catherine had given birth to ten children and became a royal widow by 1559. These facts must at first sight look like a family resemblance or a remarkable case of synchrony, however with her criminal reputation the Franco-Italian Catherine can only provide Victorians the darkest shadow to Victoria’s immaculate moral standards.

⁵¹ I refer here to both Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida’s notions of trace as articulated in Julian Wolfrey’s *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (2002), where a ghost, as a trace, is “the condition or possibility of any mode of representation. The spectral is that which makes possible reproduction even as it also fragments and ruins the very possibility of reproduction’s apparent guarantee to represent that which is no longer there fully” (Wolfreys 2).

the Geneva Rath Museum. While their presence in the Victorian public sphere allowed the portraits to be viewed by a wide audience, their current absence from picture galleries constitutes what Avery Gordon calls “ghostly traces” and Derrida the “specter,” or “the invisibility of the visible” (Derrida 125). Both of these sensational portraits of the Queen Mother appear in England during a period of sharpening social antagonisms.⁵² The fact that Hornung’s portrait of Catherine also appeared at the heart of the English art world during a period when the British nation was still uncertain about the future of the monarchy, raises questions about how this historical queen functioned as a shadow of tyranny. In particular, the portrait conveys specific Victorian fears and anxieties concerning the anomaly of their own female monarch. The passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 excited latent national fantasies about confessional difference, provoking anxieties that were quickly transformed into sensational narratives about threatening dangerous foreigners.⁵³ Catherine de Medici’s symbolism as a queen who was part French, part Italian, provided a source of fuel to ignite this anti-Catholic sentiment, and in Protestant literature condemning Roman Catholicism, her name and that of her son Charles IX appear as portraits of tyranny, religious intolerance, and violence.⁵⁴ The Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of August 24, 1572 was for many Victorian historians, Catherine de Medici’s personal crime, and her influence over her son made her the epitome of the Bad Mother.⁵⁵

⁵² Historian Dorothy Thompson claims that “there was more [anti-monarchical] turbulence in the years between 1839 and 1842 than at any other period in the century,” and much of this was due to “xenophobia and fear of Catholic influence” directed however irrationally against the royal family (Thompson 33).

⁵³ Dorothy Thompson also emphasizes the “British hostility to particular monarchs” claiming that “support for a Catholic monarchy was problematic at best in a century when Catholic massacres of Protestants—such as the St Bartholomew of 1572, which had begun the flow of French Huguenot refugees to Britain, and many subsequent episodes of such slaughter—held something of the place in English popular imagination that is today held by the Nazi Holocaust” (4).

⁵⁴ For history’s “black legend” of Catherine see Sutherland (1978), Gay (1974), Knecht (1998), Kruse (2003), and Kuperty-Tsur (2007).

⁵⁵ In Victorian historiography Catherine de Medici appears at the center of debates around the massacre. In the pages of the *Westminster Review* (1827) on the eve of the passage of the Catholic Emancipation Act, British historian and author of *The History of England* (1823) John Lingard, debates with John Allen, a writer for the *Edinburgh Review*

ii. Catherine in the Victorian Sphere of Public Memory

I almost think there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams. Old castles, old pictures, old histories, and the babble of old people, make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint one. One holds fast and surely what is past. The dead have exhausted their power of deceiving—one can trust Catherine of Medici now.

—Horace Walpole to George Montagu, *Letters* January 5, 1766 114.

Horace Walpole's claim "one can trust Catherine of Medici now," may reflect the eighteenth-century's uncertain vision of the past that had diminished Catherine's predominantly evil reputation, yet among Victorian historians, Thomas Carlyle is perhaps the least like Walpole in his approach to her symbolism. Carlyle's opinion of Catherine is essentially an unrevised version of the gothic villains Walpole constructed in characters such as Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764).⁵⁶ In 1855, when Carlyle turned his attention to the Italian Renaissance in his unpublished essay "The Guises," Catherine's memory forcibly recalled historical cycles of rebellions and revolutions.⁵⁷ Comparing Catherine's massacre of August 24, 1572 to the September Massacre of 1792, Carlyle writes that

On Sunday night 24 August 1572 there burst out such a scene as the world never saw before or since, in Paris and over France—the massacre of St. Bartholomew burst forth. The horrible phenomena of which I have not now the spirit to describe. To kill these accursed Huguenots at one fell swoop that was the plan of Catherine de Medicis, and the official authorities of France: the King himself, wretched, excitable, mortal, was seen firing down on the Huguenots, from a window in the Louvre; the valet who loaded for

over Catherine's role in premeditating the massacre. Other Victorian historians who published work on Catherine and the massacre include Protestant polemicist Henry White (1868), Catherine's sympathizers John Benson Rose (1871), and Catholic Rev. Patrick Moran (1874). For the portrayal of Catherine as a bad mother see Kruse 226-227.

⁵⁶ Until 1842, the year in which the contents of Walpole's villa Strawberry Hill were auctioned, there still hung over the door in the West end of the Long Gallery a large portrait of *Catherine de Medici and her Children* (1561) by Francois Clouet. In the letter cited in the epigraph above, Walpole cites his own novel as an example of thinking through "old pictures," establishing a gothic connection through Catherine.

⁵⁷ Catherine also resembles a royal version of Dickens's harpy Madame Defarge, a point I turn to in my final chapter on Marie-Antoinette.

him, musket after musket, has testified the fact: Catherine his mother sat unconcerned, not firing, quietly waiting; the scene resembled that of September 1792 but far out did it in depth and horror. (“The Guises” 38-9)

The verb “to burst,” which is twice repeated in the passage, anticipates Walter Benjamin’s style of disruptive temporality and his view of Messianic time in which both the past and future figure in an instantaneous and visually present now: “The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again” (255). Like Carlyle, Benjamin perceives in history a perception of time through the visual. Carlyle’s sudden leap from August 1572 to September 1792 also uncannily anticipates Benjamin’s “tiger’s leap into the past” (“Illuminations” 261). Carlyle however, is also repeating Edmund Burke’s earlier assessment of the 1572 massacre in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791):

Your citizens of Paris formerly had lent themselves as the ready instruments to slaughter the followers of Calvin, at the infamous massacre of St. Bartholomew. What should we say to those who could think of retaliating on the Parisians of this day the abominations and horrors of that time? (125)

Burke and Carlyle both configure the event of 1572 into the French Revolution, but only Carlyle mentions that the massacre was “the plan of Catherine de Medicis” (38). By focusing his attention on the queen, Carlyle raises the threat of female monarchy to high pitch, and yet he was not alone in warning Britain of the supposed dangers of female monarchs.

In his manuscript Carlyle claims that Catherine instigated the crime of the St. Bartholomew’s massacre, describing her as a domineering maternal figure: “Catherine de Medicis brisk-eyed even hectically vivid and with a foolish boy of 10 entitled King Charles IX,

who is very submissive to his Mother, had now assumed the government herself” (25). Portraying the Valois King Charles IX as being “very submissive,” Carlyle is particularly ambivalent about Catherine’s motherhood. “Pity certain mothers” he writes, while undermining that pity in the next clause: “this daughter of the Medici she too was made of flesh and blood; but her position among human creatures had become extremely peculiar” (41). The tendency to show pity for Catherine while simultaneously accusing her of murder, genocide, and other crimes, is a recurrent theme in nineteenth-century literature. Though today few readers would be familiar with the copious literature about Catherine that appeared during the Victorian mid-century, her name was a byword for an overbearing mother, a criminal queen, and a sensational murderess. Carlyle’s “brisk-eyed” and “hectically vivid” Queen Mother is also the verbal equivalent of Hornung’s visual representation sitting, “quietly waiting,” and “unconcerned.”

Only two years after Carlyle put aside his history of Catherine’s regency, Anthony Trollope’s older brother Thomas published *The Girlhood of Catherine de Medici* (1857). This biography, which was reviewed by George Eliot, was the only Victorian monograph which focused exclusively on Catherine’s early convent life in Rome and her subsequent moral development. Like Carlyle’s unpublished manuscript, Trollope’s book has been consigned to the shadows of Victorian literature, and yet it sheds light on his brother’s evocation of Catherine in *The Way We Live Now*. Several critics have attempted to locate an actual target for Trollope’s caricature of Lady Carbury, yet if one turns to Anthony’s much eclipsed older brother Thomas Adolphus, a literary prototype emerges in this writer of sensational biographies about infamous Italian women.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ In *Fictions of State: Culture and Credit in Britain, 1694-1994*, Patrick Brantlinger observes that “as a novelist who bears some resemblance to Trollope’s mother, moreover, Lady Carbury bears just as much resemblance to Trollope himself. The texts she produces in perfectly cold-blooded, mercenary fashion, *Criminal Queens* and *The*

Thomas Trollope's study focuses on Catherine's early life, bringing her up to the marriageable age. She is described as being a natural product of her society, and when Trollope combines her subsequent political role as Queen Regent with her tainted Medicean heredity, these factors unwittingly produce the consummate villainess: "The portent we have to study in her is that of a penetrating intelligence wholly devoid of moral ideas" (161).⁵⁹ Throughout his study Trollope reiterates his claim that Catherine's "active and acute intellect [was] wholly uninformed by any moral ideas whatever. Right and wrong were practically words devoid of sense for her" (275). Catherine is an "exceptional portent of wickedness" but "a natural product of her time," concluding that "a moral deformity so monstrous could not be generated by the social life of our own day" (vi).⁶⁰ In exaggerating Catherine's "moral deformity" Trollope constructs a monster queen who, when left unchecked by male political authority, would eventually become a harpy. In her review of Trollope's book, George Eliot concurs with the author's assessments while writing that

Mr. Trollope has taken up a character about which there can be little dispute. Catherine de Medici has not found apologists, nor does Mr. Trollope attempt the task. The utmost he has done to soften the harsh judgment of history is to show, and he has shown it, that Catherine was a true child of the age. (Eliot "Westminster Review" 163)

Wheel of Fortune, are analogues to the novel Trollope has produced" (166). Two other critics have read Trollope's character as referencing the celebrated female historians Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland. Patrick Collinson asserts that the Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England*, which appeared in numerous editions, was "later caricatured by Trollope as Lady Carbury" (157), and Miriam Burstein claims that Lady Carbury's "elevation of sensation over accuracy" is merely the novelist's "gibe" at these female historians of queens (219).

⁵⁹ The prolific Thomas produced numerous historiographies including *A Decade of Italian Women* (1857), and *Gemma* (1866), a novel with a sensational plot involving poison and murder.

⁶⁰ Other Victorians who share Trollope's presentism are historians Macaulay and G.F. Young. In the latter's *The Medici* (1904) he refers to the "age of Catherine de Médicis" by creating a direct historical parallel to the Victorian period: "Such a character, for instance, as that of our deservedly honored Queen Victoria, would in that age have been simply crushed, and would have been of no use to poor passion-tossed France. In stormy weather ships' anchors must be made of iron, not of gold" (419). See also Sichel (1905).

Eliot's claim that Catherine "has not found apologists" is not entirely correct. When John Stuart Mill apologizes for "the unprincipled Catherine de Medici" in *The Subjection of Women* (1869), he concludes that "most great queens have been great by their own talents" and that when Catherine submitted to the councils of men, even she "could feel the value of a Chancellor de l'Hôpital" (172).⁶¹ Though Mill ironically subjects Catherine's powers of rule to male authority, it is her criminal powers that he unleashes. Eliot's observation that "Catherine was a true child of the age" explains why her figure was so frequently caricatured and why she provided a model for the creation of the mother-as-villainess in popular sensation fiction of the sixties. Catherine's symbolism as the consummate "criminal queen" did not erupt spontaneously from the minds of these writers. She had, as the epigraph from gothic novelist Horace Walpole shows, already colored the pages of British literature as a spectral figure.

Only a few months before Princess Victoria became Queen, one of the first Victorian gothic novels to represent Catherine as a dark mother-villainess and tyrant was published by William Harrison Ainsworth. In Ainsworth's historical novel *Crichton* (1837), the novelist presents a living paradox; Catherine is "blindly superstitious, bigoted, yet skeptical" (81).⁶² The narrator concludes that "if her enemies are at all to be believed, [she was] addicted to the worship of false gods" (81). Accompanied by her Italian astrologer the arch-villain Cosmo Ruggieri, Catherine jealously guards the throne of France, controlling the strings of power from behind the throne. Catherine will go to any length to protect her Valois sons, and when her favorite Henri III

⁶¹ Mill refers to the French statesman Michel de l'Hopital (1507-1573) whose policies of tolerance during thirty years of religious wars were unusual for the century. In 1563 he advised the French State to recognize Charles IX's majority thereby indirectly strengthening Catherine's authority behind the throne.

⁶² According to critic Richard Church, Ainsworth "brought sensationalism and an atmosphere of the Chamber of Horrors into the historical novel," and the novel's portrait of the Queen Mother represents her as sensational poisoner, kidnapper, and master of dissimulation (Church 118). Critic Kathleen Tillotson likewise notes that as a novelist, Ainsworth is "obviously a sensation seeker, exploring the past for grosser stimulants, bloodier horrors, and more violent crime" (141).

asks her why she will kill for her family, she replies, “I watch over your interests with maternal solicitude” while confessing that “if I work in darkness, I have only one aim—the maintenance of your glory and power” (117). In this plot, Catherine abducts the youngest girl child of a Bourbon noble who is next in line to the French throne. The princess Esclairmonde is a Protestant and like Princess Victoria, a virgin damsel on the verge of becoming a queen. She is jealously guarded and kept confined behind the stone walls of Catherine’s Louvre. The point here is not to turn Ainsworth’s novel into a *roman à clef* about Victoria’s royal situation, but to demonstrate the extent to which it draws on images already available in the culture to criminalize the Bad Mother while liberating her captive from tutelage. Ainsworth’s novel moreover, appeared at a moment in her history when Princess Victoria was locked away in Kensington Palace. This explains why the novel’s structure of feeling harnesses gothic elements to narrate a fairy tale plot about a princess’s escape from an evil mother figure.

Victoria lived under the constant surveillance of her mother the Duchess of Kent and her comptroller the Irish John Conroy. Described by the court diarist and gossip Charles Greville as “a ridiculous fellow, a compound of ‘great hussy’ and the Chamberlain of the Princes of Navarre,” Conroy isolated Victoria from any but his own children and imposed a rigid system of discipline to prepare her for the Duchess of Kent’s regency (249).⁶³ As recent biographers of her early life have shown, public sympathy with Victoria’s struggle against Sir John Conroy added a sense of relief to the joyful occasion of her accession.⁶⁴ Britain’s Regency Act of 1830 provided the duchess with the title of “Regent of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland” should the

⁶³ Greville refers to “The Conquered Duchess,” a satirical poem by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams (1709-1759) on the occasion of the Duchess of Manchester’s marriage to an Irishman named Mr. Hussey. The Chamberlain of the Princess of Navarre is a reference to Boyet in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. See Greville 249.

⁶⁴ See Katherine Hudson, Lynn Vallone, and Kate Williams.

princess's uncle King William IV deacease before Victoria reached eighteen.⁶⁵ The Duchess's advisor Sir John Conroy devised the ruthless "Kensington System" which provided a method for managing Victoria into a submissive position. This system devised an imaginary family structured as a political system in which Victoria would be subject to her mother's Regency and Conroy's ultimate control behind the scenes. In Ainsworth's novel, the widow Catherine and her evil attendant are outwitted by the gallant knight Crichton who rescues the heroine.⁶⁶ Though two hundred and fifty-eight years of intervening history had passed between the setting of Ainsworth's sixteenth-century tale and the dawn of Victoria's reign, and though Catherine's character and symbolism are clearly anachronistic, the text nevertheless provides a unique perspective on popular perceptions of queenship in 1837.

Victoria was only sixteen when Ainsworth began writing *Crichton*. "Shielded from public as well as royal eyes, the eighteen-year-old girl was a national mystery," observes Adrienne Munich, and "encouraged by lack of evidence, many hailed a creature constructed from hearsay, hope and novelty" (14-15). In emphasizing fantasy, like Munich, I underline the notion that Victoria was "constructed" as a "national mystery." Ainsworth's narrative reconstructs the fantasy in the form of a gothic historical romance whose male characters are fascinated with the aesthetic attributes of the heroine. The troubled relationship between the duchess, John Conroy, and Princess Victoria existed until the early morning of June 20, 1837 when the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chamberlain arrived at Kensington to announce the passing of William IV. Victoria had indeed turned eighteen in May, and was

⁶⁵ The Regency Act 1830 (1 Will.4 c.2) was an Act of Parliament containing ten sections stipulating the conditions of the regency.

⁶⁶ In her article "Victorian Gothic in English Novels and Stories, 1830-1880," critic Alison Milbank places Ainsworth's fiction firmly in the political context of Princess Victoria's accession while claiming that "to clothe the contemporary in Gothic garb is to perpetuate an anachronism, deliberately or not" (147).

thereby ready to occupy the throne in her own right without the intervening regency of her mother. The duchess and Conroy's shadows nevertheless continued to fall on Victoria. Ainsworth's plot suggests the political realities surrounding Victoria's intimate circle. In *Crichton* the heroine is under constant watch and her every move is controlled by Catherine and her advisor, clearly articulating a structure of feeling found in Greville's *Memoirs*. Yet the novel also betrays through Catherine's symbolism, a strong distaste for female monarchs.

A clear warning about the dangers of female monarchy surfaces in the preface to Mrs. Anna Jameson's *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Sovereigns* (1831). Jameson observes that "women called to empire have been, in most cases, conspicuously unhappy or criminal" (xiii). Here again we see the overlapping categories of the "criminal queen" described as a dangerous threat to the nation. Jameson concludes from her study of Catherine de Medici's influence on her daughter-in-law Mary Stuart, that the former exercised a terrible example: "When we are told that Catherine de Medici was at the head of that court and society, in which Mary's education was completed, we shudder at her very name, and tremble at the idea of the very contagion to which the youthful queen was exposed" (224). Jameson published her study under the reign of Victoria's uncle William IV, and her views should be understood in relation to wide-spread fears of female influence in politics. She concludes that "were we to judge by the past, it might be decided at once, that the power which belongs to us, as a sex, is not properly, or naturally, that of the scepter or the sword"⁶⁷ In 1837, the newly crowned Victoria presents conditions for understanding the contradictions and paradoxes involved in representing her new powers.

⁶⁷ See also Maria Jewsbury's review in *The Atheneum* in which she counters Jameson, writing that, "to the incompetency of queens, and their superiority in misrule, crime, or suffering, we must strongly object" (730) adding that "the feminine instruments of political crime and disaster have not been queens gifted in their own right with supreme authority, but the mistresses, or intriguing wives or mothers of kings" (730).

What kind of monarch will she become? Will she marry a Catholic Albert and like her Stuart ancestors, drag the nation back to Rome? Will she be identified with Old Corruption, a dissolute monarchy? The literature I explore in this chapter draws on readings of Victorian texts that make either direct or indirect parallels between Victoria and Catherine de Medici lending the latter an ominous social presence that critics of Victorian literature have overlooked. It is therefore important to recognize that Catherine circulated within the Victorian public sphere as a symbol of “Papal Aggression,” Machiavellianism, tyranny, and the figure of the “Whore of Babylon” leading the “Monstrous Regiment of Women” into bloody violence and crime.⁶⁸ While in British art, literature, and historiography the predominant attitude toward Catherine de Medici is one of hostility and caution, at times some of her traits are used to direct anti-monarchical sentiments toward Victoria and Albert.

Apart from Mrs. Jameson’s *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Sovereigns*, one prominent example in which Britain is warned of the dangers attendant with female monarchy surfaced only four years before Victoria’s accession to the throne. Written as a “Counter-Blast” to John Knox’s first “Blast,” a chapter in Hartley Coleridge’s *Biographia Borealis* (1833) claims that “the main disqualification of women to rule, arises from the easiness with which they are ruled,” that “no good woman *wishes* to rule,” and that, “ambition, a far deadlier sin than the world conceives makes worse havoc in a female heart than in a man’s” (Coleridge 242).⁶⁹ After asserting that ambition is what really corrupts women and “perverts, where it does not extinguish the maternal

⁶⁸ Knox’s work, which focuses on Mary Stuart’s mother Marie de Guise and Mary I, post-dates Catherine’s assumption of power in 1561. Nevertheless his misogynistic rhetoric would subsequently extend to her regency. The endurance and force of that rhetoric would appear to Victorians as a natural and apt description of the fear and anxiety occasioned by female rule.

⁶⁹ David Hartley Coleridge (1796-1849) was the eldest son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

affection,” Coleridge goes on to produce “the standard comparison” of evil female monarchs to show that

Semiramis, Agrippina, and Catherine de Medici are not the only instances that might be adduced of women who have not merely scrupled no wickedness for their son’s advancement, but actually corrupted the minds of their offspring, and plunged them into excess of sensuality, that [they] themselves might govern in their names. (Coleridge 242)⁷⁰

According to Coleridge’s assessment, the threat of an “excess of sensuality” is what makes a female ruler exercise a bad influence over her children as she takes over the reins of the government. All this would have been very disparaging news to the eighteen year-old Victoria who wrote in her journal on the day of her accession (20 June 1837): “I am sure, that very few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have” (Hibbert 23). It might be fairer to say that no amount of good wishing on the young queen’s part could ever erase from public memory the traces of John Knox’s *First Blast* or the Jacobin’s “standard comparison” of historical queens.

The comparisons between queens would also find their way into the press as it did in 1845, four years after Prince Albert and Victoria were wed. An alarmed reviewer for the *Oxford and Cambridge Review* expresses moral outrage and indignation at a series of sensational articles drawing direct parallels between Queen Victoria and Catherine. According to the unnamed reviewer, the incident prompting the comparison was a report of Albert massacring a battue of

⁷⁰ As already mentioned, the term “standard comparison” is Hunt’s term for the Jacobin’s lists of supposed evil historical queens found in eighteenth-century French revolutionary and anti-monarchical pamphlets (Hunt 107). See also Crawford (2004) 197.

deer corralled into a pen purposefully designed for the royal couple's cruel entertainments. The reviewer references a series of newspaper articles attacking the royal couple just after Victoria and Albert's visit to the Prince Consort's native Coburg. The most flagrant of these appeared in *The Morning Post* (Thursday, Sept. 4, 1845) where the reporter sets the terrible scene before the reader:

Three small tables were also erected in various parts of the ground, and here the sportsmen (!) were placed; but Prince Albert killed several stags from the house in which the Queen and the ladies were seated, and which reminded me forcibly of the balcony from which Catherine de Medici incited her silly son to blaze away at the unfortunate Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Eve. The slaughter was carried on for two hours without intermission when her Majesty and the ladies of the Court sickened at the scene withdrew. When the signal to cease firing was given the servants went round with long stout poles, to which netting was suspended, and in these they bore up the bodies of the slain, and laid them between the wind and our nobility. ("The Queen's Visit"1)

The reporter leaves no doubt that the scene at Coburg should be understood as directly associated with the 1572 massacre. Moreover, the incident at Coburg received widespread coverage in the press, and according to Richard Altick, in "the storm of indignation that swept England when descriptions of the prearranged massacre arrived, the Queen was as much blamed for countenancing it as her husband was for participating in it" (441-442). Though Altick does not mention the article in the *Oxford and Cambridge Review*, his description of the event as a "prearranged massacre" mirrors almost exactly the popular Victorian perception that Catherine had premeditated the massacre at Paris.

The anonymous reporter from the *Oxford and Cambridge Review* goes on to complain that “worse still is the comparison which the writer [of *The Times*] afforded to others the opportunity of making between our gracious sovereign and the infamous Catherine de Medicis [sic]” while noting sardonically:

Truly there was a perfect parallel. In the first place deer are so like Huguenots, and the death of a deer is so similar in importance to the death of a human being, that these two circumstances alone would justify a comparison, which if made seriously, had been the most odious, the most disloyal, and the most un-English. (“The Queen” 388)

Albert is the subject of political caricature throughout the first decades of Victoria’s reign, and in the press it is his enthusiasm for the hunt that draws attention. He is often represented as one who could not be contented with the delicate British habit of killing the occasional stag; Albert always seems to want a massacre. It is this violence that is displaced onto Victoria, while Albert is symbolically compared to Charles IX whom the same articles depict standing on a balcony at the Louvre and firing onto his terrified Huguenot subjects. Additionally, the article’s mention of Catherine de Medici displaces widespread anxieties over Albert’s foreignness to Queen Victoria. In paralleling the two queens the media sets up an historical comparison in order to produce a sensation of terror, for if Albert could do these things to animals in such a methodical and routine manner, and with Victoria sitting by watching, what might they not do to Victorian subjects? (Altick 443). The reviewer points out that the articles are mistaken, that there is a difference in both kind and degree. But what the articles stress echoes the historiographical argument that

identifies Catherine de Medici with the massacre. It is this association that forms the basis for the parallel to Victoria.⁷¹

In the periodical review however, Catherine de Medici is described as “most un-English” and as the embodiment of female cruelty:

[Catherine de Medici] was not sickened at seeing a human being die; she was delighted at seeing hundreds of human beings die; she was delighted at seeing them die a death of anguish; at seeing them shot and butchered as if they were so many deer; at seeing them so butchered by her own son, and under her own command. (“The Queen” 388)

This historical parallel’s rhetorical appeal operates through a reading in which the equation of the evil Catherine with the massacre also contains a clear warning for the Victorian reader. The author of the review condemns the poisonous insinuations with such vehemence that a certain vicarious pleasure registers in that struggle to disavow the uncanny doubling effect of Catherine superimposed on to Victoria. In the process Catherine becomes a socio-cultural symptom in that she represents the uncanny return of the repressed in the Victorian press. If she is the queen who, in Carlyle's words “sat unconcerned, not firing, quietly waiting” (39), what would she do if she possessed the power to enact criminal violence?

⁷¹ See Elaine Kruse’s article “The Blood-Stained Hands of Catherine de Medici” where she asserts that “the images of foreigner and witch facilitated blaming Catherine for the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre” (Levin 147).

II. Shadow Discourse: Theorizing Catherine de Medici as Queen Victoria's Shadow

Mais quand on rencontre un 'vagin denté'—si je puis m'exprimer ainsi—de la taille exceptionnelle de la Reine Victoria... [But when one encounters a 'vagina dentata', if I can say so, of the exceptional stature of Queen Victoria...]

—Jacques Lacan, *Lacan Seminar XXII*: R.S.I. 11 February, 1975, xxxii.

From what could be called the other time, from the other scene, from the eve of the play the witnesses of history fear and hope for return, then, 'again' and 'again,' coming and going. [...] A question of repetition: a specter is always a *revenant*.

—Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 11.

How could Queen Victoria be understood in relation to Catherine de Medici, the historical queen regent who “premeditated” the Massacre of St. Bartholomew? In order to interpret the relationship between Catherine and Victoria's symbolisms, the author of *The Morning Post* article presumes a reader who has a command of anti-monarchical sentiment and anti-gynocratic rhetoric in both the British press and in historiography. Catherine haunts Victoria from the past as she resurfaces in national memory. If haunting, according to Derrida, is temporally disjointed and always a question of repetition, then in this historiography and literature, parts of Catherine and Victoria appear as simulacra of one another (20-21). When Catherine reappears, she does so as a revenant and a shadow returning from the past to haunt the Victorian press. Retrospectively, an interpretation of this complex cultural text requires recognizing that it is a fantasy structured through a substitution of authority figures. Though separated by time and space, the overdetermined symbol of the queen supplies an uncanny effect as Catherine's shadow looms over this literature.⁷² Recalling Freud's notion that symbols are

⁷² *The Bedford Glossary of Literary and Critical Terms* adds that “things that are overdetermined are hard to explain without reference to various factors, rendering meaning indeterminate in the sense that no one meaning or interpretation can be said to be definitive” (Murfin 320). The overdetermined symbol of the queen also operates as a symptom in literature. In an analysis of Victoria's royal symbolism in *Symbol and Privilege*, Ilse Hayden claims that “the meanings inherent in the Queen can be contradictory” and that “this is part of their allure, especially so since the essence of social life is paradox” (Hayden 2).

overdetermined and “describe situations in which multiple causal factors give rise to two or more plausible, coexisting interpretations,” the Victorian parallel between the queens past and present fantasizes Catherine not as a portrait of Victoria but as a distorted image in a cracked mirror (Murfin 320).

Because she is both a political figure and a private person, no symbolic figure in Victorian literature is as replete with contradictory and paradoxical facets as the Queen.⁷³ The historical period I examine in the sections below covers roughly the years 1859-1862 when sensation fiction was in its formative stages. Swinburne and Braddon combine political and social problems in their texts speaking to issues of female power at a time when Queen Victoria would face the ultimate challenge of her reign; the death of Prince Albert. Prince Albert died of typhoid fever at Windsor castle on 14 December 1861, a midpoint between Swinburne’s publication of “The Queen Mother” in December 1860 and the appearance of *Lady Audley’s Secret* issued in three volumes by Tinsley Brothers in October 1862.

Swinburne’s plays look back to the Victorian fifties and bear the mark of his undisguised hatred of Victoria and Albert for having reconciled England with France in 1855. Swinburne’s Catherine play in particular, contains what Isobel Armstrong refers to as a “logic of violence” that borrows from “the conservative poetry of sensation for a radical politics” with both a psychological and pathological aspect (Armstrong 403-406). As I argue, Swinburne’s poetics of sensation employs a language that attacks Victoria by resurrecting the wicked Italian Queen from sixteenth-century France. Swinburne’s misogynistic representation of Catherine as a bloodthirsty and incestuous mother draws on violent language calculated to insight a powerful affective

⁷³ “The cultural paradox of Queen Victoria’s specific kind of monarchy” according to Adrienne Munich, “generates its own complex figurations” (Munich 190).

response from his readers. In this way he shares with Braddon's popular novel a tendency to represent the darker side of femininity and queenship in order to elicit a politically incendiary message about gender politics.

In both Swinburne and Braddon's texts the "criminal queen" Catherine de Medici promotes a view of female power (whether royal or domestic) that rejects the gender norm of the submissive wife as found in Coventry Patmore's myth of the Angel in the House. As a castrating mother, both tyrannical and monomaniacal, Catherine is the opposite of Victoria, and yet her figuration, as the epigraph from Lacan implies through the "vagina dentata," fleshes out the latent anxieties that Victorians felt about their own queen.⁷⁴ Lacan's comment about Victoria is disturbing. It seems mad, unsubstantiated, and even smug.⁷⁵ It is less of an analysis than a reiteration of a fantasy. This strange catachresis of the vagina dentata draws one's attention away from more familiar assumptions about Victoria as an icon of domesticity.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Lacan's reference to Victoria as a vagina dentata, or "toothed vagina," appears in his discussion of Lytton Strachey's biography *Queen Victoria* (1921):

What fatality made it so that a certain Albert of Saxe-Coburg fell into the paws of the *Queen*? He did not have any leaning toward women. But when one encounters a vagina dentata, if I can say so, of the exceptional stature of Queen Victoria...A woman who is queen is truly the best vagina dentata one can come up with, it is even an essential condition—Semiramis must have had a vagina dentata, one sees it quite well when Degas draws her. Elizabeth of England too, and that had consequences for Essex. (Lacan *Seminar* xxxii)

⁷⁵ Those critics of Victorian literature who have quoted Lacan's statement generally read the archetype of the "toothed vagina" as a purely negative and misogynistic trope, in short, as a trap. Barbara Creed's book *The Monstrous Feminine* explores sexual myths that position women as monstrous, devouring, and evil. Elaine Showalter, in *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, cites Lacan's allusion to the vagina dentata in her chapter on "The Veiled Woman," claiming that "the *vagina dentata* haunted the dreams of such *fin de siècle* writers as Edmund de Goncourt" and that "the veiled woman hides the guillotine and the man-trap behind her gauzy scarf" (Showalter 148). In a different context, Elliott Gilbert in "The Female King: Tennyson's Arthurian Apocalypse" suggests that Lacan's allusion gives voice to "one of the central problems of Victorian society: the growing assertion of female authority" (Gilbert 865).

⁷⁶ In his study *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, Erich Neumann defines the vagina dentata as a "negative elementary character" of the archetype of the feminine. He observes that "the destructive side of the Feminine, the destructive and deadly womb, appears most frequently in the archetypal form of a mouth bristling with teeth..." (Neumann 168).

Lacan's fantasy of Victoria, when read in light of Freud's essay "The Uncanny," provides some insight. Toward the end of the second section of his essay, Freud claims that "it often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs" and that "this *unheimlich* place...is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning (*SE* XVII 245). Freud's "once upon a time" already suggests fantastic origins for Lacan's excessive claim, but it also informs my reading of sensation fiction with a structure for understanding how these literary texts incorporate the historiography of Catherine so that her symbol is always already haunting from within.⁷⁷ It is this figuration that initiates my investigation of how two writers as different as Swinburne and Braddon could both use the symbol of Catherine in their texts to disavow aspects of Victoria.

This reading requires a theory that combines psychoanalytic and historiographical methods, and in each section of this chapter I will return to the figure of the vagina dentata by suggesting that the sensational Catherine de Medici is the queen whose maternal authority substitutes for Victoria. Describing this sixteenth-century queen as the "sensational Catherine de Medici" speaks to the Victorian anxieties about her ominous presence in the Victorian sphere of public memory.

⁷⁷ In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud considers queens as "symbols which bear a single meaning almost universally: thus the Emperor and Empress (or the King and Queen) stand for the parents" (*SE* V: 683). What Lacan adds to Freud's fantasy however, is his suggestion that other female monarchs appear as substitutions for the figure of the vagina dentata. While the essay, as Nicholas Royle claims, "suggests an uncanny strangeness in the notion of substitution or substitutability as such," in "The Uncanny" there is no mention of the overdetermined symbol of the queen elaborated by Freud elsewhere (Royle 41).

III. Swinburne's "The Queen Mother"

It would seem as though to publish a book were equivalent to thrusting it with violence into the hands of every mother and nurse in the kingdom... We, meanwhile, who profess to deal neither in poison nor in pap, may not unwillingly stand aside. Let those who read will, and let those who abstain from reading. *Caveat emptor*. No one wishes to force men's food down the throats of babes and sucklings.

—Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, Hyder 24.

Directly after lunch we [Napoleon III with Victoria and Albert] all entered the Louvre... We looked out of three windows, the one which commanded a beautiful view on Paris of the Pont-Neuf and the Quais; the other supposed to be the window out of which Charles IX fired on the poor victims of the St Barthélemy (the anniversary of which is to-morrow!)

—Queen Victoria, *Leaves from a Journal* Thursday, August 23rd, 1855. Mortimer 107.

In 1855, at the height of the Crimean War and two years before the twenty-three year old Algernon Charles Swinburne began to compose his historical drama "The Queen Mother," Victoria and Albert visited the emperor of France inaugurating a rapprochement between their respective countries. The fact that the Queen of England should be accompanied by Bonaparte in the very spot where Catherine's son supposedly fired on his Huguenot subjects, introduces a complex pattern of historical ironies.⁷⁸ In "The Queen Mother," published in 1860, Swinburne's attitudes relate to his hatred of Napoleon III and are connected to the royal couple's visit to France. In this section I claim that Swinburne's play represents Catherine de Medici as Victoria's

⁷⁸ Queen Victoria could not have known that the myth of Charles IX firing on his subjects would be definitively refuted in a series of brilliant articles published in *The Society for the History of French Protestantism* (1857). See Diefendorf "Blood Wedding" (2006).

shadow as he displaces aspects of the Bad Mother Catherine on to Victoria, and aspects of her son Charles IX on to Napoleon III.

Swinburne's play opens at Catherine's headquarters in the Louvre, two days before the massacre of St. Bartholomew of August 24 1572. Catherine de Medici's high-born harlot Denise de Maulévrier refers to her as "that woman with thin reddish blood-like lips, / that queen-mother that would use blood for paint" ("The Queen Mother" 3.1. 96). In these lines Denise is addressing Catherine's twenty-two year old son King Charles IX as she goes on to ask: "Can you not see her joint the trap for you, / Not see the knife between her fingers, sir, / Where the glove opens?" Denise is an agent in Catherine's "escadron volant" (flying squadron), her intimate circle of ladies who double in the play as her court spies.⁷⁹ Although she is supposed to be loyal to Catherine, Denise here describes the Queen Mother as a *vagina dentata* whose murderous hands set the "trap" which, by upward displacement of guilt, is associated with her "blood-like lips." The Queen Mother is a nightmare of maternal domination and authoritarianism, a tyrant who has set a "trap" to catch her son and devour his young manhood by making him conspire in the massacre.

In the central plot of Swinburne's play the character Denise begins as a mediator between Catherine and Charles by acting as an informant for Catherine and by bending Charles to his mother's will. Slowly however, Denise comes to realize that Catherine intends to set a trap for the Huguenot nobles that she has lured into Paris for the wedding of her daughter Marguerite de Valois to the Protestant Henri of Navarre. Knowledge of the Queen Mother's murderous

⁷⁹ In an essay on Lord Melbourne, British journalist Dominic Wyndham refers to the Flora Hastings scandal of 1839 by drawing an analogy to Catherine's flying squadron: "The ladies of the Royal entourage, like those of Catherine de Médicis (whom Queen Victoria so oddly resembles in a duodecimo way) were presumed to be vestal virgins" (90-91).

intentions thrusts Denise into a moral quandary as she increasingly becomes the character with the greatest psychological interest in the play. It is through the character Denise, who has intimate knowledge of both Charles and Catherine's minds, that Swinburne explores the depths of their dissimulation and moral depravity.

The play barely disguises Catherine's incestuous bond with Charles, but it is also that bond which makes the king her only access to power and her accomplice. Charles in turn, becomes increasingly like his mother, for as Denise exclaims in the first act when he sadistically twists and bruises her fingers while crushing her hands: "Your finger pinches like a *trap* that shuts" (1.1. 5, italics mine). Like his mother who joints traps for her enemies and keeps knives between her fingers, Charles relishes the sight of physical pain. Following Lacan's psychoanalytic description of the vagina dentata as a "signifier of power," what Swinburne's play accomplishes with this recurrent imagery of the trap, maps Catherine's body as the origin of the St. Bartholomew's massacre. The Queen Mother's bodily sensations match her deeds as noted in the epigraph to this chapter. "I am hot only in the palms of my hands," Catherine says as she inquires about the progress of the massacre (5.3). Here the hands, the central organs of human actions and deeds, stand in metaphorically for the Queen Mother's murderous agency and her power.⁸⁰

In the lines that follow, Catherine likewise reads the unfolding events of the massacre through the metaphor of maternal functions: "I am certain also that this hour / Goes great with childbirth and with fortunate seed," while noting that "sons are born and die, / Yea, and choke

⁸⁰ In "The Blood-Stained Hands of Catherine de Medicis" (1995), critic Elaine Kruse emphasizes the point that historically, pamphlet and tract literature voicing anxiety over Catherine are "grounded in misogynist theological, biological, and political arguments" (140), and the title of Kruse's article suggests an anatomical origin of the horror.

timeless in the dead strait womb” (5.3). This contrasting imagery of fertility followed by the stillborn “dead strait womb” places the Queen Mother at the center of an extensive scene of corruption as she wields power over life and death. Such imagery also invokes Swinburne’s parallel fascination with the destructive mother-goddesses Kali and Hertha who embody the archetypal myths of the Terrible Mother and the Cosmic Womb. Critic F. A. C. Wilson observes that in Swinburne’s employment of these figures “there seem to be undertones of gleeful incestuous transport, backed by a strong sense of mother-child antagonism and a desire for self-immolation” (226).

When the twenty-two year old Swinburne wrote this play at Oxford between 1859 and 1861, he chose the subject of Catherine de Medici and the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre as a tribute to Christopher Marlowe from whom he borrows his subject matter.⁸¹ Though the play is classified as a closet drama intimating the inward psychological world of private consumption, its historical subject beckons outward toward the public, specifically to a central concern of sensation fiction: the blurred fault line between the public and the private spheres. Critic Ian Fletcher claims that “the Victorian world in Swinburne’s eyes was unable to resolve the antinomies that haunted it: the public world of bourgeois morality and repressive Christianity” (x1). But in what ways do Catherine’s ghostly adumbrations materialize in Swinburne’s drama as a response to the culture of his time? Characterized by her violence, her lust for blood, and will

⁸¹ In the 1904 edition of his *Collected Poems*, the poet retrospectively muses: “My first ambition was to do something...not unworthy of a young countryman of Marlowe the teacher of Webster the disciple of Shakespeare” (Henderson 50). Though Marlowe’s “The Massacre at Paris” (1593) may serve as a model for “The Queen Mother” the latter’s Catherine is neither as blood-thirsty nor as incestuous as she becomes in Swinburne’s play. Samuel Chew regards the play as an “antechamber” to Swinburne’s Mary Stuart trilogy, writing that: “The Queen Mother” remains the work of no mere student and imitator. It stands upon its own feet; and its author was furnished with an instrument for the composition of his most ambitious work in the dramatic form; the trilogy of Mary, Queen of Scots (193). There is also evidence from his correspondence that Swinburne was reading Balzac’s *Sur Catherine de Médici* (1846), which is the first section of the *Comédie humaine* titled “Études Philosophiques.” Swinburne writes to William Bell Scott in 1859: “you would rejoice in the Etudes Philosophiques which I have just purchased. (Letters” I: 28). Balzac consistently defends Catherine’s political role while apologizing for her violence.

to power, Catherine qualifies as a debutante in the role of a Victorian sensation heroine. No Victoria, she symbolizes what Lyn Pykett calls the Victorian “improper feminine,” a “contradictory discourse” wherein “women are either non-sexual, or they are omni-sexual, criminals, madwomen or prostitutes” (Pykett 16). For Swinburne, Catherine de Medici presides over a court that creates and nurtures moral monsters. Even Catherine’s daughter-in-law Mary Stuart, the subject of my next chapter, was raised under her guidance. Swinburne observes:

But of the convent in which Mary Stuart had passed her novitiate the Lady Superior was Queen Catherine de’ Medici. The virgins who shared the vigils of her maidenhood or brightened the celebration of her nuptials were such as composed the Queen-Mother’s famous ‘flying squadron’ of high-born harlots, professionally employed in the task of making the worship of Venus Pandemos subserve the purposes of the Catholic faith or polity, and occasionally, on the Feast of Saint Bartholomew, exhilarated by such diversions as the jocose examination of naked and newly murdered corpses with an eye to the satisfaction of a curiosity which the secular pen of a modern historian must decline to explain with the frankness of a clerical contemporary. (“Character” 425)

Swinburne’s language here takes part in a discourse critic Maureen Moran has identified as “Catholic sensationalism,” a complex blending of physical sensations with heightened fears of confessional difference. Moran claims that “the ‘sensationalizing’ of the Church of Rome dramatizes the many and interrelated understandings of ‘sensation’ that haunted the period: its indication of the mysterious connection between body, nerves, and mind; its emphasis on extremes of emotion” (3). This is evident in this passage where Swinburne’s young maidens engage in the “jocose examination of naked and newly murdered corpses.” Swinburne’s

denunciation of the “Catholic faith or polity” that would take pleasure in the massacre is likewise sensational.

Swinburne’s warning to the Victorian would-be buyer of his books in the epigraph cited above is a rebuttal to those critics who associated his work with the popular novels. His resistance to the idea of being identified with those who deal in “poison or pap,” ironically reinforces the drama’s connection to sensation fiction. In *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (1998), Brantlinger asserts that “in reviews of sensation fiction throughout the 1860s, metaphors of moral corruption disease, and poison proliferate” and that “along with disease and poison, sensation novels also purvey filth and excrement, polluting the minds of the reading public and befouling the national culture” (143). Swinburne’s caveat to his readers therefore shares something with this cultural view, and his Catherine de Medici is not only a poisoner, but a mercenary who trades in both poison and pap. The Queen Mother’s patronym immediately associates her with her mercenary Medici ancestors treated in detail in Thomas Trollope’s biography mentioned earlier.

Swinburne is haunted by Charles IX, taking a vicarious delight in imagining the ravings of a tyrant whose domineering mother inhabits a vortex at the center of the drama. Because Swinburne identifies her maternal body as being so central to the events of the massacre, her complex character suggests the socio-cultural anxieties already mentioned as present in the Victorian public sphere. Catherine de Medici symbolism represents the outcome of Swinburne’s intersecting political and psycho-sexual factors unconsciously associated in the construction of her character. Because Catherine’s consistent attribute is that of a tyrannical and domineering royal mother, she is repeatedly represented as having control over both biological and historical time, and these temporal elements are connected to Swinburne’s republican political sentiments.

As a self-styled republican, the young Swinburne was horrified by the French coup d'état of December 1851. Swinburne's biographer Edmund Gosse observes that the poet's "extreme and unwavering detestation of Napoleon III was a remarkable characteristic of his temper. It dated back to his childhood and was no doubt connected to the coup d'état of 1851" (Gosse 209-210). There is therefore some precedent for Swinburne's attacks on Victoria that relate to "La Soeur de la Reine" to which I will turn in the next section.

"The Queen Mother" opens in the environs of the Louvre where courtiers mingle dressed in masquerade. The first act is charged with the atmosphere of a controlled hostility as various Huguenot and Catholic nobles interact. The Huguenot character La Rochefoucauld for example, warns Coligny that Valois court flattery and over-kindness is really over-kill, that though "fair words go with them" these words only mask evil intentions (1.4. 39). Murder and civility are lethally combined in the poisonous atmosphere of Catherine's Louvre. Above all it is "the queen [who] gets kind; she lessens and goes out, / No woman holds a snake at breast so long, / But it must push its head between the plaits" (1.4. 41). In these lines La Rochefoucauld associates the queen's feigned kind words with the deadly venomous serpent hiding in her plaits, and as Bram Dijkstra observes in *Idols of Perversity*, "the soul-destroying women of poets such as Swinburne had obviously found a formidable weapon in the snakelike flexibility of their golden tresses" (Dijkstra 230). La Rochefoucauld's reference to the preciousness of courtly manners and language conveys the sense of dissimulation that characterizes Valois court life.

Language is the chief weapon of entrapment in Swinburne's play, and it is associated with hypocrisy as the mask that the tyrant queen wears. Denise refers to the dissimulation at Catherine's court as coloring everything, including love. "It is mere pain, not love that makes me dull" she tells Charles, and "count not on love; be not assured of me" (2.1. 44). In this

atmosphere of treachery one can never trust a word as she cautions: “Trust not a corner of the dangerous air / With some lean alms of speech; I may deceive you” (2.1. 44).⁸² Here Denise’s “lean alms of speech” reiterates what Coligny has said in the previous act when describing the Queen Mother’s courtiers: “Their nerves are threads of silk, their talk such cries / As babies babble through the suckling milk” (1.4. 42). The courtier’s nerves described as silk threads draws on the discourse of sensationalism as the Huguenot noble recognizes that the corruption of court life renders them all infantile. Though language is the order of the law and religion, the Catholic court is full of infants (lit. *infans*, no speech) who merely “babble.” Coligny observes that their mouths are made only for tasting and sucking, that “it would be honey to their lips, I think, / To have our death for their familiar word” (1.4. 42). These references to babbling babies and sucking mouths in Coligny’s words also lead back to Catherine’s maternal authority associating the fact that she is a woman as well as a queen with the infantilization of her court. Associations of Catherine with a terrifying and dangerous kind of mother beast watching over her cubs appear continually in Victorian literature, and they recall Foucault’s “royal genealogies,” especially his focus on Mopinot’s pamphlet mentioned in the introduction. In Froude’s polemical essay “Condition and Prospects of Protestantism” (1895), he warns specifically of the feminine dangers of Catholicism, writing that “when educated Protestants turn Romanists or Anglo-Catholics, and profess to hate the Reformation, they imply that they regard Coligny as a rebellious schismatic, and Catherine de Medici and her litter of hyena cubs as on the side of providence and justice” (67). Here Froude’s Catherine appears as she does in the pamphlet

⁸² Swinburne elsewhere describes the Valois court as one whose “pursuits and recreations were divided between the alcoves of Sodom and the play-ground of Alcedama” (“Character” 376).

literature Foucault discusses in *Abnormal*, and where Marie-Antoinette is a bad mother hyena (97).

In her precarious role as regent however, Queen Catherine cannot afford the luxury of delicate and flippant speech that characterizes her courtiers. Swinburne vests her with the power of direct language. Her mind throughout the play is fixed on one thought, securing the maternal cord that connects her to Charles IX. If she loses control over Charles, she loses the object upon which her maternal identity and political power are based. This explains her motive in securing Charles's complicity with the massacre. Addressing Guise she reveals the tenuous boundaries that separate Charles from her. She explains that she has placed Denise beside Charles because "the king did lean to her, / And out of his good will I made this cord, / To lead him by the ear" (2.2. 71). The metaphor suggests both the umbilical cord and the arachnid web of the haunting black widow.

At this point in the play Catherine senses that Denise has begun to disrupt her maternal plans for controlling Charles. Earlier, when discussing Denise's role as mediator between mother and son, Catherine tells Guise: "Yet if she spring him once, / Click, quoth the gin; and there we trap" (1.3. 29). According to her plan, Catherine would use Denise as an extension of herself. By the second act however, Denise has disappointed Catherine by switching sides and favoring the Huguenots. Still, Catherine claims that Denise "has not slit the web so near across, / But her own edge may turn upon her skin: / I have a plot to rid the time of her" (2.2. 71). Catherine the ever-patient spider re-works her web, but she also realizes that her maternal authority requires that her son be trained as an accomplice to the massacre.

When in the first act of the play Charles hears that the Admiral Coligny has been wounded in the arm by an assassin's shot, he informs Catherine that he intends on paying the Admiral a visit.⁸³ Accompanied by Catherine and Guise, Charles enters Coligny's apartments. As soon as she enters she tells Coligny that she will always speak of him as "the leader of my loves, the captain friend / Among my nearest" (1.4. 36). As a widow, Swinburne's Queen Mother displays dubious mourning practices. Warming to her words Coligny quickly loses his head over her for Charles then informs him that "there's no man, none in the world, my mother mates with you / Save two, that's I and God" (1.5. 36).⁸⁴ The phrase "my mother mates with you" stands out from the line as a singular declaration drawing attention to Catherine's perversion and dissimulation. Moreover, in providing Catherine with an eroticism associated with extreme danger, Swinburne recalls both the Hornung and Delacroix visual images depicting the queen mother seated with the head of Coligny. Swinburne's allusion provides the blood-thirsty Catherine with a voracious sexual appetite; for immediately after the visit Coligny complains that "the bloodsmell quickens in the head, the scent / Feels gross upon the trail..." (1.4. 42). Catherine's Medusan powers are serving her well for her visit has given the Admiral a massive headache.

Charles IX, the sadistic son, is fascinated and half-obsessed with the site of Coligny's wounded body which provokes an unusual response. When sticking his fingers into the hole of the Admiral's soiled jacket, Charles turns to his mother for her approval of his discovery. Fixated on the Admiral's wound, Charles insists, "I pray you show me but the coat, I would / Fain see the

⁸³ This incident follows Marlowe's text where the visit also occurs at the end of the first act however, by making Catherine be present at the visitation Swinburne introduces a fantasy scene not found in any of his literary predecessor's treatments.

⁸⁴ Catherine has lost her husband Henri II, and yet the play suggests she has merely replaced him with other men including her own son.

coat where blood must stick of yours” (1.4. 37). When Coligny yields his filthy blood-stained coat, Charles responds:

Ay no more red than this?

I thank you; was it this way the slit came?

Yea, so, I see; yea sideways in the sleeve.

Is that the admiral’s blood indeed? Methinks,

Being issued from so famous veins as yours

This should be redder. See, well above the wrist,

See Madam; yea meseems I smell the stain. (1.4. 38)

Charles’s enthrallment by the bloody coat is shared by Catherine as he directs her attention to the smell suggested by the stains on the dirty sleeve.⁸⁵ Pointing to the exact spot where the bullet passed, he enacts in front of his mother the proper training response that lends her increased authority.⁸⁶ Swinburne negotiates the complex overlapping imagery of this maternal supervision by allowing Catherine to teach her son how to disassociate pain from religious martyrdom, for in this play the trauma of the massacre is not processed through religion but through the flesh, and it is the senses that provide the imagery. Catherine, patiently attending to Charles’s fascination and being satisfied that he has learned the lesson, responds that “It is an ill sight” and gently

⁸⁵ The royal family’s visit to Coligny may be understood in relation to Kristeva’s claim in *Powers of Horror*, that “maternal authority is experienced first and above all, after the essentially first oral frustrations, as sphincteral training” where the mother instructs the child in the rituals of purity and defilement (71). In this scene Swinburne deftly maneuvers what Kristeva would refer to as the rites of defilement and purification “that essential ridge, which prohibiting the filthy object, extracts it from the secular order and [provides] it at once with a sacred facet” (65). It also speaks to my larger claim that Swinburne’s drama participates in the genre of sensation fiction by appealing to the senses, and “preaching to the nerves” (Mansel 481).

⁸⁶ For Barbara Creed in *The Monstrous Feminine*, “all signs of bodily excretions—bile, urine, shit, mucus, spittle, blood—must be treated as abject, cleaned up and removed from sight” and while the mother’s role in training the child to manage this procedure is preparatory for entry into the Symbolic, the memories are painful sites of adult abjection (Creed 38). Swinburne presents an unusual willingness to focus on this particular aspect of maternal authority in “The Queen Mother” as Catherine trains Charles IX to do her work.

scolds him for prolonging the visit (1.4. 38). Moreover, Catherine's lessons contain dangerous and forbidden knowledge that Swinburne's Victorian contemporaries would be anxious to repress.

In act four, scene two for example; Charles has learned from Catherine how to equate the anticipated massacre with hunting deer as a sport. Charles invites the Huguenot courtier La Rochefoucauld to examine his volume on venery. "Have you not seen my book of deer," he asks, "what seasons and what ways to take them in? I finished it last night" (5.1. 127). Charles has now not only set the trap and baited his prey in the person of La Rochefoucauld, but he intimates that the Huguenots in general are like a battue of deer waiting to be slaughtered. Now recalling the Victorian reviewer of the 1845 *Times* article who censored the imagined parallels between Catherine's massacre and Victoria's slaughtered battue of deer, it is possible to see how Swinburne's Valois-Medici uncannily represent a disavowed Victoria and Albert. In both the 1845 review and in Swinburne's play the shadow of Catherine and Charles IX return to haunt the Victorian present, for as Derrida claims, haunting is "a question of repetition: a specter is always a revenant" (Derrida 11). The specter in question is the violence embodied in Catherine and her son Charles, and their association with the massacre is later repeated in Swinburne's criticism of the poet Laureate in "Tennyson and Musset" (1881).

In this essay where Swinburne refers to Tennyson's *Idylls* as the "Morte d'Albert" and considers Prince Albert a "wittol," he turns abruptly to the laureate's invasion scare sonnets "Hands all Around" and "Britons, Guard your Own," claiming that they

rang out a manful response of disgust and horror at the news of a crime unequalled in the cowardly vileness of its complicated atrocity since the model massacre of St.

Bartholomew. Not as yet had the blameless Albert—under the spell of a Palmerstonian Merlin?—led forth—we will not say his Guinevere—to clasp the thievish hand of a then uncrowned assassin. (“Complete Works” IV: 336)

Complex thoughts are imbricated in Swinburne’s negotiation of the massacre and Napoleon III’s violent coup d’état. Here, Albert is implicated in that violence as he takes the hand of his Guinevere-like Victoria and politically weds it with that of the “uncrowned assassin.” Recalling how the periodical press in 1847 had considered Albert a violent influence on the Queen through his overindulgence in sport, Swinburne is processing widespread cultural anxieties that lie beneath the imagery of an idealized domestic royal family. The St. Bartholomew’s massacre inhabits the historical backdrop of Swinburne’s anti-monarchical diatribe leaving no doubt that he is interpreting the Victorian present through sixteenth-century France.

Returning to the drama, Coligny, whom Catherine refers to as “dear lord,” becomes the first victim of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, and Swinburne’s imagery associates his jacket with the flayed skin of Saint Bartholomew martyr. The intentional pun on “deer” and “dear lord” reveals buried levels of hostility and civility that characterize Catherine’s courtly dissimulation, but it also provides links to the notion of martyrdom and of bringing a lamb to the slaughter. The allusion to St. Bartholomew’s martyrdom is also obvious in the play when, upon leaving Coligny’s apartment, Charles turns to the Admiral and returns his coat saying, “have your cloak on; so; God give you help” (1.4. 39). The imagery re-works the symbolism of the martyr who carries his flayed skin like a cloak worn over his arm, and Swinburne’s metaphor folds the imagery back on to Catherine who is now held accountable and inseparable from the massacre. Though blood and flayed skin here refer directly to Catherine’s wounded Coligny and “dear lord,” these fleshly elements are later applied broadly to include the blood of the Huguenot

martyrs flowing in the streets of Paris. This passage shows moreover, that Catherine's blood-stained hands threaten to bleed the nation of its Protestant leadership, for as Denise later reveals, she works "to catch France in her trap" (3.1). The first failed attempt to assassinate Coligny is only the rehearsal of the massacre that will erupt from "The Queen Mother" as a play, but it is a crucial rite of passage for Charles's character, because he learns to associate his mother with the "trap" and with her prearranged order for the massacre to come.

Catherine's training and haunting possession of Charles also functions through the play's effluent hemorrhaging imagery. The word "blood" appears eighty-three times in five acts. Again, since the Queen Mother is at the center of the play, the language suggests that she is also located at the source of the flow. Catherine is now associated with the massacre in a way that allows Swinburne to insinuate the Victorian taboo of menstruation.⁸⁷ Critics of Victorian literature have shown that menstrual fluid was a constant source of anxiety haunting Victorian men, and no doubt Swinburne is engaging with this association.⁸⁸ The crudeness of the symbolism associated with the vagina dentata extends to this semantic crossroads. In Swinburne's representation of Catherine, she is located at the center of a confluence of bloody streams as Charles IX transposes associations between the anticipated violence and the timeliness of his mother's calibrations. The ever-vigilant Catherine, who always shows up on time, even chides Charles for his impatience with his training. She says of herself, in a terse manner reminding him of her authority: "I would

⁸⁷ In "The Female King: Tennyson's Arthurian Apocalypse," Elliot L. Gilbert stresses the connections Victorians such as Tennyson regularly make between revolution, violence, and popular notions about menstruation (Gilbert 177). See also Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger*, especially her argument that taboos about matter issuing from the body's vulnerable parts should be understood culturally, from "the known dangers of society to the known selection of bodily themes" (150).

⁸⁸ Sally Shuttleworth in particular, claims that "even the operations of a woman's menstrual cycle could evoke equivalent violence—whether the blood flowed or failed to appear" (Shires 37). For a discussion of a sixteenth-century French discourse of "misogynist menstruation" and the "crisis of masculinity" produced in pamphlet literature during Catherine's regency see McLive, Long, and Crawford.

not be untimely” (2.1. 55). The regulated patterns of her motherly visitations, which often catch Charles by surprise, are reminders that he is under her constant surveillance. These well-timed visits then, pair the cyclical rhythms of the mother’s timely body with the impending massacre as a religious “rite of violence.”⁸⁹ This mother’s orderliness, already connected to her confessional allegiance, is mapped on to her chaotic body which is the shadow of misrule.

Because he is a king, Charles’s body is metaphorically also the body politic, and in his assessment of the political moment leading to the massacre, he reflects,

For I, by God, when I turn thought on it,
Do feel a heavy trembling in my sense,
An alteration and a full disease,
As perilous things did jar in me and make,
Contention in my blood. (2.1.49)

In these lines from the first scene of the second act, Charles is speaking to Denise and as we shall see, his reference to the “full disease” refers to Catherine’s chaotic and contagious body. It is the queen mother’s spiritual and moral possession of his mind that makes his outward physical body experience “heavy trembling.” Denise very quickly reads the signs of his fleshly report, and Swinburne uses the language typical of what Victorian critics of literary sensationalism object to as “diseased” and having “degenerate” characteristics. In her article “Swinburne Separates the Men from the Girls: Sensationalism in *Poems and Ballads*” (2002) for example, critic Heather Seagroatt argues convincingly that Victorian critics associated Swinburne’s poetry and drama

⁸⁹ “The Rites of Violence” is historian Natalie Zemon Davis’s titular pun on the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre as a series of riots in which the violent and deadly crowd behavior had a “dramatic and ritual” structure. Davis claims that “the rites of violence are not the rights of violence in any absolute sense” and that historians have been mistaken in claiming that religion was the only symbolic interpretation for this overdetermined historical event (Davis 187).

with sensation fiction. She claims for example, that “[Alfred] Austin and [Robert] Buchanan insisted that Swinburne’s *Poems*—with its bloodthirsty women, illicit sex, and much-vaunted sensuality—was clearly ‘sensational’ because it excited violent feelings of repulsion or fascination” (47). Bringing Swinburne and Braddon together, Seagroatt claims that “sensationalism was inextricably linked to popular, sensation fiction—a form associated (in its time and ours) with women writers and readers” (41) while adding that Swinburne’s poetry “depended on the discourses of popular sensationalism” (43).

Catherine embodies this sensationalism as a contagion which she transmits to her son. Denise recognizes the shadow of the spectral mother declaring to Charles,

I fear you much;
For I can smell the mother in your speech,
This argument hath color of her eyes;
Where learn you it?” (2.1. 50-1)

Not only does Denise “smell” Catherine and “see the color of her eyes” in Charles’s body, but she can hear the motherly voice speaking through him. The queen mother has possessed Charles’s body and Denise recognizes the unmistakable signs of her physical presence in the form of his bodily sensations. This also recalls Anna Jameson’s claim that Catherine had infected her daughter-in-law Mary Stuart claiming “we shudder at her very name, and tremble at the idea of the very contagion to which the youthful queen was exposed” (224).

Charles uses this moment to launch into a long climactic soliloquy on the temporal aspects of the massacre, and it is at this point that Swinburne turns from bodily to political sensation. He sees the ripeness of the political moment as a kairotic time of the present as he

joins his mother's side with an absolute allegiance.⁹⁰ Whatever warning Denise had previously expressed in referring to the mother as a "trap" is now useless. He is Catherine's phallic son and will do the political work she needs to accomplish in France. The fleshly and sensual elements of Charles's body are also mapped on to the body politic itself which, in turn, is possessed by Catherine's will. In the soliloquy that follows his discussion with Denise, he bursts into a prophetic language that associates the Huguenot genocide with the cyclical flow of menstruation:

My brains do beat upon
The month's full time. Which day it is I know not;
It should look red upon the calendar,
And outblush its fierce use. The twenty-fourth of August—
We stumble near it unawares by this. (2.1. 51)

Caught up in a vision of the date on the calendar and his appointment with cyclical time, "the month's full time" that "should look red upon the calendar" he sees only his mother's will by disorganizing time ("Which day it is I know not").⁹¹ A close inspection of these lines shows that Swinburne joins the temporal (month, day, calendar, and twenty-fourth of August) with the body (brains, red, referring to blood, and outblush). The root of the word menstruation is the Latin "mensis" ("month"), and because it is here associated with the color of blood, the graphic imagery connects back to Catherine.⁹² Likewise, the verb "to outblush" refers metaphorically to

⁹⁰ Walter Benjamin in "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" (XIV) would later refer to this political moment as the "Jetztzeit," or "the time of the now" ("Illuminations" 263).

⁹¹ In *Menstruation and Procreation in Early Modern France* (2015), McLive observes that "the mechanization of time-keeping instruments and the calendar reforms instigated by Charles IX in 1563/4...focused attention on the cultural relativity of time, highlighting the existence of differing concepts of time" (107).

⁹² McLive refers to a tract by Catherine's sixteenth-century court physician Ambroise Paré titled "Bien réglée dans mes Mois" which calculated female menstruation according to Charles IX's newly revised state calendar documenting the "cultural significance of a well-regulated menstrual cycle" (112). By the nineteenth century the French colloquial term for menstruation "règles" (lit. rule) had extended pejoratively to include the British

an excess of blood in the human face as well as to the massacre which is by now forcefully identified with “the queen mother that would use blood for paint” (3.1. 96). Through metonymic contiguity, these lines associate the blood of state violence with Catherine’s abject bodily fluid. Since the date on the calendar is so securely established as Charles’s appointment with his phallic mother, the scene clearly signals the triumph of Catherine’s will. Though Charles’s association of the bloody time of the month with the massacre may be obvious, he himself cannot accept it in that form. He must process this situation by displacing the maternal abject on to the state violence that he can sanction as a function of the Symbolic law.

In a final declaration of the ripeness of the moment, Charles has recognized that the temporal cycles cohere. When “the month’s full time” is realized as “the twenty fourth of August,” Charles understands that his subject’s blood must flow. His language soars into a prophetic vision of disaster as he tells Denise that, “It is the time, the time—you come too late to tear its thread across” (1.1. 51). This temporal “thread” of course is his haunting reminder that Catherine alone can sunder the cord that connects him so intimately with her body. The strangeness of his language is striking when it is recalled that he is addressing Denise, for her self-appointed task has been to dissuade him from carrying out the impending order for the massacre. She fails even as Charles’s language achieves fluency.

Through the metaphor of the calendar which marks the date with the blood of his massacred subjects, Swinburne has Charles interpret the symbols as a haunting political prophecy:

“redcoats” (soldiers) who occupied Paris after Napoleon’s defeat, thus making the term available from 1815. Swinburne, who was fluent in French and corresponded with Victor Hugo and many other celebrated French authors would certainly have been aware of these associations.

But this Bartholomew shall be inscribed
Beyond the first; the latter speech of time
Shall quench and make oblivious war upon
The former and defeated memories,
New histories teaching it. (2.1. 51)

This terrifying interview concludes with Denise realizing that Charles has abdicated his sacred kingship in submission to his mother's will, which will teach "new histories." It is however, primarily the association Charles makes between the blood of the martyred Huguenots and the menstrual flow that explains why he reacts so sternly to reinforce his mother's will.

The temporal element of the massacre now ripe for a blood bath is conjoined to the womb imagery as a trap and Charles proclaims, "we trap them all in a great gin where the soul sticks as well. / Nay there's no hair of any Huguenot / But makes up parcel of my work in blood" (2.1. 52). The term "gin" also refers by extension to the "trap," or as I am claiming, the vagina dentata, and it is significant that this line is also echoed later in Swinburne's poem "Faustine" where, "The shameless nameless love that makes, / Hell's iron gin, / Shut on you like a trap that breaks" (*Poems and Ballads* 89). Swinburne's Victorian readers registered the shocking textual effect of the poet's sensational poetry, but there is also a suggestion in the play that Catherine's body contains a revolutionary potential that appeals to the base crowd.⁹³

⁹³ John Ruskin writes to Swinburne: "I like them [the poems] so much" while referring specifically to "*Faustine* which made me all hot like pies with Devil's fingers in them" (Henderson 114). For Victorian reactions to the play see also Hyder and LaFourcade.

As the massacre unfolds in the final act, Swinburne's dramatic powers are at their greatest, and he gives Catherine some of her most forceful lines as in her speech to cheer on her guards⁹⁴:

Go out and cheer your men;
Bid them be bold; say, work is worth such pains;
Be quick and dangerous as the fire that rides
Too fast for thunder. Tell them the king, the king
Will love each man, cherish him sweetly, say,
And I will hold him as that brother is
Whom one flesh covered with me. (5.3. 174)

Here Catherine is both widow and the warrior queen who commands the captain guards to be “quick and dangerous” as she loves them in the name of her son and deceased husband. This is clearly calculated to upset conventional Victorian gender norms of female passivity as the Queen Mother is represented as an active female whose eager grasping of power thrusts her into a position of command. This is also the moment when Catherine's tyrannical character, in the ninth scene of act five introduces a sinister and foreboding hint at future events. As mentioned earlier, Swinburne's antipathy toward Napoleon III began in his childhood when the brutality of the December coup d'état of 1851 left a permanent scar on his life, and when Catherine speaks to Charles about the horrific work of the massacre, she breathes an ominous note of prophecy:

Who knows, sweet son,

⁹⁴ Swinburne is very calculating in his allotment of speeches, and Catherine's appearances on the whole increase over the course of the drama. In the last act alone she speaks fifty seven times so that her access to language and representation increases as her will is accomplished. The order of her increasing lines over the course of the play's five acts runs: I: 25; II: 33; III: 46; IV: 42, and V: 57.

But here in this very Paris, where
Our work now smells abhorred, some such may come
To try more bloody issues, and break faith
More shamefully? make truth deny its face,
Kill honour with its lips, stab shame to death,
Unseat men's thoughts, envenom all belief,
Yea, spit into the face and eyes of God
His foresworn promise? Such things may be; for time,
That is the patient ground of all men's seed
And ripens either corn alike, may bring
Deeds forth which shall as far outreach our act. (5.9. 193-4)

Catherine warns of future events such as the revolutionary September Massacre that will “far outreach” the deeds of 1572, which according to Swinburne scholar Georges Lafourcade, also contains “an anachronistic diatribe against Napoleon III” (Lafourcade 260). Swinburne channels his resentment at Napoleon through Catherine de Medici’s threatening prophecies of future tyrannical brutalities by compounding and piling historical disasters one upon the other.

In his “Note on the Character of Mary Queen of Scots,” which will be discussed in my next chapter, Swinburne connects the two events of 1572 and 1852 in the form of a “secular typology” while inveighing against the Christian God.⁹⁵ He writes that “the coup d’etat of August 24, 1572, was not an offering of sweeter savour in [God’s] expansive and insatiable

⁹⁵ The term “secular typology” is from George P. Landow’s study *Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows: Biblical Typology in Victorian Literature, Art and Thought* (1980) where he claims that “political applications of religious typology exemplify an area of Victorian thought in which authors commonly extend or secularize this form of symbolism” (145). Landow asserts that “such secularizations of [biblical] typology do not depend upon the religious belief of the author who employs them” while singling out “Swinburne, who was an atheist” (145).

nostrils than was the St. Bartholomew of December 2, 1851” reversing the dates for special attention, and claiming that

in a worshipper of this divine devil [Mary Stuart], in the ward of a Medici or a Bonaparte, it would be an inhuman absurdity to expect the presence or condemn the absence of what nothing far short of a miracle could have been implanted—the sense of right and wrong, the distinction of good from evil, the preference of truth to falsehood. (Gosse and Wise 430)

Though Swinburne is writing about Mary Stuart in the context of this quote, the method of his political and secular typology is also clearly present in Catherine’s terrifying speech.

Swinburne’s poetic temporality is also reminiscent of Marx’s reactions to Louis Bonaparte’s seizing of power. In “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” (1852), Marx observes that “men make their own history” and that in “periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from their names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise” (Marx 300). By introducing these political currents Swinburne shows that his attitude to Catherine de Medici stems from his anxiety over despotism and tyranny in general, and with “the bastard Buonaparte” in particular.⁹⁶ Napoleon’s coup d’état left a terrible impression on many of Victoria’s subjects. As Raymond Mortimer in his editorial remarks in Queen Victoria’s *Letters from a Journal* (1855) observes, the incident “shocked public opinion in Britain by its brutality” and Napoleon’s “name in itself revived alarming memories” (Mortimer 14). Four years after the coup d’état, when Napoleon III attempted to repair his image through the political

⁹⁶ The tenth quatrain of Swinburne’s “A Song in Time of Order, 1852” in *Poems and Ballads* reads: “We shall see Buonaparte the Bastard / Kick heels with his throat in a rope” (*Poems and Ballads* 110).

“rapprochement” with Britain, many were shocked again at what seemed to be the Emperor's embarrassing public display of seductive diplomatic policy. When Victoria and Albert accepted Napoleon's invitation to visit France they confirmed symbolically that a new attitude toward the Emperor should be one of tolerance and mutual sympathy. At this time Swinburne, who was recently rusticated from Oxford for his support of Felice Orsini's assassination attempt on Napoleon III in January 1858, was beginning to write “The Queen Mother.” His play should therefore be read in light of his political anti-monarchism and his frustration with Victoria's apparent reconciliation with Britain's great enemy.

In the play, the Louvre becomes the metaphorical site of violence where the babbling courtiers are entertained with the spectacle of the murdered Huguenots slipping on the glistening blood-drenched streets. Symbolically however, the erupting massacre is also an instance of “a uterine economy entirely out of control” (Shires 37). When Catherine asks her henchman Tavannes “How goes the work?” he responds “even like a wave that turns” suggesting the liquid nature of political and bodily effluvia (5.9. 189). Moreover, Swinburne's play ends with mob violence likened to a sea of blood flowing through the streets and creating a great swell that swallows Paris. Surveying the scene from the Louvre a dazed Charles tells Catherine: “I did not think the blood should run so far” (5.9. 192).

In the catastrophic fifth act Denise escapes from the palace and runs out into the mob. Charles who by this point functions as the signifier of his mother's superior will, randomly aims his arquebuse into the crowd and shoots her. Catherine is indirectly guilty of Denise's assassination but she only accomplishes this final act of violence through Charles who explains to his mother: “There was a woman I saw lately slain, / And she was ript i' the side; at a point to die, / She threw her on her child” (5. 9. 192). Charles does not realize at first that he has slain

Denise but mistakes her for a mother bending over a dead child. It is to this incident that Queen Victoria refers in the epigraph cited above on her visit to the Louvre in 1855. Swinburne's play however, adds a name to the random crowd humanizing the victim and blaming the tyrants who fired on the innocent.

Though the play casts Catherine as guilty of premeditating the massacre, it does not address the historical paradox of her not holding political power in her own right, and this darkens the shadow surrounding her. As a symbol of the queen and the maternal, the "mother" portion of Catherine's official title implies her role as a hated and despised regent. In this capacity Catherine inhabits a social space that historian Katherine Crawford calls a site of "perilous performance" (Crawford 198). The title of regent is a separate category from that of queen, one that has historically been the object of derision.⁹⁷ In the play, the representation of Catherine de Medici as a *vagina dentata* prompts questions about her ambiguous position in relation to her royal family and to the French nation as a queen, but she also serves as a reminder that Swinburne is displacing aspects of Catherine on to Victoria while Catherine's son Charles is a figure for Napoleon III. In an uncanny return of the repressed Charles enacts the violence his mother can only dream of committing. Again, as she asks her henchman Tavannes in the epigraph that opens this chapter, "Do you think, sir, some of these dead men, / Being children, dreamed perhaps of this?" (5.8). Catherine's question is haunting in light of Victoria's realization

⁹⁷ Crawford describes this perilous position as "the paradox of regency—that weakness and disorder invited strength and innovation in the deployment of power" (198). Natalie Davis addresses this notion in "Women on Top," where she writes that "the rule of a queen was impossible in France by the Salic law, and mocked by the common proverb 'tomber en quenouille' ['to fall under the distaff']" (Davis 125). In both cases the scepter as a signifier of power works paradoxically and in relation to the phallic signifier. Likewise Carla Freccero shows how theories of French dynastic succession shifted with the introduction of the "Marital Regime government" ("Queer nation, Female Nation" 55). With the discovery of the fraudulence of the Salic Law humanist legists claimed that "the exclusion of women from rule was no longer a constitutional matter," but rather became part of the French canon law "which secured legal foundations for the male right to govern along the lines of a marital regime in law" (Freccero 55).

in the epigraph cited above, that she was standing two hundred and eighty-three years later, in the very spot where the Queen Mother watched her son firing on his subjects. In Swinburne's plays Catherine's foreign violence contaminates Victoria, a point that I will elaborate in the next section.

IV. "La Soeur de la Reine": Catherine de Medici as Victoria's Uncanny Twin

In Swinburne's unpublished burlesque "La Soeur de la Reine" Catherine de Medici meets Victoria again as the uncanny return of the repressed. Swinburne published his plays *Rosamond and The Queen Mother* in one volume just before Christmas 1860, and "La Soeur de la Reine" was sketched out as early as January 1861 (Lang 226). Aspects from the former play recur in "La Soeur de la Reine" producing an effect of the uncanny.⁹⁸ The Louvre, the Queen Mother, and the violent massacre of 1572 are newly imagined in Victorian London.⁹⁹ Turning to Queen Victoria for new subject matter Swinburne, still mentally processing his historical drama, makes the French burlesque a travesty of the former play.

In the burlesque Swinburne inverts the language and the historical period of "The Queen Mother" hurling the sixteenth-century into the Victorian world. This too pertains to Swinburne's republican politics as discussed above, but here he chooses two prominent literary men from the Second Empire to serve as his Cross-Channel stylistic referents. Whereas "The Queen Mother" is an English play about a French queen in the style and manner of Marlowe, "La Soeur de la Reine" is a French play about an English queen in the style of Victor Hugo and Alexandre

⁹⁸ Freud defines his notion of the experience of the uncanny as that which is "undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror" (*SE XVII* 219). Swinburne's text anticipates three aspects of Freud's concept of the uncanny which include the double as a twin, castration anxieties as associated with severed limbs, decapitation, and feelings associated with a familiar or unfamiliar place or proper name (226)

⁹⁹ Freud writes that an uncanny experience is the "unintended recurrence of the same situation" which may "differ radically from it in other respects" but nevertheless refers back to the former (237). In Swinburne's two texts a similar recurrence is experienced as the reader encounters a strange similarity between them.

Dumas *films*. By writing his play in French, Swinburne's joke on Buckingham Palace's love affair with Napoleon III is obvious as the English monarchy has been colonized linguistically. In this burlesque Swinburne channels Hugo's republican politics and his hatred of Napoleon III, but he also borrows from Dumas's popular novel and play *La Dame aux camellias* (1848), the conceit of a scorned concubine. Reappearing in diminutive form as Kitty, Catherine is not only Victoria's literary "long forgotten" sister; she threatens to usurp her throne. Kitty resembles both the courtesan Denise from the former play and Dumas's demi-mondaine Marguerite Gautier. A common whore dragged into the queen's court from the Haymarket gutter, Catherine alias Kitty, is Victoria's worst nightmare come true. Unconsciously drawing on the larger than life Catherine de Medici now reduced to the diminutive Kitty, the suggestion adds hilarity to Swinburne's burlesque.¹⁰⁰

Kitty is none other than Victoria's long lost twin sister; Victoria looms over the burlesque as a demon queen, and her twin Catherine becomes her victim. In his correspondence Swinburne refers to "The Queen Mother" as his "Catherine," suggesting that his friends are aware of his inside joke. Swinburne summarizes the play as follows:

A twin sister of Queen Victoria, kidnapped on her birth by consent of the late Sir R[obert] Peel and Lord Chancellor Eldon for political reasons—to remove a rival candidate for the throne—grows up a common prostitute—is discovered in The Haymarket by the *Lor Maire* on a profligate excursion—informed of her origins claims her rights—is confronted with queen—queen swoons—the proofs of her birth bought and destroyed—the [Archbishop] of Canterbury solemnly

¹⁰⁰ See Swinburne *Letters*: I, 27, 32.

perjures himself to the effect that she is an imposter—finally consumed by an ill-requited attachment to Lord John Russell, the heroine charcoals herself to death. (“Letters” 226)

The burlesque opens at Buckingham Palace as the Duchess of implores “Sir Peel” to reunite her with a mysterious lost daughter, the first hint that Victoria has a sister.¹⁰¹ The Duchess tells Sir Robert Peel: “Si je vous livre la fille qui est à moi, vous me rendrez la fille que vous m’avez prise [If I give you my daughter, you will give back the daughter you have taken from me] (Lang 106). The Duchess offers Victoria in compensation for the return of Catherine while alienating Victoria in suggesting that she is “leur reine à tous ces gens-là; une reine, c’est chose publique, cela ressemble à une courtisane” [queen of those people; a queen is a public thing, resembling a courtesan] (107). The Duchess of Kent implies here that Victoria’s role as both the head of state and a courtesan means that she is sexually available to her people. Victoria’s symbolism as a public figure (“the people’s queen”) is thus, equivalent to the “high-born harlots” of “The Queen Mother.” Victoria abuses her authority while using her cabinet members to consummate her sexual desires.

Whereas critics have seldom appreciated the tone of Swinburne’s irreverence toward Victoria, critic Gail Houston observes that “by satirizing the ostensible chief representative of conventional Victorian sexuality, Swinburne brilliantly questions the ideological underpinnings of what was viewed as normal sexuality. He also comically undermines aristocratic pretensions” (Houston 74). Houston further suggests that “the writer’s humorous fuss about the sovereign’s

¹⁰¹ It is important to note that Swinburne may have in mind the principal events of 1839 when Victoria’s image was doubly compromised by the Bedchamber Crisis and the Flora Hastings scandal. Many of Swinburne’s references to persons in Victoria’s court are unrecognizable while others, such as her mother the Duchess of Kent, Sir Robert Peel and Lord Russell are scandalously left undisguised. Chapter three covers the Bedchamber Crisis in greater depth.

sexuality—and his implicit belief that her sexuality informs her professional capability—also has something to do with Swinburne’s anxieties about his own poetic potency” (74). In turning the joke back on to Swinburne Houston, though psychologically astute, overlooks the substitution of authority figures taking place in the associations made between “The Queen Mother” and “La Soeur de la Reine.”¹⁰² Swinburne’s burlesque indicates “anxieties” through the uncanny return of a double.

It is not until the end of the burlesque that Victoria finally admits that Kitty is her sister. At first the twin is announced at court as “Kitty” however, by the third scene of the fourth act, the Court Chamberlain announces her full title. In an intimate conversation with Sir Robert Peel in which a sexually voracious Victoria forces him to admit that he will promise to love her “jusqu’au crime” [to the point of crime], the Chamberlain announces: “Son Altesse Royale la princesse Catherine [qui] sollicite ardemment la grâce d’être admise auprès de Sa Majesté” [Her Royal Highness the Princess Catherine ardently solicits an audience with her Majesty] (Lang 118). The French preposition “auprès de” connotes the idea of spatial contiguity—“near to” and “close by”—as well as a comparison, as in “compared to.” Swinburne takes delight in the nuances by imaging Kitty being compared to Victoria, “auprès de Sa Majesté.”

When Sir Robert Peel asks Victoria if she would like him to remove Catherine from court, she responds “Non pas! Après tout—après tout, monsieur—c’est ma soeur” [No! After all—after all sir, she is my sister] (118). In the stage direction for this scene in which Victoria recognizes that Catherine is her twin, the Queen, “avec un sourire diabolique” [with a diabolical smile], admits her sister to her court (118). Though Catherine is a common prostitute from the

¹⁰² Houston also claims that Victoria was “the ostensible chief representative of conventional Victorian sexuality,” and Swinburne is challenging that position. See also Clements (1985) who views the play as “a farce in which sexual hypocrisy is the subject” (45).

Haymarket, she is graciously admitted to the Queen's inner circle. This move allows Victoria to displace culturally disapproved sexual behaviors on to Kitty. Victoria has a voracious sexual appetite as she spends most of her lines begging Lord John Russell or Sir Robert Peel to consummate her sexual passions and showing that the twins have a great deal in common. Their differences are political as Victoria's position allows her to threaten her lovers, order decapitations for minor infringements, and express outrage when having to decide what to do about Kitty/Catherine. Swinburne may be suggesting here Queen Elizabeth I's rivalry and jealousy over Mary Queen of Scots, a theme he develops in his Mary Stuart trilogy to be discussed in the next chapter. Like Catherine however, in Swinburne's burlesque Victoria exercises her tyrannical will by royal fiat.

Victorians were repulsed by Swinburne's poetry because of its abject content, but they were simultaneously attracted to it, and the satire of Victoria in "La Soeur de la Reine" provokes a grotesque humor. Whereas in "The Queen Mother" Catherine de Medici was the entrapping vagina dentata, in the process of her harrowing return in "La Soeur de la Reine," she is the uncanny double who bears the repressed aspects.¹⁰³ In Freud's terms Catherine uncannily represents "a creation dating back to a very early mental stage" and she inhabits "La Soeur de la Reine" as this return of "a thing of terror" finally becoming Victoria's shadow queen (Freud *SE* XVII 236). Swinburne obviously enjoys blemishing Queen Victoria's reputation, but it helps to recall that he was not alone in attacking the sureties of middle-class domesticity that Victorians admired in their queen. As I have shown earlier in my examination of the Victorian press, others had done so in a much more public fashion. By giving Victoria many of the threatening and

¹⁰³ Freud claims that when all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted (*SE* XVII 236).

menacing aspects associated with Catherine in the portraits and sensational press, Swinburne reflects widespread social and cultural anxieties.¹⁰⁴

The fear that Victoria may be vindictive and seek retaliation is an element that the play barely disguises. Swinburne also features decapitation which is a reference to Victoria's excessive powers as the physical embodiment of the terrifying and devouring *vagina dentata*. In the third scene of act four, finding that her lover Lord Russell has abandoned her bed and that she has been left the prey to scandal, Victoria bemoans her disgrace to Sir Robert Peel. Enraged that all of London now gossips about her Victoria asks him if he can read in her tear-stained face the signs of a "*reine outragée ou bien une femme qui a perdu son amant?*" [a disgraced queen or merely a woman who has lost her lover?] (Lang 116). Swinburne humorously tests the boundaries that separate a Queen and her subject. Finding that her tears and hurt feelings are useless, Victoria's powers as a constitutional monarch fail her. Quickly shifting into the role of a tyrant Victoria reminds Sir Robert Peel that "*j'ai mon bourreau*" while asking him: "*ce que j'ai dans la main, répondez, milord, est-ce un sceptre? Est-ce une hache? Est-il dans toute cette infâme et misérable Angleterre une seule tête que je ne puisse faire tomber d'un souffle?*" (115). [I too have my headsman...tell me, my Lord, is what I hold in my hand a scepter or an axe? Is there in this infamous and miserable England a single head that I might not cause to fall at a breath?]. Victoria is blinded by her power, and in her rage she cannot distinguish between a scepter and an axe. Swinburne's "*Reine Victoria*" clearly brandishes the scepter as a weapon of

¹⁰⁴ When the Poet Laureate Tennyson died in 1892, and Swinburne was suggested as his replacement, one disconcerted critic announced: "I really think that if Mr. Gladstone makes Swinburne the Laureate, he will hasten the death of the Queen, for it could be nothing but an annoyance to her, and with reason" The critic recognizes Swinburne's antagonism to every value that Queen Victoria represents ("*The Lounger*" 213; also found in Hyder 86).

hilarity, and yet he makes Victoria's axe-waving a constitutional prerogative. Heads roll in Swinburne's burlesque as they do in "The Queen Mother".

Like Catherine, Victoria leaves the streets saturated with blood. In the first scene of the fourth act, two Lords are discussing the state of affairs in Victoria's England with a gentleman named Sir Chump. Lord Gotobed and Lord Butters defend Victoria's reign and her prerogatives while Sir Chump gives a very different perspective. He declares that Victoria,

a des amants, qu'elle mène une vie épouvantable, que nous vivons dans un temps inouï, que l'Angleterre, la tête couronnée de fleurs, les yeux rougis par l'ivresse, glisse du pied dans le sang répandu, rit, chante, et trébuchet à chaque pas sur une tête coupée. J'ose ajouter milord, que ce sont là des choses affreuses et dont nous rendrons compte un jour à l'humanité entière" [she has lovers, that she leads a shocking life, that we live in unheard of times, that England, crowned with flowers, eyes red with drunkenness, slips upon spilled blood, laughs, sings, and trips at each step upon a severed head. I dare add, my Lord that these are horrific things for which one day we must render an account to all of humanity]. (115)

Sir Chump is summarily denounced to the Alderman. The Queen suddenly appears as Lord Gotobed quickly ends the discussion saying "Chut! Ce serait à perdre la tête. Voici la reine!" [Hush! We will lose our heads. Here comes the queen!] (116). The term "chut" in French is a command meaning "to hush," but it is also the present perfect verb form for "choir" (to fall) as in "elle chut," or "she fell." Finally, it can also refer to an object, such as a head that has fallen. Swinburne again plays with the French nuances adding dark humor to his burlesque. The Lords register the queen's dangerous presence as castration anxiety. Swinburne disguises these

insinuations by writing the play in French, circulating it privately, and never allowing it to be published. It has remained outside of Swinburne's opus as ephemera, yet it needs to be considered in the context of the Catherine play that haunts it.

The final uncanny effect the burlesque registers is the Palace of Buckingham, which like the Louvre in "The Queen Mother," doubles as a space of violence, a nest of royal corruption, and Queen Victoria's headquarters. "La Soeur de la Reine" is haunted by Catherine's Louvre as the Freudian "unintended recurrence of the same situation" (*SE XVII 237*). Recalling that in "The Queen Mother," the opening act describes the atmosphere of Catherine's Louvre as a site peopled by babbling babies and hypocritical courtiers, at scene four of act two in the burlesque, the same atmosphere is evoked during Victoria's reception of her courtiers at Buckingham Palace. The Chamberlain announces the names of each courtier in a loud voice:

Milady duchesse de Fuckingstone—mistress Rodger Cox Tandy—Milady comtesse de Bitch—miss Sarah Butterbottom—milady Quim—milady marquise de Mausprick—miss Polly Poke, présentée par milord duc de Shittinbags—milady Cunter, par milord marquis de Bumbelly. (Lang 111)

As Swinburne was raised in an aristocratic environment and spent his adolescence on the Isle of Wight, the site of Victoria's summer-residence Osborne House, he had both a variety of historical court records and personal knowledge of court gossip readily available for this passage.¹⁰⁵ Buckingham Palace is populated with a sordid list of fantasy characters bearing

¹⁰⁵ The reference is to the French court gossip Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantome whose posthumously published *Les Dames gallantes* (1665) Swinburne read (Gosse 130). In his article "Mary Queen of Scots" Swinburne describes Brantôme's reminiscences of Catherine de Medici's court through an odd sequence of parallels. See my chapter two 20 n.22.

pornographic names, and Victoria is completely at home in this nest of iniquity where she greets her ladies with “un air d’insouciance” [an air of indifference] (111).

At this point in the burlesque Lord Russell introduces the harlot Princess Catherine to court as the sensational and shocking lowly single woman with upwardly mobile determinations. In *New Writings of Swinburne*, Cecil Lang assembles many scattered references and anecdotes about Swinburne’s unpublished burlesque, but one that stands out is Julian Osgood Field’s re-naming of the play as *La Princesse Katy*, a move that would imply that Swinburne himself was “possessed” by the earlier play he referred to in correspondence as the “interminable Catherine” (Lang 226). Clearly “La Soeur de la Reine” refers back to “The Queen Mother” thereby qualifying it as the return of the repressed. In “The Queen Mother,” Catherine de Medici was a blood-thirsty tyrant, but she now returns as Victoria’s kindred shadow. Swinburne’s humor could be understood in relation to his release of repressed guilt and desire to repair injuries played out on the mother of fantasy, however his political republicanism is more than enough reason for him to link the widow Catherine with the sexually insatiable Victoria. When read in this light Swinburne’s burlesque can be seen to supplement the darker tones of his “interminable Catherine.”

V. Catherine de Medici in Braddon’s “Lady Audley’s Secret”

They are Semiramides, and Cleopatras, and Joan of Arcs, Queen Elizabeths and Catherine the Seconds, and they riot in battle, and murder, and battle, and desperation. If they can't agitate the universe and play ball with the hemispheres, they'll make mountains of warfare and vexation out of domestic molehills; and social storms in household teacups. Forbid them to hold forth on the freedom of nations and the wrongs of mankind...To call them the weaker sex is to utter a hideous mockery. They are the stronger sex, the noisier, the more persevering, the most self-assertive sex.

—Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*. (Ed.) Houston 229.

Queen Victoria's decades-long mourning for the Prince Consort Albert began to cast a long shadow over the nation after his death in December of 1861 when her grief and obsession with his memory manifested itself in her bizarre grieving rituals and retreat from public office. Repeatedly refusing to convene Parliament, her symbolic abdication of the throne and neglect of queenly duties left a void at the head of State. Since her subjects couldn't or wouldn't openly criticize Victoria for all but abdicating while mourning, they expressed their discontent through fictive representations of horrible, criminal queens such as the sensual Semiramis, the murderous Messalina, the conniving Cleopatra, and the cruel Catherine de Medici. In a period when Queen Victoria's pervasive image offered a monarch garbed in the drabness of domesticity, the literary symbol of the "criminal queen" emerges as a way to articulate ambivalence and anxieties about her by tracing the contours of her predecessor queens, "the standard comparison" (Hunt), as royal shadows. As already mentioned, the Victorians were well aware of Catherine's dark symbolism, and in the sixties, her appearance in British histories, periodical literature, and art, secured her a place in the sphere of cultural memory. In sensation novels royalty and criminality merge in the form of madness, and here too Catherine offers Victorians the perfect representational strategy to displace cultural anxieties surrounding Albert's death and the newly widowed Victoria's refusal to accept his loss. In this section I argue that *Lady Audley's Secret*

(1862), as the literary epitome of sensation fiction, raises the specter of Catherine de Medici not only to thrill readers, but to fill in the void left by the ever-retreating Victoria.¹⁰⁶

Unlike Swinburne's drama where the phallic mother exercises total control over her son, Braddon's sensation novel establishes a scenario in which Catherine suggests the taint of hereditary madness. Braddon's novel was serialized in John Maxwell's *Robin Goodfellow* from July through September of 1861, just three months before the death of Prince Albert and six months after Victoria was mourning the death of her mother.¹⁰⁷ Elaine Showalter describes the historic event of Albert's death and the national mourning it occasioned as it relates to the emergence of sensation fiction. In "Desperate Remedies: Sensation Novels of the 1860's" (1976), Showalter claims that while Victorians were "participating in the national mourning for Victoria's domestic idyll, they were lining up at Mudie's to demand quite another sort of family chronicle" (1).¹⁰⁸ Sensation fiction filled an emotional void for a public that could not share in the fantasy of familial bliss constructed under Albert's guidance. Showalter suggests that sensation writers were working hard to feed a readership hungry for alternative accounts of family norms by replacing idyllic bliss with domestic violence, but as Karen Chase and Michael Levenson claim in *The Spectacle of Intimacy* (2000), sensation fiction also produced the figure of the lonely single woman for mass consumption. "Even as Albert's death reanimated thoughts of exemplary royal domesticity" they assert, "it built a difficult new picture of the single woman,

¹⁰⁶ Showalter asserts that in this fiction "we find a fantasy that runs counter to the official mythology of the Albert Memorial. In these [sensation] novels, the death of a husband or wife comes as a welcome release, and spouses who lack the friendly agency of typhoid find desperate remedies in flight, divorce, and, ultimately, murder" (1).

¹⁰⁷ See Braddon 32-33. The novel was quickly re-serialized in *The Sixpenny Magazine* in January and December 1862.

¹⁰⁸ Showalter goes on to assert that in the sensation novel "we find a fantasy which runs counter to the official mythology of the Albert Memorial. In these novels, the death of a husband or wife comes as a welcome release, and spouses who lack the friendly agency of typhoid find desperate remedies in flight, divorce, and ultimately murder" (1).

queen or no queen, who could never live again within the ideal frame of family life” (182). In this sense, Victoria’s shadow falls on *Lady Audley’s Secret* through her excessive mourning practices.

Accordingly, sensation fiction presents the social conditions in which mourning and murder are conceived in a mutually informing pattern as one phenomenon submerges the other. How do murder and mourning relate to one another when culture places cruelty, violence, and murder in opposite categories from mourning? Freud has shown that melancholia, unsuccessful mourning, contains an aggressive and violent impulse that is reminiscent of murderous rage in the melancholic’s censoring of the ego. Whereas the process of mourning offers the hope of future, reparation and community, the refusal of this repair causes the mourner to enter into a more permanent state of melancholy as the sufferer introjects and incorporates the lost loved one.¹⁰⁹ Remarkings that Victoria’s compulsive behavior is characteristic of the melancholic, Homans suggests that, “aided by and exaggerating a property characteristic to any representational form (the tendency to displace what is represented), her melancholic refusal or inability to complete her mourning for [Albert] takes the form in public art of endless reminders that he is dead and that she is still alive to lament his loss” (163). While Victoria may be alive, her daily ritualizing of death suggests that her social image is casting a shadow over the nation.

There is of course a difference between Victoria’s retreat into private mourning and the sensation heroine’s motivations for murder. Whereas murder wishes a person away violently, mourning grieves their absence and retreats ever more into the private sphere. Yet when Victoria exceeded the stipulated formal period of mourning, her private grief became a source of public

¹⁰⁹ See Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) as well as Abraham and Torok’s related discussions of “introjection” and “incorporation” (Abraham and Torok 1994).

resentment and outrage. In *A Magnificent Obsession* (2013), Helen Rappaport suggests that Victoria's indulgence in mourning rituals began in earnest with the death of her mother, but that even before 1861 "Victoria was already a master of the long and flamboyant mourning protocols that were in vogue, enthroning her own particular maudlin celebration of grief as a virtue to be emulated by all" (37). The Queen's display of grief entailed elaborate public rituals mythologizing Albert in a manner that some critics understood as personal mania; a form of madness. Rappaport claims that Victoria's royal physicians, Doctors Jenner and Clark, feared her total mental collapse, and remembering her descent from King George III, they entertained "thoughts of hereditary madness" (169), and that by 1867, the popular satirical *Tomahawk* would announce that the Queen's mourning was attributable to her "deplorable mental health" (191). If Victoria's inconsolable grief was interpreted by some as a form of madness, for many she was also becoming a royal malingerer surrounded by children whose financial maintenance weighed heavily on the nation.¹¹⁰ Given these associations, it should be less surprising to find that sensation fiction's use of the historical queen Catherine de Medici, who was a perpetual widow with criminal overtones, could generate symbols that displaced anxieties about the royal family.

In Braddon's novel, mourning is an enigma and a mystery the heroine buries in her psyche but which is manifest symbolically and symptomatically. Lucy's alias Helen, becomes a widow not by the agency of typhoid, but by the instrument of her own bloody hands when she intentionally helps her unwanted spouse fall down a well, the objective correlative of Helen's

¹¹⁰ At the end of the first decade of her interminable mourning Walter Bagehot announced all of these concerns. In "The Monarchy and the People" published in *The Economist* in 1871, Bagehot voiced widespread anti-monarchical sentiments writing that "from causes which it is not difficult to define the Queen has done almost as much injury to the popularity of the monarchy by her long retirement from public life as the most unworthy of her predecessors did by his profligacy and frivolity," adding that "a considerable section of the people has begun to grumble that so many royal personages are highly paid by the people for doing nothing" (871). Bagehot's reference to George IV, however cruel it may appear, registers the social and political impact of Victoria's private indulgence in the "luxury of woe" (Rappaport 148).

psychic wound. At the end of the opening chapter the reader finds Lucy alone in her boudoir where she gives the first clue of her “secret.” Isolated in her lonely room at the top of the house she reflects that ““every trace of the old life melted away—every clue to identity buried and forgotten—except these, except these”” (53). The only manifestation of the bigamous Lucy’s previous marriage materializes in the black ribbon she wears about her neck: “She wore a narrow black ribbon round her neck, with a locket or a cross, or a miniature, perhaps attached to it; but whatever the trinket was, she always kept it hidden under her dress” (50).¹¹¹ The ribbon appears three times in the final pages of the first chapter, and on each occasion Lucy is clutching it “with a half-angry gesture” (50), behaving desperately “as if it had been strangling her” (52), until the object is finally revealed as a ring wrapped in paper” “a clue to identity buried and forgotten” (53). Hidden from sight in parched yellowed paper the undisclosed secret of the ring symbolizes both marriage and abandonment, crime and insanity, and the unsuccessfully mourned past haunting the present.

Braddon locates the eponymous heroine and her secrets—bigamy and madness—in the country estate of Audley Court, a domestic site that the novel’s resident detective Robert Audley declares to be “haunted by the ghost of George Talboys” (282). Trying to keep the secret of her bigamy hidden from everyone, Lady Audley has helped George tumble into an old well on the estate where, for the remainder of the novel, she presumes his remains lie buried. George’s sudden reappearance after having abandoned Lady Audley when she was his little wife Helen Talboys some three and a half years before the novel opens, causes the desperate heroine to take drastic measures to keep her current husband, Sir Michael Audley, unsuspecting. George, not

¹¹¹ For the complex significance of the color black combining mourning and a touch of the sinister, see Hollander (1978) 365-367.

expecting that Helen has become Lady Audley, only realizes her true identity when, accompanied by Robert; he drops on hands and knees to squeeze through a “rudely-cut trap-door” leading through a secret subterranean passage into Lady Audley’s dressing room (Braddon 104).

Though the ostensible purpose of Robert and his friend’s fortuitous visit to Lady Audley’s boudoir is so that George can see her “unfinished, but wonderfully like” portrait described as a “*bonne bouche*” (tasty mouthful), what he meets on the canvas bears both “the aspect of a beautiful fiend” and the perfect likeness of his own Helen Talboys (Braddon 106). What is most striking for the narrator however, is “the ripe scarlet of the pouting lips,” for “no one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to the pretty pouting mouth the hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait” (107). Recalling now Swinburne’s description of Catherine as “that woman with thin reddish blood-like lips, / that queen-mother that would use blood for paint,” the imagery here seems to be leaking out of the canvas to engulf the nocturnal spectators. Though the shapes of their lips are different, the “ripe scarlet” and the “reddish-blood like” colors are equally identified as mixed signs of sensual beauty, cruelty, and wickedness.¹¹²

The portrait introduces key components of the uncanny; the concept of the double, the familiar and unfamiliar, and the *vagina dentata*. Robert’s cousin Alicia Audley remarks that artists can “see, through the normal expression of the face, another expression that is equally part of it, though not to be perceived by common eyes” (108). Alicia’s bit of art criticism provides a clear warning that there is more to the figure of Lady Audley than first meets the eye. When George Talboys sees the portrait however, he realizes he has been trapped, and like a deer

¹¹² Though no known Pre-Raphaelite painting of Catherine de Medici has surfaced in my research, Swinburne’s allusion to Catherine’s use of blood for paint contributes a literary portrait of her reputation as a cruel tyrant.

standing in headlights, he is left motionless. The sight of the portrait quickly transforms George's physical presence, and shortly after, Robert remarks: "George, if you could see yourself, white and haggard, with your great hollow eyes staring out at the sky as if they were fixed upon a ghost. I tell you I know that you are frightened" (73). Here Robert describes George as a dead man, a ghost who is haunted by the terrible encounter with his estranged wife. Though Catherine's symbolism will not appear until later in the novel, the indirect association to Lady Audley's Medusan powers is already clear in that George seems to read something in the portrait's face that fascinates him and recalls a terrible history.

The sexual symbolism of the "trap door" and the "secret passage" may not appear obvious to the reader, but it gives the men access to Lady Audley's private space, which should be read as a bodily invasion. I argue that Braddon proleptically anticipates Freud's claim that "there is something uncanny about the female genital organs," that "this *unheimlich* place...is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home]" and the locus of male anxiety (*SE* XVII 245).¹¹³ Freud of course, shared with other patriarchs, a desire to penetrate the mysteries of the female body, but in Braddon's scene described here, she emphasizes a subversive complicity with the two men in having Alicia lead the way: "Robert Audley lifted a corner of the carpet, according to his cousin's directions, and disclosed a rudely cut trap-door in the oak flooring" (104). Braddon's authorial persona not only alludes to this idea of the body mapping the home, but Audley Court becomes a contested space in which the domestic icon and mythic Angel in the House is really a dissimulating criminal queen. Just as in Swinburne's burlesque where Queen Victoria's double is revealed as her twin, in Braddon's novel the "truth" about Lady Audley is a secret that she must

¹¹³ When Freud considers queens and kings as symbols for parents in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), he likewise adds that "rooms represent women and their entrances and exits the openings of the body" and the Pre-Raphaelite imagery of the painting suggests an undisclosed narrative of horror lying beneath the boudoir and the portrait; beckoning male inquisitiveness (*SE* V 683).

keep hidden but that others are beginning to suspect. Whereas Swinburne's substitution of authority figures reflects anxieties about Victoria, Braddon's novel challenges the dominant gender ideology by killing the Angel in the House and focusing instead on a dissimulating and fascinating criminal masquerading as a queen.¹¹⁴

What remains perplexing is that this fantasy scene was written by a Victorian female sensation writer, Mudie's own crowned "Queen of the Circulating Library" (Carnell 47). How do we account for the unprecedented success of *Lady Audley's Secret* and the uncanny effect it achieves?¹¹⁵ A closer look at Braddon's novel also shows that what Victorian readers would find is the familiar symbol of the queen now portrayed in a peculiarly negative light, suggesting that the boundaries of the familiar were being crossed. Braddon's critics quickly registered the psychological complexity of her heroines as well as their symbolic and sexual multiplicity. In "Little Women" (1868), Eliza Linton's review of sensation heroines, they take many forms:

The conventional idea of a brave, an energetic, or a supremely criminal woman is a tall, dark-haired, large-armed virago, who might pass as the younger brother of her husband, and about whom nature seemed to have hesitated before determining whether to make her a man or a woman—a kind of debatable land, in fact between the two sexes, and almost as much one as the other. Helen Macgregor, Lady Macbeth, Catherine de Medici, Mrs. Manning, and the old-fashioned murderesses in novels, are all of the muscular black

¹¹⁴ Critic Chiara Briganti also observes in "Gothic Maidens and Sensation Women" (1981), that Lady Audley "not only finds her ancestresses in the Cleopatras and Semiramides of history but can impersonate her mad mother when madness proves useful and can cast her shadow on the other women in the narrative" (190). Briganti's description of the way shadows are being cast in this novel differs from my larger thesis that it is Victoria who is casting her shadow.

¹¹⁵ Braddon would write to Edward Bulwer Lytton to whom she dedicated her novel, "I want to serve two masters. I want to be artistic and to please you. I want to be sensational, and to please Mudie's subscribers" (Tomaiuolo 12).

brigand type, with more or less regal grace superadded according to circumstances.

(Braddon 545)

Linton observes in her recipe for the sensation heroine, that Braddon provides “more or less of regal grace superadded according to circumstances” (545) implying that the signifier “queen” can contain its uncanny opposite; a source of horror.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Linton is an astute reader and recognizes, as she comically refers to the oddity and insanity of the criminals and queens in her line-up, that the shadow has variations, hues, and shades.

If, as Homans claims “what the Victorians were treated to during the 1840’s and 1850’s was, specifically and paradoxically, the spectacle of royal domestic privacy, a privacy that centered on the ever-plumper figure of their Queen as wife and mother,” in the 1860’s they would also be treated with a very different spectacle, the Victorian housewife as a criminal queen (Homans 4). Albert’s death which brings about the dissolution of the happily married royal couple also initiates Victoria’s long plunge into the dark void of death and mourning, and Braddon’s novel emerges out of this very void in the Victorian imaginary. One characteristic of Victoria’s melancholy is the expression of her loss through hoarding. Critic Kirby Farrell asserts that “the queen was a compulsive hoarder, stuffing cupboards and wardrobes with all the clothes and accessories she had ever owned” adding that “with Albert’s death the compulsion became a votive ritual” (91). The spirit of Catherine de Medici pervades Braddon’s novel as the embodiment of female crime, but also, in her mania for hoarding, Lady Audley shares aspects of the true melancholic by taking from the material world, hoarding, and refusing to let anything go. In decorating Lady Audley’s boudoir with “drinking cups of gold and ivory, chiseled by

¹¹⁶ Braddon’s biographer Robert Lee Wolff claims “all her life [Braddon] remained “the author of ‘Lady Audley’s Secret.’ Even today, when she is remembered at all, she is still associated with her artless and somewhat trashy first great success” (Wolff 4).

Benvenuto Cellini” (308), Braddon’s anachronistically recognizes Catherine de Medici’s favorite Italian goldsmith as well as her fine collection of his artwork.¹¹⁷ In adorning her shrine with “cabinets of buhl and porcelain, bearing the cipher of the Austrian Marie Antoinette” (308), she displaces the memory of historical queens on to bibelots and rare antiques. Seeking to fill her life with commodities, Lady Audley is the classic melancholic as Braddon’s authorial persona comments:

my lady was more wretched in this elegant apartment than many a half-starved sempstress in her dreary garret. She was wretched by reason of a wound which lay too deep for the possibility of any solace from such plasters as wealth and luxury; but her wretchedness was of an abnormal nature, and I can see no occasion for seizing upon the fact of her misery as an argument in favor of poverty and discomfort as opposed to opulence. (309)

Long before Freud’s analysis of melancholia and the uncanny, Braddon was evoking similar allusions to psychic trauma while deploying devices to trouble familiar dimensions, break down barriers, and destabilize boundaries.¹¹⁸ The passage moreover, locates its heroine at the psychic threshold where Robert Audley detects and pursues her instabilities.

In the epigraph above, which has often been cited as this sensation novel’s humorous and ironic treatment of Victorian patriarchal ideology, Robert Audley’s “mental monologue” may be

¹¹⁷ Interestingly, when John Murray’s firm published *Murray’s Handbook of Florence and Its Environs* (1863), the guide notes that a number of “fine specimens attributed to Cellini were carried off by robbers in Dec. 1860” (75). Though it is impossible to determine whether or not Braddon was aware of the robbery, the suggestion that Lady Audley had somehow acquired such items adds humor as well as a suggestion of sensation and crime to the text. The guide also notes that the provenance of the stolen articles unquestionably descended from Catherine de Medici’s collections (75).

¹¹⁸ As Winifred Hughes observes in *Maniac in the Cellar* (1980), the sensation novel “was drawn to borderlands; it compulsively blurred and transgressed boundaries and knocked down established barriers” (Hughes 264).

associated with at least two of Lacan's uncanny figures of the vagina dentata mentioned earlier.¹¹⁹ Braddon anticipates Lacan's misogyny in her expression of Robert Audley's mental monologue but whereas Lacan's reference to Semiramis and Elizabeth I also includes Queen Victoria, Robert references neither the descriptive term nor the queen regnant in his meditation.¹²⁰ Instead, he performs a complex negotiation between the symbolic representation of powerful female monarchs and Victorian Britain's everyday housewife presiding over "domestic molehills" and "household teacups" (229). In short, the power of Robert's monologue, as well as the source of its humor, lies in the associations he is making between the strangeness of the historical queens and the anxieties they provoke by their uncanny affiliation with the symbols of the domestic as contained in Victoria's image.

Robert's tedious recital of the "standard comparison" of wicked foreign queens must be understood in light of Victoria's retreat into mourning not only because it locates the root of his anxiety in the idea of female power, but because the queen's resistance of such power proved to be a tantalizing and irresistible target. The monologue brings into this novel a genealogy of royalty that is clearly anachronistic and yet rewards the reader with a sensation of fright and horror (Hunt 107). Commenting on this passage, Elaine Showalter asserts that "ostensibly denouncing the immemorial wickedness of women, the monolog is really a thinly veiled feminist threat that women confined to the home and denied legitimate occupations will turn their frustrations against the family itself" (Showalter 168). Showalter is suggesting that Braddon's

¹¹⁹ Braddon describes Robert's misogynistic rambling as both a "meditation" and a "mental monologue" (Braddon 226 and 227, respectively).

¹²⁰ By comparing Victoria to the historical queens Semiramis and Elizabeth I, Lacan's term functions in his discourse as a signifier of unconscious desire. According to Mikkel Borsch-Jacobsen, the vagina dentata is a signifier akin to the phallus-penis distinction Lacan establishes more generally, namely that "the phallic signifier is posed *a priori* as a negated-superseded-transcended object, which literally forbids our understanding why it should be a question of a *phallic* signifier. The trap is impeccable" (Borsch-Jacobsen 214).

authorial strategy in “subverting the feminine novel,” stands apart from Robert’s misogyny. Though I do not wish to diminish Showalter’s claim of a feminist intervention, upon closer inspection of the chapter it is apparent that there are two voices subtly interwoven here, that of Robert and that of the narrator. The narrator prepares the ground for Catherine’s symbolic presence when Robert directly identifies Lady Audley with the Queen Mother. In order to comment on Lady Audley’s psychic state the narrator connects her with female madness:

Madhouses are large and only too numerous; yet surely it is strange they are not larger, when we think of how many helpless wretches must beat their brains against this hopeless persistency of the orderly outward world, as compared with the storm and tempest, the riot and confusion within:—when we remember how many minds must tremble upon *the narrow boundary* between reason and unreason, mad today and sane tomorrow, mad yesterday and sane today. (227, italics mine)

The theme of the “narrow boundary line” is a mark of the uncanny in the novel, and it is remarkable that Catherine de Medici presides over it along with her Italian sister Lucretia Borgia. The novel’s deliberative disclosure of the heroine’s secret of madness finally arrives exactly at the point when the narrator introduces the symbol of Catherine de Medici:

What pleasure could have remained for Lucretia Borgia and Catherine de’ Medici, when the dreadful boundary line between innocence and guilt was passed, and the lost creatures stood upon the lonely outer side? Only horrible vengeful joys and treacherous delights were left for these miserable women. With what disdainful bitterness they must have watched the frivolous vanities, the petty deceptions, the paltry sins of ordinary offenders. Perhaps they took a horrible pride in the

enormity of their wickedness; in this ‘divinity of Hell,’ which made them greatest among sinful creatures. (310)¹²¹

Catherine is introduced at precisely the moment when the heroine realizes she is no longer the infantilized girl she would like to be, but has become the full-fledged criminal heroine Robert’s detection leads him to suspect. The passage also anticipates Lady Carbury’s Catherine for whom she writes: “Pity that a second Dante could not have constructed for her a special hell” (Trollope 8). For critic Susan Bernstein, the novel’s association with these two figures constructs Lady Audley as “Rome’s unbridled female sensualism” because she is “represented in the exaggerated modifiers that comprise this vilifying personification of Catholicism as a sexually debauched woman. Thus, the ‘Lady’ of Audley Court signifies an updated, anglicized version of the Whore of Babylon” (77). Though I agree that in this passage the novel is engaging in Moran’s “Catholic sensationalism,” the specific reference to Catherine as marking the “narrow boundary line” also indicates that the novel’s traffic between xenophobic historiography, and psychiatry is permeable.

By reading the novel as a critique of the dominant gender ideology of the period, the figure of Catherine de Medici haunts the modernity of the period also threatens to destabilize the neat separations found psychiatric categories, historical presentisms, and class hierarchies. By blurring the boundaries between mad/sane, criminal/queen, past/present, ancient/modern, and high/low the novel speaks to the anxieties of period. Taking just one example of how Catherine’s

¹²¹ The italicized phrase “divinity of Hell” is from the villain Iago’s speech in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, II. iii, line 339. Like Catherine de Medici, the black legends surrounding Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519) rest on allegations of poison, murder, and incest. She was a favorite of Swinburne who cast her as a femme fatale in his first novel *Lucretia Borgia: The Chronicle of Tebaldeo Tebaldei*, posthumously published in 1942.

symbolism reflects widespread concerns about royalty and insanity, psychiatry in the second half of the century focused on her figuration as a widow and criminal queen.

The connection between royal widowhood and moral insanity is explored in British psychiatrist Forbes-Winslow's popular *Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Mind* (1866) which examined the problem of regal and domestic tyrants. Focusing on Catherine de Medici, the doctor asks: "Can there be anything advanced psychologically in palliation of the atrocious crimes of Catherine de Medici [aside from that] undetected, unperceived, unrecognized mental disease, in all probability arising from cerebral irritation or physical ill-health, necessitating not restraint, but a careful attention to physical healthy?" (118-119). He concludes that "Catherine de Medici's disposition did not show itself until after the death of her husband. How much of her conduct was to be attributed to the shock thus caused to her nervous system? It is said that she suffered from determination of blood to the head so severe in its character as to require occasional bleeding for its relief" (119). In Forbes-Winslow's assessment, he attributes Catherine de Medici's criminality and moral insanity to her widowhood. The prognosis confuses cause and effect. If the condition of widowhood is the cause and the effect, an excessive determination of the blood to the head, then moral insanity must be equated with widowhood and "determination of blood to the head" is the symptom. Like Forbes-Wilson whose discovery of "undetected, unperceived, unrecognized mental disease" is the origin of Catherine moral insanity, Braddon's resident psychiatrist Dr. Alwyn Mosgrave concludes from his quick diagnosis of Lady Audley that

There is latent insanity! Insanity which might never appear; or which might appear only once or twice in a lifetime. It would be dementia in its worst phase perhaps: acute mania; but its duration would be very brief, and it would arise only under extreme mental

pressure. The lady is not mad; but she has the hereditary taint in her blood. She has the cunning of madness with the prudence of intelligence. I will tell you what she is, Mr. Audley. She is dangerous! (385)

In Dr. Mosgrave's discourse of insanity the reader perceives the overlapping categories in which mental diagnosis and history are called on to explain away the class-inflected inconvenience of having a criminally insane lower class woman residing at Audley Court.

The problem of murder and mourning also raises questions regarding the connection between Lady Audley and Victoria's symbolism. I have argued that Braddon's heroine must be understood in light of Catherine's symbolism, but these connections also have cultural significance for the way Victoria's subjects responded to her excessive mourning practices. Homans and Rappaport, as I have indicated, both suggest that it is not Victoria's mourning, but her melancholia that structures the dynamics of her widowhood. Though *Lady Audley's Secret* was serialized before Prince Albert died in December 1861, the Queen was already a professional mourner. The passing of the Duke of Wellington in 1852 she followed with elaborate public grieving rituals, and when several members of Albert's family died, Victoria also mourned them with unusual attention to ceremony. Then came the death of her mother the Duchess of Kent in March 1861. Rappaport explains that Victoria's "orgy of ritual" provoked astonishment and "disturbed many at court, particularly in the levels of bathos with which she now eulogized her once hated mother" (39). In light of the poor relationship that had existed throughout the first years of Victoria's accession, her inconsolable grief at the Duchess's death was tinged with feelings of guilt and a "form of atonement for her own past sins" (39). Recalling now that in the opening years of Victoria's reign Ainsworth's gothic fiction drew on the imagery of Catherine as the phallic mother to express widespread anxieties about Victoria's lonely days

of isolation at Kensington, it seems less surprising that in the sixties, novelists like Braddon would still be informing their fiction with direct or indirect references to royalty.

Catherine's symbolism appears in the novel when Lady Audley gradually begins to realize that the ranks are closing in on her, that her terrible secret of hereditary insanity is about to be revealed, and that she has "strayed far away into a desolate labyrinth of guilt and treachery, terror and crime" (310). More importantly however, it is the narrator that seems to track her more insistently, for in describing her as "exacting and tyrannical, with that petty woman's tyranny which is the worst of despotisms" the heroine's traits closely resemble Robert's mental monologue associating despotic queens with housewives. Symbolically Catherine stands with Lucretia Borgia in a "lonely outer side," the liminal "boundary line" that Freud identifies when he states that the uncanny emerges at the boundary where the distinction between imagination and reality is blurred (*SE XVII* 244). In the narrator's description of Lady Audley's psychic state the names of these royal and noble female Italian villains provide an uncanny textual effect which allows the historical past to haunt the Victorian present.¹²²

Lady Audley, like the popular representations of Catherine referred to earlier, is both guilty of premeditating and attempting murder. "There were some things," opines the narrator, "that would have inspired her with an awful joy, a horrible rejoicing. If Robert Audley, her pitiless enemy, her unrelenting pursuer, had lain dead in the adjoining chamber, she would have exulted over his bier" (Braddon 296). Criminal premeditation is what connects Lady Audley to Catherine's symbolism circulating in the Victorian public sphere. More glaring and humorous

¹²² In *Confessional Subjects: Revelations of Gender and Power in Victorian Literature and Culture* (1997), Susan Bernstein reads this same passage in light of the Anti-Catholic sentiments of the times, thus: "Compared to two Italian Catholic villainesses, Lucretia Borgia and Catherine de' Medici, Lady Audley is represented in the exaggerated modifiers that comprise this vilifying personification of Catholicism as a sexually debauched woman" (77).

however, is the idea that this flaxen-haired heroine could premeditate a massacre. For Robert Audley, the shadow of Catherine de Medici falls on Lady Audley as the “demonic incarnation of some evil principle” (345). Believing her to have killed George Talboys, Robert relentlessly pursues her every move leading her to commit her next desperate remedy, his murder. At this point he has just narrowly survived Lady Audley’s arson at Luke’s appropriately named Castle Inn. The heroine sought to trap Robert in his room by locking the door and setting fire to the “lace furbelows” in an adjacent room (323). Robert survives the fire and later arrives at Audley Court to confront his nemesis, expressing his horror at her willingness to remove him and accomplish her criminal design:

‘My Lady Audley’, cried Robert, suddenly, ‘you are the incendiary. It was you whose murderous hand kindled those flames. It was you who thought of that thrice-horrible deed to rid yourself of me, your enemy and denouncer. What was it to you that other lives might be sacrificed? If by a second massacre of Saint Bartholomew you could have ridded yourself of me, you would have freely sacrificed an army of victims. The day is past for tenderness and mercy. For you I can no longer know pity and compunction. So far as by sparing your shame I can spare others who must suffer by your shame, I will be merciful; but no further...’
(353)

Here Lady Audley is directly associated with Catherine’s supposed premeditation of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. Moreover, this speech is delivered in the domestic space of Audley Court realizing what Freud would only much later describe in his reference to the uncanny as “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long

familiar” (220). Catherine de Medici’s symbolism produces this uncanny textual effect by bringing the historical queen indoors.¹²³ Whereas Swinburne directly associates Catherine’s maternal bodily liquids and her blood-stained hands with the St. Bartholomew’s massacre, Robert, seizing on the opposite metaphor of dryness and heat through the fire at Castle Inn, recognizes that Lucy’s “murderous hand kindled those flames” (353).

In the final chapters of the novel, Lady Audley *alias* Madame Taylor has been declared insane and conveniently removed to a “maison de santé” in Villebrumeuse, Belgium. Though she is no longer a danger to the Audley family, her shadowy presence remains in the estate in the form of the pre-Raphaelite portrait. “Audley Court is shut up” and likened to a haunted house, while the mysterious portrait that offered so many keys to Lady Audley’s shadow side is now covered up while “the blue mold which artists dread gathers upon the Wouvermans and Poussins, the Cuyps and Tintorettis” (446). George, who miraculously escapes from the well is unmarried and the narrator hints that “it is not quite impossible that he may by-and-by find some one who will be able to console him for the past” (446). It is also obvious that Lady Audley’s powers of undoing the family unit are duly noted on Sir Michael’s countenance now described as “a grey-bearded gentleman, who has survived the trouble of his life, and battled with it as a Christian should” (445).

Recalling that Queen Victoria’s pervasive image as the domestic icon was so widely disseminated and promulgated, Victorian readers of sensation fiction could register the difference that the sensational queen Catherine represents. Whereas in Swinburne’s historical dramas Catherine appears first as the inflated phallic mother in “The Queen Mother” and then re-

¹²³ This is a well-recognized feature of sensation fiction, for as Henry James remarks it, “introduced into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries which are at our own doors” (quoted in Diamond 195).

appears in diminutive form to haunt Victoria in “La Soeur de la Reine,” the queen regnant is not mentioned at all in *Lady Audley’s Secret*. Catherine fills that void. In 1862 Queen Victoria ceases to function as the icon of domesticity and happy married life. With Albert’s death, the central organizing principle of the Victorian nuclear family disappears, and Victoria descends into melancholia leaving her subjects to fill a void in the cultural imaginary. My focus on the symbol of the black-widow Catherine as a haunting presence and shadow in the literature examined here, substantiates my larger claim that she functions as Victoria’s shadow queen. Neither Swinburne’s plays nor Braddon’s sensation novel offers a perfect portrait of Catherine or Victoria; they offer a cracked mirror which, along with the shadow, is an element of the uncanny. In short, it is only by historicizing the multiple valences of Catherine de Medici’s symbolism and contextualizing the excess of signifiers of her power distributed via sensation fiction, that one can see Victoria’s shadow falling on her.

Chapter Two: Victoria's Shadow Queen: The Fascinating Mary Stuart

In my end is my beginning.

—Motto of Mary, Queen of Scots

Who is there, at the very mention of Mary Stuart's name, that has not her countenance before him, familiar as that of the mistress of his youth, or the favorite daughter of his advanced age? Even those who feel compelled to believe all, or much of what her enemies laid to her charge, cannot think without a sigh upon a countenance expressive of anything rather than the foul crimes with which she was charged when living, and which still continue to shade, if not to blacken her memory.

—Sir Walter Scott, *The Abbot*, 1820, C. 21, 187.

I trust you will go with me in my view as to the Queen of Scots. Guilty! guilty always! Adultery, murder, treason, and all the rest of it. But recommended to mercy because she was royal. A queen bred, born and married, and with such other queens around her, how could she have escaped to be guilty?

—Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, 1874, 8.

[Mary Stuart's] usual expression was benevolent and pleasing, and her smile bewitching, but when angered she could assume a terrible and even menacingly haughty aspect, which struck terror into all who beheld her. But her moments of violence were rare, and as a rule she bore her sorrows with great serenity, and even cheerfulness. In short, she was rather handsome and fascinating than beautiful, although as a girl and a very young woman she must have been transcendently lovely.

—Richard Davey, "Was Mary Stuart Beautiful?" *Art Journal*, 1889, 2.

There is hardly anything in our modern literature more powerful, picturesque, and dramatic than [Froude's] portrait of Mary Queen of Scots. It stands out and glows and darkens with all the glare and gloom of a living form, now in sun and now in shadow ... Without going into any controversy as to disputed facts, even admitting, for the sake of argument, that Mary was as guilty as Mr. Froude would make her, it is impossible to believe that the woman he has painted is the Mary Stuart of history and of life. No doubt his Mary is now a reality for us. We are distinctly acquainted with her; we can see her and follow her movements. But she is a fable for all that.

—Justin McCarthy, *A History of Our Own Times*. 1880, 641.

I. Shades of Ambivalence: Mary Queen of Scots in the Victorian Public Sphere

Writing in 1889 while covering the Exhibition of the Royal House of Stuarts at the New Gallery in London, the journalist Richard Davey judges with a connoisseur's scrutinizing attention, the quality of Mary Stuart's fascinating appearance in portraits.¹²⁴ The exhibition was under the patronage of Queen Victoria and many of the paintings were loaned from the

¹²⁴ For a detailed treatment of the important socio-political problems raised by the exhibition see Nicholson (111-127) and Guthrie (143-166).

collection at Windsor. Davey's confines his comments on Mary Stuart to these sixteenth century representations. In his article he answers the question of whether or not Mary Stuart was beautiful with two words: "handsome" and "fascinating." The term "handsome" is today more often used to describe an attractiveness that is manly and impressive rather than delicate or graceful. When coupled with the word "fascinating" as it appears in Davey's article, Mary's handsomeness takes on darker hues.¹²⁵ We learn in a matter of three sentences covering her entire life span that Mary could be serene and violent; pleasant and terror-inspiring; transcendently lovely as a girl, but not beautiful. The bewitching smile of her "usual expression" is what finally leads the critic to declare her to be "fascinating," a quality that Victorian historical painters sought to render in their artistic representations of Mary.

Unlike Davey, whose iconography seeks an answer to an aesthetic problem, Sir Walter Scott's narrator and Trollope's fictional Lady Carbury ask questions about her alleged guilt and criminality. Scott, like Davey locates that problem as one that must be answered by reflecting on her "countenance," a word he uses twice in his passage. Was she blameless or a guilty criminal queen? Justin McCarthy provides an answer to Lady Carbury's purely fictional question about Mary Stuart's guilt; she is, after all, a fable. What all of these writers, both fictional and historical invoke, is the familiar figure of Mary Stuart as a fascinating shadow queen whose memory endures throughout Victoria's long reign.

¹²⁵ Davey asserts in the opening sentences of his essay that "no question has been more frequently asked than the one, whether Mary Stuart was really beautiful or not. People seem to imagine that when she was alive men had a different estimate of beauty to that which holds good now, and were apt to consider beautiful what we should deem almost ugly" (16).

i. Portraits of Mary Stuart

One fascinating portrait of Mary Stuart by the British artist Laslett John Pott appeared in



the 1871 exhibit of London's Royal Academy. The title *Mary, Queen of Scots being Led to Her Execution* indicates the final moments of the queen's life [fig. 1]. Pott's choice to represent

Figure 2.1. *Mary, Queen of Scots being Led to Her Execution* (1871) by Laslett John Pott.

Mary's final moments two-hundred and eighty four years after her execution, reflects both the temporal significance of her motto "in my end is my beginning," and her enduring spectral

presence in the Victorian public sphere. The date of the Royal Academy exhibit also uncannily coincides with Queen Victoria's tenth year of mourning for Prince Albert, whose sudden death in 1861 initiated her retreat from public office and state duties. No doubt Victoria's subjects could discern some faint trace of their own mourning queen in Pott's grave matronly martyr.

Pott's prematurely-aged Mary Stuart gazes out from the canvas in a manner that establishes an uncertain relationship with the spectator's field of vision. As if unwilling to confront the spectator directly, her eyes turn slightly upward and she appears entranced by some distant object. The indirection of her gaze is precisely what attracts attention to her face, and spectators are fascinated because the queen does not return their look.¹²⁶ Pott represents the bewitching face that launched thousands of Victoria's subjects into sentimental sympathy with the historically ill-fated Queen of Scots, thus effectively bridging the historical gap with an imaginary and timeless female monarch.¹²⁷ Yet others rejected this representation of a hapless queen and moved to criminalize Mary's character. This conflict over Mary's symbolism in the Victorian public sphere suggests shades of ambivalence because her contested reputation is endlessly rehearsed with both love and hatred.

Pott's painting invited Victorians to experience mixed emotions, both adulatory and censorious. Forced to abdicate her throne and to live at the mercy of her cousin Queen Elizabeth

¹²⁶ "The queen herself," as Helen Smailes and Duncan Thomson observe in *The Queen's Image: A Celebration of Mary, Queen of Scots*, "gazes directly out of the picture towards the spectator, but the result is not a confrontation. Her gaze is all-seeing and unseeing as she processes toward the finale of her tragedy" (Smailes 145).

¹²⁷ Mary Stuart was as important on the Continent as in Britain and Alphonse de Lamartine compared her explicitly to Helen of Troy. In the 1859 English translation of his *The Life of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots*, Victorians would have read a familiar commonplace filtered through the language of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus. Lamartine writes: "If another Homer were to arise, and if the poet were to seek another Helen for a subject of the modern epic of war, religion, and love, he would beyond all find her in Mary Stuart, the most beautiful, the weakest, the most attractive and most attracted of women, raising around her, by her irresistible fascinations, a whirlwind of love, ambition, and jealousy, in which her lovers became, each in his turn, the motive, the instrument, and the victim of a crime; leaving like the Greek Helen, the arms of a murdered husband for those of his murderer" (Lamartine 5-6).

I and the Scottish Lords of the Congregation, Mary's eventual execution for treason haunts Victoria's subjects. The literature about Mary is marked with contradictory feelings, the sense Trollope best captures in his character Lady Carbury's pseudo-historiography *Criminal Queens*. In the Victorian public sphere, almost three centuries after her execution in 1587, Mary like Victoria, becomes the symbol of a queen whose multifaceted character is riddled with contradictions to the extent that fascination for and with her assumes both positive and negative aspects.

The face in Pott's portrait could not be met with the spectator's indifference as she walks to the scene of her execution. Art historian Robin Nicholson observes that "historical paintings dealing with Mary, Queen of Scots almost exclusively concentrated on the period leading up to her execution and almost universally went to great lengths to ensure historical accuracy" (121). This is also true of historical portraits. A shadow of royal absolutism and Catholic ostentation, Mary's presence invokes Protestant fears of the bewitching power of "Papistry" and the "Whore of Babylon."¹²⁸ Hurling from the sixteenth-century past into an age of limited constitutional monarchy and middle class respectability, Pott's Victorian representation of Mary suggests a Great Stuart Mother who fascinates and commands allegiance from beyond the grave. As she descends the staircase in the final moments before her execution, Mary symbolizes the dangerous confluence of sexual allure and monarchic power. While the scene may intimate her fate through the halberdier selecting his weapon in the left of the painting, there is no scaffold present on the scene, and no executioner. The composition places these elements outside of the canvas exactly where the spectator stands. It places Mary in a position as if asking her fascinated audience to

¹²⁸ In *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture*, Patrick O'Malley claims that in the Victorian period the word "fascination, with its suggestions of almost irresistible attraction to evil...appears commonly in descriptions of Catholic ritual, vestments, architecture, language, and sexuality" (5). Pott's painting of Mary would evoke these associations as well.

pity her. Pott suspends the action at the moments preceding the violent scene of her decapitation and thereby denies the ensuing debacle.

Guided by an armed escort, Mary's solemn face is framed by the celebrated pointed widow's cap that Pott's contemporaries would also associate with the mourning Queen Victoria.¹²⁹ Lou Taylor for example, in her book *Mourning Dress* (1983) observes that, the cap "was reintroduced by Queen Victoria on Albert's death in 1861, taken from the portraits of the widowed Mary Queen of Scots. The Queen wore it for the rest of her life and it was taken up by most of her widowed subjects" (138).¹³⁰ This celebrated cap is, to use Roland Barthes's term, the "punctum" in Pott's painting eliciting immediate sympathy from the spectator. The punctum also, as Avery Gordon points out in *Ghostly Matters*, "the detail, the little but heavily freighted thing that sparks the moment of arresting animation that enlivens the world of ghosts" (108).¹³¹ Mary's bonnet is just the kind of "enchanted detail" (108) animating Pott's study of her descent into the scene of her execution.

Filled with dramatic tension at Fotheringhay Castle, the scene captures Mary in the moments following the trial conducted by her Tudor accusers still gathered in the hallway above the staircase. Drawing his inspiration from the historian James Anthony Froude's *The History of England* (1870) where Mary Stuart's performance at her trial and execution is seen as "infinitely transcending the power of the most accomplished actor to represent" and consciously staged with "the most brilliant acting throughout," Pott captures ambivalence toward Mary that registers both

¹²⁹ In his biography *The Life and Times of Queen Victoria* (1891), Robert Wilson (1846-1893) dates Victoria's use of the cap to her visit to Germany in 1865 to unveil a statue of Albert: "She was clad in the deepest mourning, and under her bonnet was seen the cap à la Marie Stuart, which about this time she had begun to wear on all public occasions" (III: 250).

¹³⁰ See also Sophie Gilmartin (64-5).

¹³¹ "Punctum" is Roland Barthes's word in *Camera Lucida* for the piercing and touching detail that establishes a direct relationship with the subject of the tableau (40-43).

love and hate (Froude 341).¹³² If the Victorian spectator takes Froude's derisive stance that Mary was merely a fascinating actress, and enemy of the state who calculated in advance all the effects of her dramatic presentation, then the scene of her execution would be experienced as something less than a solemn occasion, not one inviting reverence or veneration but rather invoking anxieties about her power and sexuality. Froude's partial portrait of Mary, fraught as it is with the fear that her power and allure might threaten his manhood, does not account for other sides of her complex character. This is because, as Justin McCarthy acknowledges in the epigraph above, it was Froude's "fable" that made her so distinctly recognizable (641).

In the 1860s, as Victoria retreated from her public duties in excessive grief over Albert's death, she performed her mourning in the fashion of Mary Stuart while silently abdicating her throne. In her private writings Victoria likens her duties to the state, including the proroguing of Parliament in February of 1866, to scenes of execution. In her biography of Victoria, Lady Elizabeth Longford quotes from the queen's letters and journals intimating that the queen consciously performed her public duty as if she were Mary Stuart. Victoria experiences her presence at Parliament for example, as "a sacrifice, an ordeal, an execution and 'a *Show*,' through which the broken-hearted widow was dragged in '*deep mourning, ALONE in State*'" (Longford 347). All of these terms; "sacrifice," "an ordeal," and "execution," are inspired by representations of Mary Stuart's fate.

"Sacrifice" may be related to surrender or abdication, as in Mary's forced abdication from her throne in 1560. Like Mary Stuart, Victoria regards her royal self as being "dragged" before Parliament. An "ordeal" is synonymous with a trial or enduring any painful experience, as

¹³² The exhibition catalogue includes a sentence from Froude's history which appeared on the original exhibit card. It reads: "Allons donc, she then said, let us go; and passing out, attended by the earls, and leaning on the arm of the officer of the guard, she descended the great staircase to the hall" (Graves 187 and Froude 335-36).

in Pott's representation of the moments following Mary's condemnation in 1587. Finally, the word "execution" speaks for itself as a disturbing form of finality. According to Longford, Victoria arrived at the House of Lords and, "discarding the crown she adapted the black cap of Mary Queen of Scots. Her long veil and dress were black; her crimson robes were draped over the throne like a discarded skin, while the Lord Chancellor read her speech" (348).¹³³ Posing like the figure in Pott's portrait of Mary on her way to her execution, Victoria could be seen as manipulating the symbols of her ancestor queen to solicit pity and commiseration from her subjects. This identification is attested in an illustration from the February 10, 1866 supplement of *The Illustrated London News* [fig. 2].

¹³³ Likewise, historian W. L. Arnstein writes in "Queen Victoria Opens Parliament: The Disinvention of Tradition," that in 1866 "Victoria opened parliament, but she refused to appear in state; there were no trumpet fanfares; there was no pageantry; there were no gingerbread coaches and no royal robes. Instead she wore a widow's cap, a black dress and a long veil. Her crimson robes were draped over the throne like a discarded skin" (185-186). Drawing on Longford's biography here, Arnstein reinforces the "theatrical" aspects claiming that Victoria "partook most obviously of the 'theatrical' aspect of government" (178).

Figure



2.2.

Illustration of Queen Victoria proroguing Parliament on February 10, 1866. *The Illustrated London News*.

Dejected and dour, Victoria is seated on the robes of state as the Lord Chamberlain reads her speech. The periodical article interprets the queen's solemn facial expression noting that

the Sovereign has undergone the baptism of sorrow—of a sorrow so dark and stern as to have consigned her for years to a seclusion in which her sole earthly consolation was the sense that even that grief did not prevent her faithfully discharging her regal duties. At last, sad and silent, but a dignified if suffering Queen, her Majesty once more ascends the throne of her fathers, and takes part in the stately ritual of the Constitution. (*The London Illustrated News* 141)

Victoria is described here as a queen “faithfully discharging her regal duties” yet significantly, as a heroine in captivity. The sorrow of loss has “consigned her for years to a seclusion” in which she is haunted by the memory of Albert. In the illustration, Victoria reverses the symbolic props of Mary Stuart’s scene of execution. While at her execution Mary removed her black cloak revealing the scarlet undergarment of a Catholic martyr, Victoria here dressed in her black widow’s weeds and Mary Stuart cap, sits with “her crimson robes [that] were draped over the throne like a discarded skin.” In this *mise en scène*, all of the fantasmatic coordinates of the historical Mary are present in Victoria’s self-presentation.

Reading *The Illustrated London News*’ perspective on Victoria’s performance of excessive mourning and of her seclusion likened to one “consigned” to captivity, Mary Stuart’s shadow suggests that Victoria was performing a *tableau vivant*. As Victoria assembles her props before her subject’s eyes, the excessive grief seems to be less about conserving the memory of Albert, and more of a “magnificent obsession” with mourning itself.¹³⁴ In the decade that followed, this image of the widowed queen became inseparable from a widespread culture of

¹³⁴ In her recent biography of Victoria *Magnificent Obsession: Victoria, Albert, and the Death that Changed the British Monarchy* (2013), Helen Rappaport claims that even before the death of Albert in 1861 “Victoria was already a master of the long and flamboyant mourning protocols that were in vogue, enthroning her own particular maudlin celebration of grief as a virtue to be emulated by all” (37). On the subject of Victoria’s excessive mourning practices, see also Schor (1994), Darby and Smith (1983), and Armstrong (2001).

mourning. Albert, the original lost object of her grief, was no longer as central as the griever herself, for “if there were any cult figure, then it was Queen Victoria herself” (Darby and Smith 105).¹³⁵ What this suggests to some critics is that Victoria’s obsession had become a form of melancholia, the triumph of the survivor over representation. As such, her mourning practices develop into a cultural life of their own as she retreated to the Highlands and prolonged her seclusion at Balmoral.

As a figure of sorrow and isolation, Mary Stuart’s years of captivity in England also offered Victorians a way to imagine her as a young Gothic heroine. This is the subject matter of another complex portrait of the *Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* by the Scottish artist Robert Herdman (1829-1888) [fig. 3]. Herdman’s youthful Mary, one of four portraits of the queen commissioned by the Glasgow Art Union in 1867, is depicted with a crucifix in her hand and a billowing white veil hovering like a cloud full of tears over her female attendants. She wears a black overcoat, and crimson under gown. Tears flow abundantly from the eyes of Mary’s attendants Elizabeth Curle and Jane Kennedy as they kneel at the foot of the scaffold.

¹³⁵ As Nancy Armstrong explains with reference to Victoria’s melancholic personality, “the melancholic supplants and represents the lost object with a distinct set of visual traces. These traces are not integrated into the personality of the mourner but encrypted there as the image of an other in relation to which she herself achieves autonomy and continuity in time” (529).



Figure 2.3 *The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots* (1867), by Robert Herdman.

Standing in profile, Mary draws the spectator's gaze in a manner that solicits pity and compassion. She is not the forty-five-year-old Mary of history whose body was victimized with chronic rheumatism and arthritis. This gothic Mary is Herdman's interpretation of a heroine and

Catholic martyr floating toward her Tudor captors and executioner to deliver over her youthful head. The figure is that of an innocent and virginal Iphigenia-like heroine sacrificed to the visual pleasure and intense gaze of her enemies in the Elizabethan state. Mary's doom is foreshadowed in the coffin and the headsman's axe in the lower right hand corner, but the translucent powdery glow cast by the light falling over her veil suggests the rising sun and the beginning of a new day.¹³⁶ If Herdman's young Mary suggests her queenly motto "in my end is my beginning," that youthfulness also stands in defiance of time. This portrait of Mary Stuart imagines her inhabiting a different temporal dimension where time is pushed back to the beginning of her life. The trace of a distant memory of her girlhood in France as an eighteen-year-old princess bride may be read in her tall stature and elegance.¹³⁷

Though this is Sir Walter Scott's version of Mary Stuart, and it gave rise to many of the Victorian's most popular representations, his romanticized princess did not appeal universally. The chief crime for which Mary is deemed guilty is her complicity in the murder of her husband Darnley, a deed for which her lover James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell was accused. Mary's possible involvement in the murder is part of her symbolism as well, and in Charlotte Brontë's early poem "Lament for the martyr who dies for his faith" (1834) the poet longs to be free "From her who kissed her lord to death / And poisoned him with kindness breath" (Brontë 160). In her account of the governess Jane's scene of humiliation in the second volume, chapter seventeen of *Jane Eyre* (1847) Brontë reproduces these associations.

¹³⁶ Roy Strong argues that Victorians were fascinated by representations of doomed royalty, expressing their feelings through religious terms. In historical paintings they "were all, in their varying ways 'saints', and these pictures are celebrations of their virtues, their agonies and ecstasies and, often, their martyrdom" (Strong 2004 55).

¹³⁷ At the time of her execution at Fotheringhay Castle in 1587 Mary was no longer officially the Queen of Scots. She had already been deprived of her robes of state after having endured nineteen years in captivity.

Sitting at the piano and “spreading out her snowy robes in queenly amplitude” (257); Miss Blanche Ingram fancies herself a divine Mary who prefers a “black Bothwell.” Turning to Rochester, whom she calls “Signor Eduardo,” she requests for him to sing: “I lay on you my sovereign behest to furbish up your lungs and other vocal organs, as they will be wanted on my royal service” (257). Further acting the part of Mary, Blanche declares that “history may say what it will of James Hepburn, but I have a notion, he was just the sort of wild, fierce, bandit-hero whom I could have consented to gift with my hand” and observes “a man is nothing without a spice of the devil in him” (257). Equating Rochester’s dissolute life with that of Bothwell, the novel’s pairing of Miss Ingram with Mary both alludes to her sexual allure and resists her fascination. From the Protestant Jane’s sideline view, Miss Ingram’s haughty performance validates the stereotype while flattening its effect. This romanticized and over-idealized image of Mary Stuart, so adaptable to drawing room performance, is caricatured in Brontë’s novel suggesting that the character Jane Eyre may be an antidote to Mary’s fascination.

What if however, these versions of Mary Stuart could be regarded as anamorphic perversions and shadows of Queen Victoria? She too was at one time a princess, hailed from a life of utter seclusion to ascend the throne as a queen. Victoria’s negotiation of her own anomalous situation of being a female monarch in a patriarchal society was as troubling in its own way as Mary’s. Victoria eventually lived through the contradiction of being a royal wife; both a queen and a married woman. Finally, like Mary Stuart, Victoria was to live the latter part of her life as a widow. These artistic representations of Mary Stuart, sketched in Victoria’s shadow, are important in light of patriarchy and the history written by the latter’s male subjects.

ii. Contesting His-stories of Mary Stuart

When Froude published his historical representation of Mary Stuart, one of Victoria's subjects was appalled at his lack of sympathy for her fate. Oliphant counters his dismissal of Mary in her scathing *Blackwood's Magazine* review "Mr. Froude and Queen Mary" (1870). Oliphant draws attention to the complexity of Mary's character that Froude reduces to such statements as: "She was a bad woman" (341). Unlike Froude, Oliphant honors Mary Stuart as a woman of unquestionable genius and amazing force of character, whose history, position, and influence had as great an effect upon her age as that of any of her most distinguished contemporaries, and whose memory still retains the allegiance of an almost unanimous nation, and of enthusiastic partisans over all the world. (Oliphant 106)

In recognizing Mary's "history, position, and influence" Oliphant seeks to reclaim for her a space in the sphere of public memory that only Queen Victoria could legitimately fill.¹³⁸ This is especially because, and qualifying her expression with Oliphant's reserve of an "almost": it "retains the allegiance of an almost unanimous nation." Oliphant's curious phrase appears hyperbolic when compared to Walter Bagehot's observation in *The English Constitution* (1867) that the English masses "agree with the oath of allegiance; they say it is their duty to obey the 'Queen', and they have but hazy notions as to obeying laws without a queen" (86). Where Oliphant conjures a shadow queen still commanding devotion, Bagehot addresses a living and reigning Queen Victoria, claiming that her subjects direct their allegiance to her alone. Surely Oliphant's Mary could only retain the British nation's fascination and not their "allegiance."

¹³⁸ In chapter one I briefly discuss critic's speculations about Trollope's original whether the Strickland sisters or his own brother. I would add that in *Mrs. Oliphant, 'a Fiction to Herself': A Literary Life* (1995) critic Elizabeth Jay points to Oliphant as Trollope's target (37-8).

Oliphant's curious negotiation of the past and present through historical memory provides a glimpse into the way Victoria's subjects recognize Mary as Victoria's shadow queen.

Froude's language is borrowed directly from the theater. His history suggests to an indignant Oliphant that "[Mary] was a great actress. Mrs. [Sarah] Siddons, perhaps, would scarcely have done it so well—such is the summary way in which the historian dismisses Mary of Scotland to her grave" (111).¹³⁹ Claiming that Froude represents a dramatic and self-indulgent sensational actress *qua* queen, Oliphant will neither over-idealize nor condemn Mary. She attempts to find a middle ground. Though not as levelling as *Jane Eyre*'s dismissal of Blanche Ingram who is compared to Mary in a negative manner, Oliphant refuses to consider the queen as a mere actress. Oliphant manages to repair the damage enforced upon Mary Stuart by popular stereotype.

This stereotype was constructed more than two decades before Oliphant countered Froude's history. In his historical novel *Westward Ho!* (1855) for example, Charles Kingsley alludes to the excessive veneration of the Stuart queen as Mariolatry.¹⁴⁰ He writes with virulent anti-Catholic rhetoric that the hated Jesuits, "found it convenient, indeed, to forget awhile the sorrows of the Queen of Heaven in those of the Queen of Scots" (559). Here Mary, Queen of Scots is sarcastically compared to the Virgin Mary. The narrator of *Westward Ho!* whose incessant praise of Elizabeth simultaneously denigrates Mary Stuart, likewise uses fascination to

¹³⁹ Mrs. Sarah Siddons, the great eighteenth-century actress also played among her many stage roles, Mary Queen of Scots. Christopher Reid, writing of the actress's dramatic role as Mary Queen of Scots observes: "In view of her particular strengths as a tragic actress--her ability to inspire awe as well as to arouse compassion--it is not surprising that Siddons should have been especially noted for her portrayal of queens" (9).

¹⁴⁰ The *OED* cites 1844 as the date when the term "Mariolatry" first appears in nineteenth century Britain. Linda Colley observes that "in a Roman Catholic country, the cult of the Virgin Mary can satisfy some...need for an idealization of conventional female experience. But, for the Welsh, the Scots, and the English, this consolation had been officially removed by the Reformation" (Colley 272). The excessive devotion to Mary Stuart often referred to by anti-Catholics as "Mariolatry," continues to gain adherents throughout the century.

condemn the Queen of Scots: “Mary, finally, who contrived by means of an angel face, a serpent tongue, and a heart (as she said herself) as hard as a diamond, to make every weak man fall in love with her, and, what was worse, fancy more or less that she was in love with him” (559). Here the pairing of opposites, “an angel face” and “a serpent tongue,” the softness of a “heart” and the petrifying hardness of a “diamond,” conveys the sense of Mary’s enchanting and bewitching qualities.¹⁴¹ Even her execution at Fotheringhay, when celebrated by the villagers of Kingsley’s Northam, fascinates. Over “her fair face hangs a pitiful dream in the memory even of those who knew that either she, or England, must perish” (538).

Returning to Froude’s historical description of Mary’s scene of execution, he writes: “The Queen of Scots as she swept in seemed as if coming to take part in some solemn pageant. Not a muscle of her face could be seen to quiver; she ascended the scaffold with absolute composure” (336).¹⁴² Like Kingsley’s “fair face” from which “hangs a pitiful dream,” Froude’s petrified and entrancing fabled countenance holds the reader spellbound. He barely masks his delight in its terrorizing quality as she assumes the composure of a fascinating dominatrix “coming to take part in some solemn pageant.”

The widow’s cap so poignantly portrayed in Pott’s painting is violently removed in Froude’s gruesome description of the scene of Mary’s execution:

The head hung by a shred of skin, which [the headsman] divided without withdrawing the axe; and at once a metamorphosis was witnessed, strange as ever wrought by wand of

¹⁴¹ In *Westward Ho!* Kingsley’s character Lucy Passmore, a local white witch from Devon, also possesses the power to bewitch men. Kingsley uses the archaic verb “to overlook” to describe her “redoubted eye” which could bring a man to his ruin (125). See “overlook” *OED*.

¹⁴² For Froude, Mary’s execution is her final performance in a life “in which tragedy and melodrama were so strangely intermingled” and he adds sardonically that “she intended to produce a dramatic sensation, and she succeeded” (Froude 257). Whether or not Pott fully appreciated Froude’s irony, his depiction of the fascinating queen arrests the spectator’s gaze as it captures the same strange intermingling effects.

fabled enchanter. The coif fell off and the false plaits. The labored illusion vanished. The lady who had knelt before the block was in the maturity of grace and loveliness. The executioner, when he raised the head, as usual, to show it to the crowd, exposed the withered features of a grizzled, wrinkled old woman. (Froude 340)¹⁴³

Where Froude describes the “coif” and “false plaits” as falling off and exposing a hag-like head devoid of Medusan powers of fascination, Pott anchors the widow’s cap on Mary’s head. “The labored illusion vanished,” writes Froude, as if he through his language he were executing Mary for a second time. Conversely, Pott creates for Victorian spectators a visible sign and the trace of mourning that they could identify with Victoria. Her act of adopting Mary’s mourning cap fashion silences his-story while effectively replacing Froude’s masculine fear of loss with her plenitude, and his matricide with her rule. Whereas Froude’s historiographical perspective transfers the power of fascination from Mary to himself as historian and “fabled enchanter” (340), Victoria’s performance sustains and commemorates Mary’s memory through her own living and reigning body.

If the doomed and distressed Mary on her way to execution is serious and dignified in Pott’s image, Froude’s history constructs a menacing criminal queen exposed and rendered effete. “She was a bad woman,” he writes, “disguised in the livery of a martyr, and, if in any sense she was suffering for her religion, it was because she had shown herself capable of those detestable crimes which in the sixteenth century appeared to be the proper fruits of it” (341-42). Froude invites the reader to judge Mary harshly as if standing in the position of the sixteenth-century Scottish reformer and patriarch John Knox. Knox famously reproved Mary Stuart at

¹⁴³ In her review Oliphant responds to Froude’s description observing that “he watches her die, which is the one moment in life which commands the awe of every spectator, be the dying creature ever so mean or miserable, and smiles his best, though it is hard work, and tries to tell us that death too is a fine piece of acting” (Oliphant 110).

Holyrood Palace. “She had never yet,” Froude writes, “in private encountered any man, except perhaps John Knox, who had resisted wholly the fascination of her presence” (Froude 281). Here Froude’s invocation of Knox, with its attendant anti-feminist and anti-gynocratic rhetoric, makes the author of “The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women” stand in for the Victorian patriarchal unconscious.¹⁴⁴

Froude celebrates in particular, Knox’s ability to resist Mary’s Catholic powers of fascination. Whereas Knox resists, Froude finds himself drawn in and so must demonize in order to maintain his authority. Mary’s criminality is thus associated with anxiety over female monarchy, more specifically the matriarchal power that threatens to usurp patriarchal authority. In his undisguised anxiety over Mary’s sexual allure, he uses the patriarchal authority of Knox to ensure that masculinity is that which can resist fascination.

Other prominent resisting male voices in the Victorian public sphere would join Froude in his disparaging denunciations of the Queen of Scots, but none with such stern dislike of her fascination and charm as Thomas Carlyle. In his *Lectures on Heroes* (1841), Carlyle leads the reader before the visual spectacle of a stern Knox confronting a “high kind of woman; with haughty energies, most flashing, fitful discernments, generousities; too fitful all” (358). Channeling the voice of Knox, Carlyle informs his Victorian readers how this scene should be understood:

With irresistible sympathy one is tempted to pity this poor Sister-soul, involved in such a chaos of contradictions; and hurried down to tragical destruction by them. No

¹⁴⁴ Here I follow Lynda Hart’s (1994) adaptation of the term “Victorian patriarchal consciousness” from Laura Mulvey’s term “the unconscious of patriarchal society” (6). As a structural element in Western cultural texts the patriarchal unconscious makes women the object of a male gaze, accounting for Knox persistent focus on female monarchs. Concomitantly, the gaze becomes the cornerstone of patriarchy (6).

Clytemnestra or Medea, when one thinks of that last scene in *Fotheringhay*, is more essentially a theme of tragedy. The tendency of all is to ask, ‘What peculiar harm did she ever mean to Scotland, or to any Scottish man not already her enemy?’ The answer to which is, ‘Alas she meant no harm to Scotland; was perhaps loyally wishing the reverse; but was she not with her whole industry doing, or endeavoring to do, the sum total of all harm whatsoever that was possible for Scotland, namely the covering it up in papist darkness, as in an accursed winding sheet of spiritual death eternal?’—That, alas is the dismally true account of what she tended to, during her whole life in Scotland or in England; and there was as deep a tragic feeling as belongs to Clytemnestra, Medea, or any other, we must leave her condemned. (358-359)

The juxtaposition of the first words of the passage “with irresistible sympathy,” and the last, “we must leave her condemned,” close off any feeling for or with Mary.¹⁴⁵ Carlyle, like Froude whom he inspires in his anti-Marian stance, also employs his authorial rhetoric to assume the unconscious patriarchal position of John Knox, and like Froude, Carlyle blows Knox’s trumpet. Carlyle differs from Froude in that he is less fascinated with the particular matriarch but more concerned with public responses to matriarchy. Carlyle’s references to Medea and Clytemnestra also stress the theatrical dimensions in the scenario of Mary’s condemnation as she joins his shadowy inferno of murderous mothers and wives. He is more interested in rehearsing the position of Knox.¹⁴⁶ His goal seems more an effort to deflate female power than to respond, as in

¹⁴⁵ Commenting on these two figures as represented in the Victorian public sphere, Jennifer Jones in *Medea’s Daughters* observes that “adding more than her share of [dead] bodies is Medea, one of the most prolific murderers in Greek tragedy [and] like Clytemnestra before her, Medea’s man-made monstrousness deflects the patriarchal acknowledgment of women’s legitimate anger” (ix).

¹⁴⁶ The same comparison to the classical Greek figure is found in Lamartine who apostrophizes that “sowing the seeds of internecine, religious, and foreign war at every step, and closing by a saintly death the life of a Clytemnestra; leaving behind her indistinct memories exaggerated equally by Protestant and Catholic parties, the

Froude and Kingsley, to the submerged eroticism of her female face and figure. Carlyle directs all eyes toward Mary's tragic character. In the process he sums up all of her guilt and fails to mention a single detail of her dress, her handsome figure, her coif and plaits. Her entire trial and execution are staged from that same position which would end the supposed dangerous female power. His ambivalence is expressed in his concession that it is "with irresistible sympathy" that "one is tempted to pity." He suggests that temptation needs to be resisted and he will not allow this queen's physical attractions to deter him from condemning what she symbolizes, and so in the end "we must leave her condemned." Carlyle's flagrant condemnation of Mary Stuart is not one that a decadent poet such as Swinburne could abide. Moreover, Carlyle unlike Swinburne doesn't seem very attracted to female sensuous attractions.

Swinburne, who will receive larger treatment later in this chapter, is perhaps the most conflicted writer to engage with Mary Stuart in the Victorian public sphere. Among his miscellaneous published prose works are two essays on Mary. One is formal, written for the public sphere and included in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and the second is his "Note on the Character of Mary, Queen of Scots," which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* (1882). While the encyclopedia article is historically informative and tame, Swinburne cannot resist the temptation to draw parallels between Brantôme's *Memoirs* openly contrasting Mary Stuart's girlhood in the court of Catherine de Medici to the Hanoverian atmosphere of Victoria's court.¹⁴⁷ Swinburne daringly writes

former interested in condemning her for all, as if the same factions who had fought for her during her life had resolved to continue the combat after her death! Such was Mary Stuart" (6).

¹⁴⁷ Pierre de Bourdeille, sieur de Brantôme (1540-1614) who followed Mary Stuart to Scotland in 1561 compiled literary portraits of courtly women (*Les dames gallantes*). Ainsworth, Swinburne, and Charlotte Mary Yonge all cite phrases and anecdotes from Brantôme's *Mémoires* attesting to their knowledge of French language and culture.

of a court compared to which the court of King Charles II is as the court of Queen Victoria to the society described by Grammont. Debauchery of all kinds and murder in all forms were the daily subjects of excitement or of jest to the brilliant circle which revolved around Catherine de Medici. (IV: 376-7)¹⁴⁸

To draw such an overt parallel risks raising eyebrows at Buckingham Palace even if the comparison holds the predominant view of Victoria's tameness. Swinburne celebrates Mary Stuart's crimes and passions while admiring the debauchery that Carlyle and Froude condemn. He constructs a legendary Mary Stuart who represents everything Victoria is not. As shown in chapter one, Swinburne's burlesque of Queen Victoria's court in "La Soeur de la Reine" represents the return of the repressed Catherine, and here that shadow is transferred to Mary Stuart. Some of the burlesque's spirit finds its way into Swinburne's article for the *Fortnightly*.

The "Note on the Character of Mary Queen of Scots" is calculated to incite Swinburne's reading public. Swinburne inveighs against Mary's sympathetic supporters while simultaneously questioning Froude's condemning descriptions:¹⁴⁹

But if we reject as incredible the ideal of Prince Labanoff's loyal and single-hearted credulity, does it follow that we must accept the ideal of Mr. Froude's implacable and

¹⁴⁸ The reference is to the *Mémoires du comte de Gramont* of Antoine (Anthony) Hamilton (1646-1720).

¹⁴⁹ Swinburne refers to the historians and sisters Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland whose collaborative historical project in his view, was largely responsible for this cult-craze for Mary Stuart. When the third volume of *Lives of the Queens of Scotland* was reviewed in *The Westminster Review* (1853), one critic grumbled that "the author's admiration of the 'beauteous majesty' of Scotland is incompatible with a qualified milk and water sympathy. It is a religion with her—a sentiment of pure and undefiled Mariolatry" (278). As Jayne Lewis observes, "Agnes Strickland had been the strong-featured leader of an entire troupe of female historians whose lives' purpose seemed to be to light the candles in the Victorian cult of true womanhood" (187). John Whitaker's *Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated* (1787) attributes all of Mary's supposed crimes to Bothwell's 'amatorious poisons' (Lewis 130). The Spasmodic poet William Edmondstone Aytoun (1813-1865) wrote a dramatic monologue "Bothwell: A Poem in Six Part" (1856) in which the eponymous hero, is imprisoned. Swinburne also refers to John Hossack's *Mary Queen of Scots and Her Accusers* (1869) which attempts to rehabilitate Mary's reputation and finally, Prince Alexander Labanoff who, along with Agnes Strickland, edited and published Mary's letters.

single-eyed animosity? Was the mistress of Bothwell, the murderess of Darnley, the conspiratress against the throne and life of her kinswoman and hostess, by any necessary consequence the mere panther and serpent of his fascinating and magnificent study? This seems to me no more certain a corollary than that because she went to the scaffold with a false front her severed head, at the age of forty-five, must have been that 'of a grizzled, wrinkled old woman'. (IV 428-9)

Swinburne's resistance to the domestication of his femme fatale is indicative of his need to position himself on the fence between dueling and contrasting opinions.¹⁵⁰ He perceives in paradoxes and was capable of recognizing in the shadow of Victoria, as we will see, the wholly other and darker side of Mary Stuart. Referencing Mary's early life in France for example, he observes:

The cloistral precinct which sheltered her girlhood from such knowledge of evil as might in after days have been of some protection to her guileless levity was the circuit of a court whose pursuits and recreations were divided between the alcoves of Sodom and the playground of Alcedama. (424)

Recalling his burlesque set in the young Victoria's court populated with courtiers bearing pornographic names, Swinburne savors the corruption and makes Mary a kindred, if demon-like sister spirit. By placing Mary in the familiar Gothic setting of a cloister, Swinburne transforms the generic innocence suggestive of the persecuted and chaste heroine into a very different figure: "of the convent in which Mary Stuart had passed her novitiate the Lady Superior was

¹⁵⁰ According to his biographer Philip Henderson, Swinburne, "is obsessed with the moment when one thing shades off into its opposite, or when contraries fuse" (4). In "Swinburne's Divine Bitches" Marilyn Fisch likewise observes that Swinburne's "use of dichotomies is characterized by a refusal to acknowledge the separateness of their parts, a tendency not merely to reconcile opposites but to fuse them" (8).

Queen Catherine de Medici” (425). The “convent,” the “novitiate,” and the “Lady Superior” all form part of the Catholic sensationalism Maureen Moran finds so central to the Victorian Protestant imagination.

These visual and historical portraits of Mary Stuart are redolent with contradiction. Not only could she be thought of as a dangerous and alluring femme fatale, but also as a gothic heroine in need of saving, and a queen whose weakness led to her tragic end. Mary could also figure as a Great Stuart Mother whose ancestresses include Carlyle’s Clytemnestra and Medea, but also as we shall see, the mythical goddess Demeter and a royal mother. Fascination with Mary imbues her with powers of charm and attractiveness that associate her with power and authority tinged with erotic allure.

Each of these stereotypes speaks of male anxieties about female maturation and sexuality, but they are also about the power that comes with monarchy and rule. In this way male anxieties about Mary Stuart’s alluring qualities, as will be discussed below with relevance to Swinburne, may also be understood in terms of displacement or management of masculine anxiety. If, as critic Jayne Lewis in *Mary Queen of Scots: Romance and Nation* (1998) argues, “the extent to which the Queen of Scots stood as Victoria’s enigmatic and fascinating other woman was the extent to which she permitted those fascinated by her to love culturally and historically alienated parts of themselves,” then among these “parts” one must also consider the important question of sexual difference (180). In my readings of the literary texts that follow, I argue that Victoria’s subjects responded to Victoria’s silent abdication through their fascination with the Scottish queen. Pott and Herdman’s paintings guide my readings of texts by William Harrison Ainsworth, Charles Algernon Swinburne, and Charlotte Mary Yonge. In their historical novels and dramas, all of these writers give substance to Mary’s shadow while producing imaginary relations to

Victoria. Mary's motto "in my end is my beginning" promises an eternal return as her fascinating face as represented in Pott's painting, looks above the spectator into the distant future.

II. Theorizing Fascination: Mary Stuart as Victoria's Shadow

[M]en's fascination with this eternal feminine is nothing but fascination with their own double, and the feeling of uncanniness, *Unheimlichkeit* that men experience is the same as what one feels in the face of any double, any ghost, in the face of the abrupt reappearance of what one thought had been overcome or lost forever"

—Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman*, 56.

We are only fascinated...by something we have already lost. We are only fascinated, in other words, by what is missing— by the past. Fascination is the exhilaration of a mourning that never gives up hope.

—Adam Phillips, "Smile," (1998), 4.

In the nineteenth century, fascination is the term that best describes the eccentric associations Queen Victoria's subjects establish between their reigning monarch and Mary Stuart. It is the word they most often employ when describing the Queen of Scots, as when Margaret Oliphant in her comparative essay "Elizabeth and Mary" (1867) claims that her "powers of fascination were such that men yielded to her as if by magic" and that Mary "was not just the Queen alone, but queen of hearts; she was used to see everybody within the range of her influence yield to its wonderful fascination" (391). Jayne Lewis has argued that Victorians use fascination to express their feelings about Mary to such an extent that, "whenever Mary's name appeared, it was not likely to be far behind" (Lewis 180). Lewis understands Mary Stuart as a defining presence in the private fantasies of Victorian subjects, and yet this is only possible insofar as Queen Victoria casts her shadow on representations of her as when, in a moment of supreme irony, Oliphant extends to Victoria, the same powers of fascination she finds in Mary. In a letter to Sir Theodore Martin, Oliphant writes that "one thing [Victoria] has the power of

doing ... is fascinating anybody, or is it only the men who approach her? ("Autobiography" 216-17).¹⁵¹ What is this power of fascination that both Mary and Victoria wield over men? Jayne Lewis suggests that fascination may be historicized and located within an evolving context of psychoanalytic and historical methods, and in this section I will examine how both of these approaches to fascination yield results that clarify the ways in which Victoria casts her shadow on Mary Stuart.

Unlike Oliphant, Froude's representation of Mary's execution draws on fascination through the motif of the "enchantress-turned-hag," which, as Renaissance historian Barbara Spackman explains, is the classical "topos that exposes the beautiful enchantress (woman as lie) to the ugly, toothless old hag hidden underneath her artifice (woman as truth)" (22).¹⁵² In his claim that Mary's decapitation "exposed the withered features of a grizzled, wrinkled old woman" and caused the "labored illusion" to vanish, he describes the myth-constructing powers of his historiography to dismantle the queen's powers of fascination (Froude 340). Decapitation must certainly alter a face, but it cannot produce wrinkles, yet Froude borrows his literary conceit from Edmund Spenser's figuration of Mary as Duessa; the *The Fairie Queene's* Whore of Babylon.¹⁵³ The power residing in Froude's description of Mary's execution is located, not in his talent as an historian, but in his ability to use literary effects to symbolically defeat the Scottish queen's reputation as a fascinator. Mary's severed head is likewise an uncanny

¹⁵¹ Sir Sidney Lee notes in his 1904 biography of Victoria that none of the several hundred portraits of her are "satisfactory presentments" because "the Queen's features in repose necessarily omit suggestion of the animated and fascinating smile which was the chief attraction of her countenance" (Lee 582). Lee's use of the term "fascinating" here is free of the darker connotations often associated with the word.

¹⁵² See Barbara Spackman article "Inter musam et ursum: Folengo and the Gaping 'Other' Mouth" which also focuses on the "*bocca sdentata* (the gaping toothless mouth) as the displacement upwards of the *vagina dentata*" (7).

¹⁵³ For the connection between Mary Stuart as Duessa and the Whore of Babylon, see Anthea Hume's entry in *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (Hamilton 1997 229-230). For Froude's resistance to Duessa as the figure of both Mary and Rome see Ciaran 191.

figuration of Protestantism's vanquishing of Rome which reveals the Whore of Babylon to be an illusion. Transformed from an enchantress to a hag, Froude's Mary becomes the queen who is punished for her crimes as "truth" is revealed through "his-story." As I have shown, not all Victorians appreciated Froude's representation of Mary, and this particular passage is targeted by many of his contemporaries who saw in her the figure of a Great Mother who had been lost to history.

In the epigraphs above, Kofman and Phillips's psychoanalytic reflections on the power of fascination both claim that what lies beneath the interminable attraction to the uncanny other is an inexorable encounter with loss. For Kofman that which is lost is the "eternal feminine" which male subjects must give up in their eternal struggle to overcome their originary attachment to their own mothers. For Phillips, who examines Freud's analysis of Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" and Walter Pater's reference to her "enigmatic smile," it is their mourning over the mother they have lost that promises never to end. In order to establish the connections between fascination and loss, Phillips quotes from Freud's account of the recurring smile in Leonardo's portraits: "'It was his mother,' Freud writes, 'that possessed the mysterious smile—the smile he had lost, and that fascinated him so much when he found it again in the Florentine lady'" (5). Phillips understands fascination to be "the exhilaration of a mourning that never gives up hope."¹⁵⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century, fascination had become a distinct category in Victorian discursive practices, one that according to Steven Connor had completed a transition from a transitive to an intransitive phenomenon.¹⁵⁵ Because it was during the nineteenth century

¹⁵⁴ In "Absent Meaning" (2009), Christopher Massey concurs with this description of Freud's theorization of fascination, adding that "we are encouraged to regard fascination as a state of being held or entranced by the repetition of a loss the nature of which is enigmatic, excessive or unknowable" (108-9).

¹⁵⁵ In "Fascination, Skin and the Screen," Connor argues that the word fascination derives from the Latin *fascinare*, meaning to bewitch or enchant and, until the nineteenth century and even beyond, the word retained this strong association with the idea of the

that the experience of fascination gradually transitioned from an exclusively visual to an emotional phenomenon involving loss, it stands to reason that conflicting explanations would coexist in Victorian literature. In particular, fascination with powerful female rulers would produce equivocal and ambivalent responses from British subjects.

Feminist psychoanalysis has understood fascination as a complex phenomenon used against women in patriarchal culture, and Froude's account of Mary's execution is a painful reminder of how power is turned against female monarchs. Accounts of fascination have so often been gendered and sexualized that feminists have labored to reveal its hermeneutics and to expose its logic of misogyny.¹⁵⁶ In her account of the mutual fascination between feminists and psychoanalysis, Elizabeth Grosz explains that fascination's "etymology involves two antithetical meanings: 'to attract, irresistibly enchant, charm,' or 'to deprive [a] victim of the powers of escape or resistance by look or by presence'" (6). She adds that "to fascinate is to entice *and* trap, seduce and contain, a relation similar to that between the snake and the snake charmer, in which each charms, and traps the other. Mutual fascination is always a risky business" (6). In this context Grosz writes about the mutual fascination between patriarchs such as Freud and the women who are so often their fascinating objects.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless applying her recognition of fascination's mutual dependence to Victorian discourses of separate gendered spheres; it becomes obvious that the term is capable of disabling their seemingly rigid gender and sexual dichotomies.

maleficent exercise of occult or supernatural force. For most of its history, fascination has also been assumed to be a power exercised largely and characteristically through looking. (9)
Other critics who register the nuances of the term "fascination" in Victorian literature include Beth Newman (1990), James Eli Adams (1994), and Patrick O'Malley (2006).

¹⁵⁶ See Spackman.

¹⁵⁷ For an alternative account of Freud's Svengali-like powers of mesmeric fascination see Nina Auerbach 16-18.

Historicizing fascination as Jayne Lewis and Steven Connor do, also allows me to raise questions about its relevance to gender and sexuality over time. What does fascination with a powerful queen such as Mary Stuart tell us about the ways Victorians perceived Victoria during different periods of her reign? Fascination as a transitive verb, is aggressive and intrusive, and when Margaret Oliphant's asks if Victoria fascinates only the men who approach her, she suggests that, like Mary, the Queen has some enchanting power of erotic attraction and allure. What does this mean in the context of female monarchy? Some Victorians understand that fascination is about the loss or surrender of will.

Fascination as the loss of will is the subject of Natalie Rose's rhetorical analysis of fascination in "Flogging and Fascination: Dickens and the Fragile Will" (2005). Rose studies the intersecting discourses of fascination and flagellation which, as she claims, develop simultaneously in mid-century Victorian novels and in physiological and ethical studies about volition. She concludes that "the threatening power of fascination lies in its anti-individualist traversing of borders, as it exposes the unsettling contingency of selfhood and the fragile nature of the self-determination integral to Victorian middle-class identity and ethics" (Rose 528). Certainly for patriarchs such as Froude, Carlyle, and Kingsley as we have seen, the danger experienced in considering Mary's powers of fascination involves defense mechanisms of resistance, disavowal, and displacement. Resistance to her charms however, also implies that they have some foreknowledge of their own illicit desires. Though Rose overlooks the political dimensions of Victorian's fascination with royalty, in the literature I study, Mary Stuart's charms and enchantments speak to these important intersecting discourses of female power and physiological responses.

Powerful women and especially historical queens, test models of manliness and what Rose calls the “tenuously bounded selves whose volitional capabilities are too weak to withstand [their] psychic influence” (506). When Froude and Kingsley write about Mary they reflect anxieties about their own “tenuously bounded selves” in face of this powerful queen. When relating the story of her execution Froude resists Mary’s charms by assimilating them to himself as the “fabled enchanter” (340). Kingsley’s Mary likewise makes men feel that they are loved by her, and the narrator’s assessment of this fact allows him to resist these charms by appropriating her powers only to succumb to her narcissism. When the eternal feminine and the double are encountered by male subjects, as Sarah Kofman notes, they feel an overwhelming sense of loss. For Kofman that loss is related to male narcissism as he confronts in the eternal feminine what resembles himself. The experience is intolerable because it raises doubts about his own plenitude.¹⁵⁸ When the eternal feminine is royal as in these representations of Mary Stuart; the threat is multiplied such that fascination with queens implies a debilitating surrender of the will. It is not surprising that a female monarch would be fascinating for her male subjects, because during the period under consideration here, femininity demanded a threatening sense of surrender on the part of men to an imagined “feminine principle.”

But how do these psychoanalytic explanations relate to history? Historian Helen Hackett observes that “poised between the human and divine, the mortal and immortal, elevated on a throne to draw the eyes of beholders, endlessly represented and re-represented, it is not surprising that monarchs have been an abiding object of fascination” (811). Hackett hints at the powerful attraction that subjects have for their monarchs, but she overlooks the difference in

¹⁵⁸ Lewis also claims that, “for the Victorians, male and female alike, ‘fascination’ seems to have borne directly upon a conception of femininity as a quality at once erotically enticing and utterly mysterious, as far as could be from the Ruskinian ideal of female self-abnegation” (Lewis 141).

gender that a female monarch represents. In order to account for the enduring fascination with female monarchs it is important to consider the historical gap between Mary Stuart's sixteenth-century Scottish rule and Queen Victoria's constitutional monarchy. In his article "His Majesty the Baby': Narcissism and Royal Authority," political theorist Peter Schwartz studies the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the periods representing the historical gap between the reigns of Mary Stuart and Victoria. He claims that during the period "narcissism is a defining feature of royal authority and, more generally, of all concentrated and consecrated forms of political authority" because "the self-consciously paternal authority of the monarch concentrates and incorporates within itself the more primitive and encompassing authority of the mother of infancy" (267).¹⁵⁹ In light of Britain's two centuries of intervening history of male Stuart and Hanoverian monarchs, it is important to consider how Victoria's accession would represent an historical and political anomaly and a return to the "authority of the mother of infancy."¹⁶⁰

In the nineteenth century, when social and political institutions were undergoing massive democratic, republican, and anti-monarchical transformations throughout European societies, the associations between the sacred and kingship no longer retained the symbolic powers that feudal and early modern monarchies enjoyed.¹⁶¹ Concepts of absolute monarchical power that predominated during Mary Stuart's period of rule no longer functioned under a constitutional

¹⁵⁹ Using Freud's well-known sobriquet for primary narcissism "His Majesty the baby," Schwartz theorizes that "the recapitulation of primary narcissism within the realm of politics reveals the extent to which political and social structures themselves can restore relationships between adults that are inherently fantasy-ridden, regressive, and destructive psychologically" (273).

¹⁶⁰ Though the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714) represents a female monarchy, as Toni Bowers observes in *The Politics of Motherhood* (1996), "Anne's maternal representation failed to bring her political authority because it was actually *more* potent and threatening than Elizabeth's" (72).

¹⁶¹ As will be shown in the final chapter of this dissertation, the revolution in France was largely responsible for the overturning of every category, religious or secular, which traced its origin or impulse back to the monarch. As Lynn Hunt observes, "the revolutionaries pushed forward the desacralization of the world that had begun in the Renaissance; they dramatically enacted the annihilation of the signs and symbols that had given the Old Regime, and tradition itself, its meaning" (Hunt 194). As a figure central to the French Renaissance and the Old Regime, Mary Stuart continued to exercise her powers of fascination primarily through her enchanting aesthetic appeal.

monarchy. The Stuart dynasty had lost its political power, but more importantly mass reproduction of their royal symbolism in insignia and portraiture began to erode their aura as well. As Walter Benjamin acutely recognizes, the process of mechanical reproduction which brings things closer spatially, also removes their aura, which he defines as “the unique phenomena of a distance, however close it may be” (222). What Benjamin describes here in the waning of aura may be related to the manner in which fascination in the nineteenth century undergoes a transition from a transitive to and intransitive form of experience.

In Mary Stuart’s France, fascination was connected to the Old Regime’s proximity to the sacred and the divine. Lynn Hunt explains that “under the Old Regime in France, the ‘mystic fiction’ had it that the sacred was located quite precisely in the king’s body” (197). Though in France the Salic law prohibited women from ruling as queens in their own right, Mary Stuart became the Queen of the Scots from her birth in 1542.¹⁶² Mary’s return to Scotland as a queen regnant was the occasion that initiated the British and Scottish legends of her fascinating beauty.¹⁶³ Fascination with Mary Stuart is thus inseparable from the sixteenth-century courtly creation of ideal forms and a belief in the “mystic fiction” of the “king’s two bodies.” Yet some of this mystical attitude toward monarchy still remained three hundred years later despite evolving perceptions of Victoria’s diminished socio-political role.¹⁶⁴ While acknowledging the historical distance separating Mary Stuart from Victoria, Victorians were fascinated by perceived

¹⁶²Sent to France in order to avoid King Henry VIII’s violent attempts to capture her and wed her to his son Edward, Mary grew up in the Valois court of Henri II and Catherine de Medici, with her mother, Mary de Guise, ruling as Regent of Scotland until her death in 1561. Though Mary became Queen of France for one year after her marriage to Francois II, with his untimely death in 1558, she returned to Scotland.

¹⁶³ Pierre de Ronsard’s series of poems reflecting the Old Regime’s idealization of royal figures turns to Mary Stuart as the apotheosis of the all that signals attraction and charm.

¹⁶⁴ Antony Taylor observes that “much of the criticism of Victoria in the early years of her reign was veiled behind a veneer of loyalty and was again expressive of the ambiguities surrounding the idea of kingship in the first half of the nineteenth century” (39).

associations between them; associations fraught with anxieties and ambivalences about the nature of queenship.

Originally understood as a quality linking monarchs to concepts of the divine and the transcendent, fascination, or to use Peter Brooks's term "fascinans," elicits contradictory feelings of awe and terror. Brooks has shown in *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976) that the desacralization of European societies initiated by the French Revolution, brought about a concomitant transformation in the literary imagination.¹⁶⁵ In his account of the effects of desacralization on literary culture, he claims that "melodrama and the Gothic novel" give rise to a moral universe in which the pre-revolutionary and monarchical order is replaced with a new set of social and moral imperatives. Literature thus provides the means and the space to negotiate the political crisis of the revolution. But how does fascination, the term Brooks never explains completely, operate in the Victorian texts to account for this retention of sacred elements associated with the monarchy?¹⁶⁶

Though fascination is the term used by Victorians to describe Mary's powers and symbolism, the phenomenon of fascination is difficult to apprehend in terms of a subject and object framework.¹⁶⁷ This is because, according to the transitive form of the verb "to fascinate," the dynamic between the fascinator and the fascinated defies rational explanation. It was during the Victorian period that the predicate form of the word was gradually replaced with the adjective "fascinating," while the older transitive verbal connotation derived from the Roman

¹⁶⁵ Borrowing his key terms from Rudolph Otto's monograph *The Idea of the Holy* where the theological concept of the "mysterium tremendum et fascinans" is discussed as the dialectic relationship constituting "the qualitative content of the numinous experience," Brooks overlooks what Otto calls "the element of fascination" in the experience of the numinous (Brooks 17 and Otto 31).

¹⁶⁶ Elaine Hadley like Brooks, overlooks the theme of fascination in her analysis of melodramatic tactics. See Hadley 1995.

¹⁶⁷ Critic Mieke Bal claims for example, that fascination "undercuts binary opposition itself as a reliable structure" (quoted in Dixon 64).

cult of the “*oculus fascinans*” or evil eye theory, gradually became obsolete.¹⁶⁸ Steven Connor claims that “fascination has long been assumed to be a power exercised largely and characteristically through looking,” and Mary Stuart’s ability to cause this experience must also be related to something other than the sacred (9). As I will argue, fascination is related to Victorian (male) threat of female sexuality, the problem of narcissism, and what feminist critic Madelon Sprengnether calls the “spectral” or “preoedipal mother” (5).¹⁶⁹ It is fear of the irretrievable historical loss of this mother figure that emerges in Charlotte Mary Yonge’s novel about Mary Stuart, but the same dread of loss also motivates Swinburne to write his trilogy.

Both Swinburne and Yonge construct Mary as a kind of substitute authority figure, or to use Roach’s term, a surrogate who “may provoke many unbidden emotions, ranging from mildly incontinent sentimentalism to raging paranoia” (2). In *Cities of the Dead* (1996), Roach turns to the theater to account for the returning substitutions of mourned figures from the past. He claims that “performance offers a substitute for something else that preexists it” and that it “stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace” (3). In Froude’s theatricalization of Mary Stuart which reminded Oliphant of the great actress Mrs. Siddons, the queen has her existence and entries through a long intervening history of dramatic performance not unlike Roach’s account of the overlapping histories of surrogation. Unlike Froude, who diminishes Mary’s motherhood in favor of the figure of an enchanting actress,

¹⁶⁸ Equally obsolete today is fascination’s associations with pseudo-sciences such as Victorian mesmerism, animal magnetism, phrenology and spiritualism. Critic Daniel Pick claims shown in *Svengali’s Web: The Alien Enchanter and Modern Culture*, “long-standing (and long-contested) theories that had persisted from the period of Classical Greece to the Renaissance about the forces that were projected out by the looking eye had not completely vanished by the late nineteenth century, and were sometimes subsumed into new magnetic and electrical theories of ‘fascination’ (169).

¹⁶⁹ Though Sprengnether does not mention Queen Victoria as a source of dread for Freud, she addresses his “spectral mother” as “a figure of subversion, a threat to masculine identity as well as to patriarchal culture” and the Great Mother becomes “the object of his fascinated and horrified gaze” (6).

Oliphant stresses “the mere fact that Mary had a son increased her popularity at once tenfold” (“Elizabeth and Mary” 404).

When Mary appears in literature as the figure of a lost “preoedipal mother” I refer to her as the Great Stuart Mother. Mary’s execution symbolizes the annihilation of this maternal figure. In the period when Queen Victoria is the national and symbolic figurehead, fascination with the spectral Mary becomes a way to defend against the loss of the maternal. Victorian literature about Mary Stuart, whose doomed history marks her dynasty as a “lost cause,” ensures her constant presence as a source of divine sovereignty emanating from their national past.¹⁷⁰

In what follows, fascination for Mary in texts by Ainsworth, Swinburne, and Charlotte Mary Yonge appears in three different forms that emerge during distinct periods of Victoria’s long reign: aesthetic fascination with a gothic version of Mary Stuart in the dawning moments of Victoria’s accession, fascination as it relates to the “lost cause” of the Stuart line in Swinburne’s complex figure of the narcissistic femme fatale in “Chastelard,” and finally fascination for the figure of Mary Stuart as a mythical Great Mother during Victoria’s Golden Jubilee (1887). Though all of these works have since fallen out of favor with contemporary audiences, they were widely read during the period. By recuperating them here, I reclaim their significance as literary

¹⁷⁰ Freud’s attention to the “enigmatic smile” which appears in so many of Leonardo’s works, is as Sprengnether observes, part of a much larger Victorian cultural context emerging with Victorian social anthropologist’s accounts of matriarchy. In *The Spectral Mother: Freud Feminism, and Psychoanalysis*, Sprengnether discusses both Freud’s monograph on Leonardo and his denial of the preoedipal mother as a spectral figure, “the object of his fascinated gaze, at the same time that she elicits a desire to possess and to know” (5). Moreover Freud’s “struggles to incorporate matriarchy and mother goddesses in his system of cultural and religious progress attests to the fascination she holds for him as well as the threat she embodies” (118). Drawing on the theme of fascination in Walter Pater’s famous essay on Leonardo da Vinci, Freud extrapolates a theory of fascination articulated in his monograph *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (1910). There he accounts for the impulse and compelling force of “fascination” to the loss of a maternal figure (Freud 80-81).

texts that attest to the symbolic and shadowy presence Mary Stuart assumed during Victoria's monarchy.

III. Mary Queen of Scots in W. H. Ainsworth's *Crichton* (1837)

All eyes, all thought, turned toward the Princess Victoria; but she still remained, shut away in the seclusion of Kensington, a small unknown figure, lost in the large shadow of her mother's domination.

—Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria* (1921), 65.

Within the narrow circuit of its formal and limited walks, Mary Stuart was now learning to perform the weary part of a prisoner, which, with little interval, she was doomed to sustain during the remainder of her life.

—Sir Walter Scott, *The Abbot* (1820), C. 20, 187.

But attend me and you shall have the story of Esclairmonde in the true style of a chronicler. Immured within her chamber—carefully watched by her Majesty's attendants—suffered to hold no intercourse with any of the palace—Esclairmonde until within these few days has led a life of entire seclusion.

—William Harrison Ainsworth, *Crichton* (1837), Bk. II, C. II, 90.

In each of these three quotations the writers are fascinated with a female figure held in captivity. Strachey's Princess Victoria is the familiar figure of the Gothic heroine locked away in seclusion "in the large shadow of her mother's domination." Sir Walter Scott's hero Roland Græme, imagines Mary in his historical fiction *The Abbot*, as "a captive Princess doomed to dwell" at Lochleven (183). Finally, in William Harrison Ainsworth's novel *Crichton*, the Gothic

heroine Esclairmonde, “immured within her chamber,” is oddly like these other descriptions of Princess Victoria and Mary Stuart. In the emotionally heightened atmosphere of expectation and joy that accompanied Victoria’s accession, there was also a hint of “madness” which the January 1838 periodical *Spectator* captured in the term “Reginamania,” a term that may be associated with fascination in the sense described by Helen Hackett above (Plunkett 70). Young men lost their heads and gave way to their fascination with the spectacle of a princess emerging from Kensington to take her rightful place on the throne.

This section builds on my discussion in the previous chapter on Catherine de Medici’s symbolism by turning to her daughter-in-law Mary Stuart. Though Ainsworth is known today as a Newgate novelist, celebrated for the most notorious of his crime fictions *Jack Sheppard* (1839-40), set in sixteenth-century Valois court of France, *Crichton* appeared in a moment of crisis and transition for the British monarchy. I claim that it is an important work for understanding aesthetic fascination with Mary Stuart and its relation to Victoria in the years 1835-1837.¹⁷¹ The character Esclairmonde physically resembles Mary Stuart while the narrative of her captivity and release is reminiscent of Victoria’s predicament in the period before her accession. In the reading that follows, my argument is twofold and addresses first the popular anxieties about Victoria’s

¹⁷¹ Critic Alison Milbank suggests in her article “The Victorian Gothic in English Novels and Stories, 1830-1880” that in Ainsworth’s Tudor novels, “the Gothicizing of Victoria inaugurates the nineteenth century as a ‘Gothic cusp’” (Milbank 147). She offers a historically contextualized reading of the author’s series of “historical romances” centered on English queens such as Lady Jane Gray, Anne Boleyn, and Mary Queen of Scots. Milbank claims that Ainsworth borrows Horace Walpole, Matthew Gregory Lewis, and Anne Radcliffe’s eighteenth-century Gothic convention of setting novels in southern Europe and at historically remote times. The Victorian “royal Gothic” however, changes this strategy, for it “brings the settings of this genre to British shores” (Milbank 147). “The Victorian age,” Milbank claims, “began like the ending of an Ann Radcliffe novel; the bad uncles and the despotic guardian give way to the true heir, who is now able to preserve and defend her national inheritance” (Milbank 145). Though Milbank overlooks *Crichton*, her designation of a subgenre called “royal Gothic” generically describes of Ainsworth’s plot.

seclusion at Kensington Palace prior to her accession. I then address fascination in Ainsworth's narrative as a way to conceive of Mary's gothic symbolism as Princess Victoria's shadow.

i. Crichton's Plot: The Mystery of Esclairmonde as a Figure for Princess Victoria

Published to great acclaim in February of 1837, only four months before King William IV's death, *Crichton's* plot articulates and anticipates in narrative form the public fantasy of Princess Victoria's accession to the throne on June 20, 1837.¹⁷² On this date the princess emerged from her seclusion at Kensington Palace where her mother the Duchess of Kent along with her equerry Sir John Conroy, had successfully kept Victoria away from the court of her uncle. The first epigraph cited above from Lytton Strachey's biography *Queen Victoria*, presents a scene of expectation while emphasizing the breathless suspension shared by many in the spring of 1837. Strachey's biography relates history to fantasy by drawing on gothic discourses of a young heroine who is unknown to history. It is specifically her mother's domination, another particularly gothic trope that hovers over this "small unknown figure." What Strachey observes about Victoria here is equally applicable to the Gothic heroine at the center of *Crichton*.

To read *Crichton* today is to venture into a fantasy about royalty reminiscent of early nineteenth-century phantasmagoria shows in which images are projected continually on a flat surface while their source of production, a magic lantern, is concealed from view.¹⁷³ An

¹⁷² Ainsworth's biographer Stewart Ellis writes that "the sale of *Crichton* was phenomenal," and quotes a letter from the author to James Crossley detailing its success. "My success has been triumphant," writes the exultant Ainsworth, and "the whole of the first edition was sold out the first day—1250 copies. I am now at press with a second" (Ellis I: 318). By May of 1837 *Crichton* became the theme for Andrew Ducrow's dramatic spectacle at Astley's Amphitheatre in London (I: 347).

¹⁷³ This same phantasmagorical effect led Edgar Allan Poe, in his 1841 review of the novel, to complain that Ainsworth "keeps us in a perpetual state of preparation for something magnificent; but the something magnificent never arrives" (101). As Poe goes on to observe, "the reader turns over the page in expectation, and meets with nothing beyond the same everlasting assurance:—another page and the same result—another and still the same—and so on to the end of the performance" (101). Though Poe's devastating criticism points out its "improbable" and

anonymous review published in the *Athenaeum* supports the phantasmagorical quality of the novel observing that “a better field [than Henri III’s French court] could hardly have been selected, even had the novelist not chosen to make this vivid phantasmagoria revolve round one central figure of surpassing brilliancy and interest” (“Crichton by Ainsworth” 156). The historical figures that flash before readers include Mary Stuart, Catherine de Medici, Henri III, and the Admirable Crichton, but the counterfactual heroine Esclairmonde is the protagonist whose release from captivity guides the reader to the novel’s final page.

Crichton’s initial rescue fantasy is located in the central comic-romance plot. As already mentioned, the heroine is sequestered in her infancy by the queen and raised in complete ignorance of the outside world until the day Catherine allows her to attend a ball at the court of her son Henri III. The king is immediately fascinated by the heroine’s beauty and, not realizing that she is his kin, attempts to seduce her. This is the subject of Hablot K. Browne’s illustration for the 1842 edition of the novel and it depicts the moment when Esclairmonde is brought before King Henri’s court. In the illustration, a towering Catherine accompanied by the evil Cosmo Ruggieri, stands guardedly behind the curtsying Esclairmonde [fig. 4]. The princess is dressed in sixteenth-century costume; a dark gown with pleated sleeves and a ruff. Her hair however, is not arranged according to the fashions of the Valois court, but gathered with large clusters of curls worn over the ears and resembling numerous early portraits of Princess Victoria. The courtiers gathered in the foreground resemble adolescents, reminiscent of Swinburne’s Catherine play in which her infantilized subjects are dominated by her will. One detail that stands out in Browne’s illustration is the icon of the Virgin Mary affixed to the wall above a decorated

“inconsequential” construction, Ainsworth’s novel does in fact have a central plot that presents the plight of a Gothic heroine (Poe 102).

cabinet. The presence of this devotional object I would argue, reinforces not only Catholic Mariolatry, but a displaced reference to the absent Mary Stuart. In this way the illustration's visual iconography suggests that Esclairmonde is protected by the Virgin Mary.



Figure 2.4. Hablot K. Browne (Phiz), illustration to William Harrison Ainsworth's *Crichton*, 1849.

Because the text presents the narrative trajectory of an attractive gothic heroine who is about to become liberated from a system of oppression, the plot is rendered culturally intelligible in relation to widespread rumors about Victoria's troubling family situation. The illustration represents the crucial moment when Esclairmonde's true identity is discovered by Crichton, who is also fascinated by her resemblance to Mary Stuart. In his multiple attempts to liberate Esclairmonde from her captivity, Crichton recognizes that his fascination with the heroine is attached to his devotion to Mary Stuart.

Esclairmonde is first introduced at a court Ball under Catherine's watchful presence, and the novel intimates here the division of public and private worlds. Fascination with the princess is narrated through the public revealing of a concealed world. Like Strachey's Victoria whose accession is narrated as a crossing from innocence to experience, Ainsworth's plot interweaves a virginal subtext as all eyes are fixed on the nubile Esclairmonde. Intrigued by her mysterious presence, Henri asks one of his courtiers "canst inform me whose lovely face lurks beneath yon violet mask?" (87). Described as a "fair incognita," Esclairmonde is in the spotlight and all eyes are turned in her direction only because the courtiers see the king's erotic attraction to her.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ In 1830, when she was eleven years old, Victoria's uncle William IV succeeded his brother George IV to the throne. Only a year later she had her first public appearance at a Ball given by William for her twelfth birthday. William was fond of his niece but despised her mother and Sir John Conroy. He often invited his niece to attend court but this was repeatedly ignored and turned down by the Duchess of Kent and Conroy. That is, until at the event of his birthday dinner in August 1836 the King publicly humiliated the duchess in front of all his royal guests. He accused the duchess of keeping his niece from court and declared that he hoped he should live until Victoria's eighteenth birthday so that she would no longer need her mother to act as Regent.

Crichton's role in the plot is to rescue Esclairmonde from the evil Catherine, and this is important because it connects his fascination with her to her status as a captive. Unlike Swinburne's Catherine, whose maternal domination and tyranny allow her to triumph over her son Charles IX, Ainsworth represents Catherine as capable of being undermined by a politically astute hero. Though no less a villain, in this reading Catherine is rendered less of a threat because of Crichton and his devotion to the chivalric defense of Mary. As a fatherly figure and a knight devoted to his Queen, Crichton is not only capable of rescuing Esclairmonde, but he also gives her council. In this way the novel ushers the heroine into the public world through Crichton's male agency as a chivalric knight. It is Catherine who reminds Crichton of his devotion to Mary and oddly reinforces his fascination with the heroine.

When Crichton responds to Catherine's suggestion of his knightly duty to Mary he claims: "I have remained constant to the creed of my ancestry—to the creed of my conviction; and in behalf of the religion, in the cause of my injured queen, I should have taken up arms, when I was of years to bear them" (357). For the remainder of the novel this association of the Mary's symbolism with Esclairmonde's plight, and her need to be rescued, will allow Crichton to maintain his chivalrous devotion to his Scottish queen while making his sole aim that of delivering Esclairmonde from her captivity. These elements of character and plot in the novel demonstrate that popular anxieties about real political situations such as Victoria's emergence from seclusion, could transform fiction into public fantasy.

ii. Mary Stuart's Symbolism in Crichton

Ainsworth's plot is an adventure narrative in which Crichton's chivalric devotion to an idealized Mary Stuart is his rallying cry to rescue Esclairmonde. The symbol of Mary Stuart in

turn is what René Girard in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1976), would refer to as the unattainable ideal that structures triangulated desire and provides the model for chivalric manliness in Ainsworth's narrative (4). Although Mary Stuart is absent from the actions of the plot, her symbolism lends historical interest. As the fascinating shadow queen behind the heroine's plot, Mary's aesthetic qualities are shared with Esclairmonde.

The novel opens in 1579 while Mary is undergoing the eleventh year of her captivity under the Elizabethan state. Her absence from the plot makes her symbolic textual presence an ideal enabling male chivalry. For the novel's royal and noble characters, Mary represents an absence that registers as a great loss. As noted earlier, in the Valois court Mary Stuart was celebrated for her beauty, and her return to Scotland was an event the French Renaissance courtly poet Pierre de Ronsard lamented as a great loss in his elegiac poetry. When the narrator describes Esclairmonde's physical features, she is draped in the symbolism of the Queen of Scots borrowed from Ronsard's poetry. King Henri III, who is the historical Mary's brother-in-law, is the first to remark Esclairmonde's physical resemblance:

As he contemplated [Esclairmonde's] soft and sunny countenance, Henri thought that, with one solitary exception, he had never beheld an approach to its beauty. That exception was Mary of Scotland, whose charms, at the period when she was united to his elder brother, Francis the Second, had made a lively impression on his youthful heart, some sense of which he still retained, and whose exquisite lineaments those of Esclairmonde so much resembled, as forcibly to recall their remembrance. (98)

Here the terms "resembled" and "remembrance" emphasize the king's personal memory of Mary, and yet the heroine before him is unknown to history though she is cut from the same

cloth as the Scottish queen. Likewise his recognition of her “charms,” a term synonymous with fascination, draws attention to her allure. It is no mere coincidence that Ainsworth’s characters suddenly recall the memory of Mary Stuart when they see Esclairmonde because she is the symbol of beauty, the object of chivalric devotion, and a royal princess who is about to emerge into the public eye. As her name suggests, Esclairmonde is “the light of the world.”

Thus like Princess Victoria in the spring of 1837, Esclairmonde calls instantly to mind the promise of a spring-like reign and liberation from the past symbolized by her captivity and release.¹⁷⁵ Arguing that “no female character in British history bore such a close relationship to [the] sensitive ideals of upper-middle-class feeling as did the Queen of Scots,” Roy Strong claims that “it is hardly surprising that the rise in the cult of Mary Queen of Scots coincided with the advent of this type of heroine in the Gothick [sic] novel” (Strong 138). Images of Mary Stuart as a Gothic heroine or sentimental character are pervasive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Sir Walter Scott’s representation of her as performing the “weary part of a prisoner” brings that image forward.

Mary Stuart’s symbolism in *Crichton* brings something new to the experience of fascination, and that is because she does not figure as a main character. She nevertheless contributes an aura in the Benjaminian sense discussed earlier as “the phenomenon of a distance, however close” (Benjamin 222). In *Crichton*, the Queen of Scots is *regina abscondita*, a missing queen, and this intensifies the mystery surrounding her symbolism as well as creating the aesthetic distance. King Henri describes Esclairmonde as the replica of Mary Stuart:

¹⁷⁵ In Laetitia Landon’s poem “A Birthday Tribute” which commemorates Princess Victoria’s eighteenth year, her description of Victoria’s bright future, contemporaneous with the publication of *Crichton*, captures the same aesthetic fascination: “Fair art thou Princess, in thy youthful beauty / Thoughtful and pure, the spirit claims its part; / Gazing on thy young face, a nation’s duty” (Landon 258).

Imagine, then, features moulded in the most harmonious form of beauty, and chiseled with a taste at once softened and severe. The eyes of a dark deep blue, swimming with chastened tenderness. An inexpressible charm reigns about the lips; and a slight dimple, in which a thousand Cupids might bask, softly indents the smooth and rounded chin. Raised from the brow so as to completely display its snowy expanse, the rich auburn hair is gathered in plaits at the top of the head, crisped with light curls at the sides, ornamented with a string of pearls, and secured at the back with a knot of ribands; a style of head-dress introduced by the unfortunate Mary Stuart, from whom it derived its name, and then universally adopted in the French court. (97)

It is Esclairmonde's resemblance to Mary Queen of Scots that allows Ainsworth's characters to recognize and identify her. King Henri III's ability to see Mary's shadow in Esclairmonde's profile initiates the theme of fascination and chivalric devotion.¹⁷⁶ This textual memory in fact divorces the concept of fascination from the visible as Connor conceives of it (9). The focus on an absent queen in the novel brings fascination back to the divine and numinous—the experience, the spiritual presence, and the shadow of the regal and sacred are enough to render fascination.

Though the popular image of Mary as a Gothic heroine was present as a powerful fantasy in Victorian art and culture, in this novel the character's fascination is unique for its reliance on those symbolic dimensions present in discourses about the Virgin Mary.¹⁷⁷ Ainsworth's text

¹⁷⁶ Eve Sedgwick's observes that for the heroines in Gothic fiction "life begins with a blank." Sedgwick claims that "it is only after experience has inscribed some of these blanks with character that the figure's true identity is 'discovered', and then it is made known by a retracting of recognized traits from other faces" (Sedgwick 156). This is signally true for Esclairmonde whose character is formed through the symbolic valences of Mary Stuart without which the reader cannot understand the princess's trajectory.

¹⁷⁷ As noted earlier, Catholic devotion and reverence to the Virgin Mary was anathema to many British subjects in the aftermath of the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act.

draws on an association between the symbolic value of the icon in Catholic faith and the chivalric devotion to Mary Queen of Scots. This iconic symbolism is then transferred to Esclairmonde who bears such a close likeness to Mary.

If she is to be rescued, Esclairmonde's identity must fuse with the chivalric devotion her rescuer already recognizes in his allegiance to Mary Stuart. Catherine gives voice to this when she tells Crichton that his energies would,

indeed, have been beneficially displayed in crushing that serpent brood which the pernicious zeal of the fanatic Knox has called into life. Had the tocsin of Saint [Bartholomew] been rung from the towers of Edinburgh Castle; had our gentle daughter Mary dealt with her ruthless foes as we have dealt with the enemies of our faith, she would not now have been a captive to Elizabeth. Chevalier Crichton, your lovely queen weeps away her hours in prison. It should have been your aim, as faithful Catholic, and loyal subject, to have effected her liberation. (356)

Here Catherine introduces an important historical note on Mary Stuart's predicament in 1579, at this time Mary is Elizabeth's prisoner and is desperately seeking devoted and chivalrous knights to press for her interests as heiress to England's throne. Catherine's advice to Crichton also links the association of Catholic devotion to the chivalric duty of a knight to protect his queen. Yet her advice is contradictory. She cannot see that by abducting Esclairmonde and making her a hostage, she is mirroring Mary's plight under Elizabeth.

Again, Mary Stuart does not need to be physically present though the language alludes to her. Fascination operates as a transcendent ideal by subsuming it under the divine and the numinous. Though in history Mary Stuart was Henri III's brother's (Francois II) queen, and his

fascination contains a barely concealed desire for his brother's Dowager Queen, the narrative emphasizes her legendary beauty as an ideal. Yet Esclairmonde provides the physical surface upon which Henri can belatedly re-enact his fantasies. He draws on this repertoire of disembodied physical features in order to drape the fictional Esclairmonde with Mary's symbolism.

As mentioned earlier, this fascination with Mary Stuart's charms is voiced by the king who is also the voice of the people. This is an important point because it means that the text is articulating its aesthetic fascination with Mary Queen of Scots while providing a means for Ainsworth's readers to imagine their own Princess Victoria. However different from Mary Stuart Victoria may appear later, these fantasies are being made available to a wide reading public. I have suggested that the Gothic heroine Esclairmonde provides the perfect template for such an association. Esclairmonde, like Richard Herdman's suggestive portrait of a gothic Mary Stuart discussed earlier, is an historical anachronism in this context and a counterfactual element in Ainsworth's plot, yet he introduces the symbolism in order to allow the historical past to impinge on the present.

By rearranging the fantasmatic coordinates whereby the text's characterological relationship between Esclairmonde and Mary Stuart is solidified through the enactment of a symbolic transfer of chivalric ideals of devotion, the text actively creates ideology. Fascination in this historical novel takes the form of a fantasy which borrows anachronistically from history in order to celebrate Victoria's new reign. Henri's fascination with Esclairmonde actively recruits Mary's physical traits that recall a gothic princess, and by celebrating her youth, her beauty, and physical charms the text joins Sir Walter Scott's apotheosis cited earlier.

On the final page of the novel, Esclairmonde is no longer a captive. Though her marriage to Crichton is suggested in the last sentence, there is no marriage. The novel's final words are given to the jester Chicot who says "let us send for the priest at once [for] points of faith are easily settled where love plays the umpire" (493). When understood in the context of 1837, this ending could easily be read as a plot about the beginning of Victoria's reign. The novel thus fills simultaneously the roles of heralding a new Queen who is figured as a gothic heroine; it invokes the symbolism of Mary Stuart as her fascinating shadow from the past, and it offers this fantasy as a way to promulgate Victoria's ascension. *Crichton* transforms into aesthetic form, the same widespread feelings of excitement, anticipation, and Reginamania that the *Spectator* bemoaned. Finally, the novel traps readers in the labyrinthine intricacies of the Valois court in order to offer a fantasy fiction of Victoria's ascendancy.

IV. Swinburne's Mary Stuart: Fascination and the Jacobite Lost Cause

Yes; and *I* feel a sort of reverence in going over these scenes in this most beautiful country, which I am proud to call my own, where there was such devoted loyalty to the family of my ancestors — for Stuart blood is in my veins, and I am *now* their representative, and the people are as devoted and loyal to me as they were to that unhappy race. (59)

—Queen Victoria, *More Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands, from 1862 to 1882* (1884), 113.

Pity for Mary Stuart and her "unhappy race" is what moves Victoria to write that "Stuart blood is in my veins," but the young Swinburne, who was beginning to compose his historical drama "Chastelard" in 1859, is fascinated with the shadow of Mary Stuart for a different reason.¹⁷⁸ Like Victoria claiming descent from Mary Stuart, Swinburne fabricates a fantasy. He finds his ancestral lineage among the ranks of chivalrous knights who are willing to forfeit their

¹⁷⁸ Though not published until 1865, Swinburne disclosed the germ of his play in a letter to William Bell Scott, dated December 16, 1859: "Don't you think a good dramatic subject would be Mary Stuart's amour with Chatelet? one might end with cutting off his head on the stage" (Letters I: 28).

lives and lands in service of their queen.¹⁷⁹ If Victoria descends from the Stuarts and rightfully claims that “the people are as devoted and loyal to me as they were to that unhappy race,” then Swinburne’s Jacobite devotion should naturally be directed to Victoria as a modern representative of the Stuart line.¹⁸⁰ Swinburne devoted over three decades of his life writing about a mythical Queen of Scots who was the opposite of all the values Victoria embodied. Mary functions as a symbol for his chivalrous ideals as well as his erotic fascination.

It is significant that Swinburne’s earliest known poem is one that celebrates Victoria not as a domestic icon but as Gloriana. Georges Lafourcade, in his magisterial *La Jeunesse de Swinburne, 1837-1867* (1928), refers to an early poem Swinburne composed at Eton titled “The Triumph of Gloriana” (11). He celebrates the arrival of Gloriana amidst “a countless crowd” who with “hearts upraised and voices loud, / A thousand shouts the spacious triumph filled” (quoted in Lafourcade 12). Swinburne however, was not destined to become a poet who would sing the praises of his queen. As shown in chapter one, Victoria would next appear in the unglorified version found in his burlesque “La Soeur de la Reine.”¹⁸¹ Swinburne’s later responses to Victoria’s monarchy always combine praise with irony and mockery, and this reflects his peculiar blend of republican politics and Jacobite allegiances. Turning his poetic skills to Mary

¹⁷⁹ In *A.C. Swinburne and the Singing Word: New Perspectives on the Mature Work* (2010), Yisrael Levin asserts that though it is true that “the Swinburnes supported Mary Queen of Scots and were involved in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715” nevertheless “Swinburne was not averse to mythologizing his genealogy and passing off romantic fantasies as biographical fact” (77).

¹⁸⁰ In *Victoria in the Highlands* (1968) David Duff notes that “in conversation with Lord Macaulay, Queen Victoria referred to ‘my ancestor, Charles I.’ Back came the crushing retort: ‘You mean your Majesty’s predecessor’” (289 n4). See also Sophie Gilmartin who claims that Victoria’s claims are fictional (59).

¹⁸¹ Swinburne memorializes Victoria’s visit to Eton which took place on 4 June, 1851. In June 1887 his long poem “The Jubilee” appeared in *The Nineteenth Century Review* offering a feeble attempt to celebrate the fiftieth year of her reign, but by this point he seems to have exhausted all of his poetic energies in the praise of queens who bear no resemblance to the sexagenarian Victoria.

Stuart as his queenly muse, Swinburne can indulge his fantasy of being devoted to a queen who is nothing like Victoria.

Swinburne's attitude toward Victoria worsened after Napoleon's coup d'état in 1851 therefore, his obsession with Mary Stuart in "Chastelard" should be read in light of the Catherine play discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁸² Chapter one argues that Swinburne's reactions to Victoria's association with a tyrant such as Napoleon III provides the impetus for his resurrection of Catherine in his first drama. This same political motivation must be considered when examining the language he gives to his dangerous and violent Mary. In contrast to Ainsworth's novel where chivalry is in service of masculinity—Mary is symbolized as the gothic maiden in distress and in need of rescuing—Swinburne's fatal queen inspires a narrative of psychic pain and pleasure. In "Chastelard" Mary exploits chivalry unmanning men and threatening the safety of her people and nation.

The play features Mary as a vampiric and blood-thirsty femme fatale. In the place of Ainsworth's Princess Esclairmonde, Swinburne's Mary Stuart is like Théophile de Gautier's Clarimonde, a vampire who "reddens at the mouth with blood of men" (5.2).¹⁸³ Mary takes after her mother-in-law Catherine whose "thin reddish-blood like lips" terrorizes her subjects ("Queen Mother" 3.1 96). Swinburne developed this figure in the seven years between 1859 and 1865 when he wrote into Victorian poetry a steady succession of demonic and sexually insatiable queens, dominatrixes, and female tyrants.¹⁸⁴ None of these figures resembled Victoria in the

¹⁸² Critic Sharon Weltman observes that "Victoria's record of political agitation in international affairs" demonstrates how "her position as monarch conflates public and private spheres" and adds that Victoria's "friendly delight with Louis Napoleon of France provides an instance of a personal relationship that historians see as having affected her opinions about appropriate foreign policy" (121 n13).

¹⁸³ Clarimonde is the vampiric femme fatale in Gautier's short story "La Morte Amoureuse" (1836) who unlike Swinburne's Mary, is defeated. See Praz 231.

¹⁸⁴ In a letter to William Bell Scott (16 Dec. 1859), Swinburne shares his passion for sensational historical personages. Much like Lady Carbury writing to her would-be publishers, Swinburne asks Scott: "Don't you think a

least, and though Swinburne's fascinating Mary is only part of this mythography of queenship, it belongs to the genealogy of the femme fatale and a shadow of Victoria's domestic iconicity.¹⁸⁵ It is therefore important to consider how Victoria's shadow falls on Swinburne's Mary Stuart, arguably his most enduring and complex image of a queen.

i. The Femme Fatale 'Jacobite-Style'

In constructing Mary Stuart as a femme fatale, Swinburne articulates one Victorian strand of fascination that had endured into the nineteenth century; the idea of a fatal encounter with a bewitching enchantress capable of killing men through the power of her look. This is evident in Swinburne's selection of an epigraph for "Chastelard" which he drew from a passage in Sir John Mandeville's imaginary geography *Voyages and Travels* (1300-1399?). The passage speaks of a race of women with Medusan powers:

Another Isle is there toward the North, in the Sea Ocean, where that be full cruel and evil Women of Nature. And they have precious Stones in their Eyes. And they be of that Nature, that if they behold any Man with Wrath, they slay him anon with the Beholding, as doth the Basilisk. (Mandeville 355)¹⁸⁶

In associating Mary Stuart with these medieval "Women of Nature," Swinburne suggests that fascination's visual transference is historical as well as poetic truth.¹⁸⁷ Fascination or

good dramatic subject would be Mary Stuart's amour with Chatelet? One might end with cutting off his head on stage" (Henderson 40).

¹⁸⁵ See Nina Auerbach (1982).

¹⁸⁶ The passage Swinburne cites is consistent in spelling with James Orchard Haliwell's 1834 edition. It reads: "Another Yle is there toward the Northe, in the See Occean, where that ben fulle cruele and ful euele Wommen of Nature: and thei han precious Stones in hire Eyen; and thei ben of that kynde, that zif they beholden ony man, that slen him anon with the beholdynge, as dothe the Basilisk" (Maundeville 285).

¹⁸⁷ The *OED* lists the adjective "Beholding" as having two variants, both related to fascination: "that holds fast the eyes, attractive" and "looking on, gazing."

“beholding,” evokes an enigmatic and mysterious “female principle” that Swinburne combines with the metaphor of the ocean.¹⁸⁸ Together, the mythical fatal woman and the metaphor of the ocean give expression to Swinburne’s chaotic emotions. The figure of Mary Stuart combines Swinburne’s historical and political interests with his psychological need to be dominated by a powerful woman. In “Chastelard,” Mary commands allegiance from a man who sacrifices his life for her pleasure. Determined to live out his passion, the historical Chastelard concealed himself in her bedchamber at Holyrood Castle on February 12, 1560.¹⁸⁹ In his play, Swinburne’s hero loses his head over Mary in both the literal and figurative sense. As Mary vacillates over punishing him for his crime, Swinburne luxuriates in describing every lurid detail of the voyeur’s clandestine behavior. Chastelard, who knows that his fate is predetermined by his criminal actions, will not attempt to save himself. Much to the pleasure of this fatal woman he will perish, but not before confessing to Mary Beaton that “for my death, sweet friend, / I never could have lived long either way” (3.1 54). He thus embraces his death even before concealing himself under the queen’s bed.¹⁹⁰

In the moments before Mary arrives at her chamber, Chastelard indulges his scopophilic obsession by inspecting every inch of her bed:

Here is the very place:

Here has her body bowed the pillows in

¹⁸⁸ Like other dangerous and life-annihilating women in his poems, Mary Stuart represents what Catherine Maxwell has identified as “a disruptive ‘Female Sublime’ which is also a ‘Bad Sublime’” (182).

¹⁸⁹ The plot is based on a true historical event, for the French poet and dancer Chastelard who was the grand-nephew of the Chevalier de Bayard, followed Mary to Scotland and to his grave. Knox’s summary of Chastelard’s fate in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland* (1566) provides the germ for Swinburne’s play: “And so received Chattelett the reward of his dancing, for he lacked his head, that his tounge should nott utter the secreattis of our Quene” (Knox II: 368).¹⁸⁹

¹⁹⁰ Jerome McGann claims that “Swinburne was not only absorbed by figures of powerful and/or unattainable women at a very early age; he also seems always to have been fascinated by the idea of ill-starred love” (McGann 216).

And here her head thrust under made the sheet

Smell soft of her mixed hair and spice. (3.1 55)

Repeating lines with the words “here” and “her,” Swinburne populates the bed with signs of Mary’s body while her absence suggests to Chastelard that danger is part of the fascination.¹⁹¹ In suggesting an association between the linen and Mary’s absent body, the lines intimate Chastelard’s fetishistic attachment.

The play substitutes Chastelard’s head for that of his queenly lover. Critic Catherine Maxwell suggests that Chastelard should be read as suffering from castration anxiety. She qualifies this assertion adding that “while castration in *Chastelard* is primarily symbolized through decapitation, Swinburne illustrates throughout how that crisis is adumbrated, brought about and performed through visual relations” (189). This supports my reading of the play as being less about castration and more about fascination. Rather than being terrorized by Mary as the agent of his dismemberment, Chastelard engages in a playful exchange with her.

In scene one of the second act just before the fateful encounter in Mary’s bedchamber, both attend a court masque where Mary beseeches Chastelard:

Lend me your sword a little; a fair sword;

I see the fingers that I hold it with

Clear in the blade, bright pink, the shell-colour,

Brighter than flesh is really, curved all round.

Now men would mock if I should wear it here,

Bound under bosom with a girdle, here,

¹⁹¹ Moreover, as Adrienne Munich suggests in reference to Swinburne’s royal females, “the earthly scent of [Victoria’s] favorite patchouli emanates from their bedsheets, as it did from hers” (176).

And yet I have heart enough to wear it well.

Speak to me like a woman, let me see

If I can play at man. (2.1 43)

Here Mary's associations with Venus are realized through color and especially the "bright pink" and "shell colour" of her hand.¹⁹² The act of seeing her hand reflected on Chastelard's sword, "clear in the blade," suggests that the steel has turned into pinkish flesh. Mary's use of the sword as a mirror also suggests the idea of narcissism rather than castration anxiety. If the Freud's paradigmatic equation in "The Medusa's Head" is "to decapitate = to castrate" (273) making genital difference the locus of male terror, I suggest that Swinburne's play emphasizes Chastelard's fascination. Rather than castrating Chastelard's specular position, Mary engages in a playful exchange with her victim. In his review "Mr. Swinburne's Trilogy" (1882) critic George Simcox observes that in "Chastelard" the poet "makes Mary play with her mad lover like a cat with a mouse, enjoying his admiration and his accomplishments all the more because she sees his danger" (170). This description does not suggest that Chastelard is threatened by a castrating queen either, but rather that Mary is playing with him.¹⁹³

Mary also engages in a playful disordering of gender categories, especially as she says: "Speak to me like a woman, let me see / If I can play at man" (2.1 43). Several of Swinburne's earliest critics recognized this mixing of genders. In his article "The Poetry of the Period" (1869)

¹⁹² In Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (c. 1486) the goddess appears poised on a pink-colored scallop shell. Dante Rossetti's many poems and paintings representing Venus in various symbolic guises may also have influenced Swinburne's use of the Venus motif.

¹⁹³ Austin's reference to the cat and mouse game is reminiscent of Sarah Kofman's discussion of fascination and narcissism cited earlier. Discussing Freud's claim that women are narcissistic, Kofman observes that "by virtue of their libidinal position, women can be compared with children, great birds of prey and cats, with great criminals as represented in literature" (53) and that "if she is to be able to enjoy herself narcissistically; what is attractive in woman is that she has managed to preserve what man has lost, that original narcissism for which he is eternally nostalgic" (52).

for example, Alfred Austin compares Tennyson's "'proper' feminine muse" in *The Idylls of the King* (1859) to "the 'improper feminine muse of Mr. Swinburne'" (469). Austin claims that the Tennyson is inspired by "the feminine muse of the Hearth, whilst [Swinburne's] is the feminine muse of the Hetaire" (469). He singles out Swinburne's Chastelard as exemplary of the "improper" feminine while vociferating: "Chastelard, a man—a man! we scarcely like to own sex with him; but for all that it is intrinsically feminine" (470). Austin identifies Chastelard with the poet Swinburne as he asks "but what have men...with 'pride in their port, defiance in their eye,' men daring, enduring, short of speech and terrible in action—what have these to do with Mr. Swinburne's Venuses and Chastelards" (460). In defying Swinburne's "effeminacy" and conflating the poet with his creation, Austin sounds like Froude and Kingsley who, as mentioned earlier, resist Mary's fascination. Significantly, Mary provides the conditions for Chastelard's "effeminacy" by enjoying his company and by toying with him in a manner that would be unimaginable if she were a Victoria.¹⁹⁴

Swinburne's Chastelard on the whole, seems unconscious of Austin's notion of "effeminacy." Chastelard would rather die than see Mary's reputation blemished, and this is Swinburne's conscious construction of Jacobite allegiance. Loyalty to Mary is here conceived as a dangerous encounter with a femme fatale, but the danger is part of the excitement.¹⁹⁵ For Mary Stuart's Victorian sympathizer Oliphant, as we have seen, allegiance to the great Stuart mother

¹⁹⁴ For a discussion of Austin's Victorian discourse of effeminacy as "civic failure" and the opposite of eighteenth-century classical republican definitions of masculine "virtue" see Dowling (1994) 5-15. For an extension of this idea to Kingsley's "muscular Christianity" see Laura Fasick (2000).

¹⁹⁵ For a consideration of Swinburne's masochism in his construction of the femme fatale, see Marilyn Fisch's article "Swinburne's Divine Bitches" (1-11). For a psycho-biographical consideration of Swinburne's castration complex and flagellation fantasies see Leonard Shengold (167-206). In his psychological analysis of the poet in *Boswell's Clap and Other Essays* (1988), critic William Ober separates Swinburne's republican politics while focusing primarily on his masochism. Finally, see Christopher Lane's article about Swinburne in *Burdens of Intimacy* which discusses within a Freudian paradigm, the poet's interest in flagellation.

meant accepting the charges brought against her including treason, adultery, or murder. More personal, Swinburne's Chastelard tells Mary, "I must shortly die," hastening to add "My life being wound about you as it is, / Who love me not, yet do not hate me" (3.2). The repeated adverb "not" in the last line suggests structural ambivalence yet it works to reinforce Chastelard's sense of absolute and pathological devotion to Mary. Unlike Oliphant who claimed that Mary "retains the allegiance of an almost unanimous nation," Swinburne's allegiance is total (Oliphant 106). Swinburne's Jacobite devotion to Mary Stuart is devoid of political meaning in the age of Victoria, and as critic Curtis Dahl observes in "Swinburne's Loyalty to the House of Stuart" (1949), "in the staid, settled era of Victoria, Jacobitism was merely a lost cause—a hopeless gesture of revolt against middle class political morality" ("Swinburne's Loyalty" 467). Blinded by his allegiance to the political and sexual absolutism of his ideal Stuart monarch the poet will not sing to Victoria who is tame and rules constitutionally. Swinburne's politics are inconsistent and contradictory.¹⁹⁶ As mentioned earlier, his predilection for paradox and the fusing of contraries is part of his legacy as a poet and thinker. His republican sympathies and atheism co-exist with his Jacobite allegiance, and this blend of opposites makes absolutism equivalent to a democratic desire for freedom and liberty.¹⁹⁷ How does this paradox work for him? As we have seen in the first chapter, Swinburne equates Catherine de Medici with tyranny and by an unthinkable comic extension, Victoria becomes her twin. In his allegiance to Mary Stuart however, Swinburne suggests that the Jacobite's spirit of rebellion is consistent with a love of liberty and freedom.

¹⁹⁶ For a discussion of the "strange relationship between Jacobitism and radicalism" including republicanism, see John Cannon's "The Survival of the British Monarchy" (1986) 146-7.

¹⁹⁷ According to Dahl "at first glance Swinburne's loyalty to the Stuarts would appear diametrically opposed to those traits of radicalism and amorality which have made him a symbol of the late Victorian aesthetic movement" ("Swinburne's Loyalty" 455). Dahl also claims that Swinburne's loyalty to the Stuarts "was not a solitary and unrelated trait in an otherwise opposed nature but rather an integral part of a definite pattern" (455).

Swinburne's Mary represents the fusion of these political opposites, but through her fascination she also symbolizes the tyranny of the senses. According to Isobel Armstrong, Swinburne's language is "both anarchic and subject" merging the politics with his poetics (406). His "anarchic language of excess" (406) overturns categories of gender and family prevalent at the time while exposing Victorian anxieties about how this power operates through sensuality. Mary's powers of fascination prove irresistible to Swinburne as he explores the mechanism behind her attraction to reveal its source in the irrational. Mary's charm has a deadly force on men's minds as she explains in a soliloquy from the first scene of act one:

Meseems my face can yet make faith in men
And break their brains with beauty: for a word,
An eyelid's twitch, an eye's turn, tie them fast
And make their souls cleave to me. (4.1)

In these lines Mary vacillates over having Chastelard's death sentence reprieved, but she uses the polysemic word "cleave" which contains two opposite meanings. In the biblical sense used for matrimony, "cleave" means to adhere, or to cling together, as in the biblical passage which endorses a man to leave his parents and "cleave to his wife" (Mark 10:7). It also means to separate or to cut apart, which is directly connected to Mary's ultimate decision to have Chastelard beheaded. Both senses of the verb "to cleave" are related to the mechanism of fascination that structures the play. Mary both binds fascinated male victims to herself and sunders or "break[s] their brains with beauty" (4.1) Her powers of fascination are not as noted earlier, exercised only through looking, but rather by absorbing the gaze of her spectators; with

“an eyelid’s twitch” Mary can “make their soul’s cleave” (Connor 9).¹⁹⁸ Swinburne’s term “cleave” also reverses the meaning they have in Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* which extols in men, the virtues identified with Victorian women, such as sweetness, chastity, and faithfulness: “To lead sweet lives in pure chastity, to love one maiden only, cleave to her” (Tennyson “Idylls” 471-72).¹⁹⁹ Swinburne’s Mary, as a femme fatale, has the power that Tennyson gives to men.

The word “eyelid” cited in the passage also draws attention to the physicality of vision. In an early review of “Chastelard” by Henry Morley, the critic discusses Swinburne’s repetition of the word eyelid. “Mr. Swinburne seems,” writes Morley, “at an early period of his life, to have got it into his head that enough hadn’t been made of the eyelids in poetical description. In Mr. Swinburne’s eyelids this is the setting up of a neglected feature in its place of honour” (Hyder 44). Morley claims that “the effect of the incessant flash of eyelids has to our eyelids the effect of conversation with a man who is perpetually twitching and winking” (Hyder 44). Morley’s humor draws attention to the exaggerated way that Swinburne writes about vision’s fleshliness, but he also indirectly affirms the role of the eye in fascination. Just as the sword mentioned earlier becomes pink and takes on flesh, so the organ of sight, which operates as a kind of weapon, is embedded under the eyelid.²⁰⁰ Coupled with Mary’s cruelty, her tyranny over her lover’s senses makes her the consummate femme fatale who observes no boundaries and exhibits no prohibition curtailing her violence. Yet for Swinburne, to offer a defense of Mary would be tantamount to an admission of her guilt, and this queen is just as incapable of feeling remorse as

¹⁹⁸ The passage is also reminiscent of Queen Elizabeth’s desire not to interfere in her subject’s private religion and, as reported by Sir Francis Bacon, to make windows into men’s souls. Swinburne’s bewitching Mary would “make faith in men” and direct her gaze into their souls.

¹⁹⁹ In “Under the Microscope” (1871), Swinburne refers to Tennyson’s poem as the “Morte d’Albert” and calls Tennyson’s Arthur a “wittol,” making the Laureate’s Arthur an acquiescent cuckold.

²⁰⁰ Here it is important to note that in his essay on the uncanny, Freud insists that that castration anxiety is associated with the fear of the loss of the eyes (*SE* 17 232). Swinburne’s play never alludes to Freud’s analogy but rather insistently makes the eyelid the focus of his poetic attention.

she is feeling mercy. Mary warns Chastelard: “Alas, poor lord, you have no sense of me; / I shall be deadly to you” (3.1 64). She inhabits the position of a dominatrix who takes great delight in leading her blind and senseless lover to his death.

As mentioned earlier, Swinburne is deliberately offering a fantasy that runs counter to the middle-class version of Mary as an innocent victim and martyr. This representation would not only shock his Victorian readers, but his portrayal of her blood-lust would cause revulsion. Yet Swinburne proceeds with his depictions of Mary knowing in advance that they will offend her defenders such as the Stricklands.²⁰¹ Mary is a dominatrix, and Chastelard inhabits the fantasmatic scene of masochistic desire that provokes an unsuspecting reader to catch an unconscious glimpse of the sexual scenario unfolding in the drama. In her reading of “Chastelard,” Jayne Lewis claims that for Swinburne, “perversely enough, it would seem that his own tongue had been bridled by the historical (or at least the historically fantasmatic) Mary’s apparent determination to ‘shut up men’s lips’” (Lewis 191). Lewis’s parenthetical “historically fantasmatic” reinforces my notion that Swinburne’s Mary is really a Victorian perversion of the historical queen. She appears as a threat to the male Victorian writer’s voice, a feature Swinburne takes delight in staging. His fantasy does not attempt to place Mary on a high moral pedestal, rather it distances him from the domestic world of bliss that Victoria and Albert had worked so hard to construct for the nation. Arguing that Mary Stuart is a consummate figure of the femme fatale in Swinburne’s play, Peter Stine asserts that “Swinburne was consumed with her and saw her as a complex symbol of his own day” because “she stood for an aesthetic and moral honesty that the Victorian period, with its militant religiosity, and its stringent puritanism,

²⁰¹ During the period he was writing “The Queen Mother,” “Rosamond,” “La Soeur de la Reine,” and “Chastelard” Swinburne was at Oxford, and his coterie of friends were all in on the secret of his plots; eating them as fruit from his tree of forbidden knowledge. “Chastelard” must be read as part of this early collection of plays about Queens Catherine de Medici, Eleanor, Victoria, and Mary Stuart.

could never know” (114). Likewise in his biography of Swinburne, Edmund Gosse tries to account for why the Victorian public did not appreciate his depiction of Mary Stuart and speculates that

the reading public was satisfied with the way in which Tennyson, particularly in the *Idylls of the King*, treated the emotions in the rude stories of a mythical antiquity which he rehearsed, and as it were adapted, for a strictly modern use. His Elaines and Enids were conventional women of the reign of Victoria, travestied against a background of semi-barbarous romance, but preserving all their latter-day prejudices. (Gosse 129)

By contrast, Swinburne’s readers were displeased because “his attitude to life was totally foreign to a generation which had pastured on *The Angel in the House*” (Gosse 131). Like Braddon’s sensation heroine Lady Audley, who is the literary offspring of Catherine de Medici and a conscious despoiler of the domestic angel, Swinburne’s Mary is a demon “with that magic power of fascination, by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile” (Braddon 47).

ii. Divided Loyalties: Swinburne’s Substitution of Authority Figures

How do we account for the coexistence of fascination and repulsion that characterizes Chastelard’s situation in Swinburne’s play? I define what Adrienne Munich refers to as Swinburne’s “queen complex,” as a defense mechanism which allows him to displace anxieties about Victoria’s female power on to Mary Stuart as a substitute authority figure he could accept.²⁰² Throughout his career Swinburne’s fascination with Mary Stuart alternates with ambivalent feelings he expresses toward Victoria, suggesting divided loyalties. The unconscious

²⁰² I borrow the term “queen complex” from Munich (176).

fantasies about powerful females indicate a need for an authority figure through whom he can ward off his critic's social sanctions, particularly the accusations of his effeminacy as we have seen in Alfred Austin's "The Poetry of the Period."

In a letter to his American biographer E.C. Stedman written on February 20, 1875, Swinburne writes of his descent from a family devoted to the Stuarts:

My grandfather never left France till called away at 25 on the falling in of such English estates as confiscation had left to a family which in every Catholic rebellion from the days on my own Queen Mary to those of Charles Edwards had given their blood like water and their lands like dust to the Stuarts. ("Letters" III: 10)

The first person singular possessive "my own Queen Mary," suggests that she is alive and even strangely aware of his chivalric devotion (III: 10). As the source of his Jacobite fantasies, Mary crystallizes diverse strands of erotic and political thought. As I have shown, "Chastelard" presents Mary as a femme fatale who, early in his career, fascinates him as his female other. The hero wants to be caught "in an act," as Elizabeth Grosz claims about fascination, "as aggressive as it is loving" (Grosz 6-7). In his letter to Stedman however, Swinburne's fascinating Mary adds political dimensions to her eroticism. In order to trace the way Swinburne's "queen complex" haunts his literary imagination it is sufficient to look briefly at his other correspondence.

While writing his autobiographical letter to Stedman, Swinburne fired off two other notes to his closest friends.²⁰³ These letters offer further insights on his fascination with Mary, as well as alluding to the way in which she serves as a substitute, however imperfect, for a different kind

²⁰³ The American Wall Street broker, poet, and critic Edmund Clarence Stedman, included a chapter on Swinburne in his *Victorian Poets* (1875). See Hyder 165.

of authority figure. In these letters Swinburne symbolically deposes Victoria who represents the domestic icon he deplors. In the first letter addressed to his friend Thomas Purnell, Swinburne relates an incident reported in the *Daily News*. The article claims to have located the infant child of Victoria's deceased uncle George IV, better known as "Old Corruption."²⁰⁴ Swinburne writes that the article "at last gave me courage to make public as much as I dare of the case of the Royal Claimant," and continues that he has "every reason to believe that the injured lady still lives—that the rightful Queen of England is at this moment a prisoner in Newgate" (*Letters* III: 7). On closer inspection however, he notes that the article reveals there was in fact, no "injured lady" imprisoned at Newgate. The "rightful queen of England" and "Royal Claimant," was Swinburne's own fabrication from the report. The *Daily News* reads:

For some time it has been believed in the great Republic that one single copy of the 'Memoirs of George IV' of England was hidden somewhere in America. The demand for this costly article has naturally produced a supply...The true 'Memoirs of George IV' with the account of his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert and of the birth of their child, is still to seek, and the whole interest centers on this infant. In the eyes of American readers, careless of the Royal Marriage Act, this infant is the rightful heir to the English Crown. Naturally a profligate and luxurious court has concealed the poor creature's existence and claims. Perhaps he is wearing an iron mask in The Tower of London, perhaps he was deposited at a Foundling hospital, like la princesse Kitty, in an unacted French melodrama by a living English poet. (*Letters* III: 7)

²⁰⁴ The discovery of the spurious "Memoirs of George IV" inspired several newspapers to investigate claims of a "Royal Claimant" in prison.

Swinburne could not have failed to recognize in “la princesse Kitty,” a reference to his unpublished burlesque “La Soeur de la Reine” which I have already addressed at length in chapter one.²⁰⁵

While it is tempting to argue that Swinburne was serious in his response to the *Daily News* article, that he truly believed a Royal Claimant was imprisoned in Newgate, two days after penning this letter to Purnell, Swinburne, now fully aware of the humor, writes to his friend Edmund Burne-Jones: “Did you see the (mis)quotation—still it was a quotation—from the greatest of my humble works—about the Princess Kitty in the *Daily News* of Friday? It stirred me up to cast off the abject fear which has too long withheld me from laying bear the wrongs of that lady” (*Letters* III: 17-18).²⁰⁶ In the transition taking place through these three letters, Swinburne moves from an initial reaction to the report on Friday February 20, through a sketch of his personal biography for Stedman’s article written on the same day. In his letter to Burne-Jones he finally recognizes the extensive reach of his fantasy.²⁰⁷ Within the span of these three

²⁰⁵ For a discussion of Swinburne’s frequent return to the unpublished burlesque in correspondence see Francis Sypher Jr. and Gillian Workman’s articles both published in the same volume of the *Harvard Library Bulletin* (1973). See also Cecil Lang *New Writings* (1964).

²⁰⁶ Swinburne goes on to further elaborate the connections:

Sir, I have written on the subject to that Gentleman of the Press! I have indeed—and told him I have every reason to believe that she still lives! That the rightful Queen of England is at this moment the inmate of a cell in Newgate, chained by the waist to the wall, guarded by a cordon of Aldermen who relieve each other every three hours—and once a day visited by the Lord mayor who then deposits his evidence signed and sealed in the Lobby (spelt ‘Lobi’) of the House of Commons in a Black Box sealed with the arms of England, which the Premier nightly opens, and reads to the Privy Council, the deposition of the Lord mayor winding up with the mystic word—Albright! But, Sir, I shall lay the facts of the case before Dr. Kenealy—indeed it is the Stoke election that has at last given me courage to move in the matter—and then! When he has taken up the case with this Royal Claimant, will not the blood-cemented throne of Balmoral totter to its basis? They do say that the injured lady’s nose has been slit—in fact, put out of joint—because, as you are well aware, a statute of King Canute has decreed that no heir with any facial disfigurement can succeed to the throne of England—but I will not believe it of Victoria. (*Letters* III: 17-18)

²⁰⁷ Referring to these letters, Dahl asserts Swinburne “could pour into his Jacobitism the same passionate defense of maligned and dispossessed royal womanhood that caused him to spring excitedly to the defense of a poor mad prisoner in Newgate who asserted she was rightful queen of England” (Dahl 467). Dahl is referring to the same letter to Parnell mentioned above, but he overlooks the correspondence that follows.

letters, Swinburne articulates a conscious defense of what he perceived as a rightful cause, an autobiographical account in which he claims his Jacobite descent from the chivalric devotees of “my own Queen Mary,” to a self-conscious realization and narcissistic self-gratification for having played a role in constructing this public fantasy.

Swinburne’s letters not only record his devotion to Mary, but they also provide a map of his political thought, which has a strange twist in the end. In a letter to his mother dated two days after the death of French historian Louis Blanc, Swinburne boastfully fantasizes of having converted the eminent Republican and Socialist leader to Jacobitism by offering the argument that

If we had succeeded in bringing back the Stuarts and driving out the Guelphs, England would now be a Republic. For we would never have been such servile idiots as to recall the Hanover rats—if we had once driven them out—and we certainly should have had to get rid of the Stuarts a third time. (Letters III: 322)²⁰⁸

Continually deposing and crowning phantom monarchs in his mind, this letter offers evidence of his divided loyalties and how his imagination ranges when moving between queens: substituting one authority figure for another. When read beside his correspondence, Swinburne’s literary imagination forms something like a mental puzzle or psychic collage of disparate fragments piecing together his violent perceptions of the world with something more determinant, perhaps even at times, loving. In the process of untangling Swinburne’s fascination with Mary, the reader encounters a mind that is constantly shifting, consciously multiplying queens who serve the symbolic purpose of replacing Victoria with perverse substitutions. In the end, the “poor mad

²⁰⁸ Swinburne met Louis Blanc (1810-1882) in 1867. Blanc, then an exiled revolutionary, was living at the home of the poet Mathilde Blind in St. John’s Wood.

prisoner in Newgate” and the historically dispossessed Mary Stuart, are really Victoria’s shadows falling on Swinburne’s work.

V. 1587 - 1887: The Specter of Mary as the Great “Stuart” Mother

In the year 1882 Swinburne laid his Scottish queen to rest in his poem “Les Adieux a Marie” and in “Mary Stuart,” the final drama of his trilogy. In that year the Tractarian novelist Charlotte Mary Yonge published *Unknown to History: A Story of the Captivity of Mary of Scotland* (1882), her historical novel covering the nineteen years of Queen Mary’s captivity. If Swinburne’s evolving portrait of Mary runs counter to the well-known domestic icon of Victoria, Yonge connects the cult of domesticity to the legendary myth of Mary Stuart as a Great Mother.²⁰⁹ Mary is at one moment the tender mother who enfolds her daughter in her loving arms, and in the next she is described as a Cleopatra “drawing up her head with the conscious fascination of the serpent of old Nile” (315). In this section I continue to explore fascination while turning to the period preceding and leading up to Queen Victoria’s first Jubilee. Rider Haggard’s jubilee novel *She: A History of Adventure* (1887) celebrates the sexagenarian Victoria’s fiftieth year as queen regnant. But Haggard’s Queen Ayesha, a figure often read as Victoria’s shadow, is also a figuration of the Great Mother as she appears in late nineteenth-century matriarchal theory.

Yonge and Haggard’s novels emerge in a period when debates over matriarchal theory were at their height. Classical cultural evolutionists made armchair pronouncements in favor, or

²⁰⁹ Rosemary Mitchell argues that though Yonge’s habit of constructing complex historical typologies and “complex symbolic practices” in her texts, *Unknown to History* “can be seen in relation to Scott’s *The Abbot* (1820), but perhaps it is no more than a straightforward continuation of the novel” (Mitchell “Charlotte Mary Yonge Reading, Writing, and Recycling” (40). She nevertheless admits that “the ageing Yonge could still engage in complex intertextual strategies, and still demand much of the late Victorian reader” (41).

against an original female society, and in this context, matriarchal theory prompts a re-reading of Yonge's lesser-known representation of Mary as Victoria's shadow. As Jayne Lewis observes about Mary, "Victoria's subjects...obligingly saw the shadow of that tragic royal mother in her," and Yonge celebrates the bonds between her fictional royal mother and counterfactual daughter through myth (Lewis 172). In her depiction of Mary and her mysterious lost daughter Bride, Yonge attempts to fill the void of a historical loss.²¹⁰ In what follows Haggard and Yonge's novels serve as bookends in celebration of Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

i. Fascination with the Great Mother: From Bachofen to Haggard

The fascination exercised by the mother, by the archetype of the mother, manifested itself especially in the unreal importance that Bachofen confers to a real power, namely the domination by the mother.

—Ernst Bloch, *Natural Law and Human Dignity* (1987), 15.

Bloch's claim that fascination with a mother and the archetype of the Great Mother suggests a powerful response to myth that permeated the second half of the nineteenth century. During Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee period her subjects were debating concepts of matriarchy and patriarchy in prominent periodicals, and it is hardly coincidental that in 1887 writers would emphasize the terrifying powers of their own queen by constructing historical and mythical queens derived from Bachofen's theory of Demetrian matriarchy. In her article "The Sexual Politics of Victorian Social Anthropology," Elizabeth Fee claims that during the three decades from 1860 to 1890 "social anthropology demonstrated that the idealized family of the Victorian middle class was dictated by no law of nature, that monogamous marriage was only one of various human sexual possibilities" (24) She goes on to claim that the idea suggested to many that "women were not necessarily born only to domestic and decorative functions" (24).

²¹⁰ Cicely Talbot alias Bride is the offspring of Mary's brief marriage to James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell.

As subversive and disruptive of social norms such claims may have appeared to Victorians, Fee also notes that these theories, starting with those of Jacob Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* (1861), were quickly adjusted to the prevalent conventions and were used in part to justify the dominant sexual and political ideologies of the period.

Demetrian matriarchy, as Cynthia Eller claims in *Gentlemen and Amazons* (2011), was the truest form of matriarchal theory found in Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* (1861), and though I do not claim that the devout Christian Yonge was familiar with his work, his theories of matriarchy were widely discussed and debated in Victorian periodical culture. In this atmosphere it would be difficult for any cultured person to ignore the ramifications of matriarchal theory and the widespread fascination with the mysteries of the ancient Greek myth of Demeter multiplying in the period's poetry.²¹¹ Demetrian matriarchy, according to Bachofen, is the stage of history in which property and status are conferred matrilineally, and it is characterized by the rule of women, or "Gynaikokratie." Demetrian matriarchy is also characterized by a nostalgic longing for the rule of women, and it is this sense that its widespread appeal emerged in British social and cultural anthropology.

Matriarchal theory also inspired Victorian poets to take up the myth of Persephone's capture by Hades and Demeter's longing for reunion with her daughter; a theme explored by critic Margot K. Louis in her book *Persephone Rises, 1860-1927: Mythography, Gender, and the Creation of a New Spirituality* (2009).²¹² Louis argues that when Bachofen proposed that

²¹¹ Historian Bonnie Smith offers Jane Ellen Harrison as an example of a scholar of Greek myth through whose work "the maternalist side of feminist ideology found its way into the writing of history" (723).

²¹² Though Bachofen's matriarchal theories had little direct influence on British art and culture, the Scottish ethnologist and lawyer John Ferguson McLennan (1827-1881) published his *Primitive Marriage* (1865) in which he develops independently some of Bachofen's similar claims about matriarchy. Though in developing his theory of marriage capture he does not mention the myth of Demeter and Persephone, Margot Louis claims that to educated Victorians the myth would be the perfect illustration of the concept. McLennan also travelled in the pre-Raphaelite circle and wrote verse.

patriarchy was preceded by matriarchy “a new fascination with deep and hidden forces within the psyche or the culture gave fresh urgency to the symbol of a vitalizing or appalling underworld (ix). It is this “symbol of a vitalizing or appalling underworld” that the novelists Charlotte Yonge and Rider Haggard both transform in their fictions about queens who resemble the mythic figure of the Great Mother. Whereas Yonge offers the reader a “vitalizing” underworld, Haggard’s chthonic and cavernous kingdom of Kôr is “appalling,” repulsive, and terror-inspiring. In fact Haggard’s *She*, as feminist critic Cynthia Eller argues, “can be read as a synecdoche of late Victorian matriarchal myth,” and if the widespread fascination with the mythical figure of the Great Mother terrified Haggard, such representations were pervasive in the late-Victorian period. When Haggard published his jubilee tribute to Victoria, he incorporated a mythical queen, a two-thousand-year-old Ayesha, or *She-who-must-be-obeyed*, who mourns the death of her lover Kallikrates, a figure resurrected from ancient Greek myth.

Haggard’s ancient queen presides over a timeless underworld in which she observes elaborate mourning rituals that have reminded many critics of Victoria.²¹³ Adrienne Munich claims for example, that “*She* testifies to the excesses of figuration inspired by the anomalous figure of authority” (272), while Kirby Farrell observes that Haggard “grew up in a kingdom ruled by a funereal Queen Victoria, who was everybody’s mythic mother and yet as life-denying as a Greek Fate” (81). Likewise Nina Auerbach claims that “Ayesha will become a suprahuman absolute monarch, a galvanized and transfigured Victoria,” the embodiment of the Victorian myth of woman’s transforming powers (37). Finally, Gail Houston casts Ayesha as “a representation of an omnipotent queen who has outlived her usefulness” while as a “male

²¹³ See Farrell (81); Gail Houston (75), Nina Auerbach (37), Adrienne Munich (“Queen Victoria, Empire and Excess” 272), Deirdre David (197), and Thomas Richards (117).

bonding adventure,” Haggard’s *She* “is replete with explicit loyalty to Victoria” (75). What these critics all partially recognize is that Haggard combines in his mythical figure, the overdetermined symbol of a queen whose rule represents matriarchal power, but whose excess threatens to destroy the culture and civilization of a progressively democratic and modern England. It is not an exaggeration to claim that this is what the surrounding culture of Victorian social anthropology also feared, but as Eller observes, “*She* is vastly more one-dimensional and harsh in its attitude toward women than the matriarchal myth” (190).

Haggard’s ancient African queen is infused with the same funereal obsessions as Victoria. Ayesha’s ritual mourning is a compensation for a loss, or a lost past that she is incapable of sustaining and equally incapable of leaving behind. While comparing Ayesha with Victoria, Kirby Farrell observes, “in an implied psychic economy, Queen Victoria and her subjects invested devotion (hero worship) in the cult of the prince consort, which gave back a conviction of heroic purpose and immortality” (93-4). What is missing from Kirby’s otherwise accurate description of “the cult of the prince consort” is that the real power of immortality resides in the queen, for the political and theological theory of the king’s two bodies sustains the notion that the sovereign’s body politic is immortal. Likewise matriarchal theories, though fraught with ambivalence about female rule, nevertheless retain an allegiance and fascination with the all-powerful mother.

The importance of the debate over matriarchal theory and its historical relevance is best understood in the context of Queen Victoria’s reign, and Haggard’s novel gives a fictional account of how two of her male subjects, L. Horace Holly and his ward Leo Vincey become fascinated and finally resist the powers of *She-who-must-be-obeyed*. Like Swinburne’s Chastelard, Leo and Holly are irresistibly charmed by this fatal woman who like Mary Stuart

owns “an air of sublime coquetry that would have been worthy of the Venus Victrix” (157). Moreover, Holly’s fascination with Ayesha partakes of that transitive verbal form discussed earlier as he relates: “Drawn by some magnetic force which I could not resist, I let my eyes rest upon her shining orbs, and felt a current pass from them to me that bewildered me and half blinded me” (157). Finally, like Swinburne’s Mary, Ayesha too warns her fascinated subject that “beauty is like the lightning; it is lovely, but it destroys” (157). Significantly, though Queen Ayesha has survived for two millennia in her caves, it is only with the arrival of the English gentlemen that her immortality ceases as she is consumed by a blaze that ends her reign: “Smaller she grew, and smaller yet, till she was no larger than a monkey” (292). Haggard’s shadowy Ayesha must decrease as Victoria increases.

The symbolic war between Victoria and her rival queen is the subject of chapter twenty-two in which Queen Ayesha launches into a long tirade threatening to take Leo to England and usurp Victoria’s throne. “She can be overthrown,” exclaims Ayesha, and upon hearing from Leo and Holly that Victoria is loved by her subjects she laments “a queen whom her people love! Surely the world must have changed since I dwelt in Kôr” (253-4). In 1887, anti-monarchical sentiments and arguments demanding Victoria’s abdication are still lingering after Victoria’s decades-long seclusion. They are audible in Ayesha’s thinly-veiled threats. In his ambivalent fascination with Ayesha, Holly reflects his terror of the Great Mother for

evidently the terrible *She* had determined to go to England, and it made me shudder to think what would be the result of her arrival there. What her powers were I knew, and I could not doubt but that she would exercise them to the full. It might be possible to control her for a while, but her proud, ambitious spirit would be certain to break loose and to avenge itself for the long centuries of its solitude. (253)

In this war of two worlds in which an alien evil queen threatens to usurp Victoria's throne, the reader encounters not only England's fears of their colonial others, but also the fascination with the Great Mother articulated in matriarchal theories, and finally the terror embodied in her menacing promise to return. Ayesha's last words, as recorded by Leo, are addressed to her ancient lover with a chilling promise: "Forget me not, Kallikrates. Have pity on my shame; I die not. I shall come again, and shall once more be beautiful, I swear it is true!" (292). Ayesha is Victoria's shadow, a representation of excess and an excess of representation, but she is also like Mary Stuart whose motto "in my end is my beginning" promises her haunting return.

She reigns over an empire whose stretch includes a series of caves that allow the male heroes access to her underworld. This stress on the cavernous underworld through which men must travel in their heroic journey to reach the queen of their desires makes Haggard's novel useful for psychoanalytic readings, and yet it also has an historical context that is not immediately distinguishable from its sexual content. As Eller claims, in his novel "Haggard captured much of the ambivalence that notions of matriarchy conjured in the late nineteenth century" (190), and it is in this larger context that we must turn for answers. The fascination exercised by such quasi-immortal fictional queens found their counterparts in Victoria and her historical shadow Mary Stuart.

If Ayesha is the queen of Haggard's novel who most resembles Victoria, Holly and his guide old Billali are symbolically figured as queens as well. While on their way to an exclusive invitation to visit Ayesha, Holly and old Billali are forced to go on all fours and creep through narrow passages to reach the queen's apartments. At this point Holly asserts his national manhood declaring: "I am an Englishman, and why, I asked myself, should I creep into the presence of some savage woman as though I were a monkey in fact as well as in name?" (140).

Nevertheless, describing his advance into the caves, the “Englishman” likens himself to a queen while complaining: “I had to wave my leg for some seconds in the air at every step, or else to advance with a full stop between each stride, like Mary, Queen of Scots, going to execution in a play” (141). This sole reference to Mary Stuart in the novel stands out because it invokes her well-known suffering as a chronic victim of rheumatism. When displaced onto Holly however, the allusion is more than light humor, for it transfers onto Holly the aspect of a disabled and decrepit queen.

When Holly reaches Ayesha’s apartment and watches her from behind a curtain, the undiscovered voyeur, now like Swinburne’s Chastelard, gazes upon the queen in her body natural. As a woman and widow mourning over her ancient lover Kallikrates whom she has slain, and cursing the memory of the Egyptian woman Amenartas who took her place, Ayesha is the embodiment of the powerful matriarch that late nineteenth century males treated with the ambivalence discussed earlier. The fascinated Holly in turn claims that “it was her face that caught my eye, and held me as in a vice, not this time by the force of its beauty, but with the power of fascinated terror” (163). Recalling now Froude’s historical illustration and Pott’s portrait of Mary Stuart, Holly observes that “the awful vindictiveness displayed upon those quivering features, and in the tortured look of the upturned eyes, were such as surpass my powers of description” (163). Holly then recalls that “to my intense horror, I knew that I could never put away the vision of those glorious eyes” and fascinated by her uncanniness he relates that “the very *diableries* of the woman, whilst it horrified and repelled, attracted in an even greater degree” (160). Thus like Kristeva’s twisted braid of horror and fascination designated as feminine abjection, the horrified Holly becomes Ayesha’s willing victim, for “victims of the abject are its fascinated victims if not its submissive and willing ones” (Kristeva 9). The power

that patriarchal theories exercised over Victorian gentlemen were as Ernst Bloch describes them in the epigraph cited above, all about an “unreal” fascination with “the domination by the mother,” and whereas for Haggard, Ayesha’s powerful underworld is appalling and must be destroyed, for Yonge it is vitalizing.

ii. The Fascinating Mary as the Great Mother in Yonge’s “Unknown to History” (1882)

Though Yonge’s historical novel makes certain claims for its historical accuracy, it should be read as a mythography as elaborate and fictionalized in its own way as Swinburne’s dramas and Haggard’s queen in a strange African underworld. On February 27, 1882, Yonge wrote prefatory remarks for her novel asserting that

if circumstances regarding the Queen’s captivity and Babington’s plot have been found to be omitted, as well as many interesting personages in the suite of the captive Queen, it must be remembered that the art of the storyteller makes it needful to curtail some of the incidents which would render the narrative too complicated to be interesting to those who wish more for a view of noted characters in remarkable situations, than for a minute and accurate sifting of facts and evidence. (Yonge vii)

Though I am not claiming that Yonge intended a reading of her text that considers Mary as a figure of the Great Mother, her treatment of the ritual of mother and daughter reunion found in three central chapters, reiterates popular Victorian conceptions of the myth of Demeter and Persephone. According to historian Bonnie Smith, the myth of the dying and rising god which, for the Cambridge Ritualists echoes ancient rituals, could inspire a turn to history, or at least Greek rituals could be a source of inspiration for writing historical fiction (Smith 723).

Yonge, as critic Clemence Schultze observes, was versed in classical material, and in her fiction at times she uses “historical or mythological matter for entire novels” (Schultze “Yonge and the Classics” 167). My reading of Yonge’s novel focusses on her fascination with Mary Stuart as the symbolic embodiment of a Great Mother fashioned from the Greek myth of Demeter and her daughter Persephone. In the first section of the novel Yonge’s attention to the “secret history” of Mary’s Stuart’s lost daughter combines elements of Greek ritual and myth with the legends of the Scottish queen’s powers of fascination. In her children’s book *Aunt Charlotte’s Greek History* (1876), Yonge writes the story of Demeter and Persephone for an entire generation of British children. The myth begins with

Ceres (Demeter), the grave, motherly goddess of corn and all the fruits of the earth. She had one fair daughter, named Proserpine (Persephone), who was playing with her companions near Mount Etna, gathering flowers in the meadows, when grim old Pluto pounced upon her and carried her off into his underground world to be his bride. Poor Ceres did not know what had become of her darling, and wandered up and down the world seeking for her. (“Aunt Charlotte” 22-3)

“Aunt Charlotte’s” narrative of Demeter and Persephone serves as the core of her plot in *Unknown to History*, and Yonge merges these with her historical novel. Since Yonge, as Schultze observes “imbibed classical history and mythology from an early age” (160), it is not surprising to read also that her treatment of classical myth comprises “dispersed allusions to the classics and the learning of Greek and Latin within the contemporary novels” (167). Yonge’s novel fuses the symbols of Greek mythology with the figure of Mary Stuart in Book the First, chapters fifteen and sixteen.

Titled “Mother and Child,” chapter fifteen narrates the scene of Mary’s reunion with Cicely.²¹⁴ Mary invites Cicely to spend the night with her. Cicely, who has suffered a fall from a horse on the previous day, goes to her for comfort. As Cicely climbs into bed, Mary’s attendant pulls back Cicely’s nightclothes in order to dress her wounded arm. Mary’s eyes fall upon the two monograms on her daughter’s back. Instantly recognizing these marks, Mary begins to tell Cicely the narrative of her origins and birth at Lochleven. If the work of mourning involves a retelling of one’s narrative of loss, then repetition of the story is crucial to that process, and Mary begins her narrative in the third person:

There was a lonely castle in a lake, grim, cold, and northerly; and thither there was brought by angry men a captive woman. They had dealt with her strangely and subtilly; they had laid on her the guilt of the crimes themselves had wrought; and when she clung to the one man whom at least she thought honest, they had forced and driven her into wedding him, only that all the world might cry out upon her, forsake her, and deliver her up into those cruel hands. (Yonge 182)

Telling Cicely the story in fairy tale form, Mary can very gently introduce her to the painful narrative of loss and separation which underscores their mother and daughter relationship.

Moreover, by beginning the story in the third person referring to herself as “a captive woman”

²¹⁴ Cicely, or Cis, is a foundling rescued from a shipwreck at Spurn in the Humber estuary of East Riding Yorkshire. Richard Talbot, a sailor in command of Elizabeth I’s ship finds the mysterious wreckage during a storm and rescues the infant who miraculously survives. Taking her home to be raised by his wife Susan along with their sons, Cicely grows up not knowing that she has been adopted and that she is Mary’s royal infant. When she is found, her rescuers notice two strange monograms branded on her back and a scroll sewn to a band wrapped around the body. They fail at first to decipher the monograms and the peculiar writing on the scroll until almost one hundred pages into the first volume. Up to this point in the novel Susan Talbot is the only mother Cicely has known and now Mary Stuart will take her place. While Susan has always suspected the secret of her adopted daughter’s connection to Mary, Cicely must find out that identity by herself.

who “clung” to Bothwell, Mary provides the perfect means of recounting her past, and Mary’s narrative compensates for the loss both mother and daughter have sustained.

Yonge stresses the switch in Mary’s narrative from the third to the first person. As she continues her narrative “Mary, forgetting the third person,” inserts the personal pronoun: “And I—I shed some tears, but I could well believe that the innocent babe had been safely welcomed among the saints, and I could not grieve that she was, as I thought, spared from the doom that rests upon the race of Stewart” (183-184). It is at this moment in the story that Cicely begins to realize who she is even as the reader begins to recognize the symbol of Mary as the Great “Stuart” Mother. These conjoined powers of motherhood, royalty, and grief also reflect Tennyson’s contemporary poem “Demeter and Persephone” (1886; 1889) where mourning and maternal devotion combine in lines 32-33: “So mighty was the mother’s childless cry, / A cry that rang through Hades, Earth, and Heaven!” (Tennyson 562).

The mother and daughter bond is secured when Mary tells Cicely that Gorion, her attendant at Lochleven, “had set two marks on the soft flesh, which he said could never be blotted out in after years” (183). In the process of relating the story in her own words Mary attempts to take Susan Talbot’s place and effectively asks Cicely to split her psyche: “be Cicely Talbot by day as ever. Only at night be mine—my child, my Bride, for so wast thou named after our Scottish patroness” (Yonge 186). Mary not only requests Cicely to substitute her as her mother figure, but she also re-christens her with the name Bride, calling her “my child, my Bride, mine ain wee thing, my princess by night” (189). The imagery of the night here suggests Mary’s larger journey to her own end at Fotheringhay, but it also revitalizes the myth of Demeter’s reunion with Persephone.

This theme is fully elaborated in chapter sixteen when Cicely and Mary travel underground into “Peak Cavern.” Peak Cavern, is accessed through a large entrance as described in the novel:

The magnificent vaulted roof grew lower, and presently it became necessary to descend a staircase, which led to a deep hollow chamber, shaped like a bell, and echoing like one. A pool of intensely black water filled it, reflecting the lights on its surface that only enhanced the darkness, while there moved on a mysterious flat-bottomed boat...that the visitors must lie down flat in it to be ferried one by one over a space of about fourteen yards. (213)

Mary is delighted with her visit to the cave and even refers to the pool with a line from Dante’s *Inferno*: “Quando noi fermerem li nostri passi / Su la triste riviera a’ Acheronte” (213).²¹⁵ While the reference to Dante’s third canto clearly intimates Mary’s own passing, it also merges the Pagan with the Christian. The names of Charon the Ferrier and the river Acheron appear seven times within four pages, making the submerged reference to Hades/Pluto very clear, and signifying the connection to the Demeter and Persephone myth. By placing this mother and daughter reunion in an underground cave, the text anticipates the opposite of Haggard’s two Englishmen who venture into Kôr fascinated by Queen Ayesha.

How do these fictions of underground kingdoms and subterranean visits work with Victoria’s symbolism in the decade of the eighties? Mary’s visit represents a time before her decapitation which symbolically ends and erases the maternal in culture. The descent into the cavern allows the novel to record a moment “unknown to history” through which Yonge reflects

²¹⁵ “When we have stopped along the melancholy shore of Acheron.”

the culture's loss of Mary Stuart, but also her continuing presence in the genealogical line leading to Victoria. The novel's descriptive passage celebrates a pilgrimage to the burial site of this cultural memory. For Joseph Roach this substitution of maternal figures would fit with his description of surrogation as a process whereby loss is processed through memory. "Into the cavities created by loss through death or other forms of departure" Roach writes, "survivors attempt to fit satisfactory alternates" (2). This process of substitution also applies to the renaming of the bell-shaped cave mentioned in the passage. It was changed to "Victoria Dome" when Queen Victoria visited the caves in 1842.²¹⁶ In this way Mary Stuart's name is written over at the very spot where she enters into the memory constructed by literature. As Jayne Lewis observes of Yonge's cavern "the cave at the heart of *Unknown to History* also ties female dream life to those crannies of Britain's political unconscious that did manage to manifest themselves in history" (218). It is through Victoria that this history emerges from the cavern created by loss and Yonge's novel imagines the possibility of queens being reunited through her fictional rewriting of history.²¹⁷

By representing Mary Stuart as a figure of immense proportions and having a power of fascination such as only the mythical Great Mother Demeter could have, the text reconciles a royal mother with her princess daughter. The question of Cicely's unknown identity which only gradually surfaces, is also a way for Yonge to teach her young female readers vital lessons about their own undiscovered identities. In Cicely's identity as a princess, the text makes the question of origins a mystery to be solved as a riddle. One evening, after hours concentrating on the

²¹⁶ Peak Cavern is located in Castleton, Derbyshire England.

²¹⁷ In her article "Women in Waiting: The Logic of the Non-Historical" (2001), Lewis discusses Yonge's chapters claiming that "the cave braids history together with what, to quote Yonge's title, is 'unknown to' it yet can only be apprehended from within it, as loss" (191). Yet Lewis inexplicably erases the significance of mother daughter bonding by claiming that "the cave removes the very bond to Mary that it at first fosters" (192).

scroll's cryptic writing, Richard finally breaks the code, which humorously turns out to be only a bit of French writing. Richard tells his wife that

the scroll was a letter to the Abbess of Soissons, who was aunt to Queen Mary, as was well known, since an open correspondence was kept up through the French Ambassador. This letter said that 'our trusty Alison Hepburn' would tell how in secrecy and distress Queen Mary had given birth to the poor child in Lochleven, and how she had been conveyed across the lake while only a few hours old, after being hastily baptized by the name of Bride, one of the patron saints of Scotland. (Yonge 99)

This is the fabula of the novel and it is connected within a tradition of historical romance much like Ainsworth's plot in *Crichton*. Here however, the novel repeats the mother's quest for a ritual reunion with her daughter by referring to a mysterious document which supplies textual evidence of their bonds. Bonnie Smith argues that a "renewed fascination in the late nineteenth century with archives, inscriptions, and manuscripts, and other primary evidence inspired the first flush of maternalist and matriarchal investigation" (713). Yonge's inclusion of these elements into her narrative reflects this cultural preoccupation with rare documents. In the passage, Cicely is first "conveyed across the lake," and then she is "hastily baptized by the name of Bride," elements that reappear when Mary undertakes the subterranean journey to Peak Cavern. Cicely is figured as a princess whose identity is resolved and disclosed on spiritual, ritual, and mythical levels.

In the second portion of Richard's interpretation of the mysterious scroll he explains that Cicely Talbot / Bride Hepburn

had been nursed in a cottage for a few weeks till the Queen had made her first vain attempt to escape, after which Mary had decided on sending her with her nurse to

Dumbarton Castle, whence Lord Flemyng would dispatch her to France. The Abbess was implored to shelter her in complete ignorance of her birth, until such time as her mother should resume her liberty and her throne. (99)

Recalling that in *Crichton* Esclairmonde was stolen in her infancy and raised by Catherine de Medici “in ignorance of her rank,” in both novels there is the same fantasy of a future claim to the throne. Cicely could become a queen because she is Mary’s daughter, and the plot prepares the princess to pass through the same ritual process of accession and coronation Mary underwent in 1542. Yonge’s narrative differs from Ainsworth however, in that Mary’s daughter is not rescued through the chivalric intervention of a male hero. She is discovered and recognized by her mother, then travels along with her mother through captivity, only to live through Mary’s execution and mourn her death (243).

Yonge’s plot recalls an earlier creation of maternal fiction which also utilizes the pattern of mother daughter recognition. In Sophia Lee’s eighteenth century epistolary novel *The Recess* (1783-1785), Mary Stuart’s two fictional daughters Matilda and Ellinor have to live in an underground recess, a cave-like retreat below an estate. With no knowledge that they are the daughters of a queen, they live an isolated existence, and like the inhabitants of Plato’s mythical cave, their only access to the outside world is through shadows. The obvious parallel to eighteenth-century women’s lives brings together the core elements of myth and history to tell a story of identity and selfhood. Lee’s daughter heroines recognize the image of Mary Stuart when they encounter her mysterious figure in a portrait. Whereas the narratives of loss and reunion in

Lee's secret history are only symbolic, for there is no joining with the mother, Yonge's story brings mother and daughter together for the duration of novel.²¹⁸

The discovery of Cicely's true identity as a princess of royal blood is at the core of Yonge's novel as it is in *Crichton*. Yonge however, identifies a cluster of Victorian fantasies about mourning and motherhood reenacting the mythic subtext of Demeter and Persephone. The ritual through which Demeter's symbolism is substituted by that of Mary Stuart is also usefully interpreted through Roach's concept of surrogation. As a continual process of substitution in which narratives of loss or of "actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric," surrogation accounts for the way multiple threads of maternal history coexist (2). The novel likewise presents a kind of palimpsest as mythical, historical and real embodied figures are written over one other. If Mary is not exactly a Victoria, she is a shadow, a substitute, and a surrogate for a Victorian ideal of motherhood. In its celebration of this ideal motherhood when Victoria was anticipating her Golden Jubilee, Yonge's fiction transfers Mary's mythical dimensions to her royal descendant.

iii. Fotheringhay: "In my end is my beginning"

Returning now to Mary's fateful last moments at Fotheringhay in 1587; Yonge's novel anticipates the date of Victoria's Golden Jubilee three hundred years later. The novel's description of Mary's final moments also vividly recalls John Laslett Pott's painting with which this chapter begins. Though Pott constructs the scene of Mary being led to her execution, the painting does not stress violence or punishment but pity, compassion, and mourning. Likewise the novel creates a stage setting without the drama of the final moment. Instead of the axe

²¹⁸ Ainsworth's narrative of princess Esclairmonde also relies on themes of adventure and expectation, captivity, and rescue, but it differs substantially from Yonge's concern with death and mourning.

falling, Yonge records her reluctance to perform such a scene: “the last scene at Fotheringhay has been mostly recorded by history, and need not here be dwelt upon” (Yonge 572).

Withholding the theatrical effects of Mary’s demise is strategic for Yonge and in her refusal to recreate it; she suggests that there is still sacredness and mystery surrounding royalty.

Unlike Victoria whose mourning for the Prince Consort was accompanied by a silent abdication of her royal duties, the historical Mary Stuart married Bothwell. As noted earlier, when Darnley was murdered, she turned to Bothwell as her closest ally, and many of Yonge’s contemporaries relished this history of Mary’s “criminal past” as sensational and theatrical. Yet by downplaying all of this criminal past, the novel constructs Mary within a mother and daughter tale. The fantasy of a mourning mother Mary yearning after her daughter is what props the novel’s symbolism of queenship. To be a queen is to mourn perpetually.

Victoria’s mourning for Albert was excessive and had no precedent in British history. The Queen was obviously nothing like Mary Stuart, and yet she seems to have performed and lived her life in admiration of Mary to such an extent that she “dramatically performs, in her own person, her reluctance to perform” (Homans 64). This is what Yonge’s refusal to dramatize Mary’s execution also reflects. Margaret Homans’s witty assessment of Victoria’s reluctance to prorogue Parliament after Prince Albert’s death in 1861 captures exactly the royal dilemma Victoria faced in constructing her new identity as a mourning widow. It also assists a reading of how Victoria might have fancied herself in a position similar to Mary Stuart.

Though she refuses to deliver the scene of Mary’s execution, Yonge, like Pott, dramatizes the scene of her trial:

Then from the door in the center, leaning on Sir Andrew Melville's arm, came forward the Queen, in a black velvet dress, her long transparent veil hanging over it from her cap...She turned at first toward the throne, but she was motioned aside, and was made to perceive that her place was not there. She drew her slender figure up with offended dignity. (Yonge 456)

The vacant throne at Fotheringhay belongs to Elizabeth I who is absent from the trial, and yet the sentence implies that Mary Stuart knows that it is her rightful place. In light of my earlier discussions of how the Victorians made Mary Stuart their unofficial secret queen, the passage intimates that secrecy as a private compact with the reader. "Many Victorians" Jayne Lewis observes, "pictured fascination as a kind of compact between some secret compartment within the one who is fascinated...and her, at least equally secretive object" (181). The loyalty Mary commands as the Great Mother exceeds the established boundaries of official propriety as when "she was motioned aside," or she "was made to perceive." Mary's "offended dignity" is felt by those in attendance as well:

One defenseless woman against an array of the legal force of the whole kingdom. It may be feared that the feelings of most were as if they had at last secured some wild, noxious, and incomprehensible animal in their net, on whose struggles they looked with the unpitying eye of the hunter. (456)

The narrator's emotional investment in the scene describing the "unpitying eye" resembles Victoria's reactions when in a discussion with Lord Melbourne about Mary's execution which took place in 1839, he had called her a "bad woman." Victoria responded in her journal entry: "I pitied her" (Esher "Girlhood" II: 219). By keeping Mary's memory alive through her pity

Victoria allows the dead queen to continue living a surrogate life through her while effectively sharing her throne with her ancestress.²¹⁹ Yonge's passage also recalls Victoria's feelings recorded after her opening of Parliament in February 1867. "There were many, nasty faces—and I felt it painfully" writes Victoria, "at such times the Sovereign should not be there" (quoted in Hibbert 197). Recalling now Victoria's performance of Mary Stuart at the opening of Parliament in 1866, her description of the ordeal, display, and symbolic execution she claimed to have endured, Yonge's novel offers Mary as a textual shadow.

In Victoria's fantasy, her Stuart ancestor takes the form of a specter haunting her sartorial performances in public and national events. As she memorialized Mary in her visits to Scotland and on every state occasion, Victoria was never to be seen without her Mary Stuart cap. In turn, Victoria's subjects interpreted and registered her private fantasies as "public feelings" in art and literature. Queen Victoria the "Widow at Windsor," draws on the figural historiography of her ancestress while rehearsing the stage setting of a fantasy intermingling her own mourning for Albert with that of her Stuart ancestor.²²⁰ Yonge in her own way rehearses that same fantasy but adds to it the dimensions of a lost and mourned motherhood.

Victoria's imagined "public execution" is of course only an exaggeration of her personal distaste for public display, yet Mary's symbolism is palpable in her diary entry: "To enable the Queen to go through what she can only compare to an execution, it is of importance to keep the thought of it as much from her mind as possible" (Queen Victoria Hibbert 192-193).²²¹ The

²¹⁹ Jayne Lewis responds to Victoria's pity for Mary by suggesting that she "incorporated the memory of rival reputations but out of them generated an entirely different kind or response—pity whose structure makes the respondent (here, Victoria) part of the figure to which she responds. She thus grounds that figure in a specific historical moment, even as she is projected beyond it" ("Reputations" 48).

²²⁰ The sobriquet is Rudyard Kipling's from the *Barrack-Room Ballad* "The Widow at Windsor" (1890).

²²¹ In *Mary Queen of Scots: Romance and Nation*, Jayne Lewis likewise notes that "were we to interpret obsession with the Queen of Scots execution as a displacement of aggression against the consciously loved Queen Victoria, such details would even mark the present's slide into the past" (Lewis 207).

“execution” is only symbolic, but in her staging of this “labored illusion,” Victoria displays in a very public manner, the affective intensities of compassion and pity she consciously fantasizes about Mary.²²² Yonge on the other hand, only allows that scene to appear in a single paragraph and in the words of Cicely’s fiancé Humfrey Talbot:

But when the tragedy had been consummated, and he had seen the fair head fall, and himself withdrawn poor little Bijou from beneath his dead mistress’s garment, handing him to Jean Kennedy, he had—with blood still curdling with horror—gone down to the stables, taken his horse, and ridden away” (Yonge 575).

Recalling now Froude’s description of Mary’s execution which so troubled Oliphant who wrote that “[Froude] grins horribly a ghastly smile when the axe falls upon Mary’s neck, and feels himself still at liberty to jeer when the dead face which had won so many hearts is held up, awful in the first distortion of slaughter” (106), Yonge also resists the occasion to linger on the scene. Like her character Humfrey whom the narrator describes as having “taken his horse, and ridden away,” the chapter quickly turns back to the living.

Yonge’s fantasy of a spectral Mary and her lost daughter also recalls Victoria’s claim of being of Stuart descent.²²³ While it may indeed be true that Victoria shared a genealogy with Mary Stuart, what seems more important is that it takes on the form of a public fantasy. Yonge’s novel lends that fantasy narrative form, and in the 1893 edition illustrated by William

²²² Commenting on this same scene of Victoria proroguing Parliament, Margaret Homans articulates the metaphorical stage direction of the scene, claiming that “[Victoria] does not fail to perform; rather she dramatically performs, in her own person, her reluctance to perform” (Homans 64). Here too the shadow of Mary Stuart looms behind Victoria’s tragic and melodramatic response to being a public spectacle and “a Show.”

²²³ Sophie Gilmartin observes that, “unlike other women, Victoria also claimed kinship with the English-Scottish royal line that Mary Stuart had given birth to through her son James I” (Gilmartin 58).

Hennessey, Victoria's shadow is made visible [fig. 5].²²⁴ Mary is seated, dressed in her widow's cap with ruffle and crucifix. She is in the act of giving her consent to Cicely's request to marry her adopted brother Humfrey. Hennessey renders Mary Stuart as a plump matronly figure very unlike Herdman's youthful Mary discussed earlier. Though she only lived to be forty-two years old, the artist portrays Mary as a white-haired elderly woman who resembles Queen Victoria. As Victoria's shadow queen, Mary Stuart transfers some of her fascinating appearance to her descendant. In the novel's final chapter Cicely marries Humfrey and moves to The Hague where "the Princess bride of Scotland still remained in happy obscurity, 'Unknown to History'" (589).

²²⁴ Though the 1882 version of the novel did not include illustrations, Yonge hired the American-born Irish William John Hennessey (1839-1917) to provide them. In particular, he depicts a moment shortly before the textual account of Mary's execution.



"O mother, how can you ask?"

PAGE 554.

Figure 2.5. William John Hennessey, illustration to C. M. Yonge's *Unknown to History*, 1882.

Chapter Three: The Exceptional Elizabeth I: Victoria's Shadow Queen

In Elizabeth's reign ...the unjust degradation—the cruel execution,—the vainly touching appeals,—of her mother, Anne Boleyn, (that mother who is by historians stated to have bowed her heart to her licentious husband in her last, miserable letter, that he might show kindness to her child), taught Elizabeth no tenderness, and inspired her with no pardon for those of her own sex who offended her.

—Lady Caroline Norton, *Letter to the Queen* (1855), 135-36.

As Elizabeth passes from the scene, as her brilliant reign closes, and the curtain falls upon that busy, troublous, splendid, empty life of hers, wherein this combination of a man's brain and a woman's heart brought upon her the faults, weaknesses, and sufferings of both, and the happiness of neither—our strongest sensation towards her is absolute pity.

—Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, "Elizabeth and Victoria" (1864) 122-3.

Let us rather open our eyes, and see in those old Elizabethan gallants our own ancestors, showing forth with the luxuriant wildness of youth all the virtues which still go to the making of a true Englishman.

—Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho!* (1854), 171.

I. "I have no sympathy with my great predecessor": Dissing Queen Bess²²⁵

In the midst of her 1887 Golden Jubilee celebration, Queen Victoria paused to write a note to Archibald, Fifth Earl of Rosebery thanking him for an unexpected "valuable present" she had received; a coffered locket containing a miniature watercolor of Queen Elizabeth by Nicholas Hilliard [fig. 3.1].²²⁶ Victoria explains: "It is the beautiful little miniature in its quaint setting which you once sent for me to see, and which I shall greatly value, though I fear I have no sympathy for my great predecessor, descended as I am from her rival Queen, whom she so cruelly sacrificed" (Esher III: 341).

²²⁵ Throughout this chapter I follow the Victorian practice of referring to Queen Elizabeth I as Elizabeth.

²²⁶ The miniature is in The Royal Collection at Windsor.



Figure 3.1. Miniature of Queen Elizabeth by Nicholas Hilliard, late sixteenth-century.

Queen Victoria's great sympathy for her ancestress Mary Stuart is evident in her reference to Elizabeth as merely a predecessor and Mary's "rival" queen. Implicitly recognizing Victoria's condescending tone, Rosebery responded two days later in a letter guardedly assuring the Queen that her sentiments are justifiable. "I can well understand" he writes, "that your Majesty should feel no very cordial affection for Queen Elizabeth, who, with all her force of character, seems to have been wanting in that very quality of sympathy which has been the subtle and pervading distinction of your Majesty's reign" (342). The Hilliard watercolor which Rosebery gave in the

hope of solidifying a bond with Victoria, turns out to be the very object she despises. She admonishes his presumption, and Rosebery, in turn, casts the memory of Elizabeth into the shade even as he elevates Victoria. The operative word in the letter is “sympathy,” the emotion that in this case fails to bind Victoria and her subject Rosebery to the memory of Elizabeth as the “great predecessor.” Though Victoria may not have been aware of the massive production of literature and art on Queen Elizabeth which appeared during her reign, the personal distaste for her predecessor is evident in writings from her youth. In critic Lynne Vallone’s *Becoming Queen Victoria* (2001), she cites an early entry from Victoria’s copybook: “Elizabeth was a great Queen but a bad woman; and even in her royal capacity she erred sometimes; she had a very great idea of her prerogative and was more arbitrary even than her tyrannical father” (120).

Echoing Victoria’s exchange with Rosebery, the epigraphs that open this chapter reflect the opinions of three mid-century Victorian writers who voice their opinions about Queen Elizabeth. Lady Caroline Norton and Dinah Mulock Craik treat Elizabeth in a negative and dismissive manner while in Charles Kingsley’s novel *Westward Ho!* (1854), she is circumvented and demoted in preference to the male gallants who served her. In all of these passages Elizabeth’s imagery wanes, and this chapter argues that in her own century Victoria overshadows Gloriana by becoming a queen who combined her maternal, wifely and imperial statuses to rival her “great predecessor.” The epithet Gloriana, which is Edmund Spenser’s poetic creation in *The Faerie Queen* (1590), is a vision of Elizabeth as the embodiment of imperial power and feminine virtue.²²⁷ Though in celebrating Victoria’s reign many of her subjects perceived a return to the Golden Age of Queen Bess, many found in Elizabeth only a distant shadow from the past. This cultural contradiction representing Elizabeth as both a celebration of the glorious English past

²²⁷ See Hamilton’s *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (1997 333) and Montrose’s *The Subject of Elizabeth* (2006 219).

and an evanescent shadowy figure offers a way to understand how Gloriana's symbolism proved useful to Victorians in thinking about their own queen as a Gloriana Victoriana.²²⁸

When writers such as Carlyle, Froude, and Kingsley celebrate Elizabeth, they do so by transforming her into a queen who stands in symbolic relations to the culture of the Elizabethan Age. Carlyle, who coins the term "Elizabethan" in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841), mentions Elizabeth only once, indicating that "Acts of Parliament, King Henrys, Queen Elizabeths go their way" (94).²²⁹ Nevertheless, he claims that Shakespeare "is an English King whom no time or chance, Parliament or combination of Parliaments, can dethrone!" (102). Carlyle symbolically transfers Elizabeth's throne and title to Shakespeare who now stands in symbolic relations to the culture of his time. Elizabethan writers and gallants subsequently become models for a new kind of English exceptionalism that is peculiarly Victorian. As they turn their attention to "those old Elizabethan gallants," Gloriana gets lost in the celebration of her century (Kingsley 258). For these Victorian men of the mid-fifties, the Elizabethan Age was mobilized to claim the historical superiority of the English and to show how Providence continued to shine on Protestant England. Exceptionalism is the perception that a nation or a time period is exceptional in some way and does not need to conform to normal rules or general principles, and for Froude and Kingsley, Elizabethan England exemplifies this notion. Yet even as the men of Froude and Kingsley's imaginary Elizabethan England triumph over Spain,

²²⁸ The epithet is from Nicola J. Watson's essay "Gloriana Victoriana: Victoria and the Cultural Memory of Elizabeth I" and alludes to discomfort and unease with Victoria's cultural representations (Homans and Munich 79-104).

²²⁹ The *OED* lists the names of two authors, Isaac D'Israeli (1807) and S. T. Coleridge (1817) who had used the term before Carlyle, but they do not use it in the same sense that Carlyle gives it as a period designator. He was the first Victorian to associate the term with a period of heroic achievements such as Shakespeare John Lucas gives the date 1815 in his essay "Love of England: Victorians and Patriotism," but he does not cite a source (65).

defeating the Armada and routing Elizabeth's enemies, Gloriana's imagery recedes into the past in favor of the queen who rules the Victorian present.

Victorians split Elizabeth's symbolism alternatively into the beloved Virgin Queen and the unloved cruel despot. In chapter two I argued that Mary Stuart's symbolism of mother, martyr, gothic princess, and femme fatale combined heterogeneous facets of her character to evoke fascination. Mary was the fascinating queen whose memory had, according to novelist Margaret Oliphant, retained "the allegiance of an almost unanimous nation" (106). In this chapter I show how Victorian writers in turn, were ambivalent about Elizabeth's status as the Virgin Queen. In light of her alleged sexual maturity, a topic about which the Victorians are fluent, their ambivalence resides in their inability to countenance her paradoxical symbolism as a virgin.

i. Portraits of Elizabeth

In presenting Elizabeth and Mary as rival queens, Oliphant's language draws from the art of painting: "In front of this great glowing gorgeous canvas, the whole foreground is taken up with the figures of two women—representatives, as it were, of the two halves of the world, who tore that world asunder in their day" ("Mr. Froude and Queen Mary" 105). Here Oliphant's "great glowing gorgeous canvas" is diametric to the intimate and tiny character of Elizabeth in the Hilliard portrait Rosebery presented to Victoria. Artistic representations of Elizabeth that emerged in the public sphere emphasize the difference between these two contrasting figures. David Wilkie Wynfield's historical portrait of *An Incident in the Life of Queen Elizabeth*, exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1875, is an illusionistic rendering of the queen in her bedroom at Nonsuch Palace [fig. 3.2]. Depicted on a massive canvas standing eight feet tall and

eight feet wide, it exposes an intimate and private moment of an elderly Queen Elizabeth with the Earl of Essex. Wynfield's queen, unlike Hilliard's watercolor of a youthful woman without shadows, is depicted in a state of undress and disarray.²³⁰

This queen is not the Elizabeth of the speech at Tilbury (1588) nor of the *Armada* portrait. She has neither power nor youthful exuberance. Sitting on her bed under a bower of light projected into the room through the window pane, the superannuated queen stares into the rebellious Essex's eyes. Elizabeth's head is slightly tilted to the side suggesting not rage, but an inquisitive and curious attitude. On a table in front of Elizabeth is a mirror reflecting the "incident" as it unfolds. The spectator only perceives the rear view of the mirror upon which a shadow from the window is cast. Elizabeth ignores her image in the mirror's reflection but gazes into Essex's eyes.

²³⁰ In 1599, Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex was sent to Ireland to subdue a rebellion led by the Irish leader Hugh O'Neill, 2nd Earl of Tyrone. Essex failed in his task precipitating his downfall. His rebellion against Elizabeth led to his execution in 1601.



Fig. 3.2. David Wilkie Wynfield's *An Incident in the Life of Queen Elizabeth* (1875).

The exhibition catalogue describes the scene in Wynfield's portrait:

Hurrying back from Ireland, Essex rode at once to the palace of Nonsuch, where the queen was. Arriving early in the morning, he made his way, in spite of all protestations, into the royal bedchamber. Throwing himself down before Elizabeth, he covered her hand with kisses, and besought her not to listen to the accusations of his enemies. The old queen, who was newly risen, without her wig, and in the hands of her tirewoman, received him very graciously, but later in the same day she ordered him into arrest, on the charge of high treason. (“Exhibition of the Royal Academy” 33)

Wynfield’s painting reverses the symbolism of the celebrated sixteenth-century *Rainbow Portrait* in which Elizabeth appears as the peerless queen without shadows, dressed in a gown richly embroidered with ears and eyes, and holding a rainbow in her hand. No rainbow without the sun is the motto inscribed on that sixteenth-century portrait suggesting that like the sun, Elizabeth’s body casts shadows. In the Victorian Age it is Victoria who becomes the source of light, while Elizabeth is her shadow queen. In Wynfield’s painting, the spectator finds that the source of light is not Elizabeth’s body but that it issues from the sun filtering in through the window, and this perspective sheds new light on the past by framing history from the vantage point of Victorian modernity.

The incident painted here is also narrated in volume six of Agnes Strickland’s *Lives of the Queens of England* (1843). Strickland asserts that Essex, having returned unexpectedly from Ireland, and learning that Elizabeth had retired to Nonsuch Palace, travelled the distance from London. Essex then “burst unannounced into her bedchamber, flung himself on his knees before her, and covered her hands with kisses” (Strickland 177).²³¹ Essex’s behavior suggests to

²³¹ Multiple editions of Strickland’s *Lives of the Queens of England* were published during Queen Victoria’s reign. The pagination here is from volume seven of the 1848 edition.

Strickland, the rage of an unrequited lover and she emphasizes the Queen's scandalous behavior in giving Essex "a kinder reception than he had anticipated" (177). Strickland concludes that Elizabeth was not angry, even though Essex had caught her "at her private morning toilet, undighted and uncoifed, in the most mortifying state of disarray, with her thin grey locks disheveled and hanging about her haggard countenance" (178). Belying her fierceness, Elizabeth is a pathetic figure who has been caught off guard without cosmetic aids to preserve and sustain her vanity.

Strickland's Elizabeth is reminiscent of Charles Dickens's Cleopatra Skewton from *Dombey and Son* (1848) who is also one of the Tudor Queen's fictional offspring. Dickens describes the mercenary invalid in a similar state of decrepitude. Upon being prepared for bed, Mrs. Skewton's maid, who "should have been a skeleton with dart and hour-glass" (431), removes the "false curls and false eyebrows" along with her "false teeth, set off by her false complexion" (317) after which:

The painted object shrivelled underneath her hand; the form collapsed, the hair dropped off, the arched dark eye-brows changed to scanty tufts of grey; the pale lips shrunk, the skin became cadaverous and loose; an old worn, yellow nodding woman with red eyes, alone remained in Cleopatra's place, huddled up like a slovenly bundle, in a greasy flannel gown. (431)

If there is any doubt that Dickens fashioned this portrait of the mercenary Cleopatra after Queen Elizabeth, the novel goes on to provide Mrs. Skewton with the maiden name "Feenix," linking her to one of the Tudor Queen's most recognizable iconographic symbols, the self-begetting Phoenix. In chapter twenty-seven of the novel, Mrs. Skewton is wheeled out in her bath chair to

visit Kenilworth, the site where Elizabeth was sumptuously entertained by Leicester in 1575, and to Warwick Castle where she dotes on a portrait of “that inestimable Queen Bess” (425).²³² While reminiscing about the Tudors and “those darling bygone times” with their “delicious fortresses, and their dear old dungeons, and their delightful places of torture” (424), Skewton refers to the Elizabethan Age as “so extremely golden” (425). Like Dickens’s readers who are treated to a Victorian version of the ailing and aging Tudor Queen, Strickland’s Essex is confronted with a woman “painfully conscious of the ravages of time” (Strickland 178). Essex refers to the queen as an “old woman crooked both in body and mind,” and according to Strickland he returns only to greet “a royal coquette of sixty-eight” (197 178).

Elizabeth is also represented by symbols long associated with the Virgin Mary. The Rose, the Moon, the Phoenix, the Ermine, and the Pearl among others, were part of her royal iconography. These Christian and ancient mythical references to Elizabeth’s iconic status represent sexual chastity and purity. They are instruments for wielding political power, but these attributes also surface regularly in Victorian literature that treats Elizabeth as a sexual anomaly.²³³ Elizabeth’s reputation evoked the negative and even repulsive sense of the exceptional as a deviation from gender norms. In this sense Elizabeth was considered abnormal, a superannuated virgin Queen who refused marriage, lacked tenderness, and ultimately left behind no offspring. Like her father Henry VIII, she cruelly sacrificed those she pretended to

²³² According to his cousin Mrs. Disney Leith, Swinburne liked to perform Dickens, and at home on one occasion “he made us into a kind of tableau out of *Dombey and Son*—himself taking the part of Mrs. Skewton in her bath chair (Leith 8).

²³³ Victorian biographies and children’s literature likewise stressed the point that Victoria too was a kind of reincarnated Elizabeth. In his *Extraordinary Women: Their Girlhood and Early Life* (1857), biographer William Russell, backed by the authority of Macaulay describes “Queen Victoria as ‘a milder, better Elizabeth;’ a compliment which, at all events, will not render the celebrated historian obnoxious to the charge of flattery or servilism” (Russell 91).

love.²³⁴ Elizabeth fell below the standards of female sovereignty reflected in Victoria's reign because she represented a kind of queen that defied their stereotypical ideals of what an exceptional woman should be: submissive, tender, motherly, and a good wife.

Mary's physical attractions in texts by Swinburne and Yonge, drew Antony Babington into dangerous conspiracy and Chastelard to self-destruction, but the Victorian Elizabeth uses her sexual chastity as a repellent. Remote, inaccessible, and wielding her scepter while poised on an island nation insulated from her enemies, Queen Elizabeth's sexuality is out of bounds and forbidden, always protected by her virgin status. Dickens observes in *A Child's History of England* (1851-1854) that Elizabeth "always declared in good set speeches, that she would never be married at all, but would live and die a Maiden Queen" adding in frustration that "it was a very pleasant and meritorious declaration I suppose; but it has been puffed and trumpeted so much, that I am rather tired of it myself" (263). Dickens expresses boredom with Gloriana whose chastity is a form of puffery.

In her sixteenth-century iconography, Elizabeth's self-sufficiency and self-renewing capacities are symbolized in the "rarissima Phoenix," or the "self-begott'n bird" which according to Kantorowicz's study *The King's Two Bodies*, symbolizes her virginity (389).²³⁵ Yet in Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, when the Phoenix symbol appears in Mrs. Skewton's maiden name "Feenix," the name distorts, indeed, reverses the royal iconography while producing a humorous effect. When mocking Mrs. Skewton whose false features and prosthetics are referred to as the

²³⁴ Art historian Roy Strong asserts that "although the Victorian age rejected Elizabeth I because she epitomized its female vices—spinsterhood, vanity, and behavior ill befitting a lady" he confesses "I cannot but believe that the celebration and cult of the Virgin Queen had a powerful influence on the cult of Victoria" (*Recreating the Past* 153).

²³⁵ In his study of the aesthetics of absolute power *Portrait of the King* (1988), Louis Marin, drawing on Kantorowicz asserts that as a "symbol of royal virginity" the "phoenix represents the exceptional case in which the individual is by itself the whole species, since the species produces only a single individual at one time" (100).

“ashes” which her maid would collect nightly from her mistress, “ready for tomorrow’s revivification,” Elizabeth’s symbolic and iconographic power as the self-begetting bird is purely artificial and cosmetic (422). Though Dickens’s Skewton is certainly no virgin, and “certainly not resembling Shakespeare’s Cleopatra, whom age could not wither” (324) the “forlornly faded” character invites comparison with Strickland’s pretentious and superannuated virgin Elizabeth.

Whereas Strickland directly addresses Gloriana’s reputation, in his fiction Dickens references her only indirectly. Nevertheless both writers share the common perception that Queen Victoria’s predecessor is cruel, mercenary, undignified, and improper. In Wynfield’s painting as well, though Elizabeth’s smile may seem benevolent, there is also a strong suggestion that she is enjoying herself, making the indecent “incident” a scene of royal impropriety. In Strickland’s history, as Essex creeps out of Elizabeth’s “royal penetralia,” he is said to be thankful that “he had found a sweet calm at home,” leaving the reader to piece together the implicit psychosexual reference (177). Although Strickland’s queen seems to condone rather than condemn Essex’s intrusion, his subsequent death on the scaffold suggests Elizabeth privately relishes the fact that he is a man completely at her mercy. Strickland asserts: “That incident certainly sealed the fate of the luckless Essex,” which implies that to be in Elizabeth’s presence is to encounter certain death (178).

As Essex enters unannounced into Elizabeth’s bedchamber, he is caught in an act reminiscent of Chastelard’s invasion of Mary Stuart’s privacy I discussed in chapter two. Whereas Swinburne’s Mary is an adulteress and a femme fatale, these portraits of Elizabeth show that she hides behind a mask of vanity and hypocrisy. According to Oliphant, “Essex, [Elizabeth’s] bright young favorite, had given his head as the penalty of his rash trick of

rebellion” and thus like Mary’s Chastelard, he too perished (“Elizabeth and Mary” 414). Oliphant adds that “in the callousness of her age Elizabeth had mourned him little” (414). Elizabeth’s cruelty toward her rival, or any man who comes too close to her, always produces a deadly effect. Unlike the fascinating Mary Stuart whose Chastelard willingly submits to his destruction, Elizabeth, motivated by jealousy, vanity, and self-protection, makes her victims concede to her façade of virginity. Recalling that the Queen of Scots was celebrated and pitied by Victoria’s female subjects for her maternal nature, for having endured her captivity under Elizabeth for nineteen years, and for her martyrdom, Elizabeth is by contrast, barren, a cruel hostess, and guilty of sacrificing her rivals.²³⁶ Elizabeth “has now no enthusiast to make a stand for her” writes Oliphant, “no one, now or ever, to take up her cause” and “it is hard, when one comes to think of it, that Mary, having had all the good things of a woman’s existence, should have all the pity too” (414). Oliphant refuses to pity or sympathize with Elizabeth, adding that her “life, notwithstanding its magnificence, is one of the saddest of lives” (414).

A vindictive Queen Elizabeth makes an appearance in Swinburne’s “Mary Stuart” (1882), the concluding play of his trilogy. After Mary Beaton secretly sends a letter to Elizabeth through her secretary William Davison in which Mary insults her rival’s non-consummated “sexless lust” and closed womb, Gloriana finally concedes to sign the warrant for her execution. With exceptional cruelty Elizabeth refers to Mary as “the she-wolf that I saved, the woman-beast, / Wolf-woman— how the Latin rings we know” and “*Lupanar*—but no brothel ever bred”

²³⁶ In her article “Gender, Religion, and Early Modern nationalism: Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots and the Genesis of Anti-Catholicism,” historian Anne McLaren suggests that the rivalry between the two queens over Mary’s maternity had a long history in the construction of British Anti-Catholicism: “Mary’s motherhood suggested that time itself—like maternity, a powerful symbol of natural process—would heal the rupture in the natural order represented by the two queens, at least with regard to gender hierarchy and blood inheritance” (751)

(4. 3 456).²³⁷ Indecisive, cruel, and vindictive, Swinburne's representation of Elizabeth also mirrors the iconoclastic sentiments of his contemporary Strickland, who claims that Elizabeth's cruelty extends to animals as well. Strickland repudiates the queen's sadistic delight in hunting deer at Kenilworth in 1575, claiming that on one occasion the queen drove a deer so hard that "in the chase the hart took to the pool, where he was caught alive, and her majesty granted him his life on condition that he 'lost his ears' for a ransom" (V: 455). Strickland adds that "this useless cruelty aptly preceded the bear-baiting of the next day, when the virgin queen had the satisfaction of seeing a great sort of ban-dogs which had been tied in the outer court, let loose on thirteen bears that were baited in the inner" (455). Like Prince Albert and Victoria who had alarmed the press in 1845 when they were shown massacring a battue of deer in Coburg, Strickland's Elizabeth displays exceptional cruelty.

In a *Punch* illustration which captured widespread sentiments about the incident at Coburg in 1845, the illustrator mirrors past and present [fig. 3.3]. In chapter one I showed how Catherine de Medici and her crazed son Charles IX were compared to Albert and Victoria on holiday in Coburg, but *Punch* illustrated the same event by referencing good Queen Bess. The "Historical Parallels" were drawn from English and not French history signifying that Victorians were not always looking across the Channel for evidence of violence, but found it at home as well. *Punch* elicits horror in its bold inference that Victoria and Albert might also have a penchant for cruelty.

²³⁷ "Lupinar" in Latin means "brothel," and Swinburne is deliberately punning with the word's similarity to "lupa," which means both "she-wolf" and the Latin slang for "prostitute."

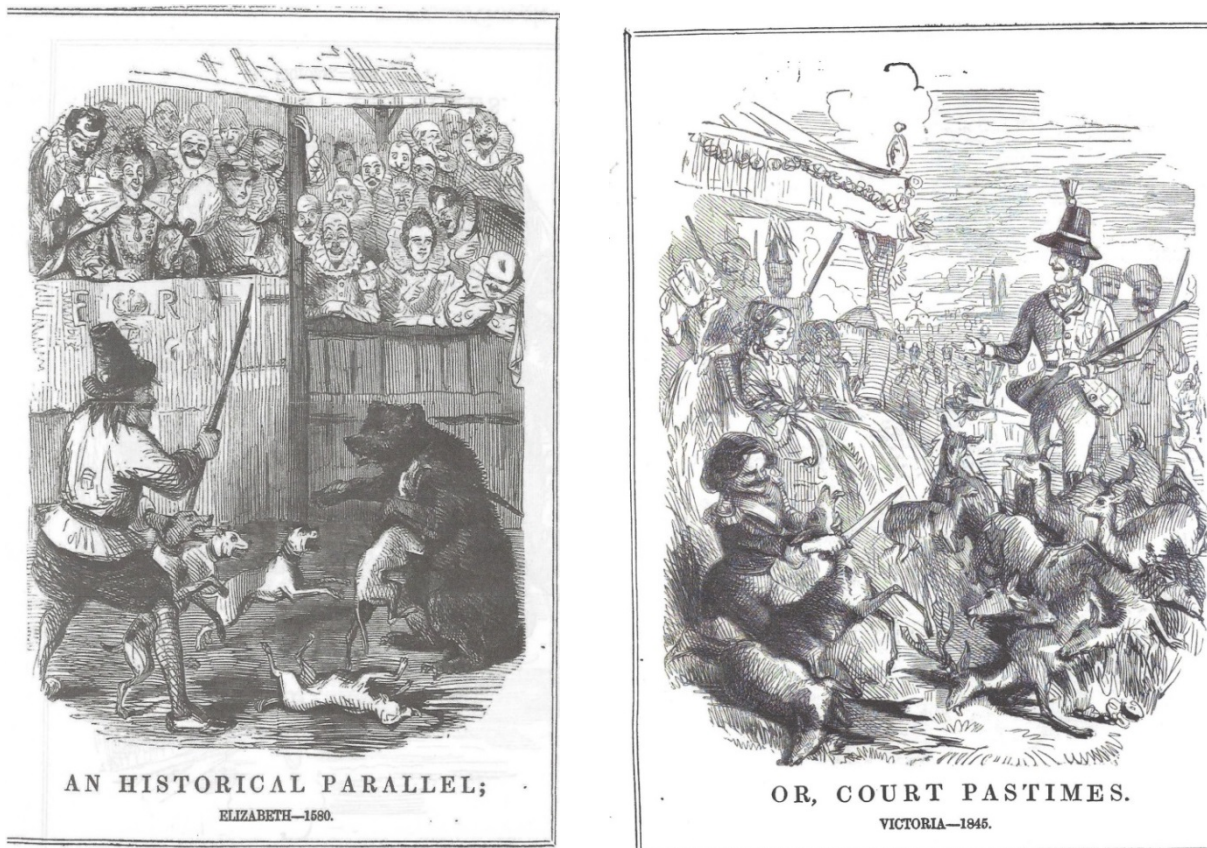


Figure 3.3. Illustrations possibly by John Leech. *Punch*. IX (1845): 130-131.

ii. Elizabeth in Her-Story

Lady Caroline Norton, in the first epigraph cited above, dismisses Queen Elizabeth for having a callous attitude toward her mother Anne Boleyn. Showing no clemency for her female subjects, Norton exemplifies how Elizabeth does not conform to Victorian gender norms.²³⁸ In her celebrated letter urging Queen Victoria to support the cause of married women who were

²³⁸ The full title of Lady Caroline Norton's pamphlet is *Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill*. Though in her book *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (1988) Mary Poovey provides a close reading of Norton's pamphlet while claiming that it "did more for the development of feminist consciousness...than did the more polemical works of Mary Wollstonecraft or even John Stuart Mill," she overlooks the relationship Norton constructs between Victoria and her predecessor Queens and how it contributes to a feminist critique of the ideology of "exceptional women" (Poovey 21).

struggling against the British legal institution, Norton offers Victoria a lecture on the history of British royalty. She stresses important differences between Victoria and her predecessor: “Not lone and vainglorious, like the virgin Queen Elizabeth [but] more of ‘the beauty of womanhood’ adorns the destiny of Queen Victoria” (133). Here the term “womanhood” is a compliment withheld from the “vainglorious” Gloriana whose virginal status makes her an exception. Highlighting Elizabeth’s lack of tenderness and what she judges to be her unforgiving attitude toward her mother, Norton pleads with Queen Victoria not to follow the example of her Tudor forbear, but through her influence, to do what she can to support the cause of her female subjects.²³⁹

Ironically, Norton’s history lesson appears in a pamphlet pointing out “the grotesque anomaly which ordains that married women shall be ‘non-existent’ in a country governed by a female Sovereign” (4).²⁴⁰ During Elizabeth’s reign nothing positive was done to improve married women’s positions before the law, a fact that Norton deems unacceptable. Victoria’s queenship overshadows that of Elizabeth and yet, under Victoria all married women are still declared “non-existent” in the eyes of the law. In her pamphlet Norton conveys strong feelings about the mother and daughter relationship between Elizabeth and Anne Boleyn, and in sketching her shadowy portrait of Elizabeth, Norton’s historiography merges into autobiography. The sad tale of Princess Elizabeth and her mother describes the way Norton feels about her own insecure relationship with Victoria. She extends that insecurity to all of Victoria’s female

²³⁹ See below for a discussion of “influence.”

²⁴⁰ Queen Victoria, unlike Norton, considers her own royal position as anomalous when she writes to her uncle Leopold in 1852: “I am every day more convinced that *we women, if we are to be good women, feminine and amiable and domestic, are not fitted to reign*; at least it is *contre gré* that they drive themselves to the *work* which it entails” (italics in original Esher II: 367).

subjects while emphasizing the anomalous situation of a queen regnant who has no power to change the law; a problem she identifies as originating in the reign of Elizabeth.

Multiplying references to Elizabeth as the ungrateful progeny who consigned her own mother to perpetual oblivion, Norton constructs a scenario in which Elizabeth is “the haughty scion of degraded Anne Boleyn” (133). This historical parallel between Anne Boleyn and her haughty daughter should be read as Norton’s reference to Queen Victoria’s relationship to her female subjects. Norton makes Anne Boleyn inhabit the subject position of those “non-existent” married woman and the suffering mothers her pamphlet defends. Repeatedly turning to Anne’s sufferings and beheading, Elizabeth is considered a royal daughter whose relationship with her mother has failed.²⁴¹ Here Victoria’s “womanhood,” closely associated with motherhood, proves to be her distinct advantage over her predecessor, and her influence is deemed crucial to changing the laws. Yet Norton suggests that Victoria, unlike Elizabeth, cringes at the contradictions her position entails.

Norton’s history lesson is written as a guide for Victoria’s royal conscience, but when read by the queen’s female subjects, it becomes deeply personal. Because this open letter is addressed to Queen Victoria, Norton leads her readers to imagine they inhabit the uneasy position of their queen, and as she unfolds her argument, they read about their own subjectivities through the history of Elizabeth and Anne. Though claiming not to believe in “quaint old histories, or fairy fables, fit only for the amusement of children” (4), Norton’s letter ironically participates in the generic structure of the fairy tale, and her Elizabeth appears repeatedly as an

²⁴¹ Victoria would later claim in a letter to Prime Minister Gladstone in 1870: “The Queen is a woman herself—& knows what an anomaly her own position is” (quoted in Helsing et al. 68). Victoria’s belated recognition that her contradictory status as a female monarch may reflect positively on women’s claims for equality with men is not meant to encourage such behavior.

Evil Queen reminiscent of Dickens's mercenary Mrs. Skewton.²⁴² Throughout the letter Norton celebrates Victoria for possessing the tenderness Elizabeth lacks and she mobilizes the Tudor Queen's effigy to expose cracks in Victorian gender ideology.

The crux of Norton's argument however, points out the anomalous situation of a fecund and maternal queen Victoria who had born eight children by 1855, and yet whose status as a royal mother and married woman was having no positive effect on the laws which required her female subjects to suffer their oppression in silence.²⁴³ In relating her story, Norton brings Elizabeth into the Victorian sphere of memory as a figure of past wrongs while attempting to inspire Victoria to influence changes in the law. Published at a moment marking the height of Queen Victoria's blissful marriage to Prince Albert, Norton painfully reflects: "My miseries date from the time of your Majesty's accession. The years that you have spent as a happy wife and mother, I have spent in continual struggle for justice" (132). Tracing her "miseries" back to the period when her estranged husband George Norton sued Lord Melbourne for criminal conversation, Norton places Queen Victoria in the same position as Elizabeth who ignored the plight of her female subjects.

Norton's appeal to Victoria to exercise her influence recognizes the Queen's capacity for persuasion rather than power. In presenting the case that English women have been wronged due to laws that have been in place since the reign of Henry VIII, Norton is not asking Victoria to consider women as being different from men before the law. She asserts that "women are not appealing for an exceptional law in their favour; on the contrary, they are appealing not to be

²⁴² Like the mercenary Mrs. Skewton who submits her daughter Edith to the ruthless marriage market, Elizabeth notoriously interfered in the marriages of her court favorites Leicester and even Sir Walter Raleigh.

²⁴³ Mary Poovey argues that "Norton was able to identify these injustices because she had personally endured them, but being able to voice them in such explicitly political terms required transforming herself from the private sufferer of private wrongs into an articulate spokesperson in the public sphere" (Poovey 64).

made an exception from the general protection of the laws” (106).²⁴⁴ In using the terms “exceptional” and “exception” here, Norton draws on the discourse used to qualify the status of female monarchs initiated during Elizabeth’s reign and substantiated by her symbolic position as “Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen.”²⁴⁵ Norton’s democratic impulse however, refuses the discourse of women’s supposed exceptional status in favor of equality before the law. Under Victoria’s reign however, the anomaly of her exceptional status as a biological mother and wife raised issues that were obviously different from those of Elizabeth. In a memorandum dated May 1856, and as if responding belatedly to Norton’s letter, Queen Victoria points out the “strange anomaly” of her own position before the Constitution:

It is a strange omission in our Constitution that while the wife of a King has the highest rank and dignity in the realm after her husband assigned to her by law, the husband of a Queen regnant is entirely ignored by the law. This is the more extraordinary, as a husband has in this country such particular rights and such great power over his wife, and as the Queen is married just as every other woman is, and swears to obey her lord and master, as such, while by law he has no rank or defined position. This is a strange anomaly. (Esher II:244)

Here Victoria considers her position as a wife to be the same as that of every other female British subject while simultaneously objecting to the Constitution’s “strange omission” of the Prince Consort from its laws. Though in the memorandum she does not mention her Tudor predecessor

²⁴⁴ The three main ways in which Norton asserts that the law is unfair include the fact that men only need one reason (adultery) to divorce their wife, while women need several. Divorce is only for the wealthy who have the time and finances to pursue it, and finally in setting up a parallel between the divorce laws of Scotland and those England Norton exposes the contradictions that exist within the realms of Victoria’s queendom.

²⁴⁵ I borrow the title of Helen Hackett’s book *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (1995).

whose virginal status had depended partly on rejecting her many suitors and of refusing to marry, Victoria sees herself as having to reign under similar constitutional constraints.²⁴⁶ At first, Victoria's discomfort with the constitutional neglect of her husband's position does not seem to countenance the domestic troubles and debates about women's rights which erupted in the mid-fifties.²⁴⁷ Upon closer inspection of her letters to her daughter Vicky however, it is apparent that even before Albert's death Victoria held a deep ambivalence about marriage: "All marriage is a lottery—the poor woman is bodily and morally a husband's slave. That always sticks in my throat" (Fulford 244). Victoria configured the child-bearing duties of motherhood as "the shadow side" of marriage, complaining that it was the "yoke of a married woman" (77-78).

Even in the decade that followed, when Elizabeth's specter was invoked to critique Victoria's prolonged absence from duty after the death of Prince Albert, the Virgin Queen's exceptional status could not fit comfortably into Victorian gender norms. In 1864, while Victoria was mourning, novelist Dinah Maria Mulock Craik suggested that in looking over her shoulder, Victoria might find her shadow queen disapproving her isolation and retreat from duty. In Craik's article "Elizabeth and Victoria, from a Woman's Point of View" (1864), she warns Victoria not to cast off court etiquette by remaining in seclusion, and conjures Elizabeth's figure as an ever-receding and disappearing historical shadow (Craik 128).²⁴⁸ Craik's historical parallel traces Elizabeth's evanescent figure through a triple allusion to her passing, as her "reign closes" and "the curtain falls" over that "empty life of hers" (122-3). The sentence erases Elizabeth even

²⁴⁶ For a discussion of Elizabeth's complex negotiation of her numerous marriage proposals by various suitors, see Susan Doran's article "Why Did Elizabeth Not Marry?" in Walker 30-59.

²⁴⁷ As queen regnant, Victoria was not subject to the law of *couverture* through which her female subject's lost their legal status when entering marriage. For a discussion of the political significance of the law of *couverture* see Pateman (90-100).

²⁴⁸ This article was first published in *The Victoria Magazine* in 1864 (97-103), edited by Emily Faithfull. It was later reprinted in Craik's *The Unkind Word and Other Stories* (1870).

as it elevates Queen Victoria in a manner reflecting contemporary anxieties about the two queens.²⁴⁹ The object of Craik's comparison lies in her devastating remark that "history records, from undeniable evidence, [Elizabeth's] restless, solitary, unloved life—that miserable death. And the root of all, as we now know, was what is at the root of most women's characters and lives—love" (122). Craik daringly compares Elizabeth's passion for her favorites, which was "the inevitable fate of a woman who fixes her affections upon an unworthy man," to the sorrow Victoria continues to carry about in her mourning for Albert.

Recalling Elizabeth's "terrible deathbed scene" that impressed the imaginations of many children of her own generation "as she lay raving on her palace floor, with her hair torn, and her three hundred dresses, stiff with jewels, all disregarded" (121), Craik uses words that nearly repeat Norton's similar depiction of Elizabeth. Norton finds Elizabeth

sitting for ten days on cushions on the ground; generally with her finger in her mouth, and her eyes bent on the earth: till she died, and was buried, (at the expense of £17,438), and her ransacked wardrobe attested her feminine love of finery, by countless jewels, and upwards of two thousand different dresses! (Norton 139)²⁵⁰

Neither Norton nor Craik extend sympathy to Gloriana, and in their parallels they both entertain Elizabeth's negative symbolism. This Victorian tendency to express contradiction and paradox through Elizabeth's symbolism writes the Tudor queen into oblivion. In these prominent examples of Victorian female writings in which she is invariably represented as an elderly and

²⁴⁹ This is what historian Nicola Watson calls the myth of "Gloriana Victoriana" which superimposes Elizabeth's iconography on to Victoria and suggests a substitution of authority figures. See Nicola J. Watson's article "Gloriana Victoriana: Victoria and the Cultural Memory of Elizabeth I" and Susan Griffith's *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 132.

²⁵⁰ Elizabeth the dying Queen prostrate on the floor is the subject of Paul Delaroche's *The Death of Queen Elizabeth* (1827), possibly inspired by an earlier painting *Queen Elizabeth Appointing her Successor* by British Robert Smirke. See Stephen Bann *Paul Delaroche: History Painted* 89.

perpetually dying queen, Elizabeth's senescence provides a means of dispelling the powers of her threatening eternal virginity, a problem that vexed the ideology of motherhood and the myth of the Angel in the House.

Craik, Wynfield, and Strickland all suggest that Elizabeth's passion for the wrong man relies on the symbolic and physical social distance that the position of a queen requires.²⁵¹ In Wynfield and Strickland's narratives of the young Essex, they stress the geographical distance he travelled to reach the Queen, the paradoxical remoteness and proximity of the Queen's body natural and politic, and the distance between their respective ages. In Wynfield's painting Elizabeth is not in London but at Nonsuch Palace in Surrey. This fact should be understood in light of the social and physical distance that for two decades Victoria placed between herself and her subjects. Though the painting suggests promiscuity rather than Elizabeth's alleged chastity, it also reflects a concern that surfaces in popular anti-monarchical and republican perceptions about Queen Victoria's reclusiveness.²⁵²

As argued in the previous chapter, Victoria's absence from London was a constant source of complaint as she confined herself in Balmoral. Her "ministers abhorred the place," observes biographer Christopher Hibbert, and Benjamin Disraeli complained that "“carrying on the government of a country six hundred miles from the Metropolis' doubled the labour involved in being Prime Minister" (182). Victoria became increasingly associated with this perception of her widowhood and confinement. In her article, Craik refers to a "sketch in crayons" in which

²⁵¹ Susan Frye in *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation* (1993), argues that Elizabeth used a "discourse of distance" as a means of positioning herself as "powerful because she was remote, self-sufficient, and desirable" (107-114). Likewise in *Symbol and Privilege*, Ilse Hayden argues that "social distance is often expressed spatially," and that even though on occasion that spatial distance may appear to have shrunk, "the social distance has not" and "the social boundaries are as zealously guarded over as ever" (97).

²⁵² In Elizabeth's case her distance from the epicenter of court life can signify a means of maintaining her power, but for Victoria it signified self-indulgence and a silent abdication of duties. It is also a well-known fact that the Scottish servant John Brown's close attachment to Victoria featured as a blemish on her chaste widowhood.

Victoria is dressed as Elizabeth's rival with the Mary Stuart cap referred to in chapter two.²⁵³

Victoria is a black-clad widowed queen whose "hair, which looks as if it were slightly grey, is put back under a widow's cap" (124). Noting that the Queen, "in her splendid isolation, has no next friend," and that her subjects "believe the Queen, in giving up State etiquette, is periling the life of a nation," Craik urges Victoria to end her mourning (128).

In opposing Victoria's overindulgence in sorrow, Craik stresses that the Queen's perpetual mourning is not typical of the English. Her view is that the English prefer to repress and mask their grief. Craik maintains that "Englishmen would esteem [Victoria] all the more for making her sorrow a silent sorrow" (130). She adds that "English women, so many of whom are also widows, or childless, or solitary and forlorn, would like to see her suppress, in every suitable way, all outward tokens of suffering" (130). As Craik pleads with Victoria not to indulge her excessive grief, Elizabeth's shadow looms in the background of her article as a painful reminder of how a queen should not let grief get in the way of her public duties.

iii. Exceptional Elizabeth Haunting Victoria

Four years after Craik published this article in *The Victoria Magazine*, a testament to the public's frustration with Victoria's mourning is the subject of a woodcut by an unknown artist. Featured in *The Razor; or, London Humorist and Satirist* (July 11 1868), Elizabeth's ghost appears before Victoria garbed in her widow's weeds, with her "Marie Stuart" cap, and holding a copy of her journal *Leaves* which appeared in the same year. Victoria asks the specter "Why do you frown—What have I done? To which Elizabeth responds "Let grief prevail o'er duty!" [fig. 3.4]. Elizabeth's ghost is shown with her crown, sceptre, and orb. Towering above the frightened

²⁵³ Craik does not identify the photograph or the photographer in her ekphrastic description.

widow who looks up startled by the scene before her, Elizabeth is a spectral shadow that comes to haunt Victoria during her protracted period of mourning. Like Craik, who admonishes Victoria to “do her best to overcome her grief” (131), the *Razor* woodcut makes it understood that Elizabeth, as Victoria’s predecessor Queen, has had enough of her mourning. Victoria’s fashion statement is a vivid reminder of Marx’s observation that “the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living” and the ghost of Elizabeth returns like a nightmare to haunt the widowed recluse (Marx 188).



Figure 3.4. “A Vision.” Woodcut for *The Razor* by an unknown artist, 1868.

Unlike the *Razor*'s satire, Craik softens her sarcasm by observing that “glorious as the Elizabethan era was, we cannot but draw a parallel between it and what we are now thankfully

and proudly beginning to call ‘the Victorian Age’” (123).²⁵⁴ Here Craik intimates the desire of all of Victoria’s subjects who would rather see their Queen emerge from retirement to fill her public duties. When read beside the woodcut from the *Razor* which admonishes Victoria for her excessive mourning, Wynfield’s painting also alludes to this touchy subject matter even while its historical context refers to Essex’s misbehavior in Ireland. The rebellious Desmonds and O’Neils were a source of vexation for Elizabeth, and for Victoria it was be the O’Connells, the Fenians, and the Parnells who would trouble her reign. In 1868, fear that Victoria might be assassinated by any number of discontented Irish insurgents brought distant memories of Elizabeth’s stern treatment of her Irish subjects to the surface. At this time, Gladstone was urging the Queen and Parliament to disestablish the Church of Ireland by passing the Irish Church Bill.

²⁵⁴ Craik’s use of the term “Victorian” in reference to Queen Victoria provides evidence that contradicts recent scholarship on periodization. In “Clearing a Way to the Past or, Why Victorian?” (2001), John Lucas repeats the argument he has asserted in several published articles, that the term Victorian does not refer properly to the age until after the 1870s (241). Joseph Bristow’s article “Why Victorian? A Period and Its Problems” (2004) has pointed to the American E. C. Stedman (1876) and to John Addington Symonds (1889) as the first to identify a literature that can be called Victorian, yet he overlooks Craik.



Figure 3.5. “A Change for the Better.” Woodcut for *Punch* by an unknown artist, July 31, 1869.

Recalling Elizabeth’s legendary cruelty toward her Irish enemies, and perhaps Essex’s perceived cowardice in his negotiation with Tyrone, *Punch* greeted the debates over the bill by again conjuring the shadow of Victoria’s “great predecessor” [fig. 3.5] In Sir John Tenniel’s illustration, Elizabeth’s angry masculine-featured face is reminiscent of portraits of Gladstone, who was then urging her to approve the Irish Church Bills. Gladstone had invoked the Virgin Queen “asking whether or not she would have regarded the Irish state church, based on her

Church settlement, as a failure if she could have seen it as I was in the nineteenth century: the Church of a tiny minority, paid for by a hostile majority (Franssen 76). Whereas in the woodcut from *The Razor*, a shrunken and widow-clad Victoria is haunted by her Tudor predecessor, in *Punch* the spectral Elizabeth scolds Victoria in a humorously contrived Elizabethan vernacular: “Agreed have they? Ods boddikins! Gads my life, and marry come up, sweetheart! In my time I’d have knocked all their addlepates together till they had agreed!” (Punch 1869 38). The idea here is that Victoria is too lax or too gentle in her approach to the Irish.

Perhaps stemming from the effects of her prolonged isolation and grief, Victoria has lost her power to lead the nation while, as her shadow, Elizabeth reminds the widow that she should attend to her duties and enforce a decision about the Irish Church Bills. If we read *Punch*’s caricature of Elizabeth as a kind of Gladstone figure in drag, by extension the figure of Victoria might represent a kind of Essex figure being reprimanded for not handling the Irish with the kind of severity they deserve. This Victorian representation of Elizabeth’s exceptional and spectral character implies not only the positive image of her greatness, but also her oddity and incompatible gender status.

II. Virgin Territory: From the Exceptional Elizabeth to Elizabethan Exceptionalism

But Queen Elizabeth or Queen Victoria, had they not inherited the throne, could not have been entrusted with the smallest of the political duties, of which the former showed herself equal to the greatest.

—John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, 170.

...yet will I leave an exceptional work after my death, by which not only may my memory be renowned in the future, but others may be inspired by my example.

—Queen Elizabeth, “Speech at Cambridge 1564,” Marcus 89.

Queen Victoria overshadows Elizabeth in all of these Victorian texts, and this section takes a closer look at Elizabeth’s Victorian reputation by focusing on contradictions that arise in her symbolism as an exceptional historical queen. The adjective “exceptional” has two sets of contradictory meanings.²⁵⁵ “Exceptional” is an adjective that qualifies Elizabeth as an outstanding, excellent, peerless, and unsurpassed female monarch. She is the pride of “Merrie England,” a miraculous sign of providential favor, and a symbol for the English nation.²⁵⁶ The same adjective however, contains the negative shadowy connotation of abnormality, strangeness, and the unexpected, as in the crimes of exceptional cruelty Strickland describes. Elizabeth as Good Queen Bess, the vestal Virgin, and the exceptional woman appears as a symbol and icon through which Victorians express ambivalence. Because the bulk of nineteenth-century writing about Elizabeth paints her with warts and all, it is important to recognize that in the Victorian age it is Queen Victoria that casts her shadow over literature about her predecessor.

The Victorian female literature about the two sixteenth-century queens I have discussed so far, has shown that their “matriarchal mirror,” to adopt Sophie Gilmartin’s related term,

²⁵⁵ In the *OED* the adjective “exceptional” stresses how an exceptional person or thing stands apart from perceived norms.

²⁵⁶ Historian J. W. Burrow in *A Liberal Descent* (1981) argues that “the notion of an Elizabethan golden age passed into popular mythology, where it was identified as the authentic site of Merrie England” (Burrow 249).

confirms their construction of a royal genealogy “through which they could see their own lives reflected and refracted” (56). Whereas Gilmartin uses the metaphor of the mirror, I use the shadow specifically to resist the kind of exactitude that realistic representations claim. In the representations of Gloriana discussed so far, Elizabeth is hardly the image of femininity that Oliphant, Norton, Craik, and Victoria seek to emulate. Through paradox, Dickens’s Cleopatra Skewton likewise humorously deflates the Virgin Queen’s glorious age as “so extremely golden” (425). Decrepit and feeble, this nineteenth-century Cleopatra can only preoccupy herself in offering her daughter as a substitute for her own mercenary desires. Yet in John Stuart Mill’s praise for Elizabeth’s political abilities in the epigraph above, he exemplifies the positive side of the exceptional while echoing Elizabeth’s Latin oration at Cambridge University in 1564.²⁵⁷ Elizabeth claims that she will have accomplished an “exceptional work” by the end of her life and consciously creates the conditions in which her image will serve future generations as an example.²⁵⁸ Here Elizabeth’s term “exceptional” has no psychosexual connotations of virginity or chastity but only the promise of an outstanding capacity for rule. This positive qualification runs counter to the way historians Froude and Strickland emphasize Elizabeth’s weaknesses, her eternal vacillation, jealousy, and vanity.

²⁵⁷ Mill only emphasizes Elizabeth’s ability to exercise her political duties while he demotes Victoria to second rank. In doing so, he mirrors the discourse of historically exceptional female rulers featured in the genre of “The Girlhood of Exemplary Women” (Homans and Munich 94). Nicola Watson defines this genre as “historical fiction for children, and especially girls, offering usefully English role models” through which the authors “try to convey the essence of the feminine character before it was overtaken by political or historical contingency” (94).

²⁵⁸ John Nichol’s Latin transcription of her speech does not contain the adjective “exceptional,” the full phrase being rendered “*memoria mea posterum celebris fiat*,” nevertheless the idea of Elizabeth as a female monarch set aside from all other rulers is clearly present (Marcus 89). In “Woman’s History in Transition” for example, Natalie Davis claims that histories of “Women Worthies” “had a polemical purpose: to disclose the range of female capacity, to provide exemplars, to argue from what some women had done to what women could do, if given the chance and education” (83). Critic Susan Doran observes that “through the image of the Virgin Queen [Elizabeth] was able to present herself as no ordinary woman, but as an exceptional woman whose purity made her worthy of devotion, even adoration” (Walker 35).

Casting doubt on Elizabeth's chastity, the Victorian historians trouble her symbolism as the queen set apart from all other women.²⁵⁹ Virginity may also register as an anomaly; "natural" in girlhood, but unnatural and even pathological in adult women. This is the figure of Elizabeth as a virgin-turned-childless hag that Freud and Lytton Strachey later depict. In "Some Character-Types Met with in Psychoanalytic Work" (1916) Freud claims for example, that Elizabeth should be associated with Lady Macbeth "who has only herself to blame if her crime has been barren of the better part of its results" (330). Virginity, or "barrenness" are oddly associated in Freud's mind with Lady Macbeth's crimes, and in a strange twist he indirectly favors Mary Stuart claiming that "the accession of James I was like a demonstration of the curse of unfruitfulness and the blessing reserved for those who carry on the race" adding that "Shakespeare's *Macbeth* develops on the theme of this same contrast" (328). Like Freud's barren Lady Macbeth, Strachey's Gloriana in *Elizabeth and Essex* (1928), fares no better as he diagnoses her with "vaginismus," defined as "a condition of hysterical convulsion, accompanied, in certain cases, by intense pain" (24). Like the Victorians who turn their attention away from the enigma of Elizabeth's body and look to her men, Strachey observes that "though the precious citadel was never to be violated, there were surrounding territories, there were outworks and bastions over which exciting battles might be fought" 25). The Virgin's territories lead in centrifugal rather than centripetal movement; always flowing from her body and never penetrating the "precious citadel." As it relates to the exploration of virgin territories, neither the psychologist nor the psycho-biographer stray very far from the Victorians who probed into the mysteries of Elizabeth's sexuality.

²⁵⁹ As critic Rohan Maitzen asserts in her essay "Plotting Women: Froude and Strickland on Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots," these historians constantly emphasize the binary opposition and "the conflict between their roles as queens regnant and their natures as women" (Felber 126).

In Victorian representations of Catherine de Medici, the Queen Regent appears as the overbearing mother and widow but also the criminally insane and threatening figure of the *vagina dentata*. Likewise in the figure Froude and Kingsley sketch of Catherine's daughter-in-law Mary, she is the "enchantress-turned-hag" whose fascination is a threat to masculinity. Though Elizabeth may not fit in either of these images, her symbolism relates to the classical topos of the "puella-senex," an image found in Renaissance emblems and a strange blend of age and youth as well as sexual categories.²⁶⁰ Kingsley for example, counters the portraits of an aged and decrepit Queen Bess described thus far:

'But Queen Elizabeth was an old woman then.' We thank the objector even for that 'then;' for it is much now-a-days to find anyone who believes that Queen Elizabeth was ever young, or who does not talk of her as if she were not born about seventy years of age, covered with rouge and wrinkles. We will undertake to say, that as to the beauty of this woman there is a greater mass of testimony, and from the very best judges too, than there is of the beauty of any personage in history; and yet it has become the fashion now to deny even that. (25)

Elizabeth is imagined here as half child and half crone. In dismissing her detractors, Kingsley takes a vicarious delight while reiterating popular representations. In doing so, he inadvertently participates in the denigration of her symbolism, and he will not deny that Elizabeth used cosmetic aids to prolong her physical attractions. "No doubt" he writes, "she used every artificial means to preserve her famous complexion; and quite right she was" (25).²⁶¹ As in Dickens's

²⁶⁰ For this emblem see Adler 73. For the overlapping connotations of the terms "virgo" and "puella" see Patricia Watson (1983).

²⁶¹ In early modern iconography the archetype of the "puella senex" compliments that of the male "puer senex" as a figure for the congruence of extreme age and youth. See Adler 73.

description of Mrs. Skewton, Kingsley's article even hints at the iconographic Phoenix, for "like many Englishwomen, she retained her beauty to a very late period in life, not to mention that she was, in 1592, just at the age of rejuvenescence which makes many a woman more lovely at sixty than she has been since she was thirty-five" (25). Kingsley leaves the reader wondering if Elizabeth's "rejuvenescence" is a product of nature or cosmetic. Even in this defense of Elizabeth, Kingsley's review registers anxieties about representation that are reminiscent of the Earl of Rosebery's caution in his letter to Victoria opening this chapter. Everywhere she appears in Victorian literature, Elizabeth's sexual status renders her anomalous and abnormal.

The historian Edward Freeman for example, in reviewing Froude's two volumes on Elizabeth in the *Saturday Review*, was disturbed by the latter's treatment of the queen's virginity writing that,

no virtuous woman, wife or virgin, would now-a-days sound a trumpet before her in this way to announce her own virtue. If a woman now were to assert her own purity, it would at once imply that suspicion had fallen on it. To praise a woman for her chastity, would now be taken, not as a compliment, but as an insult, as implying the possibility of her unchastity. (Freeman 81)²⁶²

What Freeman suggests here is that the title of virginity adds nothing to the queen's status, but rather detracts and even shames her. Freeman's framing of Elizabeth as a woman "sounding a

²⁶² Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-1892) became Regius Professor of History at Oxford University in 1884 and occupied the position until 1892 when he was replaced by Froude. Freeman was an outspoken critic of Froude's historical method. See Ian Hesketh's *The Science of History in Victorian Britain: Making the Past Speak* (2011).

trumpet before her” and announcing her chastity is reminiscent of more recent theorizations of performativity and masquerade.²⁶³

Although the positive figure of Elizabeth the “exceptional woman” is celebrated as a cultural icon in images of Gloriana and the Vestal Virgin, in Victorian literature she sits uncomfortably on her symbolic throne.²⁶⁴ This idea is substantiated by Helen Hackett’s claim that “when set against Victoria and the kind of femininity that was promoted in her reign, Elizabeth looked profoundly unnatural and unappealing” (Hackett 64). Elizabeth is a masculine queen who claimed in her speech at Tilbury to have the “heart and stomach of a man.”²⁶⁵ These gender distinctions are incompatible with a Victorian ideology of separate spheres which insists that women’s primary duties are as mothers and wives. What was the “exceptional work” Elizabeth wanted to accomplish and how does it look from the vantage of Victorian gender ideology? In the thirtieth year of her reign the defeat of the Spanish Armada may have seemed to Elizabeth the fulfillment of her promise to “leave an exceptional work after [her] death,” but in Victorian retrospection this victory over Spain signaled Elizabeth’s demise. Froude for example, held that if the defeat of the Armada was proof of providential favor for Protestant England, it did not mean that providence favored Elizabeth. Though Victorians were vexed by Elizabeth’s cult of virginity and its troubling association with Roman Catholic Mariolatry, few would

²⁶³ Kathryn Schwarz for example, whose article “The Wrong Question: Thinking through Virginity” (2002) focuses on Elizabeth, claims that “virginity is a speech act that masquerades as a bodily state, a male fantasy that locates feminine will at the heart of heterosexual reproduction, a licensed performance that incorporates, co-opts and conspires with the body beneath” (154). Freeman’s reaction likewise considers the performative aspect of Elizabeth’s virginity while suggesting that Froude’s defense of her chastity is tinged with prurience.

²⁶⁴ Recent critical work on Elizabeth has begun to explore the darker sides of Gloriana. Critic Julia Walker refers to “the dark side of the Cult of Elizabeth,” in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana* (1998). Her book explores literature that examines the unexceptional, or “less famous discourse of disrespect and dissent” directed at Elizabeth during her reign (1). Pointing out the message of the *Rainbow* portrait in which Elizabeth is the sole source of light, Walker reads the motto “non sine sole iris” as entailing “where there is sun, there is also shadow” (1).

²⁶⁵ See Montrose (2006) 148-149.

downplay the enormous impact of the Armada and its critical usefulness in denouncing “Popery.” In the Victorian sphere of public memory Elizabeth was the queen who had revealed in her subject’s suggestions that she symbolized the exceptional status of the “vestal virgin,” and this discourse resurfaced in their verbal and textual wars against Popery.²⁶⁶

The metaphor of invasion and violent rape from a threatening Catholic other provoked renewed English anxiety and hostility when on 30 September 1850, Pope Pius IX appointed Nicholas Wiseman to be Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. The pope’s presumption was widely regarded in England as an invasion of national territory, and this incident brought Elizabeth back into focus. In the sixteenth-century Elizabeth’s reign was characterized by its impregnable resistance to foreign invaders such as Philip II, but the Victorians stressed Gloriana’s vulnerability and permeability.²⁶⁷ Froude and Kingsley’s narratives stress this aspect of Elizabeth’s fragility as I will show, and the language they use overlaps discourses of virginity with political and confessional fears. The “Papal Aggression” was widely interpreted as an attempt to institute territorial rule and to restore the Roman Catholic Church in England.²⁶⁸ Victorian anti-Catholicism produced enemies within England’s borders as well. In arguing for Victorian literary “Catholic sensationalism,” Maureen Moran claims that rumors of a secret Catholic invasion of Jesuit priests created a culture of fear in the mid-fifties as she cites from the *History of the Jesuits* (1854), a publication that typifies the extreme anxiety of the period: “If they hated England and Queen Elizabeth in the sixteenth century, they bear no less hate to England and Queen Victoria in the nineteenth” (43). Historical parallels are drawn here from two

²⁶⁶ Though her subjects also produced similar conceits for her, Victoria had no inclination to consider herself in such terms. See Munich 193-4 for Craik’s Jubilee Tribute which draws on the “repertory of virgin mother images” (193).

²⁶⁷ Jeffrey Knapp, in *An Empire Nowhere* (1992), stresses Elizabeth’s unattainable virginal status: “Most extraordinary about Elizabeth herself, was the virginity, the ‘impregnable virginity,’ that seemed not only to figure England’s separateness and purity but actually help to preserve them by literally fending off ‘foreign kings’” (67).

²⁶⁸ See Wheeler, Griffin, and D. G. Paz’s “Popular Anti-Catholicism in England, 1850-1851” 332.

centuries as if no intervening history had occurred. The invasion scare of 1854 however, was not just about the incursion from outside of England, but the fear of the Catholic enemy within.

There is however, another reason for Kingsley's mythologizing of the Elizabethan period. In *The Sinews of the Spirit* (1985), Norman Vance turns to the immediate political crisis of 1852 when the Duke of Wellington warned ominously that the newly empowered Napoleon III might threaten England with invasion.²⁶⁹ Vance argues that "the press had whipped up a full invasion scare" and that "this manly and patriotic hysteria, linked with anti-Catholic feeling in that the emperor and Pope were political allies, was just the stimulus Kingsley needed for his rousing patriotic tale about an earlier aggressor in alliance with an earlier Pope" (88). As I have argued in previous chapters, the same anxieties were present in Swinburne's plays and articles about the tyrannical Catherine de Medici and her daughter-in-law Mary Stuart. In Swinburne's plays however, his fears are directed at Victoria for allowing the enemy to influence political realities within England. Kingsley and Froude show no such fear, but rather, their defense of Elizabeth draws on a barely disguised fear about her virginity.

Queen Victoria's purported reaction to the Pope's aggressive move best captures the widespread feeling of the moment: "Am I Queen of England or am I not?" (Norman 56).

Victoria's question assumes that she is nominally Queen of her territory, but it also cautiously

²⁶⁹ Even the poet Laureate Tennyson, after reading Froude's essay "England's Forgotten Worthies" (1852), wrote Elizabeth out of his poem "The Revenge: A Ballad of the Fleet" (1878) which celebrates Sir Richard Grenville's courageous self-sacrifice in a fatal struggle with the Spanish in 1591. Though in lines 101 and 102, Tennyson's noble Sir Grenville cries out before dying, "I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man and true; / I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do," no other mention of Elizabeth appears in the poem (Tennyson 527). Carlyle, remarking Tennyson's omission of Elizabeth's parsimony, noted that "Alfred" would not "allude to Elizabeth's starving the poor sailors," a comment that epitomizes the Victorian attitude toward the Tudor Queen as stingy, cruel, and unsympathetic (524). In his poem "The Armada" (1888) Swinburne, referring to the English ships being "stinted in gear" (line 81), similarly notes Elizabeth's close-fisted policy in failing to provision her fleet during the Armada. Parsimonious and jealous, Elizabeth's cruelty has no bounds as she turns her back on those who sacrifice their lives in her service; an impression shared by Strickland.

avoids the Pope's presumption that England had become spiritually Catholic and the Virgin Mary's territory. Veneration of the Virgin Mary was not part of Protestant religion, and upon taking the oath at her coronation in 1837, Victoria declared that "the invocation or adoration of Virgin Mary, or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the Mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous" (quoted in Handford 82).²⁷⁰ In reciting the oath, Victoria exercised her royal prerogative to banish the Virgin of Heaven from England's liturgy, yet her great predecessor's symbolic associations with virginity overlap strangely with Marian discourse, assuring that threads of Mariolatry remained embedded in England's history and culture. Unlike Elizabeth, Victoria could assume the cultural symbolism of motherhood without contradiction, and this is the source of her difference as well as a key to understanding her power to rule. Victoria did not require the exceptional status of a Virgin Queen to symbolize her power because, as I have claimed in discussing Norton, her power does not reside in the discourse of the "exceptional" or the "exemplary woman," but through what Victorians referred to as her influence.²⁷¹

While it may seem reductive to hinge Victorian representations of Elizabeth on the claim that her sexual chastity is what made her exceptional, as will be shown below in the section on Kingsley, Elizabeth's symbolic virginity became a source of anxiety in a period when the virtues

²⁷⁰ Historian Walter Arnstein draws attention to the contradictory positions Victoria held toward Catholicism, and in his article "Queen Victoria and the Challenge of Catholicism" (1996), he shows that over the long span of her reign Victoria shifted her views on Catholic ritual to such an extent that it would prove difficult for the historian or biographer to arrive at any decisive statement of her position.

²⁷¹ Margaret Homans claims that under Victoria, "the monarchy acquired what is granted to Victorian middle-class wives in exchange for their loss of economic and social autonomy: that ambiguous resource early Victorian ideologues call 'influence'" (*Royal Representations* 3). What Homans claims about Victoria also applies to the context of Norton's letter to the queen. Influence rather than the direct wielding of political power also lies behind John Ruskin's ambiguous claim in "Of Queen's Gardens," that "woman's power is for rule, not for battle" (Ruskin 77). Adrienne Munich likewise claims that "as Victoria and her age saw it, a woman's authority derived from her ability to influence, to set an example to be emulated" (Munich 192). See also Rosemary Mitchell's *Picturing the Past* (2000) for a discussion of influence as a form of female power (152-159).

of celibacy were promoted by Catholics such as Cardinal Newman. Though Froude and Kingsley struggle to defend Elizabeth's chastity in the aim of establishing England's moral superiority, in the end, like Dickens in the passage cited earlier from *A Child's History of England*, they grew bored.

In acknowledging Elizabeth's exceptional status Victorians transform her into a symbol for the Elizabethan period.²⁷² In the process, the Victorian icon of Elizabeth proves useful for Victorian patriarchal assertions about English imperialist exceptionalism. Building on Elizabeth Langland's claims that "the Victorians forwarded and justified their own project of nation and empire building under Victoria" and that "just as Elizabeth faced down Spain and Parma, so, too, England, under Victoria, would achieve international supremacy" these Victorian men harnessed her symbolism to the project of imperialist expansion (Homans and Munich 27). Langland investigates "the necessity of the Elizabethan myth to developing Victorian myths of empire" but she stops short of investigating exactly how such a transition could take place in Victorian fiction (28). By turning to Victorian patriarchs I explore first, how Carlyle's vision of the "hero as king" follows the reformer John Knox in refusing to associate rule with femininity, then how Froude

²⁷² In her pioneering essay "Queen Elizabeth I and the Persistence of Patriarchy," critic Allison Heisch asserts that exceptional women are not representative women, and for many such women one condition of being both exceptional and female may be that the values and practices of the male society in which they function may be accepted by them, transformed and internalized, and followed, so that they become, in effect, 'honorary males'. (Heisch 45)

For Heisch, Elizabeth is an "honorary male," and though feminist critics who support Elizabeth's fame use the discourse of the "exceptional woman" to emphasize the strategic and empowering role of Elizabeth's virgin status, this stresses her difference from women who are mothers. Whereas Heisch concludes in her essay that Elizabeth was contained within and supported by the patriarchal terms that defined her queenship, Joan Scott in "The Problem of Invisibility," observes that "the task of making women visible serves a compensatory purpose: it insists that women were actors in the past and provides information to prove that. Its effect is to supplement the picture we have traditionally had; sometimes even to change that picture" (Kleinberg 12). Nevertheless these feminist critics do not contend with the Victorians who censure these very qualities.

discovers the location of authority in his male “Forgotten English Worthies,” and finally how Charles Kingsley inadvertently dismantles the edifice his predecessors erected.

In positioning Elizabeth as Victoria’s shadow queen I show how these Victorian patriarchs, operating under anxieties about female power, manage their masculinities by controlling Elizabeth’s symbolism in their writing. In his introduction to *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (1994), Donald E. Hall asks “how did the male body provide a canvas upon which real and imagined threats to male power were portrayed and what do the specific contours of those portrayals tell us about the psychologies of the men who produced them?” (10). Following Hall, I read the male body referred to here as imaginary, and the Victorian icon of the “Elizabethan” male inscribed in Carlyle, Froude and Kingsley’s historical and fictional texts, writes over the problematic Elizabeth. One way to answer Hall’s question is to further investigate Langland’s consideration of “Victoria’s place in the narrative of nationality: that is, in the Victorian’s construction of the Elizabethan age” (27). It is also important to bear in mind the sexual and erotic dimensions to which Elizabeth’s virginity gives rise. In historiography and in the novel, eminent male Victorians, frustrated with the problem of reconciling Elizabeth’s female monarchy to the norms of Victorian patriarchy, turn their attention from Elizabeth to Elizabethan men.

III. Carlyle’s “King” Elizabeth and Froude’s “Forgotten Worthies”

We come now to the last form of Heroism; that which we call Queenship. The Commander over Men; she to whose will our wills are to be subordinated, and loyally surrender themselves, and find their welfare in doing so, may be reckoned the most important of Great Women. She is practically the summary for us of *all* the various figures of Heroism: Priest, Teacher, whatsoever of earthly or spiritual dignity we can fancy to reside in a woman, embodies itself here, to *command* over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to do.

—Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1977), 321, italics in original.

Her Majesty was pleased this day in Council, to declare her royal will and pleasure, that in all the Prayers, Liturgies, and Collects for the Kings, instead of the word “King” the word “Queen,” instead of the words “our Sovereign Lord” the words “Our Sovereign Lady,” be inserted; and that in all the Prayers, Liturgies, and Collects, so altered, such change of the pronouns “he,” “him,” and “his,” be made, as will be by those alterations rendered necessary.

—*London Gazette*, Friday, June 23, 1837, 1.

i. Queens once Notable; now Forgettable

Thomas Carlyle was unwilling to recognize either queen or heroine in his widely-read *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841). His exaltation of Kings as “Great Men” receives humorous treatment in Ellen Moers substitution of gender pronouns in the passage cited above. When read in the context of Victoria’s 1837 royal decree altering “King” to “Queen” and “he” to “she” in the Book of Common Prayer, Carlyle’s gender myopia becomes transparent. Whereas Carlyle’s philosophy of authority is literary and speculative, Queen Victoria, like Elizabeth before her, wills by act of Parliament (1544) as the Defender of the Faith (1559) and the Supreme Governor of the Church of England to alter the pronouns and titles in the Book of Common Prayer.²⁷³ Carlyle’s critics have claimed almost unanimously that he fails to offer any detailed reflection on queenship, and Moers’s replacement of all the gender pronouns in his passage emphasizes his oversight. Great men are, for Carlyle, always at the center of the historical process.²⁷⁴ Though it is important for any feminist project not to lose sight of Carlyle’s gender myopia, it is also helpful to remember that his rhetoric was instrumental in forming the thought of many of the leading intellectuals of Victorian culture.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Historian Bonnie Smith claims that representations of female sovereigns asserting their will enabled Victorian women to articulate identity, visibility, and selfhood in the face of obstacles: “By saying ‘je le veux’ the female sovereign asserted her role as a major actor on the historical stage” (715).

²⁷⁴ In their recent reappraisal *Thomas Carlyle Resartus* (2010), Paul Kerry and Marylu Hill observe for example, that “Carlyle remained fairly antifeminist all his days; he never speaks of queens in any detail, nor does he entertain the notion of a woman as hero and ruler. This is all the more remarkable since Victoria was an obviously potent presence throughout the nineteenth century” (28n. 8).

²⁷⁵ See Thais E. Morgan’s *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power* ((1990) for the impact of Victorian sage rhetoric in the project of both establishing and contesting cultural power (2).

Carlyle's most significant oversight is his disregard of Elizabeth's status as vestal virgin. Nowhere in his historical sketches does he mention her exceptional status; his silence about the topic indicates that he fundamentally questions any queen's authority. Carlyle's myopia is attested in his marginal writings about Queen Elizabeth which pivot around that very question. Though as mentioned earlier, Elizabeth does not appear as a figure of kingly authority and a heroine in *On Heroes*, paradoxically, he coins the adjective "Elizabethan" within the context of his discussion of male heroism. Carlyle thereby inaugurated a literary tradition in which Queen Elizabeth is gradually detached from the adjective Elizabethan.²⁷⁶ After proclaiming Shakespeare an English King, Carlyle asks: "this King Shakespeare, does not he shine, in crowned sovereignty, over us all, as the noblest, gentlest, yet strongest of rallying signs?" (102). Carlyle ascribes to the literary man the powers he removes from Elizabeth.²⁷⁷

By crowning Shakespeare as the real Elizabethan "King," Carlyle symbolically dethrones Elizabeth and replaces her with masculine cultural authority. This however, is at odds with what John Ruskin does when he distributes the title of queen to all of Victoria's female subjects in "Of Queen's Gardens." Unlike Carlyle, Ruskin specifically proclaims that "woman's power is for rule" (77) and that they should "be no more housewives, but queens" (88). As Margaret Homans claims, Ruskin distributes the title of queen by multiplication, but Carlyle multiplies kings among whom his readers would find not only Shakespeare, Cromwell, and Napoleon, but also Elizabeth (Homans 71). But Carlyle does not even countenance women's positions, let alone their powers of rule. While both Victorian sages use their cultural authority to distribute a queen's powers to her subjects, Carlyle moves in the opposite direction from Ruskin. In her

²⁷⁶ This is similar to the way in which Langland describes how Victoria came to be thought apart from the idea of Victorianism (Homans and Munich 22-27).

²⁷⁷ Where Allison Heisch as shown earlier, argues that "exceptional women are not representative women," in *On Heroes* Elizabeth is represented as an exception in the negative sense, and she is no "honorary male" (Heisch 45).

article “Female Maelstrom: The Gender Vortex in Carlyle and Ruskin” (1997), Sharon Weltman makes a similar claim when examining the difference between the two sage’s separate conceptions of femininity. Weltman observes that “for Carlyle the language is the prerogative of men, the heroes as men of letters. Unlike Carlyle Ruskin creates a paradigm that requires us to turn from feminine evil not to masculine but to feminine good” (97). Whereas Ruskin uses the symbols of queenship to empower women, Carlyle stubbornly refuses to countenance the symbolic power of female monarchy and uses kingship to disempower women and to dethrone queens.

In *On Heroes*, Carlyle articulates his political anxiety about female monarchy through the “priestly” authority of John Knox, but first I will attend to how he conceives of Elizabeth as a monarch.²⁷⁸ There is a surviving manuscript from Carlyle where his discourse of authority is clearly articulated in the context of Elizabeth’s reign. In chapter two of his *Historical Sketches of Notable Persons and Events in the Reigns of James I and Charles I* (1843; pub. 1898) he devotes several pages to the description of Elizabeth’s funeral.²⁷⁹ Quoting from John Stow’s sixteenth-century *Annales, or a General Chronicle of England* (1631), Carlyle observes that in 1603, when James I came to the throne, “Kings, as the old Chronicle says, are now grown doubly wonderful, so long have we, fifty years or more, been under Queens” (“Historical Sketches” 10). For Carlyle, kings became not just wonderful, but “doubly” so. He adds, while referring to the many women who occupied Europe’s thrones in the sixteenth century, that queens were a

²⁷⁸ For a discussion of Knox and Elizabeth in sixteenth-century contexts see Axton, Healy, Felch, Blessing, and Montrose. For Victorian assessments of Knox see Andrew Lang’s assessment of his contemporary’s views on Knox in *John Knox and the Reformation* (1903). See also David Sorensen’s article “Carlyle’s Scottish French Revolution” (1988).

²⁷⁹ The dating of this manuscript is difficult to verify. His nephew Alexander Carlyle claims that it was submitted to his copyist John Chorley in 1851. In *The Victorians and the Stuart Heritage* Timothy Lang refers to a larger history of England and that Carlyle “abandoned the project in 1843 and concentrated on a biography of Cromwell instead” (117).

“phenomenon once notable to human nature; now forgettable” (10). Whereas Stow only writes of Mary Tudor and Elizabeth, Carlyle has in mind the many queens regnant of the sixteenth century.²⁸⁰

One way to underscore Carlyle’s dislike of female monarchy is to compare the cited passage with one Mill wrote in a letter to John Nichol, Professor of English Literature at the University of Glasgow. On August 18, 1869 Mill writes that “if queens are now superfluous, the experience which women have given of themselves as queens is not obsolete. If they are not now wanted as queens, the qualities which made them successful as queens are still the conditions of success in all the practical affairs of mankind” (Knight 679). The context of Mill’s reference to Elizabeth here affirms the same position he holds in *The Subjection of Women* (1869), that female monarchs are capable of making excellent decisions without the aid of male advisers. Although Mill is not always consistent in his defense of queens as will be shown in the next chapter, here his position regarding Elizabeth clearly counters Carlyle’s remarks.

Carlyle’s representation of Elizabeth contributes to our understanding of his attitude toward Victoria. Commenting on the counterfeit loyalty of English subjects to their rulers, he declares that

[Queen Elizabeth] was the last sovereign, if we will think of it, whom English hearts did truly love: the unfortunate English hearts ever since have been reduced, in great part and even in whole, to love the sovereign’s effigy counterfeited to the life, no sovereign’s self

²⁸⁰ John Stow writes that to the gentry, nobility and commons of the realm, “the name of a king, was then so strange, as but few could remember that they had seen a king before...because the government of the kingdom had continued almost fifty years under the reign of two queens” (813). Carlyle’s comment on the “doubly wonderful” circumstance and the “now forgettable” memory of female monarchy is his own addition to Stow’s account.

being properly there;—and to manage that sorrowful problem in such sort as they could!”

(20)

Carlyle alludes to the mystical theory of the “king’s two bodies” wherein the sovereign’s body natural is separate from the body politic, both mortal and immortal, secular and sacred. By adapting the medieval theology to radicalism however, Carlyle distills the doctrine to its ideological bareness while dismissing transcendence from royalty. Thus for sovereigns “ever since” Elizabeth, while there is no “self being properly there,” in the case of Elizabeth there is still, a female king who must be reckoned with.²⁸¹ In his discussion of the relationship between the doctrine of the “king’s two bodies” and the effigy as “a vacancy created by the absence of an original,” Joseph Roach notes that “the supposed legacy of such symbolic immutability—its living effigy—is the concept of a constitutional diffusion and continuity of governmental power, and enduring ‘body politic’ under the rule of law” (38). Effigies serve as a reminder of how communities perpetuate the memory of their dead through performance and substitution, and though Roach overlooks the way in which female monarchy shifts the gendered meaning of the king’s two bodies, the concept of surrogation accounts for the process and continuity of sovereignty (36). Strangely then, what Carlyle writes about the perpetuation and forgetting of Elizabeth applies equally to his dismissive attitude toward Victoria.

Carlyle must be aware that Victoria’s subjects did not consider her to be a counterfeit, or did he really mean to imply that Victoria is a queen with “no sovereign’s self being properly

²⁸¹ Nicola Watson writes, “all too feminine in her vices, Elizabeth was nevertheless culpably unwomanly because, instead of refusing political power in favor of exerting an uplifting, softening influence, she had obtained absolute executive authority” (Homans and Munich 82).

there”? Reviewing Frederic Maitland’s constitutional study of legal fictions and the problem of the dual nature of sovereignty, Gail Houston observes that

where the concept of the king’s two bodies was problematic, the idea of a queen’s two bodies seemed downright unworkable, for her corpus was already considered a failure as well as a fictional replacement of the king’s body. That is, the English queen was allowed to act as a fictional man and to wield a man’s power only when it was implicitly understood and acknowledged that she could never really be anything more than a counterfeit. (23)

Houston claims that the medieval Christological doctrine of the king’s two bodies, when read through the Victorian eyes of William Blackstone’s legal fictions, “both overdetermined and undermined the sovereignty and gender of the few queens regnant in British history” (23).

Carlyle’s comments about what “the unfortunate English hearts” truly love, participates in this argument by collapsing gender distinctions in favor of the universal male pronoun, and effectively erasing Queen Victoria’s royal prerogative. Victoria insisted on correcting the Book of Common Prayer by shifting its titles and gender to the female, but Carlyle uses gender marks to rewrite the history of her “great predecessor” Elizabeth as a male.

Evidence drawn from Carlyle’s letters shows that he judged Victoria to be a “weak and frail woman” who could not be trusted with the authority to govern. In a letter to his brother, Carlyle writes of Victoria’s “bit wedding” as a trivial occasion. He feels sorry for Victoria, calling her a “poor little fool,” while adding “but for the poor little fool’s *Twenty Millions of people* I am infinitely sorrier. Bad days are coming as I often spae [foretell]” (italics in original Sanders 224). Carlyle dismisses Victoria’s authority while trivializing her marriage to Albert.

Considering that Elizabeth never married, and that most Victorians as we have seen, regarded her virginal status as problematic, even aberrant, Carlyle's response to Victoria's wedding seems overly critical. What is exceptional about Elizabeth in Carlyle's view is that she recognizes heroes: "She had a hero-heart of her own which could recognize heroisms (35-36). Here Carlyle uses the female pronoun to qualify Elizabeth's gender, but in this context "she" is doing what he deems natural to females, which is "recognize heroisms." Although Carlyle has very little to say of Elizabeth's court favorites or of her hero seadogs, he does have much to say about the relation between Elizabeth's gender and its relation to power. The passage in which he describes Elizabeth's "kingship" is worth quoting in full. Elizabeth, who understood "what the heart of her English People meant" (21) would

be their king, to go before them veritably as a heaven-sent Captain and guiding Pillar of Fire. It is the task of a king. If he can do it, joy to him and to us. Right loyally, devoutly will the People recognise him as the Sent of Heaven, their miraculous Pillar-of-Fire; at sight of whom all hearts burn, and Spanish Armadas, and Nightmare Chimeras in Rome or elsewhere, are swept swiftly to the Father of them: the king wills it,—the king of England, seconded by the King of the Universe. If your hapless king cannot do this task, if in his own heart there is not nobleness to divine it, to attempt it, and know it as the one thing needful,—alas, what *can* he do? ("Historical Sketches" 21)

Carlyle again discusses Elizabeth while leaving all of the masculine pronouns in place. On one hand this gives the contemporary reader all the more reason to appreciate Ellen Moers's feminist intervention in the parodied version of Carlyle cited above, on the other hand it seems bewildering to decipher Carlyle's description of Elizabeth as a king. In order to disentangle his masculine pronouns from the feminine subject, it is useful to recall that Elizabeth in her "Golden

Speech” made the same gender reversals when referring to her anomalous position: “To be a King and wear a crown is a thing more glorious to them that see it, than it is pleasant to them that bear it. For myself, I was never so enticed by the glorious name of a King or royal authority of a Queen” (Marcus 339). Elizabeth disavows any jealousy of her position as king or queen and effectively cancels any gendered difference between the two. It is crucial to observe the difference between Elizabeth speaking for herself and Carlyle writing about her as an historian because when he writes about persons in authority they are invariably gendered masculine. In Carlyle’s eyes, precedent offers him only a patriarchal conception of kingship. As already shown, his discussions of queens such as Catherine de Medici and Mary Stuart only stresses their queenly roles as baser forms of a true kingship. In his assessment of Catherine de Medici’s regency, Carlyle claimed that she was disastrous for her son and sowed the seeds in France for the September massacre of 1792. Carlyle also held that Mary Stuart’s charm and fascination threatened Scotland with the intrusions of “Papisty,” reinforcing his view that women should be submissive rather than rulers over men. Though Elizabeth’s androgynous imagery alluded to in her speech quoted earlier equates king and queen, Carlyle has very little to say about her governing capacities as a queen, preferring instead to focus on her monarchy as a form of kingship. He thus reserves his most powerful defense of authority for discussions about male monarchs.

Carlyle repeatedly invokes and defends the radical anti-feminist rhetoric found in John Knox’s sixteenth-century text *The First Blast*. He is careful to omit any reference to historical evidence that Elizabeth was angry that Knox had disseminated his tract throughout her queendom. Although history shows that Knox recanted his anti-gynocratic statements about the unnatural status of female monarchy, in *On Heroes* Carlyle rehabilitates the reformer and

rehashes his toxic misogynist doctrines for his Victorian readers.²⁸² This would be brazen in a century in which Victoria ruled an empire much more extensive than that of Queen Bess, yet Knox's *Blast* provides Carlyle with ammunition to resist the "regiment of women" he identifies but cannot vigorously pursue under Queen Victoria's monarchy. In his rehabilitation of Knox as the figure of a "Priest as Hero," Carlyle appropriates the subject position of the Scottish reformer (*On Heroes* 370). Carlyle's habit of writing vicariously through his historical heroes, conveys a sense of his political radicalism, and this radicalism was amenable to discontented anti-monarchists living under Victoria's reign. As he channels Knox, the "Man of Genius" and the "heaven inspired seer and heroic leader of men" to counter the "Monstrous Regiment of Women," Carlyle claims:

The sum of the objections made to Knox which have obfuscated and depressed his memory for three centuries seems to be his intolerance;—that he wanted tolerance, and all the qualities that follow out of it; and particularly for his rude, brutal way of speaking to Queen Mary. (Carlyle "Lectures" 146)

By focusing on Mary Stuart as the object of Knox's diatribe against female monarchy, he again overlooks historical evidence that shows how Knox was anxious to shift his views in light of Elizabeth's example.²⁸³ Carlyle's focus on authority already establishes a male literary

²⁸² He overlooks for example, Bishop John Aylmer's (1521-1594) "counterblast" to Knox which appeared in 1559. Aylmer's *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subiectes* (1559) contests Knox's censure of female monarchy by referring to Elizabeth's monarchy as a limited government: "It is not to England so dangerous a matter, to have a woman ruler, as men take it to be. For first it is not she who ruleth but the lawes" (quoted in Montrose 19). Though Aylmer's rebuttal against Knox does not counter the preferred form of government by men, nevertheless he grounded Elizabeth's monarchy in scripture. See McLaren "The Quest for a King" (2002).

²⁸³ In Carlyle's recuperation of John Knox he is countering David Hume's negative assessment of the reformer in the latter's *The History of England*. Carlyle defends Knox's diatribes against female monarchy by countering Hume's claim that the reformer was uncivil and intolerant: "Now I confess that when I came to read these very speeches, my opinion of these charges was that they are quite undeserved. It was quite impossible for any man to have done Knox's functions and been civil too: he had either to be uncivil, or to give up Scotland and Protestantism altogether." (146).

genealogy that disallows a full treatment of female monarchy, but his disciples Froude and Kingsley would pick up his mantle while taking his investment in Elizabethan masculine authority a step further. They would appropriate Elizabeth's exceptional status as Virgin Queen to construct a moral exceptionalism for England's forgotten worthies.

ii. Froude's Elizabeth: The Virgin and the Boys

Like his mentor Carlyle, Froude often expresses his discomfort with female monarchs by channeling John Knox. In chapter two I show how Froude celebrates Knox's ability to resist Mary's powers of fascination, and here I will show how his Elizabeth is a weak ruler who depended entirely on her male advisors Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Walsingham. Moreover, she was indirectly indebted to Knox for his defense of the Reformation. "No grander figure can be found, in the entire history of the Reformation in this island, than that of Knox" argues Froude in *The History of England* (10: 455). Elizabeth is not the great reformer, but a weak and vacillating queen who refuses to eliminate her rival cousin Mary. Instead it is Knox who resists Mary's enchantments and confronts her circle of charm with historical truth.

Froude holds that Knox's accusation against Mary's crimes was warranted, and when he turns to Elizabeth he finds the reformer prevaricating when justifying her reign. According to Froude when Knox justified his *Blast*, "he told [Elizabeth] that she was to consider herself an exception to a rule [and] that she reigned by the choice of God, and not by the right of inheritance" ("Knox" 16). By making Elizabeth an "exception to a rule" that would otherwise condemn female monarchy as unnatural, Froude's Knox is colluding with the enemy, yet in defending Knox against Elizabeth, Froude is associating himself with a tradition of male anxiety in which female monarchy and power threatens to usurp patriarchal authority. If in his

undisguised anxiety over Mary's sexual allure Froude fortifies Knox's patriarchal authority and enables masculinity to resist fascination, in Queen Elizabeth the historian encounters a very different problem. Elizabeth is a woman who uses her chastity to fortify herself against men.

In his essay "The Morals of Queen Elizabeth" (1853) Froude's queen, who "was known to be proud of her title of Virgin Queen, whether she deserved it or not," was a woman who needed to be defended against her detractor's accusations of her lasciviousness (500). Victorian men puzzled over Elizabeth's title of the Virgin Queen to the extent that it reflected an extreme anxiety over her sexual symbolism. In this essay on Elizabeth's "morals" Froude agonizes over the queen's sexuality:

Shall we suppose Elizabeth to have been an infamous woman, who, with a circle continually round her of those who alternately shared her favour, turned as she pleased from courtier to courtier, changing them as her appetite tired, as she might change the dishes at her table; that, in a manner too shocking to be conceived, all this went on without disguise or concealment, winked at by the statesman, passed by with indifference by the clergy...or, if the rumour of such a thing is mentioned with a hypocritical affectation of horror, which is still more detestable? ("Morals" 505)

This passage protests too much, and it is because Froude's historiography is tinged with the morality of his day, a horror at the very idea of female sexuality. He is terrified of questioning Elizabeth's chastity or even probing into the matter. Victorians on the whole are reluctant to discuss Elizabeth's sexual purity and when they do, as shown earlier in the quote from historian Freeman, they struggle to articulate what virginity means in terms of Victorian gender ideology.

Froude's essay on Elizabeth's morals was published only after "England's Forgotten Worthies" (1852) in which he provides his views on Elizabethan men in an age of expansionism.²⁸⁴ The order in which he published these essays shows that Froude must first demonstrate to his reading public that Elizabethan seafarers were devoted to the protection of their queen, and in doing so, he justifies Elizabeth's monarchy by establishing its importance to England's expansion. In the process Elizabeth takes a backseat position while her male subjects inhabit the driving force of the Elizabethan age. Though it may appear anachronistic to modify the adjective exceptional into the substantive exceptionalism, I argue that by transforming Elizabeth's symbolism, Froude devised a convenient way to promote Victoria's British Empire. In his essay, Elizabeth's navigators Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins are heroes who rise from the pages of Richard Hakluyt's *Diverse Voyages* (1582) to assume a place of predominance in the minds of Victorian men and boys. Froude's heroes are all Protestant men who come mainly from the West Country and are shown always eager to defend Elizabeth against the Catholic enemy.

Whereas Carlyle's "Papist" enemies are found in Mary Stuart's Guise heritage, both Froude and Kingsley turn their xenophobic rage toward the Spaniards who become England's "Old Enemies" and the representatives of Roman Catholicism.²⁸⁵ Froude defends Elizabeth against the Spanish "other," and this is because it allows him to present the case for English moral exceptionalism. Unlike the Spanish who leave terror and destruction wherever they go, the English sow the seeds of goodness: "The Elizabethan navigators, full without exception of large

²⁸⁴ "England's Forgotten Worthies" was published in *The Contemporary Review* in 1852. The two-part "The Morals of Queen Elizabeth" was published in *Fraser's Magazine's* issue for October and November 1853.

²⁸⁵ As Julia Kristeva observes in *Strangers to Ourselves*, whether French or Spanish, what lies behind the persistent threat of this foreignness is nothing less than the discovery that otherness is, "at the heart of what we persist in maintaining as a proper, solid 'us'" (Kristeva 191-2).

kindness, wisdom, gentleness, and beauty, bear names untainted, as far as we know, with a single crime against the savages; and the name of England was as famous in the Indian seas as that of Spain was infamous” (43). The term “full without exception,” in this context, means that in his historical fantasy Froude creates an English “white legend” to replace the Spanish “leyenda negra,” or black legend.²⁸⁶ Even though he inserts the hesitating phrase “as far as we know” in the middle of this passage, Froude erases England’s subsequent history of slavery. For Froude it is only the English who are untainted with the vices of imperial expansion.²⁸⁷ These are the defining elements of exceptionalism which include a sense of superiority, self-congratulation, greatness, and strength. Though Froude does not commit the historical anachronism of attributing a modern sense of nationalism to Elizabethan England, his project draws enough historical parallel between past and present to imply that association.²⁸⁸ In the process of constructing the sense of Elizabethan exceptionalism, Froude draws on Elizabeth’s symbolic chastity. Examining Spanish Catholicism in his essay, Froude is concerned to defend Elizabeth’s status as a virgin Queen by sparing any reference to the Virgin Mary and avoiding the imputations of Mariolatry. While the Spanish Conquistadores are extravagantly devoted to the Queen of Heaven they are men “whose entire lower nature, unsubdued and unaffected, was given up to thirst of gold, and plunder, and sensuality” (42). By contrast Englishmen such as Raleigh and Drake do not worship the Virgin Mary, and when Froude’s Elizabethan men travel to the

²⁸⁶ For a discussion of the term “white legend” see Hodgkins 7.

²⁸⁷ In *Reforming Empire: Protestant Colonialism and Conscience in British Literature* (2002), critic Christopher Hodgkins observes that “by the end of the Stuart-Tudor era, English Protestantism’s literary imagination had made essential and enduring contributions to a shared sense, of liberatory mission, and of moral exceptionalism” (3). Hodgkins also notes that the Elizabethan voyagers “refused the worship offered by adoring natives in order to merit possessing their lands” and finally, that this attitude was central to “all expansionist paradigms and tropes that remained potent through the Victorian era” (3).

²⁸⁸ Critic Alun Howkins claims in his article “The Discovery of Rural England” that “the age of Elizabeth had long held a special place among English historians but it was with Froude that the period began to fill a central role” (Colls Dodd 70).

New World, their devotion to Elizabeth leaves a lasting impression on the natives. “On the banks of the Oronoko” Froude writes, “there was remembered for a hundred years the noble captain who had come there from the great Queen beyond the seas” (43). Here Elizabeth is clearly not the Queen of Heaven but only the “great Queen beyond the seas,” nevertheless her symbolism operates as a substitute for the Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary and Froude’s is a struggling defense of Elizabethan men who presumably observe proper devotion.

In Froude’s account, Drake and Hawkins are ennobled simply by the fact of their embarking away from home. Froude writes:

In the days of our own Elizabeth, the seamen from the banks of the Thames and the Avon, the Plym and the Dart, self-taught and self-directed, with no impulse but what was beating in their own royal hearts, went out across the unknown seas fighting, discovering, colonizing, and graved out the channels, and at last paved them with their bones, through which the commerce and the enterprise of England has flowed out over all the world.
(“England’s forgotten Worthies” 34)

In this passage the past provides the conditions for understanding the Victorian present. Here the effect becomes the cause as Froude engages in writing the history of his explorers as if they were the Victorian men and boys who read his history.²⁸⁹

Froude claims that though “the earliest achievements of the new era roll and glitter through the forty years of the reign of Elizabeth,” (39) she is not responsible for them: “The

²⁸⁹ Froude’s essay, which in part is a review of literature about Richard Hakluyt’s (1553-1616) accounts of Elizabethan voyages and travels, designates these five historical volumes as “the Prose Epic of the modern English nation” (34). As critic Jeffrey Knapp observes, Froude’s “grand view of epic-making Elizabethan explorers has managed to survive in large part only on the strength of prestige now borrowed from the literature that the explorers supposedly helped to inspire” (1).

work was not of her creation [because] Elizabeth's place was to recognize, to love, to foster, and to guide" (39). This assessment of Elizabeth differs little from Ruskin's peroration to English housewives, whose queenly "intellect is not for invention or creation" (77), but who must nevertheless, guide and influence men. Froude strips Elizabeth of the powers she claimed to command in her speech at Tilbury, and even the "exceptional work" she promised to leave for future generations in her Latin lecture at Oxford, was according to Froude, "not of her creation." Compared to the "forgotten worthies" who "plough the oceans" (39), Froude's Elizabeth is a mere rivulet and tributary.

By making Elizabeth's symbolism conform to the middle-class norms of his own time Froude re-mythologizes the Tudor queen as she becomes Victoria's shadow. Froude wants to make Elizabeth into the image of a Victorian wife, submissive, loving, fostering and guiding her men, but he realizes that this is impossible because her power to rule was not her own. By contrast Victoria, in addition to being a wife, was a biological mother and the political mother of her nation. Queen Victoria resolves Elizabeth's contradictions and this leaves Froude free to exclude Gloriana from his historical quest which is to explore the historical parallel between Elizabethan seafaring men and Victorian imperial expansion. This is the theme that Froude's brother-in-law Charles Kingsley would fictionalize in his historical novel *Westward Ho!*

IV. *Westward Ho!*: Kingsley's Fairy Queen in Victoria's Shadow

The hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea.

—Allan Cunningham, "A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea."

Though Charles Kingsley is undoubtedly one of Queen Elizabeth's greatest Victorian admirers, he always has in mind both Carlyle's preaching about masculine authority and Froude's doubts about Elizabeth's chastity. In this section I claim that Queen Victoria's shadow falls on Kingsley's historical novel as he reinvents Elizabeth as a symbol of united English resistance to foreign threat and an historical force that can justify England's imperial expansion under Victoria. In his project of reconstructing England's Elizabethan past Kingsley resurrects Elizabeth's symbolism to voice his concerns over the Crimean debacle of his own historical period. In the process he mistakes the real political purpose of the Crimean intervention, which was not an effort to mobilize empire, but to prevent Russia's expansion.

In the winter of 1855 Kingsley published a letter to Queen Victoria's soldiers in Sevastopol in which he inserts the refrain from David Garrick's well-known sailor song: "Hearts of oak our ships, hearts of oak our men, / And we'll fight, and we'll conquer again and again" (Kingsley "Brave Words" 200). These words echo the epigraph from the first chapter of *Westward Ho!*, which are from Alan Cunningham's (1784-1842) poem cited above. As a traditional English metaphor, "hearts of oak" signifies the bravery, courage and valor attributed to English sailors and tars. In the context of Cunningham's poem, the metaphor's tenor is the ship and the vehicle is the palace of oak which implies that sailors dwell in a kind of royal other space, a palace that exists somewhere on the ocean, never on the land.²⁹⁰ What does this fantasy of adventure and seafaring have to do with Victorian men fighting in the Crimean War? Kingsley published his historical novel in February 1855 when Victoria was the symbol of a fecund matriarch whose political body as the mother of her nation resembled her child-bearing physical

²⁹⁰ In traditional British symbolism ships are identified as oaks, wooden walls, palaces, and bulwarks of liberty. Ironically, though the Royal Oak tree was originally associated with the Stuart's clan badge, by the eighteenth century Edmund Burke usurped the symbol for the British aristocracy, "the great oaks that shade a country" (*Corr.* I: 381).

body.²⁹¹ Bearing in mind the contrast between Elizabeth's sexual chastity and Victoria's wifely bearing, it is important to look closely at the way Kingsley superimposes the values of his own century on to those of the past. By examining how the text develops a discourse of British exceptionalism from Elizabeth's symbolism, I argue that Kingsley's novel sets up a dichotomy between the symbolic figure of the virgin queen and Victoria whose reign exemplifies the epitome of the womanhood Kingsley values most highly.

i. How Victoria Casts her Shadow on Mrs. Leigh

Elizabeth is noticeably absent from the novel's action, and yet her virgin status, which is symbolic, allows Kingsley to distance the complexities of history in favor of fiction.²⁹² Yet paradoxically, in defending Elizabeth's chastity, Kingsley's heroes split the Fairy Queen into aspects that conform to the dominant gender ideology of the Victorian fifties. Kingsley's defense of Elizabeth is routed through his antipathy for Catholicism and paradoxically expressed in the novel's attack on celibacy and effeminacy.²⁹³ The novel pays tribute to Froude's essay on the forgotten male worthies, but in retelling the story of how Elizabeth's seadogs defended her against Catholic aggressors, Kingsley's makes the Papal Aggression of the 1850s form the

²⁹¹ By the time Kingsley published his novel Victoria was the mother of eight children. She was a queen who had largely lived up to her promise to be good as she filled the royal nursery with children who would soon occupy the royal houses of Europe with marriageable brides and grooms.

²⁹² Nicola J. Watson and Michael Dobson in *England's Elizabeth* (2002) take note of Elizabeth's "conspicuous absence" from Kingsley's novel, but they simply maintain that the vacancy is "perversely, a sort of representation of her" (188) and that "the Queen's absence in *Westward Ho!* is thus apparent rather than real" (189).

²⁹³ In Kingsley's tirades on effeminacy, he directs his Protestant indignation at his chief adversary Cardinal Newman. In *The Beast and the Monk* (1974), Kingsley's biographer Susan Chitty asserts that "in his muddled way Kingsley connected the honoring of the Virgin with this effeminacy" (237). It was Newman who, in *Tract 90* (1841), had upheld the rule of celibacy for Christian clerics, and Kingsley, who had earlier been an admirer of the Tractarians, turned his indignation toward the movement and Newman as its chief apostle (Adams 85). See O'Malley *Epistemology in the Cloister* (2009) who distinguishes a "homophobic attack" in Kingsley's diatribe (556-7).

backdrop of his novel.²⁹⁴ By identifying Elizabeth with England, and sending his heroes out to defend her chastity, the novel symbolically reclaims England's virgin territory. Though the war in Crimea was not an imperial venture, Kingsley's plot unfolds a male psychosexual fantasy that provides a justification for empire building. The novel fictionalizes this male fantasy by making the male heroes defend their queen's virginity against the accusations of Jesuit priests and Catholic laymen.²⁹⁵

Kingsley splits Elizabeth by sharing her symbolism with a female character who is a milder version of Gloriana, and much more like Victoria.²⁹⁶ Mrs. Leigh, the mother of the novel's two heroes Amyas and Frank, is a devout Protestant who endured and survived persecutions under "bloody Mary," and I understand her character as complicating the symbolism of motherhood and symbolic virginity (23). Because she lends the novel a sense of the values Kingsley most admires in a female ruler, she is also Elizabeth's counterpart, a domestic icon resembling Victoria.²⁹⁷ The mother is the central force that holds the novel together by ruling her household gently and guiding her son Amyas through his adult life. Moreover, Mrs. Leigh plays a strong role in every chapter where Amyas returns to England from

²⁹⁴ Kingsley wrote to his publisher on February 1853 that "considering these times of the Pope and the French invasion, [the novel] may make a hit, and do some good" (quoted in Vance 87).

²⁹⁵ Jesuit priests and teachers are found in all corners of the New World and they are all united in one common goal, which is to attack and eradicate Elizabeth.

²⁹⁶ Critics of the novel have noted that Kingsley divides Elizabeth's symbolism, but they do not agree on which female characters are her representatives. In *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Fame and Fantasy* (2002) for example, Michael Dobson and Nicola Watson claim that in the novel "the fate of the nation is played out across the bodies of two women, both of them surrogates for [Elizabeth], Rose Salterne and Ayacanora" (189). Dobson and Watson argue that these two characters fill the chivalric young men of Devon with an object of devotion and a feminine ideal to pursue.²⁹⁶ Though both Ayacanora and Rose play important roles in the plot's trajectory, they do not entirely resemble Elizabeth's symbolism.

²⁹⁷ In *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (2004), critic Susan Griffin asserts that Kingsley "splits [Victoria's] attributes as wife/mother and ruler between two female characters in order to explore how women's private and public roles are essential to Britain's identity as an empire" (122). Claiming that "Victoria's representatives, Mrs. Leigh and Elizabeth I stand in marked contrast to the woman whose worship defines continental maleness, the Virgin Mary," Griffin argues that "Kingsley displays, albeit unwittingly, his own and his culture's ambivalence about Victoria's complex and in many ways contradictory personage" (122).

his travels until finally, she appears on the last page of the novel presiding over the marriage of her heroic son and his Anglo-Spanish bride Ayacanora. Though both Mrs. Leigh and Elizabeth figure prominently, I claim that it is Victoria's shadow that falls on the novel by prioritizing Mrs. Leigh's maternal attributes over Gloriana's symbolic virginity. The text clearly identifies the unmarried and childless Elizabeth's indebtedness to Mrs. Leigh for having provided her with able-bodied young men. Elizabeth's first appears in a letter she writes to Mrs. Leigh,

in which she thanked her for 'the loan of that delicate and flawless crystal, the soul of her excellent son [Frank]'... and finished by exalting the poor mother above the famed Cornelia; 'for those sons, who she called her jewels, she only showed, yet kept to herself; but you madam, having two as precious, I doubt not, as were ever that Roman dame's, have, beyond her courage, lent them both to your country and your queen.' (28)

Elizabeth is only a textual presence acknowledging her indebtedness to Mrs. Leigh for having loaned her sons Frank and Amyas. Through a symbolic exchange the Virgin Queen pays her debt to Mrs. Leigh by lending her prestige. Gloriana inadvertently admits through her allusion to the Roman matron Cornelia, that motherhood ranks superior to her own symbolic virginity.²⁹⁸

In this chapter, which jumps forward five years from the opening scene where the reader first meets Amyas, the young hero has returned to Devon after having "sailed around the world with Sir Francis Drake" (21). On the same page the reader is informed that the hero's father Mr. Leigh, having succumbed to a strange illness, "died within a week" (21). Amyas's father is now eclipsed by his mother who becomes the family's only authority figure (21). From this point on,

²⁹⁸ The reference is to Cornelia Scipionis Africana (190-100 BCE) the virtuous Roman matron and mother of the Gracchi. A later reference appears in chapter 21 when the character Edmund Spenser admires Mrs. Leigh's maternal qualities and proposes to add a canto to her in *The Faerie Queen*.

the narrative is matrifocal, shifting attention away from Gloriana the Virgin Queen to Mrs. Leigh's queenly motherhood. Amyas now resides in his mother's house at Burrough Hall, and one night, he is awakened from a nightmare in which he encounters the ghostly corpse of the seadog John Oxenham whom he sees hanging from the yard-arm of his ship and beckoning Amyas to the "snow range of the Andes glittering in the moon" (52). The young man recognizes that he is being called to a life of adventure, yet Amyas's dream paradoxically sets the scene for his initiation into a mother culture. Amyas's dream encounter with the death of a father figure is followed only moments later in a scene with his mother.²⁹⁹ Rising from his bed in a "feverish and excited" state, he passes by his mother's bedchamber and finds Mrs. Leigh praying. As Amyas kneels beside her, mother and son peer into each other's souls:

There was nothing to be spoken, for there was nothing to be concealed between these two souls as clear as glass. Each knew all which the other meant; each knew that its own thoughts were known. At last the mutual gaze was over; she stooped and kissed him on the brow, and was in the act to turn away, as a tear dropped on his forehead. Her little bare feet were peeping out of her dress. He bent down and kissed them again and again; and then looking up, as if to excuse himself: 'You have such pretty feet mother!'

Instantly with a woman's instinct, she had hidden them. (53)

The passage focuses on the hero's maternal devotion, an attribute the novel never concedes to Elizabeth. Mrs. Leigh represents the values of motherhood associated with Victoria while Elizabeth is merely a distant shadow whose royal symbolism fails to inspire devotion and

²⁹⁹ Amyas is a tall blonde muscular Christian hero who dreams of circumnavigating the globe and sailing off to the New World for adventure, but his older brother Frank is his mother's favorite, an intellectual and tender-hearted young man who frequents Elizabeth's court. Amyas is described as "a beardless boy [with] the frame and stature of a Hercules, towering, like Saul of old, a head and shoulders above all the congregation, with his golden locks flowing down over his shoulders" (21).

affection but only defensiveness. Whereas Elizabeth is merely a symbol and point of reference outside of the narrative, Mrs. Leigh conforms to the gender expectations of the nineteenth century. As a widowed mother, Mrs. Leigh symbolizes both the mother of family and the nation serving as the narrative's repository for the attributes of motherhood that Elizabeth lacks. Here is the splitting referred to earlier, and the character of Mrs. Leigh enables this Victorian narrative to find an adequate imaginary site in which to deposit gendered values not found in the sixteenth-century cult of the Virgin Queen. Unlike the remote Elizabeth, Mrs. Leigh fills her role in the community at Devon by blending in with her social surroundings. Her ability to keep company with her neighbors at Devon and later mingle with Elizabeth's court society invests her with qualities Kingsley associates with the middle-class ideology that embraced Queen Victoria as their model.³⁰⁰

ii. How Amyas Defends Elizabeth's Maidenhead with His Maiden Sword

In the process of negotiating England's sixteenth-century past into his Victorian present Kingsley encounters Elizabeth's symbolic virginity as an important aspect of her queenship. Whereas virginity and celibacy had filled some cultural need in the sixteenth century for an icon that is both of this world and an exception to it, in the Victorian period these same attributes are

³⁰⁰ In his 1868 review of Victoria's *Leaves from a Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*, Kingsley praises Victoria's ability to blend in with her subjects. He asserts that "a great Queen should take her stand before her people simply upon the ground of her common humanity" (154) and claims that "if she was every inch a queen, she was also every inch a woman" ("Review of Leaves" 154). These observations place Victoria on the same level with her subjects and show that Kingsley prefers her form of queenship to that of the inaccessible Elizabeth. Victoria also resembles Mrs. Leigh not just in their shared attributes of wife and mother, but in their mutual inclination to avoid the scandals and worldliness of court life. Upon marrying her husband, Mrs. Leigh escapes "the little Babylon at Whitehall" (22), and retires to Devon. Like Victoria and Albert, the Leighs disdain courtly etiquette and prefer the simplicity of country life. In his review, Kingsley's praise of "Highlandolatry" and "Balmorality" endorses Victoria's preference for "simple, healthy, peaceful family life, of that country and outdoor kind which is almost peculiar to this empire" (155).³⁰⁰ He adds that through the Queen's example, "the average Briton should be able to sketch for himself what royalty ought to do in the retirement of a country house" (155).³⁰⁰ These domestic values do not feature in the novel's representations of Elizabeth who is associated exclusively with court life and etiquette.

difficult for Kingsley to reconcile with his belief in the sanctity of marriage. Rumors of Elizabeth's secret active erotic life prove irresistible to Froude and his Victorian readers, but for Kingsley they are embarrassing. Kingsley largely ignores any whiff of Elizabeth's moral lapses creating instead, a Queen who inspires a collective male fantasy of chivalric devotion. Her seadogs defend her against the Catholic enemy and lead her to triumph.

Returning now to my discussion of chapter three, the events lead Amyas to a direct confrontation with the Catholic enemy who would dare deny Elizabeth's status as the Virgin Queen. Leaving his mother to her prayers, Amyas goes out for an early morning bath at a pebble ridge by Bideford Bay, and as he strips and plunges into the waves, the tall dark figure of his Jesuit cousin Eustace appears on the rampart above him. Eustace, the novel's resident Catholic and enemy within, is freshly returned from his seminary in Rheims. As he sits down with Amyas to talk of the latter's adventures, Frank arrives. Eustace believes that Amyas owes his luck at sea to the "Blessed Virgin's Prayers" (58), but Frank quickly tells Eustace that his brother really owes his luck to the "peerless virgin" Elizabeth under whose command he sails. This opens a contest between the cousins as virgins and queens become the topic of a heated discussion. Eustace quickly retorts that he is at least certain about the Mother of God when he calls his "patroness a virgin undefiled" (59), and his doubts about Elizabeth's virginity are ironically reminiscent of Froude's position in "Morals of Queen Elizabeth" where she is said to be "proud of her title of Virgin Queen, whether she deserved it or not" (500). Kingsley uses Elizabeth's chastity to deflate Eustace's argument for the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, but he also ironically validates the popular Victorian perception that Gloriana was far from pure and certainly not sexually chaste. The ensuing quarrel between the brothers and their cousin introduces doubts that Kingsley would reproduce in his later periodical literature, but more

importantly the boy's conversation pivots around both confessional and national differences which disguise their anxieties about virginity.³⁰¹ Though neither brother challenges Eustace further on the matter of the queen's chastity, what Amyas says next leaves the reader in a quandary.

Amyas boasts that when he was in the Azores, he had fallen into an argument with a Frenchman about the topic of the queen's sexual chastity, and that he ended the quarrel by slicing the man's head off "and so fleshed [his] "maiden sword" (59). Frank's earlier defense of Elizabeth's maidenhead and now Amyas's fresh invocation of his "maiden sword," reinforces the gendered language that permeates the entire novel. This violent story so abruptly introduced by a character who otherwise has the habit of "just doing the right thing without thinking about it," conveniently passes over Amyas's status as a murderer. He is merely a swashbuckling young brute whose impulsiveness registers as moral rectitude in "doing the right thing" by defending his Queen (57). Nevertheless, Kingsley's hero joyfully admits to murder. Fictional murder in this case is a compensation for the hero's injured masculinity, but it also rewrites history from the victor's point of view. The murder is also a form of symbolic castration, and it is through Amyas that the authorial persona vents and compensates for masculine anxiety. Another example of this

³⁰¹ In his 1861 review of volumes seven and eight of Froude's *History of England*, Kingsley gingerly offers apologies for Froude's concerns over Elizabeth's "affection for Lord Robert Dudley, which all but alienated her from the hearts of her people, and brought her at one time to the brink of ruin" (216). In the effort to dispel contention and debate, Kingsley dismisses doubts about Elizabeth's morals by asserting that "the average morality of Elizabeth's reign was not so much low as capricious, self-willed, fortuitous; magnificent one day in virtue, terrible the next in vice" (217). Six years after he published his historical novel, Kingsley is clearly still anxious about Gloriana. In 1860, newly appointed by Victoria as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, Kingsley faced the challenge of learning how to contend with the new standards of scientific history his fellow historians had established. This explains the cautious attitude of the review, but there is also evidence that Kingsley maintained his earlier defensive position about Gloriana. He writes that Froude also defended Elizabeth's "purity" well enough and that no one could cast aspersions on her chastity "save in the foul imaginations of Jesuits like Parsons, who could conceive of no love which was not after the model of Paris, Venice, and Rome" (218). This is the same position he holds throughout his historical novel, and it suggests that Kingsley had little intention of changing his views even in the face of historical evidence.

fear or dread of castration is inscribed in the boy's conversation which pivots around numerous references to the Queen of Scots. Mary's execution is symbolically reenacted in this chapter when Amyas has finished his tale of the murdered Frenchman. Frank punctuates the finale by exclaiming "So perish all her enemies!" (60), the same words that Richard Fletcher, Dean of Peterborough pronounced after Mary Stuart's execution. The same phrase is repeated later in chapter twenty eight when the narrator describes the ringing of bells and general celebration announcing Mary's death in Northam (538). Even as the bells are ringing in celebration of Mary's execution, the Protestant mother learns of her son's fate as Amyas returns to Bideford to announce that Frank has died a martyr's death at the hands of the Inquisition (542).

If the novel displaces aspects of Mary's beheading on to Amyas's victim the anonymous Frenchman, by making Frank and Rose victims of Popery, also reclaims martyrdom for Protestantism. Though there is a great difference between the murder of a Frenchman who dislikes Elizabeth, Frank's martyrdom at the hands of the Inquisition, and the execution of the Queen of Scots, Kingsley's inflammatory rhetoric produces the desired anti-Catholic effect.³⁰² Jesuit Mariolatry is identified as forming part of a defense of Mary Stuart who was no virgin, but whose Catholicism associated her with the Virgin Mary. In their conversation Frank dismisses slander against Elizabeth's chastity by blaming it on the "tattle of a few cowardly back-stair rogues, who wish to curry favor with the Guises" (60).³⁰³

At the end of the novel Amyas pays a heavy price for his violence when in hot pursuit of the Spanish villain Don Guzman, he is symbolically punished; blinded by a bolt of lightning. The

³⁰² Eustace is condemned when the narrator asserts that "the Upas-shadow which blighted the whole Romish Church, blighted him also" (58), and he is abruptly dropped from the novel at the end of chapter twenty-two: "Let the dead bury their dead. We have no more concern with Eustace Leigh (426).

³⁰³ The Guises are Mary Stuart's evil uncles who actively participated in the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. Part of their legacy according to Kingsley, is to have spread rumors about Elizabeth's sexual affair with Leicester.

punishment is a form of symbolic castration resulting in the failure of Amyas's masculine will, but it may also register as a fantasy of reparation for earlier aggression.³⁰⁴ Critics of Kingsley's novel have overlooked Amyas's murder confession, but it is important to recall that the novel was written as a form of entertainment and spiritual instruction for Victoria's soldiers fighting the Crimean war. Kingsley implies that boastful swaggering about violent acts in defense of England would elevate a soldier's morale, and in this way the violent Elizabethan past is sutured to the Victorian present.³⁰⁵ The novel's attacks on Jesuit priests contains an anxious message for Victorian readers as Elizabeth's Catholic enemies have returned as Russians, to haunt Victoria's reign. What all of this discussion implies is that the seadog's defenses of Elizabeth are psychic fantasies that provoke masculine anxiety managed through symbolic violence. This displaced symbolic violence however has no effect on the boy's ambivalence toward Elizabeth.

iii. "For the sea my realm it is, as good Queen Bess's is the land"

Aboard the ship *Good Rose*, Amyas and his fellow seadogs can live out the fantasy of a lawless existence on the high seas, debarking on the tropical islands of the Spanish Main and Venezuela. Circumnavigation and circumvention are two ways in which Amyas and Frank avoid and elude Elizabeth. Frank tells Amyas that though he wants to join the "Brotherhood of the Rose" and go seafaring, he must first seek Elizabeth's permission before leaving her court.³⁰⁶ Breaking free of Elizabeth will not be easy, and when Amyas remarks that "the queen could not cut his head off

³⁰⁴ See Graham Dawson's *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (1994) for a Kleinian account of the fantasies involved in British adventure fiction and the "pleasure-culture of war."

³⁰⁵ Critic David Johnson, in "Fear of Death in Victorian Fiction" (1939), noting thirteen named characters who die violent deaths, claims that *Westward Ho!* has the highest score for violence in any Victorian novel (7).

³⁰⁶ Here the novel represents her as a threat to Frank's masculinity just as she was to his parents when they attended her court at Whitehall years earlier in the novel. The narrator describes how Frank and Amyas's parents had contrived to marry each other, and notes that though "the queen grumbled a little, as usual, at the lady for marrying, and at the gentleman for adoring anyone but her royal self, they got leave to vanish" (22). This representation of Elizabeth as a jealous queen works counter to both Froude and Kingsley's other characterizations of "Good Queen Bess" as inspiring her men to protect her.

for wanting to go to the sea,” Frank asks “but what ax so sharp as her frown?” (330). Being simultaneously oppressive and impressive, repelling and desirable, Elizabeth causes male characters, including Raleigh to want to flee from her courtly epicenter. This perpetual outward movement makes the plot follow a centrifugal movement. But in this passage, Frank’s fear of Elizabeth as a kind of Circe figure conceals the threat of effeminacy.

When Amyas refers to his brother’s “pain of parting from [Elizabeth]” (331), Frank responds: “I would die for the least hair of her royal head” and then proceeds to equivocate in his next breath, saying that “I could live very well from now till Doomsday, without ever setting eyes on the said head. Plato’s troglodytes regretted not that sunlight which they had never beheld” (331). The allusion to Plato’s Myth of the Cave not only invokes the shadow Elizabeth casts on her courtiers but it also introduces the theme of shadows into the novel. For Frank, being at Elizabeth’s court is the same as idealizing her, and yet the courtier can also diminish her hold by leaving her and Greenwich behind. This same wish to break free from Elizabeth is also shared by Sir Walter Raleigh when he tells Amyas of his desire to go to Newfoundland. Like Frank he too expresses his desire to play the runaway. “Gloriana don’t know it,” he tells Amyas, “and shan’t till I’m off. She’d send me to the Tower, I think, if she caught me playing truant” (244). These characters express their ambivalence toward Gloriana through their antithetical feelings of devotion and their disinclination to stay at her court.

When Frank reveals to Amyas that in a private conference the Queen has threatened him with punishment, he asks rhetorically “what worse punishment than exile from the sunlight of her presence, into the outer darkness which reigns where she is not?” (331). Frank has replaced Elizabeth with the attributes of a devouring mother who like Catherine de Medici requires

absolute devotion and attention to her constant commands.³⁰⁷ Fear and attraction keeps Frank anxious as he aspires to leave Greenwich for the New World while Elizabeth embodies an uncanny otherness that terrifies him. When he appears before the queen he confronts in her narcissism, that which resembles himself; a masculine power. This proves intolerable because it raises doubts about his own plenitude, and he leaves her court knowing that to be away from Elizabeth is to dwell in the shadow. This aspect of a terrifying spiritual mother Elizabeth also appears in Dobson and Watson's suggestion that "the fiction of fulfilled femininity embedded in Elizabeth's spiritual motherhood of her sea-dogs might all too easily transform nightmarishly into a vision of a devouring mother" (194). Unlike the Good Mother Mrs. Leigh, who like Victoria embodies the virtues of Kingsley's true womanhood, Elizabeth threatens the young heroes into submission.

Frank expresses his longing to leave Whitehall and Elizabeth's court by an indirect allusion to the force and direction of the water's currents. He refers to the idea that "the ocean follows the *primum mobile* of the heavens, and flows forever from east to west" (italics in original 327). In London, standing with Amyas by the Thames, Frank explains that: [Father Thames's] banks are stately enough; yet, you see, he cannot stay to look at them. He hurries down to the sea; and the sea into the ocean; and the ocean Westward Ho, forever. All things move Westward-Ho" (327). Frank's reference to "Father Thames" renders the water in the masculine gender and the force of its current an indirect allusion to masculine energy.³⁰⁸ While the water metaphors are used as ways of channeling the often dangerous currents of manliness, the spatial and directional flow makes use of Froude's associations of Elizabethan men with

³⁰⁷ This representation is confirmed in Dobson and Watson's depiction of the Victorian Elizabeth as a "glamorous, but deadly double to the mother" (194).

³⁰⁸ In *Victorian Masculinities* Herbert Sussman asserts that Victorians understood manliness as "an inchoate force" and that this "interior energy was consistently imagined or fantasized in a metaphoric of fluid" (10).

exceptional moral qualities and an emergent discourse of empire. Froude, as cited earlier, writes that “in the days of our own Elizabeth, the seamen from the banks of the Thames” had valiantly left England and “went out across the unknown seas fighting, discovering, [and] colonizing” (Froude 34). Almost quoting verbatim from Froude, Kingsley’s Frank philosophizes on the valor of British seamen by emphasizing their westward movement into the ocean.

In chapter sixteen Frank and Amyas Leigh are in London’s Deptford Creek aboard Sir Francis Drake’s ship *Pelican*, famed as the vessel on which Drake first circumnavigated the world (322). Amyas dines in the company of a list of England’s forgotten worthies including Sir Walter Raleigh, Philip Sidney, when they receive the news of Sir Gilbert Humphrey’s death (327). Raleigh leaves for Whitehall to notify the Queen while Frank and Amyas make their way home to their mother. Frank suddenly falls into a speech that gets at the very heart of his anxiety over female power:

You know not what power over the soul has the native and God-given majesty of royalty (awful enough in itself), when to it is super-added the wisdom of the sage, and therewithal the tenderness of the woman. Had I my will, there should be in every realm not a salique, but an anti-salique law; whereby no kings but only queens should rule mankind. Then would weakness and not power be to man the symbol of divinity; love, and not cunning, would be the arbiter of every cause; and chivalry, not fear, the spring of all obedience. (327)

The negative reference to the Salic law is also an impressive disavowal of the patriarchal institution that Carlyle symbolically defends through Knox. Once again Kingsley undermines the project that his predecessor upheld.

In Kingsley's review essay on Sir Walter Raleigh published in *The North British Review* in May 1855 he presents a different image of Elizabeth. He mobilizes a fantasmatic scenario in which Raleigh positions himself before Gloriana:

We must try to realize to ourselves the way in which men as Raleigh looked not only at Elizabeth, but at all the world. There was, in plain palpable fact, something about her, her history, her policy, the times, the glorious part which England, and she as the incarnation of the then English spirit, was playing upon earth, which raised imaginative and heroic souls into a permanent exaltation—a 'fairy land,' as they called it themselves, which seems to us fantastic, and would be fantastic in us, because we are not at their work, or in their days. ("Sir Walter Raleigh" 24)

Kingsley's fantasy of Elizabeth's England as a "fairy land" runs counter to his contemporary's portraits examined earlier. Elizabeth is fantasized from the subject position of Elizabethan men who celebrated her for possessing great physical beauty.

iv. From Queen Bess's Exceptional Men to Victoria's "Brave Soldiers"

Kingsley presents a case of English moral exceptionalism in which his noble sailor heroes occupy a narrative seascape rather than a landscape. The epigraph from Cunningham's poem carries this central message of Kingsley's historical novel by associating the heroes with the open sea while the land is left behind to Queen Elizabeth. In celebrating the Elizabethan seafarer's independence and maritime heritage, the narrator quickly lays out the novel's task to establish a new tradition within the Victorian Age. Inspiring loyalty and devotion to the Elizabethan men whom Froude called the "forgotten worthies," the reader's attention is diverted

from Elizabeth and directed toward the men who will serve as role models for a generation of young British boys and girls. The narrator cites Froude's essay:

It was the men of Devon, the Drakes, and Hawkinses, Gilberts and Raleighs, Grenvilles and Oxenhams, and a host more of '*forgotten worthies*' whom we shall learn one day to honour as they deserve, to whom [England] owes her commerce, her colonies, her very existence. It is in memory of these men, their voyages and their battles, their faith and their valour, their heroic lives and no less heroic deaths, that I write this book. (1-2)

Here the narrator asks his (male) readers to focus on "Elizabethan gallants" as ancestors of the "true Englishman" (258), and the message was clearly registered in the earliest reviews of the novel.³⁰⁹

In October 1854 Kingsley was halfway through the writing of his novel when in a letter to his friend Maurice he described it as "a most ruthless, bloodthirsty book (just what the times want I think)" and he adds that though he cannot fight in the war he can write "books which will make others fight" ("Letters and Memories" I: 330).³¹⁰ Investing in war-culture through his novel, Kingsley's imaginary Elizabethan past points in the direction of "westward ho," which provides a mirror for Victoria's soldiers fighting the "eastward ho" war in the Crimea. The novel spatializes the temporal by claiming that the political realities are the same as those of the present. Though England's historical war with Catholic Spain occupies the central portion of

³⁰⁹ The American journalist and author William Henry Hurlbut understood Kingsley's message when in a review article for the *Christian Examiner* he observes that "in this new romance of Amyas Leigh we find the indefatigable preacher enforcing his faith upon the living Englishmen of modern England, from the examples of the most heroic age of English history" (285).³⁰⁹ The Victorian and the Elizabethan are historical mirrors, but the "enforcing" of faith also registers the rhetorical impact of Kingsley's historical imagination.

³¹⁰ Amy Cruse asserts that "what Kingsley called its ruthlessness and bloodthirstiness made it acceptable to the young and the adventurous, and its high courageous spirit suited the temper of a nation that was, at the time the book was published, full of pride in the deeds of its fighting men" (307).

Kingsley's narrative, it serves as a reminder of England's present dangers in Balaclava and Sevastopol. This association between past and present is manifest in a concluding chapter:

It is the fashion now to call [Elizabeth] a despot; but unless every monarch is to be branded with that epithet whose power is not as circumscribed as Queen Victoria's is now, we ought rather to call her the most popular sovereign, obeyed of their own free will by the freest subjects which England has ever seen; confess the Armada fight to have been as great a moral triumph as a political one; and (now that our late boasting is a little silenced by Crimean disasters) inquire whether we have not something to learn from the old Tudor times, as how to choose officials, how to train people, and how to defend a country. (564)

As "the most popular sovereign," whom her subjects "obeyed of their own free will," Kingsley's Elizabeth is reminiscent of Carlyle's praise for Gloriana mentioned earlier. Moreover in this passage the text clearly draws a parallel between Elizabeth's autocratic reign and Victoria's limited and constitutional government.

In a letter to her uncle Leopold written in May 1855, only three months after Kingsley published his novel, Victoria describes her distribution of the Crimean medals to her brave soldiers. She writes:

From the highest Prince of the Blood to the lowest Private, all received the same distinction for the bravest conduct in the severest actions, and the rough hand of the brave and honest private soldier came for the first time in contact with that of their Sovereign and their Queen! Noble fellows! I own I feel as if they were my own children; my heart beats for them as for my nearest and dearest. (Esher III:127)

Victoria asserts her maternal feelings for her subjects over any other relationship, while her reference to the royal touch suggests an allusion to the cult of the royal touch which had died out in England with the passing of the Stuart kings.³¹¹ Victoria's personal distribution of the Crimean medal awards adds a touch of royalty to the value of their exchange, and this was deemed important for men such as Kingsley. Kingsley succeeds in offering his mid-Victorian readers exceptional heroic men, but his representation of Elizabeth fails to provide them with a sense of reassuring female self-sacrifice and tenderness that Victoria offered. Instead, Kingsley's novel, sketches a distant effigy of Queen Elizabeth as Victoria's shadow.

In Kingsley's novel *Gloriana* justifies male violence and defends expansionist aggression in her name. Unlike Craik who uses Elizabeth's effigy to urge Victoria to lay aside her grief, Kingsley defends Victoria's mourning practices in his review of her *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands*. Praising Victoria's "common humanity," Kingsley asserts that her eschewing of courtly etiquette makes her an exemplary female figure for all British women.³¹² He dispenses with the press whose disparaging comments about Victoria's writing are compared to the Spanish ambassadors who were Elizabeth's detractors. Citing those journalists and newspaper reporters who regard *Leaves* as trivial and unworthy of a Queen, Kingsley asserts that the "club gossips" and "town wits" are "about as important to the nation now as they were in the latter years of Elizabeth" (154). The explicit reference to Elizabeth suggests that readers can

³¹¹ A year later, in a letter dated 5 January 1856 when selecting the model for the Victoria Cross, she suggested to Lord Panmure that "the motto would be better 'For Valour' than 'for the Brave,' as this would lead to the inference that only those are deemed brave who have got the Victoria Cross" (160). Victoria's sensitivity to the issue underlying these distinctions shows her careful thought about how the values of manliness might be interpreted by her subjects. Because many of the crosses "were awarded posthumously," as John Lucas observes, "soldiers could now die not merely die [*sic*] for the queen" (30).

³¹² Kingsley's review was published in *Frasers* in February 1868. In the review he asserts that Queen Victoria, "by telling her story, simply, earnestly, confidently...has appealed to women's suffrage, of a most potent kind" (154).

have a better understanding of the past only by heeding to the present.³¹³ Whereas previous European courts made etiquette the focus of life around the sovereign, Victoria's monarchy does not depend on the court at all. Etiquette is almost completely absent from Victoria's *Leaves* and Kingsley points out that these ancient formalities had brought about the downfall of other recent European monarchies, a topic I will return to in the next chapter on Marie-Antoinette. By devaluing the importance of etiquette in his review, Kingsley unwittingly dismisses the chief source of Elizabeth's power, her ability to rigidly observe and enforce even through legislation the minutest infractions from the observance of court etiquette. By contrast Victoria, whom Henry James would later remember as "the safe and motherly old middle-class queen, who held the nation warm under the fold of her big, hideous, Scotch-plaid shawl" (James *Letters* 184), was also considered by her subjects, a better kind of Elizabeth.

³¹³ For a discussion of Kingsley's assumption that Victoria was the author of *The Early Years of the Prince Consort* see Homans 120-21.

Chapter IV: The Spectacular Marie-Antoinette: Victoria's Spectral Shadow

Excuse me, therefore, if I have dwelt too long on the atrocious spectacle of the 6th of October 1789, or have given too much scope to the reflections which have arisen in my mind on occasion of the most important of all revolutions, which may be dated from that day—I mean a revolution in sentiment, manners, and moral opinions.

—Edmund Burke *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), 70.

[Carlyle's] spectral 'History of the French Revolution' [is] spectral, for the actors in it appear without their earthly clothes: men and women in their natural characters, but as in some vast phantasmagoria, with the supernatural shining through them.

—James Anthony Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881* (1884), 78.

Marie Antoinette I have not quite acquitted. It would be uninteresting—perhaps untrue. I have accused her lovingly, and have kissed when I scourged.

—Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now* (1875), 8.

This chapter demonstrates that British visual and literary representations of the French Revolution appeared with increasing frequency throughout Victoria's reign, and that the figure of Marie-Antoinette emerged from the past to haunt the period as an overdetermined symbol for ambivalence about female monarchy. Wherever Marie-Antoinette's name appears, the term spectacle is not far behind. I claim that the Victorians derived their symbolism from Edmund

Burke's much recited melancholic reflections on the "spectacle of suffering royalty" (*Correspondence* III: 19). Whether in Thomas Carlyle's spectacle of "the fair young queen, the cynosure of all eyes" ("French Revolution" I. ii: 34), or in Froude's claim that Carlyle's vision of the revolution is "spectral," the Victorians rarely fail to capture the ambiguous sense of the spectacular. The words spectacle (a show), and specter (a ghost) share a common etymological root in the Latin 'specere' which means "to see." When referring to Marie-Antoinette as a specter I consider both the fact that she is a spectral shadow of Queen Victoria and that the subsequent attempts to re-present her do so in the form of a spectacular exhibition of British "sentiment, manners, and moral opinions."³¹⁴ In Victorian representations of Marie-Antoinette, it is this predominantly Burkean specter that returns.

Whether depicting the occasion of her joyful arrival in France in 1770 or her criminal trial and execution in 1792, Victorians render Marie-Antoinette spectacular. Yet the shadow of her alleged crimes is also part of the ambiguity of spectacle. This is the sense Trollope captures best when his Lady Carbury writes of Marie-Antoinette: "I have accused her lovingly, and have kissed when I scourged" (8). Trollope's parallel structure expresses a sense of ambivalence as accusatory and loving, kissing and scourging go hand in hand. Carlyle and Dickens's evocations of Marie-Antoinette likewise convey ambivalence and I argue that it is important to consider how Queen Victoria is casting her shadow on the Victorian icon of Marie-Antoinette.³¹⁵

I. Marie-Antoinette in the Victorian Public Sphere

³¹⁴ For Derrida, "a specter is always a revenant. It begins by coming back" (*Specters of Marx* 11). For a different but not unrelated discussion of Marie-Antoinette as a specter, see Terry Castle's article "Marie Antoinette Obsession" (*Goodman* 199-238.)

³¹⁵ The name Marie-Antoinette often appears unhyphenated in Victorian texts. In keeping with this practice I have remained faithful to the originals when quoting from the texts. The hyphenated Marie-Antoinette refers to the historical queen.

The condition of France at this moment was so frightful and horrible, that if a painter wished to portray a description of hell, he could not find so terrible a model, or a subject so pregnant with horror, and fit for his purpose.

—Edmund Burke, Speech to the House of Commons April 11, 1794 *Parliamentary History* 31, 379.

We beg, as a special favor, that there will be no pictures of the French Revolution in the next exhibition. We are already saturated with takings of the Tulleries [sic], and the avalanche of furniture from the windows of the Palais Royal, and gentlemen with fancy whiskers and classic blouses doing duty as Garde Mobiles, and have had more barricades on paper than we shall be able to get over during the remainder of our lives...All politics should be thrown into the shade, even a greater shade than that of the Octagon Room—that is to say, they should not be seen at the royal academy at all.

—*Punch*, (15 April 1848), 161.

Five days after the Chartist rally at Kennington Common on April 10 1848, *Punch's* sarcastic plea for “no pictures of the French Revolution in the next exhibition” is a testament to how quickly Victorians overcame the temporary threat of revolution in Great Britain, and that they did so by using both history and art criticism as a means of allaying their anxieties. Yet there is also real anxiety expressed in the passage. *Punch* separates the concerns of high art in its petition to the Royal Academy while it acknowledges that representations of revolution were already ubiquitous with “more barricades on paper than we shall be able to get over during the remainder of our lives” (161). As if responding belatedly to Edmund Burke’s horror at the condition of France in 1794, and his claim that a painter would only find a living hell there, *Punch* asserts that that hell is painterly, a product of the artistic mind. It is needless to point out that Royal Academicians left *Punch's* pleas unheeded, especially in light of its accelerated production of paintings depicting the *ancien regime* and in particular the tragic figure of Marie-Antoinette.

By 1875 when Trollope published *The Way We Live Now*, the British nation had, for over a decade, endured a queen who was absent from her throne. In the interim her subjects populated literature with “multiple queens in the vacuum created by Victoria’s absence” (Homans 67). In 1848 however, when Queen Victoria and Albert were threatened by the idea of imminent revolution, her subjects looked back in time and across the Channel for historical antecedents to

their own situation. It was the spectral figure of Marie-Antoinette that came to mind as a distant and yet immediate historical parallel with which to compare their own queen. In literary and visual texts Marie-Antoinette's shadowy presence prompted Victorians to reflect on the dangers of irresponsible frivolousness, of courtly corruption and scandal, and she brought to mind the consequences attendant on royal misbehavior. Yet for many, Marie-Antoinette also evoked the memory of what Carlyle, in his essay "The Diamond Necklace Affair," called "the Age of Chivalry" (96). Burke's chivalry encouraged Victorians to embrace gendered codes of, devotion, protection and allegiance to Victoria.

i. Portraits of Marie-Antoinette as Victoria's Shadow

In 1855, when Charles Dickens attended the International Exhibition in Paris, he saw his friend Edward Matthew Ward's (1816-1879) painting *The Royal Family of France in the Prison of the Temple* (1851) (fig. 1).³¹⁶ Edward Ward and his wife Henrietta were close acquaintances of Charles Dickens. In their historical paintings depicting royalty both painters highlight domestic situations in which kings and queens appear to be middle-class. In this painting Ward repudiates Jacobin and revolutionary representations of Marie-Antoinette as a criminal queen. In the center of the canvas, an anxious Marie-Antoinette watches over her king and husband Louis XVI while darning holes in his tattered vest.³¹⁷ On the lower right side of the canvas Louis XVI is sleeping on a sofa while three other members of the royal family including the king's sister Princess Elizabeth, the Dauphin Louis-Charles, and the Dauphine Marie Thérèse Charlotte are all

³¹⁶ Commenting on the exhibition in a letter to John Forster, Dickens writes of the "horrid respectability" displayed in many paintings among British contributions, but he singles out Ward's work with praise (*Letters 7*: 742-744). See also Starcky (2008).

³¹⁷ Ward's representation draws its theme from Alphonse de Lamartine's *History of the Girondists*. Lamartine's chapter appropriately titled "Royal Tailoresses," follows the trajectory of the royal family from their removal from the Tuileries and their installation in the prison of the Temple on August 10, 1792. Lamartine writes that "the queen was obliged to mend the king's coat while he was asleep, in order that he might not be obliged to wear a vestment with holes" (290).

occupied with domestic activities. A guard stands in the background peeking from behind a curtain. Doubling the queen's gaze, the guard stares at this spectacle of the anxious queen and



the sleeping king.

Figure 4.1. Edward Matthew Ward (1816-1879) *The Royal Family of France in the Prison of the Temple* (1851) Harris Museum and Art Gallery Preston, Lancashire—bequeathed by Richard Newsham.

By painting the royal family in a private and intimate scene, Ward makes the spectator question the comforts of domestic privacy. The painting embodies the contradictions of the period, for on one hand it celebrates the family gathered in a domestic scene, and on the other the spectator is confronted with the same as a harrowing experience of imprisonment. To borrow from Freud's theorization of the uncanny, Ward's representation of the domestic, the "heimlich," contains its opposite, a scene of terror. The familiar environment of the painting's domestic scene is made to seem different, uncanny, and other. Rather than experiencing critical distance, the scene requires that the spectator be absorbed into a theatrical spectacle of royal suffering.

Occupied with her everyday domestic task, Marie-Antoinette is at the farthest remove from her representation in the familiar Jacobin symbolism. The French revolutionaries regarded Marie-Antoinette as pornographic, criminal and a debauched queen. In *The Wicked Queen: The Origins of the Myth of Marie-Antoinette* (1999), critic Chantal Thomas claims that the Jacobins considered her a foreigner, a self-indulgent debauchee with an inordinate passion for jewelry, frivolous expenditure, conspicuous consumption, and dissimulation (10-11).³¹⁸ Ward's Marie-Antoinette by contrast, is designed in the image of the middle-class Queen Victoria. Marie-Antoinette's place in the center of the composition reminds spectators that Ward imagines her as a loving mother and wife who, though dead sixty-four years, still holds her royal family together. Moreover, Marie-Antoinette's position is level with the spectator's gaze, making her a spectral

³¹⁸ The literature on Marie-Antoinette's contradictory representations in Jacobin literature is vast and continually expanding. The standard text is still Dena Goodman's collection of essays in *Marie Antoinette: Writings on the Body of the Queen*. See also Chantal Thomas and Lynn Hunt's earlier work. See also Crawford (2004).

shadow for royal eyes to gaze upon at the Royal Academy. An article in *The Times* announced that the painting was exhibited at London in 1851, and had attracted Queen Victoria's attention and was one she wanted to purchase for the Royal Collection.³¹⁹ Art historian Thomas Boase claims that the painting was "the most popular and praised picture of the year," asserting that though Victoria wanted to purchase it, she "yielded her claim to an earlier applicant, 'a Lancashire manufacturer of taste and liberality'" (Boase 283).³²⁰

The painting's rich symbolism lies in its detailed depiction of the royal family's domestic activities which invites the Victorian spectator to linger and keep watch. The dauphin plays with a shuttlecock, a toy whose symbolism combines the form of a crown, hinting at monarchy and stability, with the idea of being tossed from one side to another. It suggests the dauphin's own uncertain future.³²¹ His future however, is in stark contrast to Louis XVI's posture as his head lies close by an open book on the table, its pages turned to one whose title reads "Charles I." Victorian spectators would also recognize the historical reference to the beheading of Charles I of England in January of 1639, and they would thereby be encouraged to sympathize with Ward's royalist sentiments. Louis XVI's recumbent posture intimates his fate at the guillotine on January 1793.

Marie-Antoinette's attire and facial expression are not those of a haughty French queen, but of a middle-class Victorian wife tending to her stitching while overseeing her family. These are attributes of the monarchy celebrated by many of Victoria's female subjects. Elizabeth Stone

³¹⁹ The same article underscores the pathos by adding melodramatically that the "doomed Family" are all "on the brink of the most terrible catastrophe in modern history" ("Exhibition" 8).

³²⁰ The applicant was the solicitor Richard Newsham, who bequeathed his collection to the Harris Gallery at Preston, Lancashire in 1883. See Boase 283.

³²¹ The shuttlecock, a sport object used in games of badminton and shuttledore, is mentioned in Madame de Campan's *Memoirs* which were translated in 1823, but significantly it was also becoming popular in the 1850s.

for example, in her popular work *The Art of the Needle* (1841), includes a chapter devoted to “The Needlework of Royal Ladies,” observing that “the beautiful and unfortunate Marie-Antoinette, lively as was her disposition and fond as she was of gaiety, did not find either the duties or gaieties of a court inconsistent with the labours of the needle” (Stone 388). Literally stitching the sad fate of the Queen of France into her work, Stone remarks that “one of the greatest troubles in prison, before her separation from the king and the dauphin, was the being deprived of her sewing implements” (391). Stone’s Marie-Antoinette is reminiscent of Ruskin’s Victorian house wife, who as a queen of the hearth and home would be remiss if deprived of her domestic utensils. Quoting freely from Madame de Campan’s *The Private Life of Marie Antoinette* (1823), Stone notes the queen’s activities in the Temple prison, pointing out that “they passed some time in needlework knitting or tapestry work” (391). Ward places these domestic details in his painting in order to appeal to middle-class sentiments and arouse sympathy from sentimental royalist spectators. The sewing implements in particular would appeal to female spectators who, like Elizabeth Stone look for such details to confirm their own notions of domestic life. Ward invites spectators to imagine that Marie-Antoinette is one of them; she inhabits the center of the home as a wife and a Queen Consort.

The Dauphine Marie-Thérèse stands at a table behind Marie-Antoinette pouring water into a vase of flowers which associates her with the preservation of life. This detail also conforms to the Victorian view of feminine domesticity confirmed later in Ruskin’s “Of Queen’s Gardens” where “a woman’s duty” is “to assist in the ordering, in the comforting, and in the beautiful adornment of the state” (88). If the painting instructs viewers on the lofty ideals of female rule and the “beautiful adornment of the state,” it also warns of the dangers that could befall the young and the innocent. Marie-Thérèse was Marie-Antoinette’s only child who would

survive the violence of the revolution.³²² Ward makes the royal family of France stand in for all endangered monarchies while appealing to the domestic sense of life so valued by the Victorian middle class.

Ward's painting of the French royal family relates directly to the problems of representation that Victoria and Albert would encounter.³²³ As Victoria increasingly mirrored her subjects, they would see themselves refracted in her pervasive image. Ward extends this same mirroring effect to Marie-Antoinette whose iconic image becomes immediately recognizable as "one of us." In this way Ward can anticipate an outpouring of emotion and a spectacle of sympathy from his Victorian spectators. All five members of the royal family are foregrounded in the composition which enlarges them, making them appear closer to the spectator than the five citizen-guards looming in the background. The arrangement allows the spectator to commiserate with the family while still remembering the gaze of the ever-vigilant spying jailer in the background.³²⁴

This scene of royal suffering and imprisonment imagined as one of domestic tranquility, draws attention to how Victorians in the middle decades of the period would recast the French Revolution to suit their desire for monarchical stability. Linda Shires argues along these lines that the English "fostered a view of the French family as ideal" while "reading the revolution in

³²² Writing about the "Victorian obsession with the more recent fate of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette," Roy Strong notes that the scenes are 'preoccupied with the vanishing and transitory nature of monarchy' (4).

³²³ Critic Nancy Armstrong observes that in the fifties, Prince Albert directed Victoria's representation by negotiating the "semiotic of visibility" her royalty occasioned (497). Accordingly, Albert reasoned that "since a Queen had to be on display...she should present herself at all times as the proper wife and mother" (497). Armstrong goes on to claim that "as such, [Victoria] would be valued for her capacity to perform the private feminine functions rather than to exercise the political prerogatives traditionally associated with monarchy" (497).

³²⁴ In *The Shadow of the Guillotine* David Bindman observes that Ward "exhibited between 1851 and 1875 as many as ten painting of the last days of the French royal family" (76). Ward's painting *The Royal Family of France in the Prison of the Temple* (1851) was according to critic Leonée Ormond, "the most admired Victorian painting of the French Revolution subject" (Ormond 18).

such a way as to further their own need for a centralized masculine government and a stable family life” (152). Bringing the Bourbon royal family back into public memory at a moment when the nephew of Napoleon was violently seizing power is deeply ironic. Ward’s painting part of a larger effort to reconcile the revolutionary past to the Victorian present.

The symbol of Marie-Antoinette as a stitching domestic queen makes into her a figure of royalty that Victorians could recognize, but the fact that she is in a prison makes the revolution appear dangerous. While Ward’s choice to represent this particular moment speaks more to the way he uses the past as a mirror of his own times, to remember the revolution as dangerous and unnatural in its destruction of family life, the scene also clashes with the meanings of privacy and intimacy associated with the Victorian family. The prison guards look at what they are not supposed to see and this compromises the true nature of privacy and intimacy. The painting exposes the royal family to the public eye making the spectator part of a complex dynamic of the gaze where the viewer watches the guards watching the family.

Though the scene is set in prison, its atmosphere is the epitome of the nineteenth-century taste for domestic scenes of privacy. If the French revolution was a world of increasing uncertainty and unrest, Ward brings all of that into the family. Finally, the artist’s representation of the Dauphin and Dauphine at play beneath the watch of their mother reflects Victorian anxieties about the stability of the home in the face of revolution. Ward’s painting points to all of these anxieties; moreover, when his portrait was exhibited in Paris in 1855, it carried across the Channel an ironic message of two nations undergoing a political reconciliation.³²⁵

³²⁵ As Pamela Nunn observes in *Problem Pictures*, “the family is the true theme, suggested to these royalist artists by the style of Victoria’s monarchy” adding that “royalty shown as ‘just plain folk’ went down well with both artists’ public” (105).

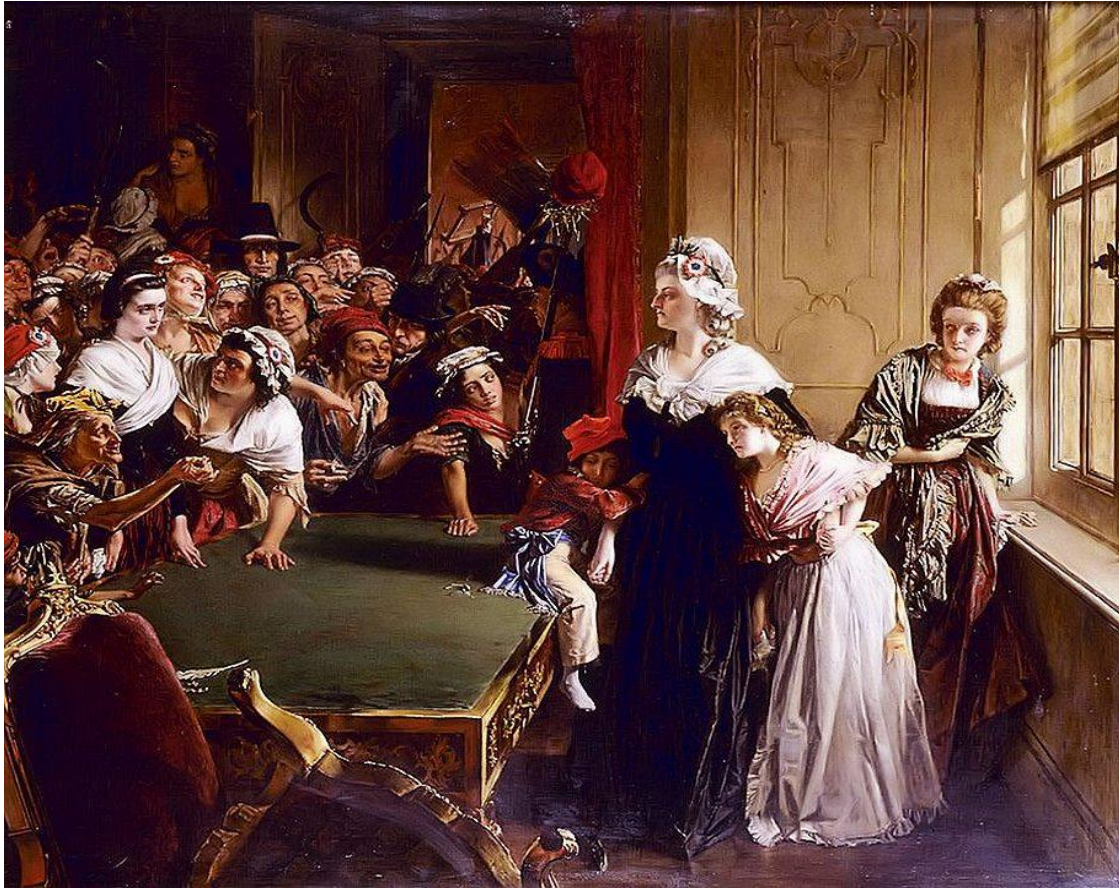
At Paris, Ward's painting suggested that the time for Marie-Antoinette's rehabilitation had arrived. Critic Andrew Sanders observes that in the mid-fifties, "the currency of images from the time of the first Revolution was evident enough at exhibitions of new paintings" and in 1855 viewers thronged to capture a glimpse (Sanders 10).³²⁶ Gambart, a French publisher, commented on the crowd's behavior:

When in 1855, this picture was at Paris...it was surrounded by a crowd, among which might often be seen eyes wet with tears. Those who wept before it were, perhaps, as often the sons of parents who had bawled execrations against 'Monsieur Veto' or shouted 'A Bas l'Autrichienne'. (Bindman 77)

Marie-Antoinette's power to elicit such emotional responses from the crowds should be understood in light of Queen Victoria's presence in Paris. In her nine-day visit to Paris in August 1855, Victoria would also experience some of these emotions as she was ushered around. On two occasions she remarks the shadow of the guillotine from the window of her carriage as she passes the Place de la Concorde. "Where that very obelisk stands," Victoria records, "Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, *'et tant d'autres furent guillotines.'* What sad reflections does this not give rise to!" (Mortimer 100). Queen Victoria's arrival in Paris marked the first visit of a British monarch to that city in four hundred years and Napoleon III welcomed the royal family, accompanying them numerous times to the exhibition.³²⁷ In its depiction of the last Bourbon royal family to occupy the French throne before the revolution, the painting participates in a "currency of images" which now ironically celebrates the new alliance of former enemies.

³²⁶ Letter to John Forster dated November 1855.

³²⁷ The last visit of an English monarch to Paris was that of King Henry VI who was crowned King of France in 1431.



In stark contrast to these paintings, Alfred Elmore's *The Tuileries, 20 June 1792* (1860), represents Marie-Antoinette at the beginning of a fifty day revolutionary period that marked the transition from the Bourbon monarchy to the French republic (fig. 2).

Figure 4.2. Alfred Elmore (1815-1881) *The Tuileries, 20 June 1792* (1860)—Musée de la Révolution française.

The Tory conservative writer John Wilson Croker in his *Essays on the Early Period of the French Revolution* (1857) observes that

the *Fifty Days* from the 20th June to the 10th August, 1792, comprised the stormy transition of France from the Monarchy to the Republic, and have already had, and will probably continue to have, a greater influence on the destinies of mankind than any other fifty days in the history of the world. (161)³²⁸

Croker's prophetic warning about the pivotal position of these brief fifty days underlines their probable impact on subsequent history. If Ward's painting, set in the days following August 10, invites the spectator to linger over the tragic scene as a moment frozen in time, Elmore's moves back to 20 June 1792, and represents Marie-Antoinette as citoyenne Capet confronted by the furious hackling women of the Paris streets. Dignified and composed, Elmore's queen protects the dauphin who dons the revolutionary's *bonnet rouge*. She wears the tricolor badge on her bonnet; strangely mirroring the crowd's republican symbols.

The French women depicted as raging maenads in Elmore's group, are held apart from the Queen by a Council table that could easily be overturned. Marie-Antoinette appears statuesque, defiant, and almost haughty, as if holding the desk in place by her commanding presence. One of the Parisian sans-culottes, a young woman, engages the queen's gaze from

³²⁸ John Wilson Croker (1780-1857), Irish statesman and contributor of historical and literary reviews and articles in the *Quarterly Review* was, according to Hedva Ben-Israel "a well-known and widely hated man" whose reputation for "fierceness in political controversy, his malignity in personal quarrels, and his heartlessness in literary criticism" earned him the sobriquet of a "human death-watch beetle" (175). Admired by Carlyle for being "perfectly impartial in his historical annotations" Croker's materials would serve as a source for *The French Revolution*.

across the table. She is the only member of the group that is not distracted or enraged as she quietly entreats the queen's attention. Elmore's work betrays British fears of the insurrection of French female sans-culottes, and yet his narrative allows for the possibility of dialogue with this young woman. The 1860 exhibition catalogue describes the scene:

A young girl, of pleasing appearance, and respectably attired, came forward and bitterly reviled in the coarsest terms *L'Autrichienne*. The Queen, struck by the contrast between the rage of this young girl and the gentleness of her face, said to her in a kind tone, 'Why do you hate me? Have I ever done you any injury?' 'No, not to me,' replied the pretty patriot, 'but it is you who caused the misery of the nation.' 'Poor child!' replied the Queen, 'someone has told you so and deceived you. What interest can I have in making the people miserable? The wife of the King, mother of the Dauphin, I am a Frenchwoman in all the feelings of my heart as a wife and mother. I shall never again see my own country. I can only be happy or unhappy in France. I was happy when you loved me.' This gentle reproach affected the young girl, and her anger was effaced. She asked the Queen's pardon, saying 'I do not know you, but I see that you are good.' (Graves 48)

Without this descriptive passage in which Marie-Antoinette is given the power instantly to convert her detractor to sympathy, the spectator would not register that the girl is in dialogue with the queen. The spectator would only see a group of angry women confronting a mother protecting her children, a theme that Dickens constructs in his character Lucie Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

A reviewer for *Blackwood's Magazine* describes the scene with a cautionary tone claiming that it "might indeed be intended at the present moment as a warning against the

tyranny of majorities and the vengeance of the populace which know no law but passion. The moral is pushed even to the extreme of the repulsive” (quoted in Tracy 287). Anxieties and fears of female insurrection aroused mostly male Victorian painters to embrace chivalrous attitudes toward Marie-Antoinette. Elmore’s queen however, is not the iconic figure of the Angel in the House that Ward’s representation implies. Instead, his Marie-Antoinette is a woman hurled into the revolutionary moment, a symbol of the hated ancien regime forced to confront her tyrannical enemies.

The crowd has invaded the royal residence at the Tuileries and the Victorian spectator is forced to experience the mob’s invasion as a confusing spectacle.³²⁹ The tragic scene is a permanent reminder of the profound uncertainty that characterizes the revolutionary moment. As Walter Benjamin observes on the tragic nature of royalty: “The sublime status of the [queen] on the one hand, and the infamous futility of [her] conduct on the other, create a fundamental uncertainty as to whether this is a drama of tyranny or a history of martyrdom” (Benjamin 73). By adjusting the gender categories in Benjamin’s passage, one might use it to read Elmore’s frozen moment as offering a “fundamental uncertainty” in its visual representation. Elmore’s Marie-Antoinette face to face with her accusers, highlights what Ward’s painting disguises behind the depiction of a domestic queen. Is she a martyr or a tyrant? Why, after all, were the women of Paris so angry at the queen? The figure in the painting is stone-like and her cold eyes hardly soften the spectator’s suspicion that she harbors some secret. Elmore exposes the darker

³²⁹ In her article “Pass as a Woman, Act Like a Man,” Elizabeth Colwill claims that “Marie-Antoinette as a ‘true monster,’ occupies an anomalous position on both sides of the gender and sexual divide in the pornography of the French Revolution. Janus-faced, she marks a profound disjuncture between the old and new regimes” (Goodman 160). As such, her symbolism lives beyond the revolutionary period and emerges in new, complex, and varied forms.

side of Marie Antoinette, as she responds to the frenzied women and accusers.³³⁰ By placing the women at a position level with the queen who is dressed in citizen attire, Elmore suggests that the uncivilized have become civilized and that democracy has levelled the queen with her accusers.³³¹

Again, unlike Ward's representational strategy, Elmore suggests that Marie-Antoinette may be a source of political terror as well.³³² Though Elmore's painting was exhibited in the Royal Academy with an explanatory note to show the baseness of the female sans-culotte's behavior, the position Marie-Antoinette occupies opposite the Parisian women mirrors the gaze of her accusers. Her queen's eyes stare across the table and are positioned to fall somewhere between the frenzied maenad with a tricolor in her bonnet and the interlocutor who is also her female sympathizer. In this way the position of the queen's image is shown to be level with her subjects. Moreover, the history of the painting's provenance shows that the final destination of Elmore's painting is France. Now housed in the Musée de la révolution française in France, it recalls the cross-Channel relationship that brought revolutionary and counterrevolutionary face to face. The long history of Anglo-French relations which culminated in their different representations of the events of the French Revolution bring Marie-Antoinette into focus as both a spectacle of royal suffering and a cause of suffering.

³³⁰ For an analysis of the overlapping categories of beauty and terror as the "Female Sublime," "Bad Sublime," and the "improper feminine" see Mattick (1990) and Zerilli (1992).

³³¹ Elizabeth Colwill in "Sex, Savagery, and Slavery in the Shaping of the French Body Politic," considers the accusations against Marie-Antoinette in the context of the revolutionary's increasingly conflicted definitions of civilization: "Even Marie Antoinette, the embodiment of civilization in the Old Regime, emerged in the pornography of the Revolution as a 'tiger with a taste for human blood,' convicted of adultery, incest, bestiality, and tribadism" (Melzer 200).

³³² The historical Marie-Antoinette is criminalized by the Jacobins for her presumed role in the Diamond Necklace Affair. Eighteenth-century French and British pornographic pamphlets accused her of a supposed incestuous relationship with the Dauphin, and at her criminal trial she was denounced by the republic as such. The Père Duchesne pamphlets described her as a Messalina and a Catherine de Medici. Kruse "The Woman in Black" 230 and Lynn Hunt 107.

For Victorians, Marie-Antoinette is a complex symbol with contradictory facets including as we have seen in these paintings, a wife occupied with domestic duties, and a tragic victim of political terror imprisoned with her family in the Temple. This symbolization however, leaves out other marginalized Victorian views. Some Victorians sympathized with the poor who blamed the monarchy for their problems and regarded Marie-Antoinette as a frivolous girl who cared little for the plight of the French masses. Oscar Wilde for example, in “The Soul of Man under Socialism” (1891) remarks that “to the thinker, the most tragic fact in the whole of the French Revolution, is not that Marie-Antoinette was killed for being a queen, but that the starved peasant of the Vendee voluntarily went out to die for the hideous cause of feudalism” (260). Here Wilde shares Elmore’s ambivalence showing the queen as upholding the feudalism of the ancien regime. In contrast to Wilde, when Walter Pater’s Florian Deleal in “The Child in the House” (1878) comes upon David’s picture of Marie-Antoinette on her way to execution, the boy experiences his first recognition of “the element of pain in things” (316). Yet Pater’s imaginary portrait is also ironic in that Florian is described as experiencing “the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering” (316). Pater’s Victorian Marie-Antoinette echoes Burke’s “spectacle of royal suffering” and yet it is tinged with a decadent curiosity for the morbid reminiscent of Swinburne’s “Chastelard.”

While the dominant strain in Victorian historical painting, especially among those associated with the British Royal Academy, followed royalist sympathies and idealized Marie-Antoinette, popular media could scoff at the pretensions of Burke’s spectacle. When *Punch* announced “The Bonnet of the Season” in January 1857 as “The Marie Antoinette Bonnet,” declaring that it should “be worn when the lady has entirely lost her head,” the editors commingled the spectacle of fashion with the spectacle of the queen’s demise (*Punch* 22).

Looking across the Channel, Victorians sought evidence in the French Revolution of a tragic story whose meaning was profoundly unstable and uncertain. In turn, they made Marie-Antoinette their own and dressed her according to their own fashions.

II. “A Spectacle of Suffering Royalty”: Edmund Burke’s Legacy

As to France, I believe it is the only country upon earth through which, for so long a way, a spectacle of suffering royalty, in every circumstance of dignity, of sex, and of age,—things that are apt to mollify the hardest hearts,—could have passed, without any other sentiment than that of the most barbarous and outrageous insolence.

—Edmund Burke to the Marquis de Bouillé, July 13, 1791.³³³

We reached Versailles in rather more than half an hour, and came in sight of the magnificent Palace, with its terraces, gardens, and fountains...we ascended the large staircase, and walked through all the large rooms and galleries...rooms of poor Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, from one of which she made her escape. All was most interesting, instructive, and melancholy.

—Queen Victoria, *Leaves from a Journal* Tuesday, August 21st 1855.

i. Edmund Burke’s Marie-Antoinette in the Victorian Public Sphere

In her journal recording her family’s visit to France in 1855, Queen Victoria guides her readers through Versailles, carefully instructing them on the “interesting” and “melancholy” place from which Marie-Antoinette “made her escape” in the morning hours of October 5, 1789 (Mortimer 90-91). In the passage from her journal, what is most “instructive” is Victoria’s assumption that her readers know the events to which she refers, for these had long been lingering in their historical memory from reading Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), and his passionate account of “a spectacle of suffering royalty.”

In contrast to the visual iconographies that Victorian painters of the mid-fifties constructed in their middle-class versions of Marie-Antoinette, Edmund Burke’s *Reflections* creates a textual mythography of the queen. His account would continue reverberating through

³³³ *Correspondence of the Right Honorable Burke* Vol. III 219. The *OED* includes Burke’s term “a spectacle of suffering royalty,” as a connotative example of “a sight, show, or exhibition of a specified character or description.”

Victorian literary texts embedding itself as a dominant ideology.³³⁴ Most importantly, Burke frames the French Revolution itself as a spectacular drama when writing in a letter to the Earl of Charlemont in August 1789 that

our thoughts of everything at home are suspended, by our astonishment at the wonderful spectacle which is exhibited in a Neighboring and Rival Country—what Spectators, and what actors! England gazing with astonishment at a French struggle for Liberty and not knowing whether to blame or applaud! (*Correspondence* VI:10)

Watching the fall of the house of Bourbon from across the Channel, Burke gazes at the French all visibly before him, forming their National Constituent Assembly and storming the Bastille before his eyes. Burke controls the effects of his show by collapsing or expanding the distance the spectator inhabits while gazing at the spectacle. Above all, for Burke the spectacle that surpasses all spectacles of the French Revolution is the fall and demise of Marie-Antoinette. His eulogy to her is found in a passage that, as critic Tracy claims, “became a recitation piece for Victorian schoolboys” (325). Burke first describes Marie-Antoinette as he remembers her in 1774:

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the

³³⁴ As W.J.T. Mitchell observes, Burke’s text “determined the basic scenes, images, figures, and topoi out of which new representations could be constructed” and “it ‘captured the imagination’ of all subsequent reflections on the French revolution” (148). Critic Lowell Frye also argues that “anyone writing about the Revolution for a British audience between 1790 and 1837 had to grapple with Burke, for it was Burke’s *Reflections*, and his four strident *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, that established the terms and tenor of the Revolution debate in England” (Crafton 85-86).

elevated sphere she just began to move in—glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendor and joy. (89)

Considering the fact that when Burke penned these words in 1791 Marie-Antoinette was a woman in her full maturity, his inflated rhetoric removes her not only from terra firma—“I saw her just above the horizon” and “like the morning star”— but also from time and history.³³⁵ Projecting backward in time to the moment when he first saw her as a Dauphine, Burke imagines Marie-Antoinette in a perpetual state of girlhood. A close reading of this passage shows that Burke’s longing for both a place—“at Versailles,” and a time—“sixteen or seventeen years ago,” contains the two indices of longing peculiar to the experience of nostalgia; time and space. In his *Reflections*, Burke’s nostalgia attempts to recuperate an irretrievable time as captured in his languorous phrase: “It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France.” Burke’s attempt to place Marie-Antoinette back in Versailles in his reader’s mind overlooks the irretrievable nature of time.³³⁶ Whereas Victoria in the passage cited above, is concerned with evoking the exact place where Marie-Antoinette “made her escape,” Burke’s passage is temporally disjointed, and his Versailles is a mental graveyard haunted with the memory of his spectral queen.

Burke’s astral symbolism furthermore, not only denies Marie-Antoinette’s human embodiment, but his eulogy becomes an elegy as he anticipates her fate. The spectacle that Marie-Antoinette once was as a star beheld in the far distance becomes a specter in Burke’s political symbolism, hence prompting Paine’s remark that he is “not affected by the reality of distress touching his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities

³³⁵ If Marie-Antoinette was nineteen when she became a queen, she was thirty-six in 1791.

³³⁶ In his *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798) however, Immanuel Kant indicates that people who experience nostalgia are not longing for a place, but for a time of youth (Hutcheon 194).

the plumage and forgets the dying bird” (Paine 102). For Paine, Burke’s “showy resemblance” is a calculated and spectacular aesthetic representation in which he quickly loses control while lapsing into the effects of his own rhetoric. Paine thus observes that:

As to the tragic paintings by which Mr. Burke has outraged his own imagination, and seeks to work upon that of his readers, they are very well calculated for theatrical representation, where facts are manufactured for the sake of show, and accommodated to produce, through the weakness of sympathy, a weeping effect. (Paine 100)

While Paine attacks the “showy resemblance,” at the time Burke writes his reflections in 1790, Marie-Antoinette is only a shadow of what she once was at Versailles. Nevertheless her symbolism is useful for his denunciation of the revolutionary regicidal state, and Burke’s appeal to chivalry addresses a particular kind of reader who could respond to her predicament. As literary critic Claudia Johnson observes: “Burke regarded the calamity of Revolution in France as a crisis of sentiment,” adding that it was also “a crisis of gender” (3).³³⁷ This is also what the feminist critic Linda Zerilli refers to as “the political meaning of Burke’s gendered coding of social crisis,” which depends on how much importance the reader attributes to his “bombastic deployment of tropes” (60-61). Significantly, Zerilli claims that Burke’s sentimental rhetoric of Marie-Antoinette’s dilemma was later taken up “to articulate Victorian society’s new gender ideology of the asexual woman, the passive victim of male sexual instinct” (Zerilli 68). While I agree with Johnson and Zerilli’s assessments of Burke’s rhetoric as representing a “crisis of gender” and a “gendered coding of crisis,” I argue that the power which sustains his rhetoric into

³³⁷ Johnson goes on to claim that “Such is the brilliance of Burke’s description of the glittering queen that readers sometimes forget that Burke is not so much lamenting the fall of Marie Antoinette as he is the fall of sentimentalized manhood, the kind of manhood inclined to venerate her” (4).

the Victorian period is propelled by Victoria's presence. Marie-Antoinette becomes her shadow in the dual sense of being both a sentimental spectacle and a specter.

Though Marie-Antoinette was not executed until December of 1793, Burke's overdetermined language is both proleptic and prophetic in anticipating her demise. In his "Letter to a Member of the National Assembly" (1791), Burke accelerates her demise in prophesying erroneously that "they will probably first assassinate the queen" (Burke *Writings* 8:309). Although Louis XVI was beheaded before her, Marie-Antoinette fulfills Burke's need of a theatrical and sympathetic account of this "spectacle of suffering royalty." Marie-Antoinette is thus already operating as a shadow in Burke's imagination, and it is his invocation of her youth that lends her tragic fate its poignancy. Because she was once young and innocent, he infers, she will always need the protection of men.

In his apostrophe to the queen, which his friend Sir Philip Francis describes as "pure foppery," Burke brings into focus the early morning hours of the sixth of October 1789 when the Queen's chambers in Versailles were invaded by an insurrectionary mob from Paris (quoted in Johnson 4). The frightening incident, complete with imagined scenes of the queen's rape and her virtual nudity, is melodramatic. Though Burke's description of the scene at Versailles is well-rehearsed in Victorian historical texts, it is not representable in their visual iconographies.³³⁸

³³⁸ Though I have been unsuccessful in finding a Victorian painting depicting this incident of the infamous "October Days" at Versailles, in *Rights of Man* Thomas Paine scoffed at the imaginary "tragic paintings by which Mr. Burke has outraged his own imagination, and seeks to work upon that of his readers" while observing that they are "very well calculated for theatrical representation, whose facts are manufactured for the sake of show, and accommodated to produce, through the weakness of sympathy, a weeping effect (Paine 100). Isaac Cruikshank's 1790 etching "The Doctor indulged with his favorite scene" comes closest to a depiction of Burke's purple passage with a scopophilic Rev. Price on the left, peeping through a hole in the wall to the queen's chambers while the revolutionaries stab her bed. The queen is seen through an open door on the right scantily clad and running down the hall.

Burke claims in the *Reflections* that in the early hours of the morning, a sentinel guarding the doors leading to the queen's bedchamber was slaughtered. Then, "a band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen and pierced with a hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked" (62). The invasion of the queen's chamber followed by the stabbing of her bed, make the spatial objects stand in metonymic contiguity to the queen's violated body.³³⁹ For Burke however, the invasion of the queen's bedchamber becomes a synecdoche for the entire French Revolution and its stripping of the decencies of political existence.

In my reading of Burke's passages then, Marie-Antoinette is both corporeally absent in the etherealized queen of his apotheosis and physically present in the dramatization of her rape. If, as Ronald Paulson claims in *Representations of Revolution*, there is, "no evidence of Marie Antoinette's fleeing almost naked," then Burke's description of the incident is a gothic fantasy, and yet it is politically significant for his argument because "the metaphoric stripping of society has become the literal stripping of the queen" (61). According to this estimate, Marie-Antoinette is disembodied, a symbol standing in for a political abstraction, and Burke's political theory sounds the tocsin against the revolution as an enemy of Britain.³⁴⁰

This point is further substantiated in Mary Wollstonecraft's observations in *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790), that Burke's rhetoric appropriates gothic literary tropes and

³³⁹ For this reading see Paulson 60-62.

³⁴⁰ On this point I follow Tom Furniss's claim in "Stripping the Queen: Edmund Burke's Magic Lantern Show," that his "unquestioning admiration of and sympathy for the queen of France is therefore emblematic of the attitude he is trying to foster toward political institutions—which should also be venerated and loved without the kind of inquiry which might strip them of their splendor and discover their 'defects'" (Blakemore 87-88).

theatrical spectacles. Wollstonecraft attacks the foundations of Burke's Gothic edifice while asking: "Why was it a duty to repair an ancient castle, built in barbarous ages, of Gothic materials?" (66). Here Wollstonecraft targets Burke's indirect association of Marie-Antoinette's body with the state when he claims that "all the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off" (67). She asks "will her form have lost the smooth delicacy that inspires love, when stripped of its Gothic drapery?" (Wollstonecraft 77).

As I have demonstrated in chapter two, these same gothic tropes were employed by writers such as William Ainsworth in *Crichton* to create a similar mood in 1837. Drawing on gothic conventions of an innocent and pure princess imprisoned in a secluded convent or castle and liberated through the timely agency of a dashing chivalrous hero, early Victorian writers construct what Alison Milbank refers to as the "royal Gothic" (Milbank 147). She claims that "the Victorian age began like the ending of an Ann Radcliffe novel: the bad uncles and despotic guardian give way to the true heir, who is now able to preserve and defend her national inheritance" (145). Though the focus in Ainsworth's novel is the sixteenth century heroine Esclairmonde, the tropes might as easily be derived from Burke's presentation of Marie-Antoinette.

The Queen of France, oddly enough, becomes a figure of supreme national importance to Britain. She is both a "spectacle of royal suffering," and a specter who returns in Victorian literary texts. In the sections that follow I show how Queen Victoria likewise became increasingly regarded as a spectacle for her subjects.³⁴¹ When they wrote about Marie-

³⁴¹ In Homans' essay "To the Queen's Private Apartments: The Queen and Prince Albert at Home" she discusses "Victoria's apparent desire to have her subjects witness her private life, to perform it as spectacle and model" (19). Moreover Victoria's journals offer paradoxically, "a spectacle of royal domestic privacy," and a "privacy...deliberately exposed" (20).

Antoinette's girlish frivolities and her dismissal of courtly etiquette, they often used the occasion to instruct or to scold the young Victoria.

ii. "A glittering star which set in blood": Victoria and the Specter of Marie-Antoinette

When Victoria's accession was being celebrated in June of 1837, the memory of Burke's Marie-Antoinette reminded some of her subjects of Burke's prophetic cast of mind. The prophetic element in Burke's writing, as Claire Simmons has argued, was founded upon such "minor distinctions" as his prophecy that "they will probably first assassinate the queen," and that "it is upon such loose interpretations of meaning that Burke's reputation as a prophet depends" (39). This notion of a "loose interpretation of meaning" is helpful in understanding a speech Sir Robert Peel read at the Tamworth election dinner (August 7, 1837) in which, like Burke, he loses his head in praising his queen. In toasting the new Queen Victoria, Peel invokes the shadow of Marie-Antoinette in a manner that was interpreted as a sinister prophecy:

I do not believe there was ever a sovereign who possessed in a more eminent degree, the attachment of her subjects of all parties than the present Queen of England. All hail the advent to power of her present Majesty as a great compensation for the heavy loss which we sustained in the death of the amiable and lamented Princess Charlotte. Indeed, I think the beautiful and eloquent description given by the great Mr. Burke of the Queen of France, may with great justice be applied to our present and amiable sovereign. 'I think,'

said Mr. Burke, ‘it was about sixteen or seventeen years ago I first saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles, and never did the eye light on that orb, which she scarcely seemed to touch, a lovelier vision. I saw her just above the horizon, glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendor and joy.’ This, I think, with justice and without exaggeration, may fairly be applied to the present Queen of England. (Haly 128-129).

Sir Robert Peel’s demonstrative pronoun “this,” which appears in the last sentence of the passage, stands in for the underlying noun phrase that refers to Burke’s rhetoric. Yet, in borrowing from Burke’s rhetoric, Sir Robert Peel damns the eighteen year-old Victoria with eloquent praise. Simultaneously, he raises the specter of Marie-Antoinette and Princess Charlotte as textual memories calculated to lead his audience into a trap when they recall the fate of the “Queen of France.”³⁴² Sir Robert Peel’s genteel insult was greeted with an almost universal contempt as it quickly appeared in the pages of the press. In an article on “The History of Hanover,” published in the October 1837 issue of *The London and Westminster Review*, a reviewer claiming that “the declaration by the Tory organs of their regret that there was no Salic law in England by which the accession of the Queen might have been prevented” (113), asserts that

The Tories, when despotism is to be upheld are the boldest of destructives. They hailed the first appearance of the young girl [Victoria], so suddenly made their Sovereign, with a

³⁴² Linda Colley argues that Marie Antoinette can be understood as the opposite of Princess Charlotte who quarreled with her father the Prince Regent over his poor treatment of her mother Queen Caroline who is missing from Sir Robert Peel’s speech. Raising the specter of Charlotte, Colley underscores the ironies in Peel’s speech observing that the “connection Edmund Burke had drawn so many years before between the maltreatment of Marie Antoinette and the rottenness of French politics was now disinterred and levelled with savage effect against Britain’s Tory government and George IV...The queen was in effect acquitted, and the ghost of Marie Antoinette was finally laid. (268).

muttered growl of deep dissatisfaction that the law permitted a woman to take the place which they dearly wished in the possession of the male heir: and their leader, Sir Robert Peel, connected with her appearance in the glittering regions of royalty, the blended imagery of splendor and blood which belongs to the melancholy story of Marie Antoinette. (113)

In alluding to Marie-Antoinette as Victoria's shadow, the Whig press ironically reinforces the association it wishes to condemn.³⁴³ In the act of publically censoring Sir Robert Peel's conscious association of Victoria with Marie-Antoinette's fate, the writer is cognizant of what is repressed, the symbolism of a frivolous girl not fit to rule a great nation.

Though couching his barely disguised anti-gynocratic rhetoric in the safe distance of Burke's apostrophe to Marie-Antoinette, the sting of Sir Robert Peel's allusion was not missed by an indignant Harriet Martineau either. Martineau responded to Peel's imprecation in an article also published in *The London and Westminster Review*.³⁴⁴ She writes that

Amidst the universal sympathy and affection which prevailed in society at that hour, it is true that from men of this class might be heard muttered curses on the laws which placed the Queen in her powerful position; and it is equally true, whatever may have been the father to this thought, that Sir Robert Peel compared her to Marie Antoinette, a glittering star which set in blood. (Martineau "Westminster" 460)

³⁴³ Likewise on the front page of the *Hertford Mercury and Reformer* of August 22, 1837, the reporter compares the speeches of Sir Robert Peel and Lord Morpeth to show readers how inappropriate and deeply insulting were the former's words in comparison.

³⁴⁴ Martineau's article was published with the title "A Letter to the Queen on the State of the Monarchy. By a Friend of the People" in the *London and Westminster Review* 32 (1838 – 1839): 454-475. For Mill's interactions with his co-editor Robertson see Mill. The intensity of Mill's antipathy for Martineau's attitude is evidenced further in his statement to Robertson that "I detest that vile Queen thing more than ever for being the cause of the first real difference we have ever had about the review" (18)

The reference to Marie-Antoinette's demise as "a glittering star which set in blood" is both poetic and accurate, but when Martineau uses it to characterize the rhetoric of "men of this class," namely Tory conservatives, she is drawing a distinction between what she considers acceptable praise and Peel's inappropriate breach of the proper etiquette when addressing royalty. Although Martineau defends Victoria against Peel's imprecation, she too ironically reinforces the association.

When Martineau initially submitted her article to John Stuart Mill, his opinions of Victoria were little better than those detected in Sir Robert Peel's misogynistic apostrophe. While discussing Victoria and still comparing her to Marie-Antoinette, Mill writes:

I am convinced [Victoria] is just a lively spirited young lady, thinking only of enjoying herself, and who never is nor ever will be conscious of any difficulties or responsibilities,—no more than Marie Antoinette, who was a much cleverer woman and had much more will and character than she is ever likely to have. She is conscious, I dare say, of good intentions, as every other young lady is; she is not conscious of wishing any harm to anyone, unless they have offended her, nor intending to break any one article of the Decalogue. (17)

Mill's disparaging of Martineau as well as his negative attitude in comparing Victoria with Marie-Antoinette shows a side of him that differs substantially from attitudes towards queens he later espoused in *The Subjection of Women* (1869).³⁴⁵

What these parallels all share is a response to the symbolism of Marie-Antoinette as it was inspired and loosely interpreted from Burke's rhetoric. This provides evidence that Burke's

³⁴⁵ For his admiration of women rulers including Queen Victoria, see Mill *On Liberty and Other Writings* 170-173.

apotheosis had become sufficiently disengaged from its original context to serve an educated Victorian public with a useful political and cultural symbolism. In turn they could use the specter of Marie-Antoinette to defend or to cast aspersions on Victoria. Whether in rejecting Peel's comparison as Martineau does, or in Mill's denying that Victoria is as clever as Marie-Antoinette, the responses process Victoria's symbolism through an ambivalent attitude toward the French queen. A specter from the past, Marie-Antoinette returns to haunt Victoria in the early days of her reign. Martineau uncannily perceives a crisis that was looming on the political horizon and taking place, as in Burke's apostrophe, around a queen's bedchamber.

iii. The Specter of Impropriety

In 1839 Victoria's favorite Prime Minister Lord Melbourne stepped down from office after losing votes in Parliament over the Jamaica Bill. Sir Robert Peel, the new Tory leader, would test Victoria's character by insisting that he be allowed to interfere in her court circle. The Bedchamber Crisis of 1839 would be the first occasion in Queen Victoria's reign to demonstrate her ability to assert her own prerogatives and to rise above political partisanship.³⁴⁶ Occurring at the same time as the Flora Hastings scandal however, the crisis took on nefarious proportions as the public learned sordid details emerging from the most intimate space, the young Queen Victoria's bedchamber at Buckingham Palace.³⁴⁷ The enduring symbolic significance of Burke's account of the invasion at Versailles to Victorian culture makes it is ironic that in May of 1839, a

³⁴⁶ In May of that year Lord Melbourne was unsuccessful in his attempt to gain the necessary votes to force sugar planters in Jamaica to end slavery. As a consequence he resigned his position as prime minister ultimately leaving Victoria to accept a Tory ministry.

³⁴⁷ Flora Hastings was lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Kent. Returning from a holiday in Scotland in January 1839, Flora noticed a protrusion in her abdomen. The Court physician Sir James Clark misdiagnosed as pregnancy what was later discovered to be a malignant tumor. She would not survive the tumor, and died in July 1839. Richard Spall in "The Bedchamber Crisis and the Hastings Scandal: Morals Politics and the Press at the Beginning of Victoria's Reign" (1987) asserts that "the Bedchamber Crisis occurred just when the public outcry over impropriety at court concerning the treatment of Flora Hastings was most vehement, and it involved several of the very same ladies of the Bedchamber!" (26).

similar intrusion into royal privacy centered on the young Queen Victoria. While I am not claiming in this section that Victoria's subjects consciously associated the Bedchamber Crisis with Marie-Antoinette, I use the latter's symbolism to think through Victorian public perceptions about royal privacy and public spectacle. When Peel invoked Marie-Antoinette's specter in hailing Victoria to the throne, he gestured at Burke's symbol of a frail and innocent young queen sacrificed to revolutionary politics. Prominent political opinions that surfaced during the Bedchamber Crisis however, would prove that the Tories could transform Burke's imagined scenario into a political reality for the young Victoria.

Upon entering office Sir Robert Peel petitioned Queen Victoria to replace several of her ladies-in-waiting who were wives of Whig politicians, with Tory Minister's wives. Victoria was indignant and refused to make any alterations to her private circle. Her response was quickly published in the newspapers and periodicals: "The Queen, having considered the proposal made to her yesterday by Sir Robert Peel to remove the ladies of her bedchamber, cannot consent to adopt a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage, and which is repugnant to her feelings" (Letters Esher 211). What Victoria experiences as "repugnant to her feelings" is specifically the notion of her Ministers of Parliament interfering in the privacy of her intimate circle.

Victoria's insistence on the privacy and intimacy of that space recalls Burke's horror and chivalric defense of Marie-Antoinette. Like Burke's rhetorical transformation of the French Queen's bedchamber into a political symbol, Victoria seizes upon the same symbolic connection to intimate that her Tory ministers are going too far. Arguably "interference" and "invasion" are different in kind rather than degree. To interfere can mean to come into non-physical contact as in a clash of opinions or tendencies, yet it can also carry a far more sinister meaning of sexual

assault or molestation.³⁴⁸ Evidence from the British press indicates that Victoria's subjects registered the historical precedent of the ill-fated royal family of France in the Tory party's attacks on the British Queen. In an article from *The Examiner* for example, a British political correspondent reports that

the *Journal des Debuts*, the Court-organ of France, has taken pains to show that whatever may be the private sentiments of Peel and Wellington, they are impelled by, and show themselves obsequious to a more bigoted more zealous, and a more anti-liberal party, than that which began the great war of 1792. It shows indeed that this [Tory] party is obliged to combat and struggle for power on a revolutionary spirit, and by revolutionary ways; setting loyalty aside as a superannuated sentiment, and raising a democratic outcry against the young Queen [Victoria], only to be compared to those which the *sans culottes* raised against Marie Antoinette. (Anon "The Examiner" 51)

With an observant eye and looking at political opinions developing across the Channel, the reporter interprets British anti-monarchical sentiments through the lens of French revolutionary history. In this reporting on the Bedchamber Crisis, Victoria's predicament is made to resemble Marie-Antoinette's struggle with the sans-culottes. The Examiner article provides evidence from across the Channel that members of Britain's Tory party were ironically reconceived as Jacobins in conservative dress.

When Queen Victoria clashed with Parliament over Peel's replacement of Lord Melbourne's government, the public scandal that ensued was filtered through the widespread

³⁴⁸ Critic Anna Clark has shown in *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (2004), that "the theme of illicit sexual influence could be used to symbolize Parliament's struggle with the monarch. Although the king had the right to choose his own ministers, Parliament might resist his power" (7). For Clark this is especially the case when the monarch selects a candidate that Parliament does not approve.

fear that Victoria's Whig ladies-in-waiting would exact an exorbitant influence over the Queen. Anxieties about a potentially dangerous female power so close to the young Victoria is what proved to be most disconcerting to those Tories who argued for interference. Peel's prying into the Queen's private circle could suggest not only his fear of a dangerous political influence exercised over her by her intimates, but also to the opposing Whigs, his illicit desire to invade her privacy.

The crisis ensured that the first political representation of the new queen before her public would involve the distinction between intimacy and spectacle, privacy and public display. After all, invading royal privacy had already proved disastrous to Marie-Antoinette's image. In England the gender ideology of the period had already politicized domesticity; it would only be a decade later that Victoria and Albert would succeed in creating a domestic image of the royal family.³⁴⁹ In the painful interval that preceded Victoria's marriage to the Prince Consort, she would have to experience the constant surveillance of her Parliament who guarded her every move. This meant that the Bedchamber Crisis, or the "tempest in the bedchamber" as Karen Chase and Michael Levenson put it in *The Spectacle of Intimacy* (2000), would be interpreted as the government putting a woman in her place. Victoria was a woman who had to be taught how to learn and obey courtly etiquette (57).

As I have shown in chapter two, Mary Stuart was invoked in a similar manner. She was represented as a as a gothic princess in need of rescuing. Chase and Levenson have argued that the crisis was also, "a spectacle that had been waiting patiently to display itself," implying that public perceptions of her youth were what required patience from her watchful male superiors

³⁴⁹ In a related context Gail Houston affirms that Victoria's "feminine difference domesticates political relations while it also politicizes the domestic" (9).

(47). According to Victorian historians of the French Revolution, a similar problem vexed Marie-Antoinette's queenship. When considered in light of Burke's rage over France's state interference with the private intimacy of royals, it is ironic that the Tory politicians, mostly all adherents of Burke's political system, could not see the chivalric model crucial to his defense of monarchy.

Recalling now Burke's stringent belief in the sanctity of royal privacy and his dismay over the march on Versailles and invasion of Marie-Antoinette's bedchamber, it was precisely this "spectacle of suffering royalty" that made him go so far as to weep over his manuscript.³⁵⁰ As Robert Tracy playfully observes, "by emphasizing the invasion of the Queen's bedroom, the violation of her bed, Burke lets every reader imagine some similar violent invasion of his/her own cherished *penetralia*, complete with implied sexual violence" ("Queen's Parlours" 328).³⁵¹

That specter was also invoked in *The Quarterly Review* issue of May 1839 where John Croker's article "The Household; or, What shall we do with the Ladies?" contains a thinly veiled polemic directly inspired by Sir Robert Peel (Chase and Levenson 58). The arguments Croker directs against Lord Melbourne and Queen Victoria for attempting to secure the places of the queen's ladies-in-waiting have to do with intimacy and influence, but his attacks on Lord Melbourne are concerned with the latter's "unconstitutional influence" over Victoria. This was an offense Croker deemed "criminal."³⁵²

³⁵⁰ In his letter to Sir Philip Francis, Burke writes: "I tell you again that the recollection and the contrast between that brilliancy, Splendour, and beauty, with the prostate Homage of a Nation to her, compared with the abominable scene of 1789 which I was describing did draw Tears from me and wetted my paper" ("Further Reflections" 24).

³⁵¹ The implications of Burke's rhetoric made it available for subsequent scenes of fictional and non-fictional violence, and Tracy demonstrates how Victorian novelists such as Disraeli, Gaskell, Eliot and Dickens were able to invoke similar moods.

³⁵² Twice in his article Croker refers to Lord Melbourne's unconstitutional "criminality" in defending Victoria's wishes to leave her bedchamber staff unchanged. See 274 and 275.

Croker argues that the historical precedent of Queen Anne shows the dangers involved in royal intimacy, for she had allowed members of her own political party to become intimately acquainted with her. In his essay, Croker turns this historical precedent to work against Victoria by claiming that those who support her decision as ‘firmness and magnanimity’ are her enemies, and that, “when they applaud the Queen, it may be safely inferred that the Queen has done something which, in their opinion, will endanger the Crown” (273). He goes on to compare the Whigs to anti-monarchists and claims that “they are like sharpers at a gambling table, who flatter and encourage a young and inexperienced dupe in the road to ruin, and applaud, as proofs of courage and generosity, every fresh plunge toward self-destruction” (273). The danger of Victoria’s position as Croker presents it draws directly on his own published assessments of the political atmosphere at Versailles.

Croker who was, as mentioned earlier, an acknowledged authority on the French Revolution, published a review article of Madame Campan’s memoirs. In the article he is concerned with Marie Antoinette’s conduct and the causes of her fall. It is ironic to read Croker’s historical observations in light of the Bedchamber Crisis, for in considering the demise of Marie-Antoinette, he writes that: “So many of the accusations were directed against the interior and strictly private circumstances of her life, that *except herself or her femme-de-chambre*, none could, of their own knowledge, deny them” (“Essays” 74 italics in original). Here Croker acknowledges that wide gulf separating the private life of a queen and her lady-in-waiting from the public’s voracious appetite for scandal.

The sensitivity Croker allows to permeate his writing about Marie-Antoinette in 1823 is not consistent with his later accusations against Victoria. Thinly veiled behind Croker’s constitutional reporting on the Bedchamber Crisis in 1839 is Sir Robert Peel’s rhetorical

influence. Fueled by Peel's political struggle with Victoria, Croker's former apology for Marie-Antoinette now becomes a source of anti-monarchical accusation. Specifically, Victoria is accused of dismissing court etiquette. If in her rejection of court etiquette Marie-Antoinette was the victim of court intrigue and calumny, Victoria too has become a willing and willful participant in her own demise.

For Croker, the principal danger to the government of leaving the queen's staff of female attendants intact would be the political influence these ladies could potentially exercise over her. Victoria misunderstood Sir Robert Peel's demands and believed he wished to dismiss all of her ladies including her beloved Baroness Lehzen. Yet Croker, noting again the present situation at Victoria's court, and assuming her to have shown favoritism toward her Whig ladies-in-waiting, writes: "The whole world unhappily knows what attention, what favours, what gratitude, these early friends and associates have received at the hands of her Majesty's confidential advisers" (238). Among these close associates were the Baroness Lehzen, Lady Portman, Lady Tavistock, and the Duchess of Sutherland, all implicated by the Hastings family in the scandal surrounding Flora. Recalling now Swinburne's French burlesque *La Soeur de la Reine* discussed in previous chapters, that work may be rehearsing the names Swinburne heard mentioned in his childhood. The association between the Bedchamber Crisis and the Flora Hastings scandal, to which Croker also alludes, had a powerful effect and helped sustain negative conceptions of Victoria's early years as Queen.

In speaking of what "the whole world unhappily knows," Croker is raising here the specter of the Flora Hasting's scandal then leaking into the press. Flora Hasting's ill-treatment at the hands of Victoria's intimate circle of ladies was the real issue that brought Victoria's staff to the center of the crisis. As I have already suggested, the ensuing "war in the press" was

decidedly partisan. Whigs and Tories took opposite sides on this crucial political question. What was really a question of party politics, the fear of influence and partisanship, was quickly transformed into a crisis of gender politics for the Queen. Because the crisis raised questions about Victoria's perceived lack of propriety and court etiquette it was conflated with the Hastings scandal. Critic Richard Spall notes that in the Bedchamber Crisis, "Melbourne and the Whigs were cast by their supporters in the press as the champions of a besieged innocent [while] the Tories were portrayed in their newspapers as rescuing the Queen from the low morality of a depraved Whig court and as the righteous defenders of a lady's honor" (37). Though in his article Spall overlooks the shadow of Marie-Antoinette, the language he employs while describing Victoria as a "besieged innocent" who needed "rescuing," recalls Burke's lament over the demise of chivalry. The spectacle of royal misbehavior which the Hastings scandal occasioned meant that the Victorian public saw a manifestation of exactly the dangers Croker was identifying with Marie-Antoinette's downfall.

It is important to note that Croker used the Flora Hastings scandal as a means of directing public opinion to uphold the Tory party's interference into Victoria's privacy. Significantly, on Thursday 18 April 1839, *The Morning Post* published a letter to the public about the misconduct of the Queen's ladies regarding their management of the Flora Hastings scandal. Signed "Justice on the Criminals," the article asks "Ought women with such tongues as theirs to be left round the Queen? Remember Marie Antoinette! and the slanders which dogged her to the scaffold!" ("Lady Flora" 5). The specter of Marie-Antoinette looms over the Bedchamber Crisis and the Flora Hastings scandal as an historical shadow, but it was also crafted by Sir Robert Peel and John Croker political rhetoric.

Scandals also partake of the spectral. The verb “to speculate” is, like “specter,” also derived from the Latin root “specere,” “to look, to see.” Scandals are conjured from speculation and hearsay. They attempt to replace a lack of evidence with a semblance of truth based on the power of public opinion. Composed of myriad speculations about what royalty is really like, scandals conjure up an imaginary relation between appearance and reality. In *The British Monarchy and the French Revolution*, historian Marilyn Morris argues that “scandals not only place the arduous duties attached to royal birth into sharper relief; royal misbehavior feeds the public obsession for personal details that will answer the unanswerable question, ‘What are they really like?’” (8). In other words, the social aspect of the scandal draws on speculation and a lack of evidence. Nevertheless, when royal scandals are announced in the Victorian press they often draw on historical precedent as when the article from *The Morning Press* asks its readers to “remember Marie-Antoinette,” or when an editorial address in July 1839 claimed that “Buckingham Palace will be as famous in future ages as that of Holyrood House, for the cruel immolation of its victim, even in the Queen’s presence, with this difference that Mary [Stuart] had no hand in the tragic affair” (“Editor” 3). Here the writer thinks through the scandal by drawing on reader’s common knowledge of the history of Mary Stuart.

In full knowledge of the Tory gossip about the Flora Hastings scandal that was quickly spreading and casting aspersions on Victoria, Croker inveighs against the Queen’s attempts to protect herself from the spectacle. Within two months of the article’s publication, Flora would be dead and the queen would face the full force of the nation’s accusations of royal misbehavior and impropriety.³⁵³ Such for Croker, is the danger of an intimate court circle. It could enclose those

³⁵³ Spall has argued that “the concern over courtly propriety, which is very much apparent in the political press of the time, was of much greater significance in determining the political actions and personal perceptions of those at the highest levels of Victorian society and politics than previous interpretations of these events have allowed” (21).

within from the outside world and leave itself open to rumor, unfounded gossip, and scandal.

Croker writes that

It is neither constitutional in principle, nor convenient or becoming in practice, that the Sovereign should be enclosed within the circumvallation of any particular set, however respectable—that in the hours of business or amusement, in public or in private, she should see only the repetition of the same family faces, and hear no sound but the different modulations of the same family voices; and *that the private comfort of the Queen's interior life should be, as it inevitably must, additionally exposed to the fluctuations of political change, or what is still worse—that political changes should be either produced or PREVENTED by private favour or personal attachments.*

(“Household” 233 italics in original)

Croker insists that in her private circle Victoria is surrounded by family faces and voices, and that this prevents her from assuming her proper role as a monarch. He asserts that Victoria, like Marie-Antoinette before her, is in serious danger because she is defying court etiquette. By allowing the influence of her Whig ladies-in-waiting to prevent her ability to be impartial and to rule without partisan prejudice, Croker invokes the specter of Marie-Antoinette. In his article on Marie-Antoinette mentioned earlier, Croker notes the supreme importance of courtly etiquette for sovereigns:

Sovereign power has a natural tendency to abuse; the private life of individuals is under a control (not always efficacious even in that class) which does not exist for princes: over the manners of the latter, courtly etiquettes and the formalities of official attendants are almost the only restraints, and they have at least this good effect, that, while they operate

as a real check on the demeanour of princes, they also afford the public a kind of guarantee not merely for the personal safety, but, in some degree, for the decorous conduct of their sovereigns. The vulgar, who do not see, and the heedless who do not examine these etiquettes, think lightly of them. In France they had become a subject of popular reproach and ridicule. Marie Antoinette was delighted to throw them aside.

(“Essays” 85-86)

Marie-Antoinette’s repudiation of court etiquette gives Croker an historical precedent to understand the danger of Victoria’s conduct. During the Bedchamber Crisis what Victoria defended as her private sphere was no longer safe from the public’s gaze. Victoria quickly became as much of a spectacle as Marie-Antoinette had been at Versailles. This is what the aforementioned article from *The Examiner* intimates in accusing the members of the Tory party of republicanism and of “raising a democratic outcry against the young Queen [Victoria], only to be compared to those which the *sans culottes* raised against Marie Antoinette” (51).

Croker’s central message is that Victoria’s privacy should be opened to the intrusions of government officials because it has become a public spectacle of royal misbehavior. It was the Flora Hastings scandal however that provided the necessary fuel to ignite the public’s speculation about what was going on behind the closed doors of Buckingham Palace. As I have shown, memories of the revolution in France and of Burke’s horror at the invasion of Marie-Antoinette’s bedchamber at Versailles were still strong enough in the early years of Victoria’s reign for Croker and Sir Robert Peel to draw these comparisons and be believed. In light of these concerns, I turn in the next section to Thomas Carlyle’s essay “The Diamond Necklace Affair” which appeared in *Fraser’s Magazine* in February of 1837, three months before Victoria came to the throne.

III. The Spectacular Marie-Antoinette and Carlyle's Ambivalent Sexism

In previous chapters I provide evidence of Thomas Carlyle's inability to countenance queenship as an ideal form of government. His Catherine de Medici and Mary Stuart are both disasters, and by inverting his gendered pronouns his "King" Elizabeth is celebrated insofar as she is rendered manly. This section will show that Carlyle's representations of Marie-Antoinette respond to Edmund Burke's apotheosis, but that they also follow Croker in serving a clear warning to Victoria of the disastrous consequences of eschewing court etiquette. An examination of Carlyle's ambivalence about the topic of Marie-Antoinette's demise thus provides a means of assessing his equally conflicting accounts of Queen Victoria's queenship. Victoria's shadow falls over Carlyle's writings about Marie-Antoinette to the extent that a comparative reading of his texts about the French Revolution bear the imprint of opinions he voiced about Victoria.

Because critics of Victorian patriarchs such as Carlyle sometimes focus solely on his misogynistic or hostile attitudes toward queens and women in general, they overlook the equally damaging effects of "benevolent" forms of sexism such as chivalry. The contemporary term "ambivalent sexism," coined by social psychologists Susan Fiske and Peter Glick is useful for clarifying Carlyle's inconsistent and often contradictory manner when writing about female monarchs.³⁵⁴ As we have seen from his attitudes to Catherine de Medici, Mary Stuart and Elizabeth I, Carlyle's sympathetic postures are generally ironic and exist alongside other negative appraisals. As a benevolent form of sexist bias, chivalry holds that women are weak,

³⁵⁴ Under the broad term ambivalent sexism, social psychologists Peter Glick and Susan Fiske have found dimensions and sub-components that range from "hostile" to "benevolent" sexism.

incompetent, and that it is a man's duty to protect the "weaker sex." This is the premise of Burke's apostrophe to Marie-Antoinette which was had been ingrained in British minds.

Carlyle, who had read Burke closely, was adept in deciphering the gender coding in the "purple passage" of Burke's *Reflections*. In an early letter to a friend dated 1818, twenty-three year old Carlyle parodies Burke's rhetoric to describe the idiosyncrasies of a dandy named Esbie:

Today I saw him enter the College-yard—'and surely there never lighted upon this earth, which he scarcely seemed to touch, a more beauteous vision.' I then thought (to continue in the words of Burke) that 'ten thousand swords (fists rather) would have leapt from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened him with insult.' (*Early Letters* I:192)

Cleverly reducing Burke's pathos to bathetic effect, Carlyle evokes laughter rather than transport. Moreover, by appropriating the spectacular qualities of Burke's French queen to emphasize the dandy Esbie's desire for visibility, the passage also anticipates the genteel mockery displayed in Sir Robert Peel's apotheosis to Victoria.

Though critics have often noted the spectral quality of the "Dandiacal Body" haunting Carlyle's early work, few have noted the shadowy textual relationship that exists between his descriptions of Marie-Antoinette and his later comments on Queen Victoria. Critic James Eli Adams, in "The Hero as Spectacle: Carlyle and the Persistence of Dandyism" claims that "the prominence of the hero as spectacle confirms a persistent affinity between dandy and prophet" and that this shadow relation "is a far more complex, anxious, and unstable norm of gendered identity than most recent criticism allows" (Christ and Jordan 215). While Adams draws

important conclusions from his analysis of the spectral dandy haunting the spectacle of the “hero as man of letters,” he overlooks both the specter and the spectacle of queenship that Carlyle’s parody of Burke infers.

In the previous section, the Bedchamber Crisis was shown to have entangled the issues of Victoria’s royal privacy and public spectacle through the shadow of Marie-Antoinette. The problem of Marie-Antoinette’s disregard for courtly etiquette was already a subject of great interest to Croker. Significantly, Carlyle would draw on the latter’s work to inform his essay “The Diamond Necklace Affair” with dire warnings for the future of the British monarchy. Carlyle’s references to Marie-Antoinette in both the pendant essay and the *The French Revolution*, foreshadow his attitudes toward the young Victoria.

i. “The Wanting of Etiquette” in “The Diamond Necklace Affair”

When Thomas Carlyle published his essay “The Diamond Necklace Affair” in *Fraser’s Magazine*, he provided his readers with an advertisement for his magnum opus *The French Revolution* then in the press.³⁵⁵ In his essay Carlyle turns his attention to the infamous *cause célèbre* involving Marie-Antoinette. The case, which began in the summer of 1784, erupted in the following year. It involved the impersonation of the Queen, multiple forgeries of her autograph, and the theft of a priceless diamond necklace. The affair compromised the royal image to the extent that it defamed the queen, permanently injured her reputation, and precipitated the downfall of the Bourbon monarchy. Whereas Burke’s reflections focus on the October 1789 incident at Versailles and move back to 1772, Carlyle’s text emphasizes the moment at which intrigue and scandal fomented around Marie-Antoinette. In particular Carlyle’s

³⁵⁵ James Fraser’s published Carlyle’s *The French Revolution* in three volumes on May 9, a few weeks before Victoria’s accession.

repeated citation of Burke's text throughout his writings on the French Revolution both affirms the latter's insistence that "the age of chivalry is gone" (Burke 66), while going beyond him to provide new answers as to why this is so.

Burke argues that "the age chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists; and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever" (66). In "The Diamond Necklace Affair" however, Carlyle amends this to state that:

The age of Chivalry is gone, and that of Bankruptcy is come. A dull, deep presaging movement rocks all thrones: Bankruptcy is beating down the gate, and no Chancellor can longer barricade her out. She will enter; and the shoreless fire-lava of DEMOCRACY is at her back! Well may Kings, a second time, 'sit still with awful eye,' and think of far other things than Necklaces. (7)

Carlyle's use of the present tense in this passage is, as everywhere in his historical writing, his method of impressing the reader with the urgency of the universal message of historical facts; the comprehensive in the particular. Quoting from John Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (1645) where "Kings, a second time, 'sit still with awful eye,'" Carlyle places the advent of the French revolution in the context of the Christian nativity narrative. Milton, the poet whom Victorian radicals, Chartists, and anti-monarchists would associate with the Cromwellian Interregnum period, finds a special place in this context. Carlyle's reference provides evidence of his radicalism in reproaching monarchs and despots. Simultaneously his gendered-rhetoric feminizes "Bankruptcy" and draws on similar Jacobin language aimed at Marie-Antoinette for her implication in the infamous affair. Her association with the incident fueled Jacobin hatred,

and in the summer of 1787 Marie-Antoinette was given the epithet “Madame Déficit,” literally “Mrs. Bankruptcy.”

Carlyle further associates feminization with bankruptcy and the Queen when his narrator asks “is the Queen’s Majesty at heart desirous of [the diamond necklace]; but again, at the moment, too poor?” (173). If Marie-Antoinette desires the necklace but is not economically in the position to purchase it, the Countess and swindler “Jeanne de Saint-Remi de Lamotte Valois” (16), a scion of the bastard branch of Catherine de Medici’s husband Henri II, will procure the thing for her. By insinuating Jeanne into the Bourbon court at Versailles, text registers a clear warning for the monarchy. Marie-Antoinette is implicated in the affair because she is imagined as being secretly desirous of the necklace.

Yet the essay’s language as a whole eulogizes Marie-Antoinette and elevates her to the same high status she receives in Burke’s apotheosis. Nevertheless, close attention to Carlyle’s language provides evidence of the essay’s political radicalism and a clear indication of his ambivalent sexism. For Carlyle, Marie-Antoinette is a paradox. If her symbolism is associated with bankruptcy, this is inconsistent with the image of her as “soft-cradled in Imperial Schönbrunn” (19). Carlyle details the Queen’s fall in the final chapter of the first section published in *Fraser’s Magazine* and titled “Marie-Antoinette.” The phrase “Beautiful Highborn that wert so foully hurled low,” appears twice in consecutive paragraphs intimating Milton’s description of Lucifer’s fall. Here Carlyle subtly undermines Burke’s apotheosis while emphasizing for radical political purposes, the significance of Marie-Antoinette’s downward spiral.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁶ See Adriana Craciun’s similar reading of Mary Robinson’s *Monody* in *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (2002), where she likewise “complicates Burke’s morning star description of Marie-Antoinette” (100).

In a moment of supreme irony the essay surpasses Burke by elevating Marie-Antoinette to the position of “Queen of the World” (19). Carlyle differs from Burke however, in his Miltonic and Virgilian descriptions of her fall:

Beautiful Highborn that wert so foully hurled low! For, if thy Being came to thee out of old Hapsburg Dynasties, came it not also (like my own) out of Heaven? *Sunt lachryme rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt*. Oh, is there a man’s heart that thinks, without pity, of those long months and years of slow-wasting ignominy,—of thy Birth, soft-cradled in Imperial Schönbrunn, the winds of heaven not to visit thy face too roughly, thy foot to light on softness, thy eye on splendour; and then of thy Death, or hundred Deaths, to which the Guillotine and Fouquier Tinville’s judgment-bar was but the merciful end? (19)

Carlyle takes vicarious pleasure in hurling Marie-Antoinette into the pit. In this passage the first sentence is reminiscent of Milton’s Lucifer who, in *Paradise Lost* is “Hurled headlong flaming from th’ Ethereal Sky” (Milton 1.45). Yet immediately after the headlong plunge, Carlyle invokes Virgil’s “*Lacrimae rerum*” (“there are tears for things” *Aeneid* 1. 462) which refers the reader back to another passage where the diamond necklace is described in painterly fashion. Drawing on Burke’s own words and formulations to rearrange this gendered description of Marie-Antoinette: “this poor opaque Intrigue of the Diamond Necklace became quite translucent between us; transfigured, lifted up into the serene of Universal History; and might hang there like a smallest Diamond Constellation, visible without telescope,—so long as it could” (4). If Burke’s description of Marie-Antoinette as mentioned earlier, disembodied the queen through astral metaphors, Carlyle, who understands the affair as a byword for Marie-Antoinette, transforms the queen into the material form of the necklace. In his elaborate description of the ornament, Carlyle loses his head over its beauty:

A row of seventeen glorious diamonds, as large almost as filberts, encircle, not too tightly, the neck, a first time. Looser, gracefully fastened thrice to these, a three-wreathed festoon, and pendants enough (simple pear-shaped, multiple star-shaped, or clustering amorphous) encircle it, enwreath it, a second time. Loosest of all, softly flowing round from behind, in priceless catenary, rush down two broad threefold rows; seem to knot themselves (round a very Queen of Diamonds) on the bosom. (6)

The spectacle of the diamond necklace here enwreathed “round a very Queen of Diamonds,” clings to Marie-Antoinette in a visually striking way. Carlyle’s anthropomorphizing of the necklace turns it into a serpent as it entwines itself, encircling, enwreathing, and flowing over the mannequin-like body of the queen. Though her name is unmentioned in this passage the reader knows implicitly that it is Marie-Antoinette who is parenthetically this “very Queen of Diamonds.”³⁵⁷ If in the previous passage she is associated with Lucifer “so foully hurled low,” here she is painted in the likeness of Eve with a serpent coiled around her body.³⁵⁸ Just as Eve was tempted by the serpent to eat of the forbidden fruit culled from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Carlyle’s fantasy of Marie-Antoinette leaves her desiring the diamonds but ignorant of the consequences that follow possession. The point is of course, that the diamonds never belonged to Marie-Antoinette, and the necklace was only attached to her in order to incriminate her. Yet this imagery contradicts the text’s larger claims that Marie-Antoinette was a passive victim of Jeanne de Lamotte’s forgeries and the courtesan Oliva’s impersonation of the queen before Cardinal Rohan.

³⁵⁷ For a discussion of how “the idea of royal femininity and that of jewelry appear to be inseparable,” see Pointon (1997) 493.

³⁵⁸ William Blake’s watercolor *The Temptation and Fall of Eve* (1808) included in his illustrations of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is a Romantic representation of the serpent wrapped around the body of a nude Eve. See Behrendt (162).

In the text Marie-Antoinette is distanced from the affair as the entire spectacle is orchestrated and dramatized by the cunning Countess. Marie-Antoinette is a spectral figure throughout the essay, a shadow tainted like Eve, with a kind of primordial impropriety. The young queen's lack of courtly etiquette has brought about her miseries and she becomes unconsciously involved in a scandal that will ultimately lead to her downfall. The narrator explains that "the Knot of Etiquette being loosed, the Frame of Society broke up; and those astonishing 'Horrors of the French Revolution' supervened" (19). Comparing the "knot of etiquette" to the draping effect of the diamond necklace which "seem to knot themselves (round a very Queen of Diamonds) on the bosom" (6), the reader is led, as in a Freudian dream-analysis to follow the chain of associations: knot of diamonds—unknotting of etiquette—bankruptcy—Revolution.

Carlyle's essay remains a classic statement of his rhetorical style. Careful attention to his language provides evidence that, in constructing his mythography of the French queen he surpasses Burke's apotheosis while undermining Marie-Antoinette with biting irony. In the heart of his essay Carlyle finds that it was Marie-Antoinette's "wanting of etiquette" that brought about her ultimate fall (19). He observes: "Marie Antoinette, as the reader well knows, has been blamed for want of Etiquette. Even now, when the other accusations against her have sunk down to oblivion and the Father of Lies, this of wanting Etiquette survives her" (19). Here Carlyle refers to the same spectacle of misbehavior that Croker intimates in his essay on Victoria and the Bedchamber Crisis treated earlier. Behind both Croker and Carlyle's assessments of Marie-Antoinette however, there is a common source. Both writers cite Madame de Campan's *Memoirs*, and it is under her authority that they can claim the French Queen's principle fault was her rejection of courtly etiquette.

Court etiquette defined the atmosphere of royal life at Versailles, and for Marie-Antoinette this was confining. Carlyle closely follows Madame de Campan's *Memoirs* and carefully notes Croker's emphasis on the veracity of her account of Marie-Antoinette's behavior. At Versailles, the Dauphiness was expected to conform to the rules of etiquette established by precedent. From her arrival in France at the age of fifteen, Marie-Antoinette's every move was followed closely by her first lady of honor the Comtesse de Noailles. Marie-Antoinette gave the countess the sobriquet "Madame Etiquette," and in mocking levity, she sent an attendant to inquire about the proper etiquette that must be followed should the Dauphine happen to fall off of her donkey. In this way Marie-Antoinette troubled the boundaries of the most serious forms of French royal custom (Fraser 77).

Carlyle observes that Marie-Antoinette "indeed discarded Etiquette; once, when her carriage broke down, she even entered a hackney coach. She would walk, too, at Trianon, in mere straw-hat, and perhaps, muslin gown!" (19). Here Carlyle's exclamation mark not only emphasizes the breach of etiquette, but he articulates the same concern with her inexperience as he would later repeat about Victoria in 1838: "Poor Queen! She is much to be pitied. She is at an age when she would hardly be trusted with the choosing of a bonnet, and she is called to a task from which an archangel might have shrunk" (Sanders 223). Like her shadow Marie-Antoinette, Carlyle's "Poor little Victory" is lost in her position. Victoria is as incapable of selecting an appropriate bonnet as she is in performing her royal duties.

If Burke, as Claudia Johnson observes, "has nothing to say on the subject of Marie-Antoinette's maternity" (151), Carlyle also leaps over the subject of her motherhood to discuss the figure of a prematurely aged and wizened figure:

Look there, O man born of woman! The bloom of that fair face is wasted, the hair is gray with care; the brightness of those eyes is quenched, their lids hang drooping, the face is stony, pale, as of one living in death. Mean weeds (which her own hand has mended) attire the Queen of the World. (19)

Recalling Froude's Mary Stuart described at the hour of her execution when the "laboured illusion vanished" and bearing "the withered features of a grizzled, wrinkled old woman," Carlyle's Marie-Antoinette whose face is "stony" and "pale" is already dead in life and "living in death" (Froude 340). Moreover, Carlyle's Marie-Antoinette carries the burden of history itself on her shoulders:

Thy fault, in the French Revolution, was that thou wert the Symbol of the Sin and Misery of a thousand years; that with Saint-Bartholomews, and Jacqueries, with Gabelles and Dragonnades, and Parc-aux-cerfs, the heart of mankind was filled full,—and foamed over, into an all-involving madness. (19)³⁵⁹

Carlyle re-imagines Marie-Antoinette as the culmination of "a thousand years" of French history. Significantly her spectral figure harkens back to the "Saint-Bartholomew" massacre with which Catherine de Medici was so closely connected in the British historical consciousness. Carlyle's version of secular or historical typology here may be likened to Swinburne's similar use of dates in his essay on Mary Stuart. As discussed earlier, the queens are evoked as specters to suggest a cyclical treatment of historical events.

³⁵⁹ Carlyle refers to the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of August 24, 1572. The Jacqueries were peasant revolts of the fourteenth-century. Gabelles refers to the salt tax, and the Dragonnades were Louis XIV's government policy of imposing systematic persecutions on Huguenots after the Revocation of the Edit de Nantes in 1685. The reference to the Parc-aux-Cerfs is to Louis XV's mistresses who were housed in a nearby hotel. Corruption seethes at all levels in the chain of associations.

Carlyle however, differs from Swinburne in that the latter understood Catherine de Medici as a tyrannical substitute for Victoria and Charles IX as the hated “bastard” Napoleon III. In his essay “The Guises,” cited in my first chapter, Carlyle claims that the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre was an event in which “the scene resembled that of September 1792” (“The Guises” 39), and that “the French Revolution itself is but the sequel of the League and of the way the League was managed and settled” (28). Perhaps following Burke who claims in *Reflections* that the “citizens of Paris formerly had lent themselves as the instruments to slaughter the [Huguenot] followers of Calvin, at the infamous massacre of St. Bartholomew,” Carlyle too draws historical parallels between these events (Burke 125). Carlyle pieces together these historical events and finds a common factor. By claiming that Marie-Antoinette is a “Symbol of the Sin and Misery of a thousand years,” he understands her figure as both a spectacle and a specter.

ii. Carlyle’s “frail cockle on the black bottomless deluges”

Carlyle, like Burke before him, separates his representation of Marie Antoinette into distinct periods. As we have seen, his advertisement to *The French Revolution* treats the years 1784 and 1785 during the Diamond Necklace affair. In his representation of Marie-Antoinette as an innocent victim we have seen that he is also capable of accusing her lack of etiquette as a serious demonstration of her political misbehavior. Just as she is terrorized by the fierce “Menads” who invaded her bedchamber at Versailles, she is also sadly guilty of a lack of etiquette and a miscalculation of her conduct in public life. Had she understood the importance of royal spectacle, Carlyle implies, Marie-Antoinette’s symbolism would be less tragic. Torn between his conflicted desire to apotheosize and then to discipline and subdue her, Carlyle’s text is characterized by uncertainty and contradiction.

There is everywhere a strange composite of beauty and guilt that accompanies Carlyle's Marie-Antoinette like a dark cloud. Her appearance in the first chapter of book two of his history already signals his ambiguity: "Meanwhile the fair young Queen, in her halls of state, walks like a goddess of Beauty, the cynosure of all eyes; as yet mingles not with affairs; heeds not the future; least of all, dreads it (FR I: 34). Again, whereas Burke begins his account with the 1789 insurrection, Carlyle reverses the order by describing Marie-Antoinette in 1774 just after the death of Louis XV. Though the cynosure at court, according to Carlyle, Marie-Antoinette "heeds not the future" and succumbs to the bliss of the moment.

This is Carlyle's description of the young Queen of France who would later be described in her darkest hours and at her trial as an imperial figure: "Marie-Antoinette, in this her utter abandonment, and hour of extreme need, is not wanting to herself, the imperial woman" (FR III: 323) and again "the young imperial Maiden of Fifteen has now become a worn discrowned Widow of Thirty-eight; gray before her time" (324). While she is still in last days "imperial" due to her descent from the Habsburg emperors, Carlyle's adjective also qualifies her character by a play of shadows and contrasts. The term "imperial" may be a subtle reference to Burke's claim that Marie-Antoinette, like Lucretia, "feels with the dignity of a Roman matron; that in the last extremity she will save herself from the last disgrace; and that, if she must fall, she will fall by no ignoble hand" (Burke 66). Yet imperial may also imply the character of one who affects a domineering or haughty manner, and in the context of Carlyle's inconsistent political blending of conservatism and radicalism his "imperial" Marie-Antoinette partakes more of pathos than tragedy.

In the final chapter of book one, Carlyle concludes his account of the insurrection of women at Versailles. "A History of Sansculotism" is the subtitle of Carlyle's *French*

Revolution, and it emphasizes the insurrectionary crowds as emblematic of the epoch.³⁶⁰

Importantly, his representation of the women of Paris as “Menads,” (I: 260) “Judiths,” (I: 263) and the “brown-locked Demoiselle Théroigne, with pike and helmet” (I: 265), all serve as direct contrasts to the kind of proper femininity he seeks in Marie-Antoinette. Yet, like Burke before him, his treatment of the women in the insurrection is so extreme that it shades into its uncanny opposite.

In her discussion of Burke’s descriptions of the Parisian women in “Text/Woman as Spectacle: Edmund Burke’s ‘French Revolution’” (1992), Linda Zerilli claims that he attempts “to contain an inverted social world in which femininity no longer signifies what Burke would have it signify” that is, “beauty, order, and submission” (49). What Zerilli calls Burke’s “spectacle” is a “fantasy in which the author finds his own completion; and the narcissistic myth of self-possession can be re-created as often as he rereads his own words” (68). Burke’s deferential attitude to Marie-Antoinette as signaled in his nostalgic longing for a return to chivalry may be likened to Swinburne’s fascination with Mary Stuart as detailed in chapter two. There, fascination with the eternal feminine was discussed in relation to men’s fascination with their own uncanny double, and the attendant experience of loss. Carlyle on the other hand, summons the specter of Marie-Antoinette not for the purpose of apotheosizing her, but to mark her as a harbinger of death, a dire warning to the British monarchy. In his attempt to comprehend Burke’s chivalry in the apotheosis, Carlyle responds that “great Burke remains unanswerable; ‘the Age of Chivalry is gone,’ and could not but go, having now produced the still more indomitable Age of Hunger” (FR: II. 36). Carlyle replaces Burke’s deference with the nineteenth-century British reality of hunger. The issue of hunger was left unresolved with the

³⁶⁰ See Lodge (1989) 133.

French revolution, and it is now threatening to bring Carlyle's Britain to the edge of chaos. Absent also from Burke's reflections is the wildness of Carlyle's natural chaos unleashed like volcanic lava and engulfing France.

In book one chapter eleven titled "From Versailles" the great procession which leads the royal couple to Paris and the Tuileries is again characteristic of Carlyle's rhetorical rewriting of Burke. The "Menadic Cohort. Menadic especially about the Royal Carriage; tripudiating there, covered with tricolor," dance about in a "slow moving Chaos" (FR I: 298-99). The Royal Carriage riding upon the waves of female frenzy is helpless to act, and "thus, like frail cockle, floats the royal Life-boat, helmless, on black deluges of Rascality" (FR I: 299). Here the ship of state is rendered in the miniature form of a lifeboat, and Burke's inflated Roman matron is engulfed "on black deluges of Rascality."

In a letter to his brother John Aitken Carlyle dated 12 April 1838, Carlyle refers to Victoria with the same language he uses to describe Marie-Antoinette, and here the shadow of the past haunts his present: "[Victoria] is decidedly a pretty-looking little creature; health, clearness, graceful timidity looking out from her young face; "frail cockle on the black bottomless deluges," one could not help some interest in her, as in a sister situated as mortal seldom was" (Sanders 222). In quoting himself, Carlyle makes the scene at Versailles erupt into the present, and his political radicalism which may be understood in light of the real threat of Chartism, anticipates Marx's claim that "a specter is haunting Europe."

To return now to the theme of shadows and contrasts that shades his Marie-Antoinette, Carlyle claims that "two Processions, or Royal Progresses, three-and-twenty years apart, have often struck us with a strange feeling of contrast," the first being that of her departure from

Austria, and “with hopes such as no other Daughter of Eve then had” (FR I: 324). The “last Procession” is to the guillotine and site of her execution. In the list of crimes that the Revolutionary Tribunal raises against her, the historian utterly dismisses the charge of incest as a topic “wherewith Human Speech had better not further be spoiled” (323). In his summary dismissal of the evidence, Carlyle quotes Marie-Antoinette’s words as she tells Hebert: “Nature refuses to answer such a charge brought against a Mother. I appeal to all the Mothers that are here” (232). These words will be later echoed in Dickens’s novel when Lucie Manette appeals to Madame Defarge for clemency. Carlyle however, creates a pencil portrait of Marie-Antoinette that serves as a warning for the British monarchy.

When he stages Marie-Antoinette’s trial Carlyle creates a scene in which the Revolutionary Tribunal sinks to the underworld. Fouquier-Tinville metamorphoses into the god Pluto and the spectators are all specters: “Dim, dim, as if in disastrous eclipse; like the pale kingdom of Dis! Plutonic Judges, Plutonic Tinville; encircled nine times, with Styx and Lethe, with Fire Phlegethon and Cocytus named of Lamentation! The very witnesses summoned are like Ghosts” (323). Carlyle derives his figures from classical mythology using descriptive language to darken the mood and atmosphere surrounding the revolutionary actors in his unfolding drama. Yet his spectacle is phantasmagoric, and it requires spectators. Significantly Carlyle uses this very language later to describe the creation of the greatest spectacle of the Victorian period, the Great Exhibition. In a letter to Jane written in 1851 Carlyle expresses his antipathy to those responsible for the Crystal Palace:

I had no idea till late times what a bottomless fund of darkness there is in the human animal, especially when congregated in masses, and set to build ‘Crystal Palaces’ under

King [Henry] Cole, Prince Albert and Company! The profoundest Orcus, or belly of Chaos itself, this is the emblem of them. (Sanders 225)³⁶¹

His reference to the “bottomless fund of darkness” unleashed upon the “congregated masses” by the Prince Consort and his company borrows directly from the tone of the previous passage. Here however, Carlyle is the self-appointed Scottish Fouquier-Tinville inveighing against the Crystal Palace as the “emblem” of the Hanovers. Critic Richard Thomas observes “the Victorian taste for spectacle...originated in the wake of the French Revolution” (54), and what the middle-classes accomplished under Victoria and Albert transformed royal spectacles of the eighteenth-century into Victorian spectacles of commodity culture. This is the lament heard in Carlyle’s letter to his wife, but beneath the text’s complaint about the Crystal palace and its “congregated masses” the reader detects a severe judgment and dire warning as debris from the French Revolution is hurled into the Victorian Age.

Within weeks of writing the letter to Jane, Carlyle was in Paris. This was the first visit he had made since 1824, and a vivid reminder of his cross-Channel connection.³⁶² His brief memoir, published as *Excursion (Futile Enough) to Paris; Autumn 1851* (1892) relates an incident when he entered the Temple prison where Marie-Antoinette was once detained during the revolution: “old pale-dingy edifice, shorn of all its towers; only a gate and dead wall to the street” (180). Upon encountering a policeman while entering, Carlyle records that the man was useless to him because he could recall nothing from the revolutionary period. Finally, Carlyle was relieved when “an old female concierge” who knew all about the Temple, appeared with her keys and directed him to the second floor (181). They entered Marie Antoinette’s “oratoire”

³⁶¹ The letter is dated 10 September, 1851.

³⁶² For a full account of this trip see Ashton (2003).

(private chapel) where the concierge “cut us off a bit of room-paper for souvenir, accepted our three francs with many courtesies, and so we left the Temple, a memorable scene in one’s archives” (181). Carlyle’s shred of wallpaper was all that remained for him of the tragic life and fall of Marie-Antoinette, but the ghostly fragment he took from her place of imprisonment fifty-eight years after her execution, travelled back with him to Chelsea. Carlyle’s description of a torn piece of paper as “a memorable scene in one’s archives” testifies to his visual approach to history, but it also prefigures Victoria’s similar reaction to Marie-Antoinette’s tragic history in her journal from a visit to Paris in 1855.

IV. Cross-Channel Queens: Marie-Antoinette’s Shadow in *A Tale of Two Cities*

A family on the throne is an interesting idea also. It brings down the pride of sovereignty to the level of petty life.

—Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, 85.

We talked of past times, and the Emperor said he knew Mme Campan, who had been one of the dressers of Marie-Antoinette, and had brought up his mother. Though he could not recollect what she had herself related, he had studied her *Memoirs*, and in those she gave an account of how the poor Queen had been summoned to appear before the Convention and had to walk through Paris on foot; that she had lived in such dread of what would happen; also of what hairbreadth escape she had when the wretches entered the room, ascended the stairs, killed the *heiduc* [personal attendant], who was in her bed, and were coming to her, when another called out, ‘*Respect aux femmes,*’ to which the wretch, who was about to kill her, replied ‘*Heim?*’ and put up his sword. The Emperor added that Mme Campan said she could never forget this ‘*Heim?*’ and still heard it in her ears, for with it was linked the saving of her life. (*Journals* 109-110)³⁶³

—Queen Victoria, *Leaves from a Journal* (1855)

Marie Antoinette’s shadow flitters across the pages of Queen Victoria’s *Leaves from a Journal* (1855) quoted in the second epigraph above. In her journal, Victoria shares conversations she had with Napoleon about the French Revolution and the vivid impressions of an incident from Madame Campan’s *Memoirs*. Similar to Burke and Carlyle’s accounts of the infamous October days, the passage is about the night of August 10 1792 when the Parisian mob

³⁶³ Victoria’s nearly exact rendition of the incident from Mme. Campan’s *Memoirs* suggests that she may have read the work herself. If so, this would increase the likelihood of her familiarity with Marie-Antoinette’s fate.

invaded the Tuileries. Victoria's thrice-removed narration of Napoleon III's memory of Madame Campan is ironic in light of the fact that the British queen was physically present at the Tuileries in August 1855. Reflecting on the trace and the shadow Marie Antoinette left in this very spot where she was held captive from 1789 until August 1792, Victoria perhaps shuddered while remembering her own predicament during the Chartist demonstrations of April 1848. Recording Madame Campan's account of the invasion of her rooms in the Tuileries allows Victoria to relive the spectacle of suffering royalty, and like Carlyle in 1851, to record for posterity, her own impressions.

No Victorian novelist was so indebted to Carlyle as Charles Dickens, and in a well-known passage from his preface to *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) he expresses his gratitude as well as his deference "to the philosophy of Mr. Carlyle's wonderful book" (398). Above all, Carlyle's insistence that the past has meaning for the present, that it exists in the present and makes history a living reality, is what Dickens accomplishes in his novel.³⁶⁴ In this section I argue that in following Carlyle's history, Dickens transforms the real historical figure Marie-Antoinette into the middle class character Lucie Manette. In turn, Lucie also bears a likeness to the Victorian domestic myth of the Angel in the House whose angelic embodiment his readers saw mirrored in the spectacle of their own queen. In her essay on Victorian readings of the French Revolution, critic Linda Shires discusses Dickens's transformation of Carlyle's dangerous revolutionary females into the figure of Madame Defarge. Shires asks the important question: "what are

³⁶⁴ Michael Goldberg observes that Dickens's purpose in the novel was similar if not the same as that of Carlyle's historical vision and that "the satire on English conditions leaves no room for doubt that the dogmatic point of the novel is to assert the possibility of similar revolution in England unless its rulers heed the lesson of the events in France" (126).

Victorians to make of Victoria?” (154). It is this question that prompts my inquiry about how Dickens processes feelings about Marie-Antoinette’s symbolism through Queen Victoria.

In the first epigraph cited above, Walter Bagehot analyses the mechanism of Victoria’s monarchy asserting that it fulfills for the British populace an illusion comparable to fiction while adding that “all but a few cynics like to see a pretty novel touching for a moment the dry scenes of the grave world” (85). In *The English Constitution* he claims that the “dignified” role of the government which the Queen occupies, functions as a kind of spectacular entertainment feeding the “bovine stupidity” of the masses (Bagehot 29). English people defer to “a theatrical show of society,” with “a stage on which the actors walk their parts much better than the spectators can” (248). Finally he asserts that “there is in England a certain charmed spectacle which imposes on the many, and guides their fancies as it will,” and this is all arranged by the Queen (248).³⁶⁵ This “charmed spectacle” of royalty which plays such an important role for the English is present in Ward’s painting of the imprisoned royal family of France. Dickens’s historical novel, I argue, recreates this “charmed spectacle” in his fiction. In comparing the spectacle of the family on the throne to a domestic novel, Bagehot echoes Dickens’s literary practice.

Dickens’s novel transforms the French monarchy of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette into an everyday British family of the nineteenth century. This allows his readers to create a fantasy world of endangered monarchy, a world in which as Bagehot claims, they come “face to face with a great exhibition of political things which [they] could not have imagined” otherwise (248). Marie-Antoinette’s conspicuous absence from the novel is perversely, a representation of

³⁶⁵ Margaret Homans claims that under Victoria, “the monarchy’s success arose from its transformation into a popular spectacle during the nineteenth century; it was during that time that the association between royal spectacle and middle-class practices and values came to seem the permanent hallmark of the royal family. This spectacle depended for its effectiveness on Victoria’s gender. At any historical period a woman is perhaps more readily transformed into spectacle than a man” (Homans “To the Queen’s Private Apartments” 3-4).

her in the fictional character of Lucie Manette. In the novel, the private life and sacred domestic sphere so cherished by mid-Victorians, and caricatured in John Bull, crosses the Channel to confront the French Revolution.³⁶⁶ In raising questions about Queen Victoria in the context of *A Tale of Two Cities*, I claim that the queen's shadow falls on the novel. Just as Dickens would arrange a fictional marriage between middle class England and French aristocracy, Victoria's political overtures to Napoleon in 1855 presented her subjects with a spectacular "rapprochement" between the two nations.

As I have already shown in this chapter, Victorians were transforming Marie-Antoinette's symbolism from the frivolous girl to the persecuted and imprisoned Queen of France. Dickens's Lucie resembles Marie-Antoinette in Ward's painting of the royal family in the Temple, but his representations of Defarge and her cronies recalls Elmore's painting. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, I argued that in *The Tuileries, 20 June 1792* (1860) Elmore introduces a fundamental uncertainty about whether or not Marie-Antoinette's tragedy was "a drama of tyranny or a history of martyrdom" (Benjamin 73). Given that Dickens's Defarge has very good reasons to hate the representatives of the ancien regime, Lucie's symbolism engenders ambivalence. In this light Lucie can be compared with Marie-Antoinette's ambivalent symbolism.

Though not literally in a prison, Lucie's grief is occasioned by Darnay's incarceration in La Force. Lucie organizes her "little household" in Paris "exactly as if her husband had been there" (285). Through this fantasy of a domestic idyll created in the eye of the revolutionary

³⁶⁶ Linda Shires explains that Dickens's novel accomplishes the obverse as well, "the transplantation from France to England of the Revolutionary image of woman as Unnatural" (Shires 148). Shires also claims that "feminist critics of culture need to attend carefully to the transplantation of symbolic representations and to their shifting meanings when moved from one geopolitical sphere to another" (147).

storm, Dickens exposes the paradoxical instability of the middle-class Victorian home. Lucie's "little household" is a spot of English insularity, an island in the middle of what Carlyle referred to as "the bottomless deluge." The same anxieties of invasion and espionage found in Burke and Carlyle's accounts of the insurrectionary events of the October days reappear in fictional form to remind Victorians of that spectacle of endangered royalty.³⁶⁷ As argued in the preceding sections, anxieties of intrusion and violation of the home give structure and meaning to the literary symbolism of Marie-Antoinette as a spectacular victim of rape and persecution.

As a "geopolitical" transplantation of the French Revolution, Dickens's Lucie Manette and Ward's Marie-Antoinette are both shadows of Queen Victoria whose crossing of the Channel in 1855 gives substance and meaning to the shadow. Marie Antoinette has a shadowy presence in Dickens's representation of the revolution, and as Robert Tracy notes, "in Lucie Manette, Dickens invented a sympathetic figure who could reenact the Queen's ordeal without being Marie Antoinette herself, or sharing any of her follies, Lucie's name, Manette, compresses MA[rie Antoi]NETTE. Her story to some extent parallels the Queen's" ("Queen's Parlours" 338). The name Manette in the French language is a diminutive for Marie-Antoinette and Dickens's text displaces aspects of the French queen on to Lucie.³⁶⁸

Returning now to Ward's painting of the royal family of France which Dickens viewed at the Paris exhibition in 1855, the novelist exerted a rare effort to attend.³⁶⁹ In spite of his dislike

³⁶⁷ In *A Social History of Housing* John Burnett argues that for mid-Victorians "this 'new' class was the most family-conscious and home-centered generation to have emerged in English History" (95).

³⁶⁸ Though the character Lucie, as critic Michael Slater has noted, bears a likeness to that of Dickens's paramour Ellen Ternan, the overdetermined and ambivalent nature of royal symbolism accounts for multiple and connected chains of associations (Slater 210-211).

³⁶⁹ Critic Michael Hollington observes that Dickens, like Carlyle, had "boycotted the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851, encased as it was in see-through glass, and did not want to go to that of Paris in 1855" (Sadrin 24). Dickens wrote in a letter that "he had not 'the faintest idea of adding his personality to the French Exhibition, after flying one hundred miles from the English'" (24).

of spectacles Dickens left behind two records of his attendance. The first, already mentioned from his letter to John Forster, singles out Ward's picture for praise. The second indirect mention is found in his article for *Household Words* titled "Insularities," published in January 1856. Here Dickens distinguishes between French paintings that convey a bold sense of drama as opposed to the "formality and constraint" found in English art ("Insularities" 473). The importance of Dickens's art criticism for a reading of his 1859 novel is apparent in light of the differences he makes between actions and gestures in French paintings, and the formality of the British:

Conceiving the difference between a dramatic picture and a theatrical picture, to be, that in the former case a story is strikingly told, without apparent consciousness of a spectator, and that in the latter case the groups are obtrusively conscious of a spectator, and are obviously dressed up, and doing (or not doing) certain things with an eye to the spectator, and not for the sake of the story; we sought in vain for this defect. (473)

Dickens's preference for French "dramatic" pictures has to do with their truthfulness, and by extension his praise for Ward's painting of the French royal family is that the painter has chosen to represent a portrait of human suffering that is true to life. This is the effect that Dickens mentions in his preface to *A Tale* when claiming that "whenever any reference (however slight) is made here to the condition of the French people before and during the Revolution, it is truly made, on the faith of the most trustworthy witnesses" (397). Like Ward's painting which singles out a moment from a scene of everyday life of domestic tranquility to convey an impression of royal suffering, Dickens's characters are represented as struggling to carry on their lives in spite of being the object of the revolutionary gaze. As a Cross-Channel novel knitted around the story of Charles Darnay (Evrémonde) and the Manette's emigrating between Paris and London,

Dickens's narrative gives substance to the shadow images of suffering royalty as apotheosized in Burke's reflections.³⁷⁰

Critics of Dickens's novel tend to overlook Marie-Antoinette's symbolic role as a spectral shadow. In her article "The 'Angels' in Dickens's House: Representation of Women in *A Tale of Two Cities*" (1990), Lisa Robson focuses on Dickens's female characters by pairing Lucie, Madame Defarge, and Miss Pross as literary doubles (Cotsell 204-5), yet she too overlooks the queen. Linda Shires, focusing primarily on the figure of the maenad, claims they represent an anomalous gender position tinged with elements of anti-Gallic thought. In the concluding paragraph of her article however, Shires mentions an alternative way to think about the representation of sans-culottes women in these nineteenth century British texts. She observes that

on a broader scale, the ideological contradictions of these texts voice a concern about female power, not just the power to rebel, but the power to rule. They address cultural concerns about a powerful mother-figure who runs the nation, Victoria. One has to wonder whether the presence of a male monarch on the throne would have sustained quite so rigorously the politicizing of the domestic sphere. (Shires 162)³⁷¹

If one reads both Shires and Tracy's claims as related to one another, that both Victoria and Marie-Antoinette are symbolically present though textually absent, then the reader must look to the larger public sphere for that context.³⁷² In order to interpret Lucie Manette as Dickens's

³⁷⁰ Darnay and Lucie Manette's marriage takes place in England but their lives are lived crossing the Channel.

³⁷¹ In "Of Maenads, Mothers, and Feminized Males: Victorian Reading of the French Revolution," Linda Shires argues that the figure of the maenad became separated from its historical roots in Greek and Roman mythology. She focuses on how the figure as it was employed in texts by Carlyle and Dickens became a framework for discussing unnatural mothers and feminine males.

³⁷² As Margaret Homans claims, "to survey the British literary scene of this time is to find queens multiplying everywhere" (*Royal Representations* 68).

middle-class version of Marie-Antoinette, the reader must pay close attention not only to her physical features, but also to her actions as they determine her character.³⁷³

Lucie's domestic character is highlighted in the novel as she is found occupied with her sewing. In "Echoing Footsteps," chapter twenty-one of book two, appropriately titled "The Golden Thread," Lucie is twice described as "ever busy winding the golden thread" (218). Echoes of Ward's royal/domestic painting resound here as Lucie, like Marie-Antoinette, sews while "the little Lucie" sits under her mother's gaze chattering "in the tongues of the Two Cities that were blended in her life" (219). In Ward's painting Marie-Thérèse stands close by Marie-Antoinette illustrating the close mother and daughter bond Dickens registers in his novel.

Yet in this chapter, Lucie also hears distant echoes "that rumbled menacingly in the corner all through this space of time" and finally "an awful sound, as of a great storm in France with a dreadful sea rising" (221). This is Dickens's tribute to Carlyle's rhetoric of Marie-Antoinette floating like a "frail cockle on the black bottomless deluges," but it also prepares the reader for Lucie's later encounter with her nemesis Madame Defarge. If Lucie is frequently found sewing, and metonymically associated with "golden thread," then Defarge is a consummate knitter endlessly looping and knotting her yarn of vengeance. Defarge's knitting is a tale of vengeance as "she tied a knot with flashing eyes, as if it throttled a foe," and "tying another knot, as if there were another enemy strangled," in her Jacobin fury she stitches a code of vindictive blood lust into her work as the names of her enemies are strangled in the loops of her yarn (185). This too is significant because it highlights Dickens's attention to the distinction

³⁷³ Critic Judith Pascoe observes, "it is a domesticated queen who dominates the literary and graphic representations of Marie Antoinette that Robert Tracy finds permeating Victorian iconography, her performative power harnessed to quotidian tasks such as sewing" (97).

between Defarge's labor-intensive and psychologically stressful knitting-mania and Lucie's domestic bliss.

Recalling now Elizabeth Stone's *The Art of Needle-Work* where Marie-Antoinette is described as "extremely fond of needle-work, and during her happiest and gayest years was daily found to be at her embroidery-frame" (388), Madame Defarge and her fellow-tricoteuses by contrast, "sat knitting, knitting, that they their very selves were closing in around a structure yet unbuilt, where they were to sit knitting, knitting, counting dropping heads" (194). The subtle reference to the shadow of the guillotine is also reminiscent of Croker's "The Guillotine," the final article in his collected *Essays on the Early Period of the French Revolution* (1857). Croker asserts that executions at the guillotine

were for many months the amusement—the *spectacle* of the *people*, we wish we could safely say the *populace*, of Paris; but, as we before stated, chairs were stationed round the instrument, where women, in a station of life to be able to pay for that amusement, used to hire seats, and sit, and chat, and work (whence they were called *les tricoteuses de la Guillotine*), while waiting for the tragedy which they looked at as a farce. (Croker 565 italics in original)

In Dickens's first chapter of book three, Charles Darnay, who has returned to France to assist in his former servant Gabelle's release from prison, is led to La Force. He will remain under guard until he makes a hair-breadth escape with the aid of his self-sacrificing double Sydney Carton. Upon entering the prison on the 14 of August 1792, Darnay witnesses a group of aristocrats described in his mental monologue as ghosts. Recalling now that the date (14th of August) follows one day after the members of the royal family were removed from the Tuileries and

confined to the Temple, Dickens's narrative closely follows that royal chronology. The passage is also uncannily reminiscent of the atmosphere in Ward's painting with its dark shades and stillness echoing Dickens's "gloomy prison, dark and filthy, and with a horrible smell of foul sleep in it" (265).

When led to La Force, Darnay, who has been completely "isolated" by the "universal watchfulness" (264) of his guides led by Defarge, first learns of the king's imprisonment when overhearing a street orator "addressing an excited audience on the crimes against the people, of the king and the royal family" (263). This section of Dickens's chapter more than any other bears out the text's resemblance to Ward's painting. Though the "ghosts" who all rise to greet Darnay "with every refinement of manner known to the time" are not members of the royal family, their fate instantly recalls that of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette who are imprisoned in the nearby Temple:

so spectral did they become in the inappropriate squalor and misery through which they were seen, that Charles Darnay seemed to stand in the company of the dead. Ghosts all! The ghost of beauty, the ghost of stateliness, the ghosts of elegance, the ghost of pride, the ghost of frivolity, the ghost of wit, the ghost of youth, the ghost of age, all waiting their dismissal from the desolate shore. (265)

This passage, with its references to the spectral characters as future victims of the revolutionary guillotine is reminiscent of Froude cited in the epigraph to this chapter. Froude claims that in Carlyle's history of the revolution, his actors appear "in some vast phantasmagoria, with the supernatural shining through them" (78). Dickens's Darnay witnesses a similar phantasmagoric effect while awaiting the guards who will usher him to his cell.

Meanwhile Lucie, who has arrived in Paris to attend her husband and fight for his life, is doubled by Madame Defarge described as her shadow. In book three, chapter three, appropriately titled “The Shadow,” Lucie implores Defarge to have mercy on her family. Addressing her nemesis in the same language Marie-Antoinette used at her trial, Lucie appeals to Defarge’s feminine instincts in the hope of saving her family: “‘As a wife and mother,’ cried Lucie, most earnestly, ‘I implore you to have pity on me and not to exercise any power that you possess, against my innocent husband, but to use it in his behalf. O sister-woman, think of me. As a wife and mother!’” (278). Unlike the women at Marie-Antoinette’s trial however, Madame Defarge lacks tenderness and is unmoved by Lucie’s imploring, while supplying her own list of the ancien regime’s injustice against the people.³⁷⁴ Turning to Mr. Lorry, Lucie then observes “that dreadful woman seems to throw a shadow on me and all my hopes” (279). At this point the text digresses momentarily into the language of the shadow as Lorry tells Lucie “A shadow indeed! No substance in it Lucie” (279), however the narrator immediately intrudes on Mr. Lorry’s assertion claiming that “the shadow of the manner of these Defarges was dark upon himself, for all that, and in his secret mind it troubled him greatly” (279). This ambiguous passage indicates that the play of light and shadow has real and substantial significance.

Defarge’s unfeminine and criminal character suggests the extent to which revolutionary violence is embodied in the feminine. A deconstructive reading of the passage shows that the gender category “female” is momentarily decentered from its central position in the narrative, and the shadow of Madame Defarge’s look, “coldly as ever” (278), emerges from the margin to take the central position of the feminine while asking Lucie: “Is it likely that the trouble of one

³⁷⁴ John Kucich claims that “in Dickens’s world the supreme disruption of normal expectations about human nature is an absence of tenderness in women” (Cotsell 139).

wife and mother would be much to us now?" (279). Here is the uncertainty caught in Elmore's painting as well; Lucie undergoes the same situation as Marie-Antoinette confronted by the furious sans-culottes women.

When Madame Defarge indicates later that she will set the trap for Lucie's execution at the guillotine, her accomplice Jacques Three remarks that "she has a fine head for it" as he has "seen blue eyes and golden hair there, and they looked charming when Samson held them up" (373). Blonde hair, as critic Galia Ofek claims, is Dickens's "synecdoche for perfect womanhood, in terms which both reflect the fairy tale and the fetishistic admiration, and which define Lucie Manette in the novel" (113). Here the text gestures at Marie-Antoinette who was executed at the guillotine in October of 1793, but it also places her fate, as in Burke and Carlyle's texts in the hands of a monstrous trio of Parisian women who are her judges. Dickens's maenadic figures are Madame Defarge, Vengeance and Guillotine. Like Carlyle before him he creates a mythological group of female figures who are so monstrous and criminal that they challenge the claims of fictional realism Dickens offers in the preface.

Among these monsters, Madame Guillotine is a metaphoric representation of the terror of castration. According to Gilbert Elliot in his article "The Female King," it was "the Dionysian guillotine [that] haunted the imagination of Europe; a mechanical *vagina dentata*, it produced, with its endless emasculations, an unstoppable blood flow" (Elliott 873). In Dickens's text Guillotine symbolizes the rage of the sans-culottes and thus the political opposite of Swinburne's Catherine de Medici and her royal associations addressed in chapter one. Nevertheless the threat of the guillotine as a female historical force still retains while feeding male fears of castration (Paulson 23).

Lucie's fate then intersects with confluent channels of royal and domestic symbolism to create textual parallels with Marie-Antoinette. As a metonym of royalty transformed into domesticity, Lucie bears a resemblance to the Victorian iconography of Marie-Antoinette, and this is evident in Sydney Carton's recognition that Lucie is just the kind of self-sacrificing and devoted wife who would be willing to go to the end to be with her husband. In chapter twelve, book three Carton implores Mr. Lorry to save Lucie by getting her out of Paris and away from the guillotine "for she would lay her own fair head beside her husband's cheerfully" (358). Recognizing Lucie's self-sacrifice and high-minded devotion to her husband, Carton is morally transformed and will determine later to take her example and die in Darnay's place at the guillotine. Carton's self-sacrificial act however, does not blot out the ancien regime's sins of the past. Darnay escapes from the Evrémone family's cycle of violence and the novel suggests that Carton's sacrifice will enable the survival and perpetuity of the middle class rather than the aristocracy. Lucy and Darnay's survival depends on Carton's noble act, but it is also enabled by Miss Pross's destruction of Madame Defarge.

Madame Defarge's death in book three brings the text to its culminating moment. Like a hurricane of national vengeance, Madame Defarge invades Lucie's former residence. She fails to find Lucie who has escaped and is well on her way out of Paris with Darnay. Defarge instead is confronted by Miss Pross who acts like a queen's lady-in-waiting and who will stop at nothing to prevent passage through her mistress's bedchamber door. If Lucie stands in for Marie-Antoinette, then Miss Pross, who is her figural lady-in-waiting, must complete the final act of killing Defarge. In this chapter Dickens rewrites both Burke and Carlyle's accounts of the women's insurrection at Versailles. Madame Defarge confronts Miss Pross and the two launch

into a violent contest of wills described as a war between two nations as Pross screams “I am an Englishwoman” (380) and “you wicked foreign woman, I am your match” (381).

As Defarge moves from door to door in order to find Lucie, Marie-Antoinette is invoked again through the synecdoche of the “Oeil de Boeuf.”³⁷⁵ Just as Marie-Antoinette was the figural “bull’s-eye” or target of the revolutionary “maenads” during the October days, Defarge in Dickens’s chapter aims for Lucie, now standing in for the ancien regime. Dickens plays with this symbolism in book two chapter one when the narrator claims that in August of 1792 “the shining Bull’s Eye of the Court was gone, or it would have been the mark for a hurricane of national bullets” (243). This passage also draws from Carlyle’s account of the insurrection of women where we writes of “a changed Oeil-de Boeuf; with Versailles National Guards, in their tricolor cockades doing duty there; a Court all flaring with tricolor” (I: 255). Here the “Oeil de Boeuf” stands in for the absent courtiers and of course, the king and queen. In Dickens’s chapter the scene is not at Versailles, but in Lucie’s rented rooms. Miss Pross is not shown defending a queen as Madame de Campan defended Marie-Antoinette, and Defarge is not a “cruel band of ruffians and assassins” as in Burke’s *Reflections*, nevertheless the scene still retains symbolic importance (62).

By transforming Marie-Antoinette’s tragic fate into Lucie’s miraculous escape Dickens offers his Victorian readers a tale in which they can recognize a “charmed spectacle” of royalty mirrored in their image (Bagehot 248). Miss Pross’s agency ends Defarge’s tyranny and the family is saved from revolutionary destruction. Though the novel presents Carton as the noble self-sacrificing agent who saves the family, there is clear evidence that Dickens was aware of the

³⁷⁵ The “Oeil de Boeuf” is the area of the Versailles Palace leading into the private bedchambers of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI. From the days of Louis XIV it was the heart of court life at Versailles.

challenge he faced in privileging one death over the other. In a letter to John Forster Dickens articulates his concerns in the ordering of the novel's culminating action:

I am not clear, and I never have been clear, respecting the canon of fiction which forbids the interposition of accident in such a case as Madam Defarge's death...and when I use Miss Pross...to bring about such a catastrophe, I have the positive intention of making that half-comic intervention a part of the desperate woman's failure; and of opposing that mean death, instead of a desperate one in the streets which she wouldn't have minded, to the dignity of Carton's. (quoted in Sanders 161-162)

Clearly Dickens took trouble to reflect on the balancing of the two death scenes in book three. Though the novel ultimately privileges the concluding narrative with Carton's self-sacrifice written over Miss Pross's "half-comic intervention," this letter shows the significance of her agency. By privileging Miss Pross's agency in her extermination of Madame Defarge I am arguing a different interpretation of the novel, one that draws on Burke and Carlyle as Dickens's sources. As I have shown, both of these literary predecessors constructed Marie-Antoinette as a Victorian icon, and though Dickens's novel never names Marie-Antoinette, her shadow looms in Lucie's empty Parisian apartments as a synecdoche for the revolutionary insurrections at Versailles and the Tuileries.

In the opening chapter of *A Tale of Two Cities* Dickens uses parallel structure to consider the past in terms of the present, 1781 is hurled into 1859. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (5) is followed thirteen clauses later by "the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only" (5). Dickens urges his readers to make comparisons

between the past the present by thinking about the symbols of monarchy. In the next paragraph he recalls “there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France” (5). The parallel structure invokes Victoria’s grandparents, Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette as shadows of the present monarchs of England and France.

Considering that in 1855 Queen Victoria was eager to open political lines of communication with France, her subjects must have wondered what their queen could possibly have in common with the nephew of the man who had carried the French Revolution to its highest quest for power. By 1859 the disastrous Crimean War and Orsini’s assassination attempt on Napoleon III had altered relations between the two countries. In her journal Queen Victoria recognizes the problems inherent in a new alliance with France. She writes:

the two sovereigns, the one the nephew of the first Napoleon, the other, the granddaughter of George III, his bitterest foe, and these two sovereigns and the two nations bound together by the closest alliance which has almost ever existed between two great independent nations. May this ever continue so, and receive God’s blessing!
(Mortimer 147)

Almost anticipating the parallel’s in the opening of Dickens’s novel, this passage closes Victoria’s journal using anaphora to draw the relations between France and Great Britain. Victoria’s “two sovereigns,” the “two nations,” and finally the modified “two independent nations,” emphasizes historical continuities and struggles, while the conversion from “bitterest foes” to “the closest alliance” connotes closure. I have argued that Victoria is casting her shadow on Dickens’s novel. The specter of Marie-Antoinette gets lost in all of this concern over Britain’s

relation to France, nevertheless her symbolism as I have shown, had served the beginning of Victoria's reign with a warning about female monarchy, and yet the perceived dangers of her youth and inexperience gave shape to her determination to rule with prudence. Recalling now that in 1859 Swinburne was writing his plays about Catherine de Medici and Mary Stuart where the historical queens reappear as uncanny doubles and substitute authority figures, it is less surprising to see Victoria casting her shadow on Marie-Antoinette as well.

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