AT WHAT COST? EMPIRE AND THE DISRUPTION OF
THE DOMESTIC SPHERE IN THE SENSATION NOVEL

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Abstract

In examining *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Armadale* by Wilkie Collins, and *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, this thesis explores the progression of Victorian anxiety regarding the effects of imperialism on both the individual members of the middle-class Victorian family and the English nation itself. As concerns in the Victorian era shifted from the protection of women and children to the condition of the men and the fading Empire, the focus of the literature of the period shifted too, reflecting the various anxieties the middle class had about the myriad effects of imperialism on their society. These anxieties manifested themselves in xenophobia and preoccupations with perceived contamination that spread from contact with other cultures to infect and ultimately destroy English families by prompting social and moral falls from grace, which could only be erased by removing the pollution or its agents. Ultimately, this thesis argues that sensation novels critique endeavors, including the expansion of the Empire, that endanger any member of the middle-class family.
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Introduction

The nineteenth century saw relatively swift changes in the British Empire's social, military, and scientific understanding that, while somewhat exhilarating, also prompted much of the middle to upper classes to begin questioning their place and purpose in the larger, more complicated world they were now part of. For instance, scientific discoveries like Charles Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 and then *The Descent of Man* in 1871, as well as military losses abroad in the West Indies, India, Africa, and New Zealand, left the Victorians uncertain of their place in the world theater, both spiritually and politically (Christ and Robson 980, 988); at the same time, societal focus shifted more toward the Victorian family unit and its protection, particularly of the more vulnerable members, the women and children, as evidenced by the various laws and reforms that addressed women and children, like the various Factory Acts of 1833-47, which restricted the age and hours of child and female workers. The 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act allowed for the establishment of divorce courts; the Married Women's Property Act was passed in 1870, nominally granting married women the right to keep the property they brought to their marriage, even though the law proved, regrettably, to be neither retroactive nor airtight. Further reforms to the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1878 afforded some protection to women who were victims of domestic abuse, and about a decade later, the Infant Custody Act of 1886 finally allowed women custodial rights to their children (Christ and Robson 990-93).

But Victorian society's new laws and understandings were not the only method of exploring the most effective way for the British Empire and its citizens to prosper in a
confusing new world. In fact, much of Victorian literature explored the effects of the
dangerous new world that the Victorian family existed in. After all, if men had to leave
their families for the glory of the Empire, to fight for Queen and country and to lay claim
to the globe, either militarily or in the form of "discovery" and planting a flag, their
absence would necessarily leave their wives and children exposed to danger since, thanks
to the gaps in the so-called laws and reforms that purported to maintain their best
interests, without the men, middle-class Victorian women and children were unable to
protect themselves.

While nonfiction essays and pamphlets written by the great thinkers, reformers,
and philosophers of the Victorian era explored these issues, another genre did the same in
a somewhat safer, more masked manner: the Victorian sensation novel, which explored
the (admittedly sensationalized) dangers that might befall a respectable middle- or upper-
class home, often made parallels between the larger issues besetting the Victorian family,
the social climate in which the Victorian family existed, and the hidden costs of imperial
expansion.

An extremely popular genre from the time Wilkie Collins first published The
Woman in White in 1859-60, sensation novels were designed to shock and entertain their
readers by portraying stories of murder, adultery, insanity, bigamy, and other outrageous
subjects in comfortable, ordinary domestic settings. But sensation novels were more than
just the tawdry entertainment their critics labeled them. As Nathan K. Hensley notes,
these novels were "reform fiction" (616), and as such, important social issues were raised
and explored as characters moved through the events that make up these novels’ plots.
Lady Audley’s Secret (1861-62), written by Mary Elizabeth Braddon; Armadale (1864-66), written by Wilkie Collins; and Dracula (1897), written by Bram Stoker, are three such novels that examine the effects of imperialism on the most basic unit of the Empire: the middle-class British family. In the background of Britain’s social consciousness during the time these novels were written was the knowledge that since its colonial losses in the late eighteenth century, the continued expansion of the British Empire in the nineteenth century was critical for Britain to try to recover its revenues and prestige. But expanding the Empire required sending men out into the world to conquer and tame, while women had to maintain the domestic sphere at home and bear children to further the Empire’s aims. What dangers, then, the men might face out in the wider world, and what dangers their wives and children might be exposed to while the men were out conquering the "uncivilized" world, increasingly occupied the public mind. The question of what foreign influences the British family might be exposed to through the father's exploration abroad, as well as the effect of his absence on mothers and their children, was of particular interest. In examining these three works, it becomes clear that each author criticizes imperial expansion for its varied detrimental effects on the British family: the needs of the conquering Empire disrupt the domestic sphere in crucial ways, leading to its eventual breakdown.

Of course, the exploration and criticism of imperial concerns as they affected the British family did not begin with the sensation novel, nor did they end with it. Sensation novels' treatment of the subject was part of a longer conversation, one that began before Victoria's reign. Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818), for example, in addition to
critiquing the hubris of man setting himself over God and Nature, also deals, William Veeder and Debra Best suggest, with problematic, absent fathers who ultimately fail their families (375; 366); in this novel, exploration and the pursuit of personal advancement prove detrimental to the family, sowing destruction in their wake. Later novels, like Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1910) and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), feature "Indian Orphans" who embody an anxiety about the state of the Empire in India and the possible negative effects of India on the Empire's stability (Rooks 505-06, McMaster 34). In between the publication of these novels, several others—sensation and detective alike, such as Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868)—continued the theme of contact with non-British lands as potentially dangerous and contaminating (Free 341), an act which tore destructively at the fabric of the British family and its attendant household.

Sensation novels, as with other novels of the time, also pulled themes, characterizations, and events from true life stories reported in the newspapers. For instance, Kate Summerscale, in her 2008 *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*, connects the 1860 murder of a small child to motifs seen in the subsequent works of Charles Dickens (53, 272), Wilkie Collins, (75, 198) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon (217, 222), to name just a few authors contemporary with the crime. These small touches of verisimilitude, coming straight from the newspapers' headlines, only highlighted the connection between the fictional and the real, and they allowed the various authors and their readers to draw definite, though somewhat masked, connections between what was happening in the books' pages and out in the wider Victorian world.
Lady Audley’s Secret, the first novel examined here, was written and published in 1861-62, around five years after the Marriage Act was passed and the Indian Mutiny took place. Lady Audley is closely tied to imperial expansion not only in the proliferation of colonial goods scattered throughout her rooms, but also in the well hidden on the property, which recalled to her audience the well at Cawnpore, the site of a massacre of English women and children. Some critics, particularly Lillian Nayder, see this as Braddon comparing Lady Audley to the rebellious sepoys (37-38). But because Braddon ultimately doesn’t make Lady Audley responsible for the deaths she’s accused of, and even portrays her in a fairly sympathetic light throughout, it might be argued that the Indian connection signals the dangers of imperialism since conquering husbands and fathers must leave their wives and children unprotected, as occurred at Cawnpore. The desire for the rich goods and the new lands comes at the cost of the whole middle-class family, particularly the wives/mothers, who are supposed to be the moral center of the home and thus the moral center of the Empire.

On its surface, Armadale (1864-66), the second novel to be examined, is the story of destiny and the sins of the father being visited on the son. But the book was written at a time of uncertainty for the British Empire: its colonies (India, New Zealand, etc.) were experiencing violence and revolution, and this upheaval left many questioning Britain's involvement abroad, when it had previously held an uncontested position as the greatest power in the world. In effect, Armadale is, as Caroline Reitz suggests, a novel about colonial guilt, though not embodied in the person of Lydia Gwilt, as she suggests. Instead, the burden of colonial guilt can be traced in the inheritance of the children of the
Armadales: the third Allan Armadale, son of the first (disinherited and subsequently murdered) Allan Armadale, is tied exclusively to England; Ozias Midwinter, son of the second Allan Armadale, is inextricably linked with the West Indies and the margins of English society. The stark difference between their lives, despite the close relationship that ties them together, illustrates the effects of imperial expansion and subjugation on the children of the very men who both embodied and maintained Britain's supremacy.

Finally, by the end of the nineteenth century, the British Empire had suffered more colonial losses abroad, just as it did at the end of the eighteenth century, and while many rich colonies and foreign interests remained shakily intact, Britain still faced opposition and rebellion from various indigenous populations under its rule. Science, particularly the theories of Charles Darwin and his contemporaries, became more mainstream, challenging traditional understandings and beliefs about the order of the natural and spiritual worlds. When taken in conjunction with the difficulty the Empire faced in maintaining its many foreign conquests, these new ideas began forcing the English to reconsider their vulnerability in the world. In addition, the more independent New Woman emerged, and as she gained social traction, the British notions of domesticity and the middle-class family began, necessarily, to change, too. It was in this climate that Bram Stoker wrote Dracula, a novel that questions the fate of an empire that exposes itself to contamination through citizens falling prey to greed and seeking personal gains abroad at England's expense. This danger is signaled by the fear of what Stephen D. Arata calls "reverse colonization," as embodied in Count Dracula (463):
instead of becoming the conqueror and consumer, England itself becomes the consumed, thanks to the men who act as England's agents abroad.

With all these concerns at the forefront of the British psyche and reported daily in the newspapers, it is no wonder that the sensation novel, meant to shock and titillate, returned again and again to the theme of the British family and the dangers besetting it from all sides, from without and within itself. With this in mind, *Lady Audley's Secret*, *Armadale*, and *Dracula* have been selected as the novels which best critique the effects of the Empire on the various members of the Victorian middle-class family. Concerns regarding the security of women and children, as seen in the numerous laws passed in the middle of the century, are best examined in works from that time period; both Braddon and Collins wrote novels exploring these issues, of which *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Armadale* additionally consider the role of the Empire in domestic disharmony. And concern over the degeneration of the Empire and the role of men became of greater importance as the era drew to a close, so the *fin de siècle* novel *Dracula*, which marries these two ideas, is a natural fit.

In this thesis, as in Victorian society, the progression of anxiety moves first from the mother in *Lady Audley's Secret*, the moral center of the home and family, to the child in *Armadale*, and then finally to the head of the household in *Dracula*, who is unmanned by the contamination he contracts as a result of going outside of the Empire and enabling dangerous foreign agents to acquire pieces of England. By the time *Dracula* was published, it takes more than one man to right the wrongs and to expel the corruption introduced into the family, which goes from touching just one family or individual, as in
*Lady Audley's Secret* and *Armadale*, to touching several: Lucy Westenra, Mina Harker, and then potentially all of England. The escalation of the disruption suggests that the Victorian anxiety about family and the Empire only grew as the era progressed, finally affecting the one family member—the father and husband—who was meant to be the conqueror, not the conquered nor the victim.
Chapter One: "My Lady Must Tell White Lies": Imperial Expansion, the Disruption of the Wife and Mother in the Domestic Sphere, and Lady Audley's Secret

Published serially from 1861-62, Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret followed Wilkie Collins's very successful The Woman in White (1859-60), the first recognized sensation novel. And as with The Woman in White, Lady Audley's Secret focuses on the plight of women under men's power. However, while the situations of the female character in The Woman in White result directly from the overt power of cruel, oppressive men and the laws in their favor, Lady Audley's Secret takes a more subtle tack, casting the title character as the nominal villainess of the work. But Lady Audley, whose true identity is Helen Talboys, is more than a simple villain: she is also a woman forced to make the best choices she can within her limited means. With an infant, an absent husband, and a father who cannot protect her, Helen Talboys has nowhere to turn in a society that has made no allowances for a woman in her situation. For although women in the 1860s seemingly had more rights with the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act, which established divorce courts, the laws regarding money and property were still unequal and weighted in men's favor. With so few options available, a social fall from grace was sometimes a woman's only recourse when the man who was meant to protect her left.

In "Rebellious Sepoys and Bigamous Wives," Lillian Nayder argues that in Lady Audley's Secret, "Braddon suggests that the . . . threat posed to the British Empire . . . [comes] from Englishwomen agitating for their rights" (39). On the surface, such an
interpretation seems reasonable. But rather than the threat to the Empire coming from women wanting access to greater property rights, through the circumstances surrounding Lady Audley and those connected with her, Braddon actually suggests that the glory of the Empire comes at the cost of domestic stability. With few options to provide for herself or her child once her husband abandons her for the Australian gold fields, Helen Talboys eventually finds a way to build a new domestic sphere for herself. This new position, however, is revealed to be untenable as the new Lady Audley must act in increasingly desperate, opportunistic, and “unwomanly” ways to maintain it, finally rendering her unfit by Victorian standards to occupy the domestic sphere in any capacity; as a result, she is sent out of England to die in obscurity. It is only at the end of the novel, when the men (like Robert Audley) fully commit to their new households, that domestic stability can be restored. Men who seek glory outside England open their dependent womenfolk—and thus the security of the domestic center—to instability when they leave, and it is only when their endeavors do not disrupt the domestic sphere, the novel suggests, that imperialism is not a threat to the critical English home front.

To understand the significance of Helen Talboys/Lady Audley's initial situation, it's first important to remember that the decades leading up to the 1860s, particularly the 1830s and 40s, saw the emergence of the idea that a man’s chief preoccupation should be business, which left the domestic sphere as the woman’s purview (Davidoff and Hall 181). This ideal was further supported by writers like Mrs. Sarah Stickney Ellis, who wrote popular books about women and domesticity, placing women at the moral center of the family and equating a stable family with a “secure basis for national stability,” which
in turn led to the idea that “[i]t was [women’s] responsibility to create society from below” (Davidoff and Hall 182-3). *Lady Audley's Secret*'s theme of imperialism being domestically disruptive becomes even clearer when one understands that with women's responsibility for being the moral center of the family, and thus the Empire, came the burden of dependence: until the Married Women’s Property Act of 1870, women’s property became their husband’s upon marriage, and it was up to the husband to protect and provide for his wife, as her father had before him. Furthermore,

[w]omen’s identification with the domestic and moral sphere implied that they would only become active economic agents when forced by necessity. As the nineteenth century progressed, it was increasingly assumed that a woman engaged in business was a woman without either an income of her own or a man to support her. . . . But unlike a man whose family status and self-worth rose through his economic exertions, a woman who did likewise risked opprobrium for herself and possible shame for those around her. Structured inequality made it exceedingly difficult for a woman to support herself, much less take on dependents. (Davidoff and Hall 272)

A proper middle-class woman wasn’t supposed to work, especially after marriage, nor was she to behave in any other way considered unwomanly. To do so compromised the domestic harmony that was believed necessary to the health of the center of British power and the Empire. Yet when a husband effectively abandoned his wife and children through exploration or service to the Empire, which could conceivably end in his death, without any real social provision for their welfare, his family was forced to make do with whatever money or position he left behind.

Helen Talboys’s situation highlights the danger in a society that places the burden of morality and domesticity on middle-class women while simultaneously forcing them
into a severe dependence on their husbands. In Helen's case, her husband, George Talboys, is in the military until he marries her, a penniless but genteel young woman, against his father’s wishes; as a result, he’s soon no longer able to afford his position as a cornet in a dragoon regiment, and though Helen begs him to “appeal to his father,” he refuses; when she asks him to try to find employment, he proves to be unsuccessful (360-61). In this, George ultimately fails to protect Helen by providing for her or their newborn son. While his inability to find employment is not necessarily his fault, his refusal to try to provide for his family by reconnecting with his father denies an avenue he could conceivably explore. Thanks to his pride, however, he doesn't seriously consider an appeal to be a desirable option, and his little family sinks further into difficulty. When their financial woes get to be too much, George compounds his sin of failure when he effectively abandons Helen, heading to the Australian gold fields to seek a fortune and leaving her only a simple note (61). He leaves her with nothing to live on, economically or emotionally, as he does not bother to write the entire three and a half years he is gone. She is, in effect, widowed by this abandonment, but whatever meager property they have does not fall automatically to her since she is not widowed in actuality.

Without their own property or a socially approved option to work for themselves when their husbands cannot or do not provide for them and their children, Victorian middle-class women had very few choices. They might throw themselves on the mercy of their family or their husband's family, but if they had no reliable relations to turn to, work became, of necessity, the only viable choice left. The only male relative Helen can turn to is her father, a drunkard; he, like George, proves to be of no use whatsoever in providing
for her. Unfortunately, as a middle-class wife and mother, Helen Talboys is not supposed to work, and there are precious few occupations available to her. She does her best, however, and attempts to support herself and her infant son respectably by giving music lessons—she is an accomplished piano player—but she makes far too little to maintain even her small household, possibly because her father takes a large portion of her earnings to spend at public houses (266). In desperation, unsupported and even thwarted by the men who are meant to provide for her and her son, Helen does the only thing she can think of and creates her first major fiction: she concocts a scheme to hire herself out as a governess, which is a good enough occupation for someone of her social class, though not at all suitable for a young mother, who would have to abandon her own child to educate the children of others, which qualifies as an exceedingly unnatural, unwomanly act.

As the ultimate result of her husband's failure to protect her, Helen Talboys, now Lucy Graham, is arguably forced into the servitude of governessing. And this becomes incredibly important during the course of the plot, the inciting event that leads to the rest of the story's thrilling and sensational moments. Helen leaves her father and son, the remainder of her home and family, writing: “I am weary of my life here, and wish, if I can, to find a new one. I go out into the world, disowned from every link which binds me to the hateful past, to seek another home and another fortune” (267). While this letter reads rather like the letters of those leaving to seek their fortunes outside England, Helen is, of course, not leaving England. However, she is leaving the center of the Talboys domestic sphere, her own little “empire,” as it were. The domestic sphere she’s meant to
be the center of has been completely disrupted by her husband’s abandonment, and thanks to her inability to provide adequately for herself and Georgie, which is most certainly not her purview by Victorian standards, she must leave to “seek another home.” That means she must leave the home where she exists as Helen Talboys, mother to young Georgie. In making the only move that she sees as remotely viable, Helen—now Lucy—has taken that first major step into moral corruption. She lives a lie and disavows her son, and though she does pay for his upkeep (362), this is not enough. To abandon her child, even though she tried several other avenues available to her as a respectable woman, is, by Victorian moral standards, an inherently unwomanly act. Furthermore, in determining to accept a position as a governess, Helen/Lucy has become a fallen woman twice over: in the moral sense, thanks to her abandonment of Georgie, and in a social sense by becoming what Davidoff and Hall call an "economic agent" (272). As Simone de Beauvoir puts it, a woman in a situation like this "finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other" (29), in this case by creating values that severely limit her choice and virtually force her into falling.

However, these falls, necessary though they may be for Helen/Lucy to keep herself and Georgie from living on the streets or in a workhouse—which would also constitute major social falls, arguably greater than the ones she has already suffered—are problematic in that once a woman has fallen, she is open to greater degrees of moral and social corruption. Such proves to be the case with Lucy, even though she does not, it seems, initially intend to slip any further than necessity has dictated. She accepts her lot as a governess with grace and equanimity, "amiable and gentle," "light-hearted, happy,
and contented" while visiting the poor and teaching her employer's daughters (47). To all appearances, Lucy is, if not exactly happy, at least not unhappy in her situation.

Unfortunately, temptation appears in the form of a marriage proposal from Sir Michael Audley, who is taken in by Lucy's beauty and evidence of her kindness. Lucy knows she ought not to accept, for despite the fact that she hasn't heard from George in several years and he might very well be dead, she is not legally a widow. The temptation proves too much, however, and Lucy agrees to marry Sir Michael in a passage that is dramatic, heartfelt, and as honest as she is capable of in her circumstances:

“How good you are—how noble and how generous! Love you! Why there are women a hundred times my superiors in beauty and in goodness who might love you dearly; but you ask too much of me. You ask too much of me! Remember what my life has been; only remember that. From my very babyhood I have never seen anything but poverty. My father was a gentleman; clever, accomplished, generous, handsome—but poor... Poverty, poverty, trials, vexations, humiliations, deprivations! You cannot tell; you, who are amongst those for whom life is so smooth and easy; you can never guess what is endured by such as we. Do not ask too much of me, then. I cannot be disinterested; I cannot be blind to the advantages of such an alliance. I cannot, I cannot!” (52)

Though she does not and cannot admit to her identity as Helen Talboys, young mother and abandoned wife, Lucy demonstrates a surprising amount of honesty, refusing to lie to Sir Michael about her feelings or motivations. She does not promise to love him, nor is she disingenuous about the attractions of his social status and wealth. She does not play the coquette, nor does she claim that she will learn to love him in order to encourage his interest. Instead, she gives him an answer that does not necessarily flatter her intentions, and in telling him as much as she can about her past, she reveals that her original intent
was merely to provide a better life for herself and, by extension, the son she has to hide. She doesn't go out into the world of governessing specifically to commit bigamy and rise socially and economically through marriage, even though marriage is the best way for her to improve her situation.

In *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class*, Leonore Davidoff notes, “If women are, . . . as individuals, not fully and legitimately within the labour market—which in the nineteenth century they certainly were not—then they must find support in the only other way they can, through the marriage market and its corollary, prostitution” (89). Helen Talboys’s only recourse (other than prostitution), once she has been abandoned and found that her respectable efforts at employment aren’t enough, is to re-enter the extremely limited job market as Lucy Graham, a poor, hard-working governess. And Lucy Graham’s only way out of her situation (again, other than prostitution) is marriage. Indeed, her employers, the Dawsons, think it's "madness" if she refuses (51). While accepting Sir Michael’s proposal makes her a bigamist and possibly even carries overtones of prostitution, that acceptance remains her best and, it might be argued, only option to escape the poverty and drudgery she’s been consigned to since her abandonment. If George had drowned himself instead of abandoning her, as he briefly considered so he might "leave [his] poor girl free to make a better match" (61), Helen might have remarried legitimately and provided for herself and Georgie in that manner. But since George decided to seek his fortune in Australia, becoming Lady Audley represents another step down Helen/Lucy's path of unwomanly behavior. Bigamy, even if one discounts the connotations of prostitution, is immoral; it disrupts the new domestic
sphere formed by contaminating it—an act directly counter to what is expected of women as the embodiment of English morality. Sir Michael has no heir other than his daughter by a previous marriage, Alicia. It is likely, though, that some of his property and the family title will pass to his nephew, Robert Audley. If Lady Audley were to bear Sir Michael a son, however, Robert would be disinherited, and the new son would become the new, though technically illegitimate, heir: an obvious corruption and compromising of the Audley domestic sphere, and a direct result of the disruption of the domestic sphere that she originally inhabited.

At this point, Helen/Lucy has made two significant decisions which expose her to moral corruption. The first step, changing her identity so she might make enough money to live on and support her son, is taken out of necessity. The second step, marrying Sir Michael, is not as necessary; it is, in fact, socially and morally dangerous because it disrupts the Audley domestic sphere and corrupts Helen further. As Lucy Graham, Helen seems to be doing well enough to keep herself and Georgie out of the workhouse. It isn't the best life, nor is it particularly proper or moral by Victorian standards, but it is understandable based on her situation. Marrying Sir Michael, however, represents a previously unlooked-for opportunity that proves unable to ignore. In accepting, even though she makes what seems to be the only intelligent decision she can based on the social strictures for a woman of Lucy Graham's status, because she is not who Lucy Graham purports to be, this action represents a degree of selfishness that suggests that Helen has begun to fall prey to the corruption introduced when she first changed her name and left Georgie to find work. After all, abandoning her baby, even if it's necessary
to provide for him, is an unwomanly, undomestic act. If she marries Sir Michael, she
gains access to more money, will be able to live a far more comfortable life herself, and
will be better able to provide for Georgie. While that last item is important and not
particularly selfish, at this point, her decision is no longer based on mere survival. It
becomes an issue of self-interest, of improving Helen's condition beyond simple
necessity, and therein lies the problem. She's committed first one and now another
immoral act, the second far more selfish and thus more dangerous than the first, even if
she did not expect the opportunity the proposal represented to arise. And these small
steps take her further into moral corruption, which she proves increasingly unequal to
resisting.

This increasing moral corruption, fed by her greed, soon becomes obvious as the
new Lady Audley adapts to a life of excess and sumptuous consumption, becoming
accustomed to the exotic objects and riches that fill her rooms and adorn her body, which
she can now claim as her own: Persian carpets, elegant perfumes, and “ivory-backed hair-
brushes” (105); opal china and a “marvellous Indian tea-caddy of sandal-wood and
silver” (242-3); the glittering emeralds, rubies, and diamonds on her fingers (122); the
lush carmine and ultramarine paints she uses (149); the sable furs from Russia (168); and
“an Indian shawl; a shawl that had cost Sir Michael a hundred guineas” (279). Katherine
Montweiler points out that "the sheer number of objects at Audley Court . . . vividly
[depict] the Victorian obsession with acquisition" (44), an obsession that Helen-as-Lady-
Audley now fully embodies. These are also foreign acquisitions associated with lands
tied to spheres of British imperial influence and competing empires, like Russia. And, as
noted previously, marriage was the only way for middle-class women to ensure their social and economic safety, so it follows that "[t]he only way for an ambitious young woman to obtain wealth (since gold-mining in Australia is out of the question) is through marriage" (Montweiler 55); as a result, it is unsurprising that Lady Audley's success is measured almost solely through the sheer number of rich items she now possesses. And although her initial acceptance to Sir Michael's proposal isn't quite as ambitious as Montweiler implies, the longer she remains Lady Audley, the more acquisitive and materially ambitious she becomes, corrupted by greed for the exotic goods Sir Michael showers her with.

This corruption becomes visible in the Audley family home, Audley Court, where the majority of the novel's action takes place. As the home and thus a physical representation of the wife/mother's place in Victorian society, Audley Court begins to reflect Helen's corrupted state. From the outside, the house is as old and English as can be, boasting architectural features that have been added during the reigns of the Plantagenets, the Tudors, Queen Anne, and George I, as well as during the time of the Saxons and the Norman conquest (44-5). In giving Audley Court such a pedigree, Braddon creates an unequivocal atmosphere of solid Victorian Englishness that encompasses her main stage. But once Helen is installed as the Court's mistress, along with this Englishness comes a distinct impression of the exotic and the imperial, most notably the Indian. Lady Audley's numerous exotic possessions begin to call the Court's unequivocal Englishness into question, and the Court's grounds are revealed to contain an old well, the masonry broken with age and its “rusty iron wheel and broken woodwork
[which] seem as if they were flecked with blood” (64)—images which would have called to the Victorian reader’s mind the well at Cawnpore (Kanpur), India, where British officers, their wives, and their children were killed by rebelling sepoys in July 1857, not long after Lady Audley was married to Sir Michael Audley. While Lillian Nayder posits that this connection reveals Lady Audley’s inherent monstrousness (39), it might also be argued that the Indian connection would remind Victorian readers of the dangers of imperialism. In Allegories of Empire, Jenny Sharpe highlights the significance of July 1857 by explaining that not only was the siege at Cawnpore “the first instance of sepoys killing officers and their families,” but “the revolt lasted for more than a year and revealed that the army could not be relied on” (63). At Cawnpore, the desire for the rich goods and new lands came at the cost of English women and children, whom the imperial army failed to protect. As a result, Cawnpore demonstrated that imperialism could prove dangerous for British women, the center of the domestic sphere and keepers of Britain’s civility and morality. Additionally, in describing the exotic objects as existing solely in Lady Audley’s rooms, purchased specifically for her, Braddon ties Helen’s greed to imperial expansion. Not only does the desire for rich goods come at the cost of families in incidents like Cawnpore, it can also come at the cost of the English domestic sphere. Abandoned by her first husband in favor of his adventures to find wealth in Australia, Helen shows herself willing to corrupt the Audley domestic sphere for a chance to seize imperial wealth in the only way a woman can—through marriage; in her case, however, this marriage is bigamous and thus immorally corruptive. Imperialism has prompted two major acts that allow corruption to be introduced to the Talboys and Audley domestic
spheres: first in George's abandonment, which necessitated Helen's initial moral fall as an absent mother due to a need to become an economic agent, and second in Helen's increasing appetite for the riches that imperialism gives her access to, which spurs her to ever greater acts of immorality in an effort to keep those riches.

The corruption also exhibits itself in Lady Audley's character, specifically in her appearance and her behavior. As Helen and Lucy Graham, Braddon's protagonist is described as sweet, gentle, and beautiful (48-9); as Lady Audley, her portrait is painted, revealing that although she is still incredibly beautiful, something has changed. A pre-Raphaelite masterpiece, the portrait portrays her and her bouncing, golden halo of curls with "a lurid lightness," "a strange, sinister light," and a "hard, almost wicked look . . . [that] had something in the aspect of a beautiful fiend" (107). This description reveals that Lucy Audley, formerly Helen Talboys, is no longer a proper woman, let alone a proper gentlewoman, despite her marriage to a man with a title. Her lies of necessity have grown until they begin to feed her desires for the finer things she never had access to as Helen, and her physical description is now reminiscent of the Miltonic Eve, who was corrupted by her desire for power out of her reach. Lady Audley's behavior, too, begins to be less kind and generous, and more grasping and manipulative as she (rightly) begins to fear anything that might come between her and originally unlooked-for success: namely, her first husband and her nephew-in-law, Robert. When George Talboys returns from Australia and discovers that his wife did not die, as he’d originally been led to believe, and is now living as Sir Michael’s wife, he confronts her and threatens to expose her. Desperate to keep her secret and retain her position and possessions, she pulls free the
iron spindle of the old well he’s leaning against, and he falls (398). Braddon implies that George Talboys is dead at his wife's hands. And although the act is not premeditated, but rather one more of desperation and opportunity, the fact remains that murder is an incredibly unwomanly, immoral act, and in this case, one motivated solely by greed.

Lady Audley's next attempt at murder is not one seized in the moment; it is one that she has some time to plan, demonstrating that her moral corruption has sunk even deeper. She goes to the Castle Inn, where Robert is staying and her former maidservant is proprietress, and contrives to leave a candle where it will catch fire and set the place alight, all in the hopes that Robert, who has by now confronted her with evidence of her bigamy and threatens to expose her, will die and take his knowledge of her bigamy with him (334). Lady Audley has, since being confronted by George and by Robert, acted in less and less womanly ways to protect herself and her new life, going so far as to plot murder. But those very acts, motivated by her greed and meant to preserve her position in the Audley domestic sphere (356), make her unfit to be the center of a household.

Braddon signals this shift in Lady Audley’s position and fitness by taking away her graceful, feminine manners: in the midst of her confession, she’s crouching down like a “creature” (366), and by the time she has fully confessed to her bigamy and been turned out of England to be “buried” in a madhouse in Belgium, "sibillant [sic] French syllables hiss through her teeth as she utters them, and seem better fitted to her mood and to herself than the familiar English she has spoken hitherto” (395). Lady Audley has finally reached the end of the journey she began when George first left her, and through her increasingly desperate, unfeminine acts, she has become something less than a woman: she is, indeed,
the "beautiful fiend" of her portrait (107), and there is even something of the serpent about her. Just as Eve is cast out of Paradise, Lady Audley must be banished from England, from the center of the Empire and the center of the last domestic sphere she tried so desperately to inhabit. Even her native language, English, is no longer suited to her, just as she is no longer suited to Audley Court or England. The moral corruption that she invited in with her decision to leave Georgie to find work and then to marry Sir Michael has gone too deep, changing her from a middle-class Englishwoman to what Jennifer Woolston calls a "criminal 'Other'" (163). While some critics attribute, in varying degrees, this criminal Otherness to her purported insanity (Woolston 165, Herbert 435), since Lady Audley is ultimately described in terms of devolution and deracination, moving from woman to "fiend" and "creature," and from English to non-English as a direct result of acts committed due to her appetite for wealth and status, "insanity" is not truly accurate. Instead, the charge of insanity affords Braddon a way to punish Lady Audley for her actions without holding her fully responsible for them.

This "out" is important, for although Lady Audley commits these terrible, unwomanly acts and must be punished for them, Braddon does not show her to be wholly bad. Instead, Braddon presents her as a woman driven to these unfeminine acts through circumstances often beyond her control, beginning with her abandonment by George Talboys and continuing with Robert Audley’s attempt to expose her. Despite trying to do away with George and setting fire to the Castle Inn, Braddon doesn’t make Lady Audley responsible for killing George Talboys or Luke Marks, the man married to her former lady’s maid and who is blackmailing her. For one, George Talboys survives his fall into
the well, saved by his experience in Australia (443), and even though his wife is the one who caused his fall, he forgives her, writing “Helen,—May God pity and forgive you for that which you have done to-day, as truly as I do. Rest in peace. You shall never hear of me again” (424). He determines to leave her alone and assert no claim over her, which suggests that he feels some responsibility for the situation she found herself in when he first left. He isn't incorrect, as he had originally intended to commit suicide so as to make it possible for her to remarry (61), but he merely abandoned her, forcing her first to rely on a father who proved as unable to provide for her as George himself was, and then to seek employment herself. Similarly, Luke Marks is saved from the fire by Robert Audley. Although he eventually dies from complications related to his harrowing night, we are told that it’s his dissolute living which ultimately kills him, not Lady Audley’s act of arson (411). It’s also worth noting that in addition to being a blackmailer, Braddon positions Luke Marks as a boorish, cruel man who terrifies his future wife and “once took up [a] knife in a quarrel with his mother” (141), clearly situating him as someone less deserving of sympathy or pity than other characters. In addition, Marks knows of the letter that George wrote; he neglected to pass it along as he was instructed to do out of greed and spite; as a result "[h]is sin has recoiled upon his own hand; for had [Lady Audley’s] mind been set at ease, the Castle Inn would not have been burned down" (433). With this observation, Braddon shifts some of the responsibility for the arson on Marks's head. The most important takeaway in all this, though, is that no actual blood stains Lady Audley’s hands. While she has proven herself unfit to remain in English society, she is
not as monstrous as she seems when she first confesses all her crimes, suggesting that Braddon does not hold her fully responsible for her actions.

Although George Talboys is painted as somewhat of a victim of his wife's villainy and espoused as a hero by Robert Audley, a closer look at his actions throughout the novel reveal him as anything but heroic or even much of a victim. After all, instead of appealing to his father to help support his family when he cannot find other work (360-61), only a few weeks after their son is born, he writes Helen a letter saying he is “going to try [his] fortune in a new world; and that if [he succeeds he] should come back to bring her plenty and happiness, but that if [he fails he] should never look upon her face again” (61). He leaves this letter on the pillow beside her as she sleeps, and he remains in Australia for three and a half years, writing to her only once: a week before he boards the ship that will bring him home (63). The man who is supposed to protect her and provide for her and their child has left, effectively abandoning her—as far as she knows—forever. As a result, she must contrive ways to support her domestic sphere economically, which means she can no longer function as its moral support.

It is also significant that not only has George Talboys left Helen, but he’s left her for Australia. Toni Johnson-Woods argues that *Lady Audley's Secret*, in conjunction with other Braddon works, suggests that "[i]t is acceptable for males to desert wives and families for months and even years because it is done in the name of furthering the British Empire" (114). However, Australia, despite its gold rush, is more than an imperial frontier. It is also a former penal colony, a rough and savage place, where the undesirables of British society were banished to keep them from contaminating the
homeland. Braddon underscores the wildness and roughness of the gold fields by describing George as having “sat on the damp ground gnawing a mouldy crust in the wilds of the new world” and being “up to [his] neck in clay and mire; half-starved; enfeebled by fever; stiff with rheumatism” (62). Australia is highly suggestive of its recent past, and George Talboys’s living conditions serve as a reminder of how uncivilized and unlike the center of the Empire Australia is, as well as how uncivilized and unmanly George’s own behavior is. Though he is out mining for gold in the hopes that he will be able to recover some of his lost income, for the entire time he is gone, he fails to support his wife and child, and by extension, he fails to do his sacred duty to the Empire. As a husband, he is supposed to provide for his wife and son, to shore up the moral center of the Empire by being a strong foundation for his family. Gnawing on a crust in the mud and muck of a land considered to be wild and uncivilized while his wife doesn’t know whether he’s dead or alive is, the novel suggests, most certainly a dereliction of his duty as a British citizen. George's desertion doesn’t glorify the Empire in the slightest; rather, he has thoroughly disrupted and thereby indirectly contaminated the domestic sphere of his own family, the very thing the Empire is sustained by.

If the Australian connection were not enough, George Talboys is further revealed as a questionable gentleman in his physical treatment of Lady Audley. When he confronts her about her bigamy, he grabs her by the wrist as she tries to leave, holding on hard enough to leave ugly bruises on her pale skin (398). In fact, Braddon's unnamed, omniscient narrator describes them as bruises left by "strong and cruel fingers [that] had been ground into the tender flesh" (123). Such violence is not the behavior of a
gentleman, nor is it the behavior of a civilized man. It rather recalls the behavior of a ruffian like Luke Marks, who beats and terrorizes his wife and who blackmails Lady Audley, or the behavior of a criminal, such as the sort of man who would have been sent to Australia, not go there voluntarily to live an uncivilized, virtually exiled existence while his wife was forced to fend for herself and her child without any word as to his whereabouts.

In addition to showing George Talboys to be a man who is perhaps less a victim and more an instigator of his wife's initial corruption, Braddon continues to somewhat redeem Lady Audley by allowing her to retain some of her femininity. Just as she keeps much of her remarkable beauty and grace until the moment of her confession, once she has the status and means as Sir Audley’s wife, she also demonstrates great generosity to those less fortunate than her, an exceedingly proper, feminine act: “I had been poor myself, and I was now rich, and could afford to pity and relieve the poverty of my neighbors. I took pleasure in acts of kindness and benevolence” (362). These acts underscore the interpretation of "Lady Audley's virtue [as] . . . perfectly real" (Herbert 434-35). Furthermore, she continues to express an interest in her son Georgie’s well-being, even going so far as to visit once and anonymously sending money for his upkeep despite the danger to her new position (364, 362). Although she has left him, she hasn’t abandoned him as fully as George Talboys did, first when he left their home, and again when he appointed Robert Audley as Georgie’s guardian with the intent of leaving England once more (84). She has broken innumerable social rules and laws regarding acceptable behavior for women, ultimately falling morally, but underneath it all, the
novel points out that she is a woman who was first set on this path because of desperation. Alone and poor, she seized what opportunities were set before her, even if they would not allow her to continue conforming to the ideals expected of her, and the novel allows her to retain enough of her femininity to show that Lady Audley isn’t a fully realized villain. Due to the nature of her crimes, she is no longer a woman fit to inhabit any domestic sphere. But due to the nature of her initial abandonment and the heavy limitations British society puts on women who are not being protected by their fathers or husbands, neither is she completely to blame. George Talboys’s desire to attain wealth and adventure in Australia came at his wife’s expense: they were her undoing and, eventually, her downfall.

Finally, at the end of the novel, a year after Lady Audley dies in the Belgian asylum, when domestic tranquility, happiness, and stability are restored, George Talboys’s sister Clara, now Clara Audley, lives in a “fairy cottage” with Robert and her brother (445). This scene serves to point out that the glory of the Empire cannot come at the expense of the crucial domestic sphere. No sooner than she learns that her brother is alive after all, Clara declares her intentions to leave for Australia to search for him. Robert immediately offers to go in her stead and then, in a rush of emotion, to go with her: “Shall we both go, dearest? Shall we go as man and wife?” (441). But at the time of this final scene, Clara has never left for Australia, nor has Robert Audley. George Talboys is restored to them, finally back home in England, the implication being that this return is likely permanent, and neither Clara nor Robert has ever had to leave. By the last chapter, Clara and Robert are married and have a lovely baby, and Robert’s cousin,
Alicia, along with his uncle, Sir Michael, visit often. Here Braddon reinforces the idea that the integrity of the domestic sphere—the integrity of England and her Empire, built upon the families of which women are at the center—is compromised unless the men who head those families commit to them fully, in this case shown by Robert’s rejection of his pipes, tobacco, and novels (446), mainstays of his days as a "handsome, lazy, care-for-nothing fellow" (71), and shown by his newfound prestige as "a rising man upon the home circuit" (445). This change in Robert, in conjunction with his status as an apparently successful and worthy husband and father, suggests that stability can only be achieved when men do not allow themselves to be distracted by the promise of excitement, adventure, or wealth that might take any of their attention from the stable domestic sphere: the most important commodity the Empire has. It is no mistake that this scene is one of the final images—it is important that this message be clearly understood.

*Lady Audley’s Secret* is written as an exciting and sensational tale of bigamy, intrigue, blackmail, and attempted murder. It has a fairly satisfying conclusion: the “villainess” gets what she apparently deserves, and as Herbert G. Klein notes, "[c]onformity to female stereotypes . . . seems to be rewarded, [and] . . . deviance from it punished. This outcome seems to strengthen patriarchal power" (171). But beneath the surface of the story, *Lady Audley’s Secret* serves as a cautionary tale for middle-class men, as well as women. The hero is not as heroic as he initially appears, and the villainess is not as villainous as a quick rundown of her actions would make it seem; in many ways, she comes across as more victim than villain. The truth behind the characters’ motivations is much more complex, and in some cases more sinister, than it
looks, and the book itself is thus more complex and interesting: it challenges deeply held beliefs about the natural order of Victorian England’s social mores, subliminally suggesting that the state of English law as it was applied to women was perhaps damaging the Empire rather than protecting it, while at the same time revealing flaws in both the Empire’s expansionist ideals and the way those ideals were executed at home. And, like its plot, *Lady Audley’s Secret’s* subtext is at once exciting and intriguing. One just needs to read a little below the surface to see it.
Chapter Two: "The Forlorn Little Vagabond": Imperialism and the Corruption of the Child in Armadale

Originally published in *Cornhill Magazine* from 1864-66 in twenty installments, *Armadale* comes between two of Wilkie Collins's more popular and better-known works: *The Woman in White* (1859-60), which popularized the sensation novel genre, and *The Moonstone* (1868), which has been called the first full-length detective novel written in English. And as with his other works, *Armadale* makes use of an extremely intricate plot. In this case, the plot depends on uncertain identities, a reassigned colonial inheritance, and a fateful connection between four men and one shadowy woman. The novel's preoccupation with colonial holdings, specifically in the West Indies, becomes particularly important because *Armadale* was published at a time of uncertainty for the British Empire: Britain's colonies abroad were gripped by waves of violence and revolution, and anxious questions regarding various facets of English identity were being raised both in literature and laws. This concern is evident in the novel's principal characters: Allan Armadale, son of the first (disinherited) Allan Armadale, is tied exclusively to England; Ozias Midwinter, son of the second Allan Armadale (formerly Allan Wrentmore), is inextricably linked with the West Indies and the margins of English society. *Armadale* is an exploration and criticism of the effects of imperialism on the identity and inheritance of English children who come from outside of England.

By juxtaposing the life and trials of Ozias Midwinter (the fourth Allan Armadale) with those of the third Allan Armadale, Collins suggests that imperial interests negatively affect the children born into families with heavy colonial ties: these children are burdened
with society's distrust and fears of foreign contamination and are thus not considered viable citizens; as a result, they cannot exist in stable domestic spheres, nor can they create their own stable domestic spheres once they reach adulthood. They have no real place in England since they are forced to exist on the margins of society, "contaminated" by their origins and foreign connections.

Identity is a key concept that Collins explores and builds upon throughout the novel, a concept that is important to understanding the character of Ozias Midwinter. As Catherine Reitz points out, *Armadale* was published in *Cornhill Magazine* alongside accounts of violence and oppression in India, Jamaica, and New Zealand, as well as articles relating to undesirable groups such as criminals, lunatics, and foreigners, placing it firmly within the time's discourse about English national identity (Reitz 92, 94-5). This preoccupation with cataloging people from different locales, social classes, and cultures suggests the English were, through identification and analysis of those considered decidedly "not like us," trying to determine what they believed it meant to be English, an attempt described in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* as "the production of identity through negation, the creation of an implicit sense of self through explicit rejections and denials, 'No, not that, and not that'" (Stallybrass and White 89). This attempt to reconcile a national confusion is also evident in the novel's two main male characters, for Collins draws clear connections between them and British-affiliated locales: for the third Allan Armadale, the connection is thoroughly English, thanks to his father's colonial disinheritance and Allan's birthplace in Norfolk (31, 60). Allan's father, the first Allan Armadale of importance in this novel, initially lives in England with *his*
father, and neither man has ever been to the family property in the West Indies (31); further, as a result of the first Allan Armadale's disinheritance, Allan inherits nothing whatsoever from his father other than his name (17), though he does inherit the Thorpe-Ambrose estate in England (91), firmly cementing his identity as purely English by birth, by geographic affiliation, and by economic inheritance. In addition, Allan displays nearly all the physical and temperamental qualities required for an English hero, such as his fair hair and "thoroughly English love of the sea" (62), which, Reitz observes, clearly signals his staunch Englishness in "a text that wholeheartedly believes that nations are something about which generalizations can be made and that individuals embody national character" (98). Allan is aligned unequivocally with England and just as unequivocally not with anything outside of it, and the denial of what would have been his inheritance suggests explicitly that Allan is so thoroughly English he has no affiliations with even an English colony—in other words, Stallybrass and White's "not that." For the fourth Allan Armadale, who calls himself "Ozias Midwinter," the connection is rooted in the West Indies through his father's inheritance, thanks to the misfortune of the first, original Allan Armadale; his mother, a woman of African blood; and his birthplace in the West Indies (117, 52). That connection is cemented more firmly once Midwinter reaches his majority and begins drawing money from what is left of his father's West Indian estates (117). Though Reitz doesn't mention anything about Midwinter's "national identity," considering that nearly every point which helps to identify Allan Armadale as English is reproduced via the West Indies for Midwinter, the ties are inescapable: if Allan Armadale is representative of England, Ozias Midwinter is "not that," making him equally
representative of the West Indies and thus "Other"; i.e., less than fully English. Even
Midwinter's assumed name, taken from the gypsy vagabond who "raised" him, signals his
status as an Other, one on the outside of mainstream English society. Though the gypsy
isn't West Indian, his kind were considered undesirable and foreign, and often labeled as
criminals in Victorian society, which is a deliberate choice on Collins's part that
reinforces Midwinter's status.

In addition, Midwinter's marginal identity is continually reinforced in how nearly
everyone treats him. His mother and stepfather, aware that his father killed the first Allan
Armadale in a fit of jealousy, mistreat Midwinter by forcing him to wear tattered clothing
while his half-siblings are dressed in finery, by beating him with a horsewhip, and by
locking him in "a lumber-room, with a bit of bread and a mug of water" (105). However,
nobody else knows the secret of his father's murderous past; rather, Midwinter's mixed-
race appearance and a few character traits, such as his superstitious, fatalistic nature and
his occasionally hysterical passions, mark him clearly as Other, someone who does not
belong. The first introduction of Midwinter as an adult, for instance, is of a man who is
"[y]oung, slim, and undersized [with] a tawny complexion . . . large bright brown eyes,
and . . . black beard, [which] gave him something of a foreign look" (67). His
dusky hands were wiry and nervous, and were lividly discoloured in more
places than one, by the scars of old wounds. The toes of one of his feet,
off which he had kicked the shoe, grasped at the chair-rail through his
stocking, with the sensitive muscular action which is only seen in those
who have been accustomed to go barefoot. (68)

This physical description clearly reflects Victorian stereotypes regarding those with
African blood. As Vron Ware notes in Beyond the Pale, it was common for nineteenth-
century writers to build on the influence of eighteenth-century writers who "not only identified blacks as a different species from whites but described at length [the perceived] similarities between blacks and apes" (64). The description of Midwinter's "grasping toes" is highly suggestive of the way monkeys and apes use their feet as ably as their hands, as well as mimicking the actions of infants and toddlers learning finer motor skills: a certain childishness is also ascribed to Africans during this time (Brantlinger 181). Further, intimating that Midwinter is used to being unshod calls to mind the image of the barefoot slave. It seems inescapable that with his dark complexion and his birthplace, the text invites drawing such parallels.

As with his physical traits, Midwinter's psychological traits also directly reflect common Victorian stereotypes of those with African blood. However, although the temperamental markers which place him on the margins of society should, based on Victorian construction of the stereotypes, come from his mother, his temperament and superstitious nature are actually legacies from his father, whose thick ties to the West Indies condemn Midwinter to a childhood of hardship, rejection, and loneliness, all through no fault of his own. For example, Midwinter's father displays an incredibly superstitious nature, cautioning Midwinter in a letter written before his death that he see the vices which have contaminated the father, descending, and contaminating the child; see the shame which has disgraced the father’s name, descending, and disgracing the child's. . . . see [the] Crime, ripening again for the future in the self-same circumstance which first sowed the seeds of it in the past; and descending, in inherited contamination of Evil, from [father] to son. (55)
An extreme anxiety about the murder he has committed leads Midwinter's father to believe that his crime will inevitably affect his son, transcending the boundaries of time and somehow infecting Midwinter with a visible taint that will illuminate Midwinter's murderous patrimony for all to see. But the only direct effect the murder has on Midwinter is his mother and stepfather's treatment; all other hardships he faces are a clear result of his status as Other. His father's anxiety, though, does have a particular effect on Midwinter. In the last paragraphs of the letter, Midwinter is cautioned to "avoid the man who bears the same name as your own" (56); when Midwinter runs into Allan mere hours after first reading the letter, he believes "[he] was looking [Allan] in the face as [Midwinter's] father looked [Allan's] father in the face" when the murder was committed (120). This moment, along with the letter's influence, leads Midwinter to confess that "[his] father's heathen belief in Fate is one of the inheritances he has left to [Midwinter]" (120). As he demonstrates throughout the novel, Midwinter does indeed embrace his father's superstitious belief in fate, convinced that a dream that Allan had upon a foundering yacht points to some grave misfortune Allan will experience at his hand (170-72)—a dream that a doctor friend of Allan's explains scientifically and to everyone but Midwinter's satisfaction (173-81). In placing the responsibility for Midwinter's "inherited" superstition with his father, Collins more clearly aligns Midwinter with the West Indies and Otherness on two levels. The first is his physical appearance, from his mother. The second, his superstition, is something his father passes on to him directly via the letter, almost as though it were a kind of will, just as he passes on his name and the money from the Barbados estates. Even without the physical markers of his Otherness,
Collins implies, Midwinter would still exhibit the sort of irrational superstition ascribed to the non-English races because of his father.

Along with his superstitious nature, Midwinter suffers from wild, unmasculine "passions." Not long after the first introduction to the adult Midwinter, he reveals his parentage and tries to convince Mr. Brock, who is Allan's father-figure, adviser, and clergyman, that his fondness for Allan is genuine and that Allan has nothing to fear from him. Midwinter maintains his emotional equilibrium during the sad story of his childhood, but when he begins to speak of how much Allan's friendship means to him and how genuinely he is devoted to Allan's happiness, Midwinter bursts into tears, overcome by a fit of "hysterical passion" (122). And still later in the novel, Mr. Brock, who has gotten to know Midwinter quite well by this point, describes Midwinter as one who suffers from "that evil spirit of Superstition" and "the paralysing fatalism of the heathen and the savage" (621, 622), referring to Midwinter's continuing conviction that Allan's dream at the outset of the novel is destined to come true. In terms of Mr. Brock's observations and Midwinter's own belief in portentous dreams, in Rule of Darkness, Patrick Brantlinger observes that despite what missionaries wanted the English public to believe, explorers' accounts suggested to the wider Victorian society that Africans could not be fully civilized due to their emotional reliance on superstition (182). And Victorian writers of the period made much of the "passions" and "superstition" of those with African blood, further reinforcing the idea that the African was uncivilized and very clearly Other (Brantlinger 183). All of these physical and behavioral stereotypes explain Midwinter's general reception among the society of Armadale: his colonial ties are visible
in his face and body, and his colonial character is observable in certain of his behaviors and ideas. After all, England received more than just sugar, spices, and rich textiles from its ever-expanding foreign colonies. It also encountered disease; was exposed to and commingled with those considered racially inferior; and, as readers could see for themselves in the pages of the *Cornhill* issues *Armadale* appeared in, suffered occasional violence, all of which the English feared might somehow transmit back to the center of the Empire and contaminate it.

These anxieties are a chief reason why few individuals in the novel treat Midwinter as anything but an undesirable Other when they first meet him, viewing him with suspicion or outright distrust and often treating him with cruelty. Even Mr. Brock, who eventually becomes Midwinter's friend, is at first "[h]alf attracted by [Midwinter], half repelled by him, [and] impulsively offer[s] his hand, and then, with a sudden misgiving, confusedly [draws] it back again" (75). Midwinter also has a dog set on him and is beaten by his schoolmaster, severely enough that the marks remain on his back in his twenties (106); he is turned out of a house where he works as a footman for a theft he did not commit (110); and despite being hardworking, intelligent, and educating himself, he "produced a disagreeable impression at first sight; [he] couldn't mend it afterwards; and there was an end of [him] in respectable quarters" (115). Collins writes these knee-jerk reactions to Midwinter's appearance and general demeanor when he tries to integrate himself into Victorian society in order to show that he does not get a fair chance to demonstrate his abilities or intellect. Instead, because he clearly bears the mark of the Other, he is rejected before he can gain a foothold in a respectable position, and as
evidenced by the reports of the Indian Mutiny and Maori uprisings that ran concurrently with *Armadale* in *Cornhill Magazine* (Reitz 92), Victorian society believed the Other was to be feared. As described by Collins, Midwinter's experiences testify quite strongly to the unfairness of this situation.

It is important to note, however, that while Collins portrays him as personifying the African stereotypes, Collins also creates a complex and sympathetic character in Midwinter, who consistently displays good manners, intelligence, and a gentlemanly sensitivity throughout the novel. When he has recovered from the brain fever that first brings him to Allan's notice, he pays both the doctor and the innkeeper who helped him during his recovery, which is an expense that Allan was willing to pay. Furthermore, Midwinter expresses a sense of obligation to Allan with a fervent gratitude that makes even the cautious Mr. Brock, who is at this point still wary of him, begin to rethink his suspicion and question whether Midwinter might be worthy of some greater regard (75). Midwinter also manages to keep his linen clean, even when he is wandering the wilds and suffering from brain fever (67), something that points to his better nature despite his misfortune. The Victorian middle class was preoccupied with "civilized" cleanliness in an effort to separate themselves from the poor and "sub-human" (Stallybrass and White 132); Midwinter's efforts in that regard, even in the throes of illness, support the idea that he is more than an unwashed, uncivilized being. And more importantly, Midwinter is accepted unreservedly, just as he is, by the third Allan Armadale (80), and soon thereafter even by Allan's suspicious adviser, Mr. Brock, who at first draws back from Midwinter in repulsion (118). Mr. Brock's trust and acceptance continue even after he learns
Midwinter's dark, murderous family secret (123). In addition, Midwinter's superstitious belief in the significance of Allan's dream is somewhat justified by the end of the novel. Several of the dream incidents come to pass, including Allan's nearly fainting when he is passed a tumbler of laudanum-laced lemonade and brandy by Midwinter's wife, who makes another attempt on his life later in the novel (680-81). These "coincidences" lead Midwinter to conclude that he is indeed dangerous to Allan somehow; as a result, he takes steps to separate himself from his dearest friend in all the world, despite the misery it will cause them both, in order to protect him (682). Taken together, these instances suggest that Midwinter is not deserving of either his treatment or his socially imposed status. His immediate, constant, and easy acceptance throughout the novel by Allan in particular, who is so thoroughly linked with England and an English identity, who shakes Midwinter's hand and allows Midwinter to call him brother even after Midwinter's wife nearly kills him (815), signals that Collins creates Midwinter as worthy of an equal footing and of Englishness despite his origins, and in asserting Midwinter's worthiness, Collins also critiques the exclusion from Englishness that he faces.

For all that Midwinter's initial rejection and marginalization in Armadale are undeserved, he later commits what Melissa Free describes in conjunction with The Moonstone as a "complicit" sin. While Free describes this as Franklin Blake, one of The Moonstone's main characters, carrying guilt by association in accepting a famous diamond brutally plundered from an Indian temple and thus becoming complicit in imperial oppression (340, 343), the concept also appears in Armadale: when he turns twenty-one, Midwinter accepts his share of what is left of his father's once-vast colonial
wealth. This, then, is the real "contamination" that Collins portrays Midwinter as inheriting from his father (55), not the burden of his father's murderous act: Midwinter's father lived a wild, dissolute life of "self-indulgence, among people—slaves and half-castes mostly—to whom [his] will was law" (31), a life that allowed him to treat several women "beyond all forgiveness" (35). From these details, Collins demonstrates that Midwinter's father abused his privilege over the people who worked his plantation, a common theme brought up by abolitionists during England's push to outlaw the slave trade. Although Midwinter himself has had no contact with the plantations or overseen any slaves or enforced apprentices in his lifetime, he still profits, however modestly, from money tainted by oppression and human suffering. In accepting that money, he accepts—complicitly—his family's, particularly his father's, past responsibility in perpetuating slavery and profiting from it in a direct manner. At least Franklin Blake did not immediately profit from the plundered diamond in *The Moonstone* when he handed it over to his cousin (29), bringing it into the family without turning it into immediate monetary gain. And at the end of *The Moonstone*, the diamond is reclaimed by its Indian protectors, allowing Franklin Blake and his new wife, the cousin to whom the diamond was originally given, to maintain an uncorrupted, viable domestic sphere (485), an outcome suggested by Free's claim that "Franklin's absolution and reunion with Rachel [who becomes his wife]" points to Blake's guilt ultimately being "temporary" (361-62). However, Midwinter's situation proves to be far different, and this difference is significant: the willing consumption of tainted money that he maintains throughout the novel, *not* his blood-borne African traits and *not* his father's crime, is what contaminates
Midwinter and renders him unfit to participate fully in English society. So although society's unfair response to a situation that was not of his own making and beyond his control is what barred him from full participation in a family situation (that is, a domestic sphere) when he was a child, his own choices as an adult have the same consequences. This time, however, they are (though perhaps unwittingly) self-inflicted and thus, Collins suggests, deserved.

Among the problems with Midwinter's attempt at creating a domestic sphere for which he is the masculine center and protector is, seemingly, his choice of wife. Lydia Gwilt, the villainess of Armadale, is an unfit wife (she is a murderess and a forger), but her questionable character is not the only thing which might ruin Midwinter's chances at creating a successful domestic sphere. In fact, Gwilt feels herself altered by her love for Midwinter at first, writing in her diary that rather than plot against Allan, she wishes to "live out all the days that are left to [her], happy and harmless in a love like [hers for Midwinter]" (616). On the night before their wedding, she writes in her diary that she will lock it forever, never to write her dark secrets or plots in it again, because she has "won the great victory; [she has] trampled [her] own wickedness under foot" thanks to her love for Midwinter (624-25), sentiments which appear to be truthful and heartfelt. Instead, Midwinter's own newly acquired, economically based colonial taint makes their domestic sphere untenable. Within two months of their marriage, one initially based, to all appearances, on genuine love from both parties, Midwinter begins to withdraw emotionally, and Gwilt reopens her diary to pour out her misery (659). The only thing which brings Midwinter happiness is the time he spends with Allan, who comes to visit.
However, it is also time that Midwinter claims he cannot spare his wife, to her great
disappointment and distress (668). What is most significant about this shift in
Midwinter's interest is the fact that Allan is ignorant of Midwinter's family history; his
wife is not. She alone among those living, now that Mr. Brock is dead (613), knows the
whole of his secret, including his acceptance of the allowance drawn from the remaining
colonial funds. Furthermore, the inheritance's actual monetary value, not just the
complicit guilt associated with it, prevents Midwinter from being a good provider: it is
enough to support him as a bachelor, but it is not nearly enough to support a man and
wife, even if his wife lives frugally (667). Since men at this time are the only providers
for their families, this failure thanks to his economic inheritance is crucial—it ensures
that Midwinter will always have to work to supplement his allowance. And due to his
personal appearance and society's suspicion, as clearly demonstrated throughout his
earlier life, finding a lucrative, socially acceptable position would be extremely difficult,
if not nearly impossible. The job as an "occasional" foreign correspondent is virtually the
only one he could get (595). It isn't even a regular position; instead, as Collins describes
it, his position allows Midwinter only a piecemeal income, which allows Collins to
underscore the problematic nature of the inheritance upon which Midwinter relies.

This question of viable economic stability is similar to the one faced by Helen
Talboys in *Lady Audley's Secret* in that Helen, once she is abandoned by her husband,
cannot support herself. She must go out and find work in order to make certain that
neither she nor her child will starve, and the very act of hiring herself out as a servant is
what triggers her increasingly unwomanly acts and begins to contaminate the domestic
spheres that she inhabits: the original one consisting of herself, her absent husband, and her child; and the new one, consisting of herself and Sir Michael. These choices, limited though they are, eventually render her unfit to occupy any domestic sphere whatsoever. Arguably, Midwinter's options, too, thanks to his status as Other, severely limit the ways in which he can support himself. But unlike Helen Talboys who, as a woman, is virtually required by Victorian society to get married in order to secure social and economic protection from a husband, Midwinter is a man and is not required by Victorian society to find an economic protector. He is expected to provide for himself. After all, the West Indian inheritance from his father's estate would be enough for him to live on as a bachelor. Midwinter's mistake is in trying to create a domestic sphere and use his inheritance as a shaky foundation upon which to build it, for that money, even with the addition of his part-time job, is not enough to adequately support a wife, let alone children, who would, through him, also be tied to the complicit guilt of imperialism as it was applied in the West Indies. As a result, Midwinter's attempt to create a viable domestic sphere is doomed from the start: the taint of his inheritance only invites chaos into any domestic sphere he attempts to construct for himself, so the domestic sphere is in no way supportable when he is positioned as its ultimately inadequate protector. This unsuitability of Midwinter's inheritance allows Collins to critique both colonialism and the English fear of the Other. In showing that an inheritance based on the subjugation and misery of others is detrimental to more than one domestic sphere (the first two Allan Armadales' families and now Midwinter's own attempt at creating a family), Collins calls into question the suitability of such practices and condemns them as irresponsible and
contaminating. After all, the West Indian property encouraged jealousy, murder, and the scapegoating of Ozias Midwinter as a child, all before Midwinter attempts to support a wife on the monies generated from it. And even though he knows what effect the inheritance had on his and Allan’s fathers, he still tries to marry with the small portion left to him. That portion’s continued unsuitability as any sort of sound economic base just reinforces Collins's assertion that a contaminated source of income will continue to contaminate, regardless of what the otherwise decent characters, like Midwinter, try to do with it.

Midwinter's willing acceptance of his inheritance, which requires the use of his true name (the name under which he marries Lydia Gwilt), also puts Allan in danger from Gwilt, who hatches a plot to murder Allan and collect a sizable widow's allowance on the strength of what is now her married name. Thanks to his inheritance, Midwinter unwittingly and unwillingly becomes the vehicle through which Allan is endangered, a fate which Mary Douglas describes as typical of those marginalized in Victorian England: the marginalized Other is a source of contamination or pollution, and

[a] polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed[,] and this displacement unleashes danger for someone. Bringing pollution . . . is a capacity which men share with animals . . . . Pollution can be committed intentionally, but intention is irrelevant to its effect—it is more likely to happen inadvertently. (140)

It's important to remember that Midwinter has this money only because Allan's father was disinherited and the property passed to Midwinter's father, divorcing Allen entirely from the West Indian inheritance. That colonial inheritance, along with the name "Allan
Armadale," is now Midwinter's birthright; the two together are what endanger Allan, not Midwinter himself directly. Midwinter has said repeatedly that he would never hurt Allan, and he has even avoided him when he thought it would be to Allan's benefit (682). It may even be said that in a sense, up until now, Midwinter has saved Allan from the colonial taint, but as Gwilt reveals in her diary, the inadequacy of the West Indian inheritance and its effects on her marriage are no small part of the reason why she is determined to claim a place as Allan's widow. This is yet another real consequence of Midwinter's willingly accepted colonial contamination for Collins: he, like others who profit from colonial interests, endangers England, as represented by Allan. It does not matter whether that danger is intentional or not; it exists regardless, and its effects remain the same. And for Collins, a man who endangers England is, even without all the other problems tied to Midwinter's inheritance, obviously unfit material as husband, father, or brother.

Despite all this, Midwinter manages to somehow be Allan's salvation at the end. However, unlike Allan's unwitting exposure to danger through him, this salvation is fully intentional. Gwilt means to murder Allan by suffocating him with a poisonous gas in a room at a sanatorium. His suspicions roused by the strange insistence that Allan pass the night there, Midwinter switches rooms with him, determined to preserve Allan from whatever mischief is meant for him by accepting it for himself (796). But he himself is saved by the would-be agent of Allan's destruction. In discovering that it is Midwinter in the fatal room, Gwilt drags him from the gas-filled chamber and, after determining that he will recover, kisses him and locks herself in the room, dying in his place (804-7).
Midwinter's saving of Allan has nothing whatsoever to do with his true name or his inheritance; it is Midwinter himself, a person acting on his instincts and the man who made Lydia Gwilt fall in love with him in the first place, that ultimately saves Allan. It is this identity, himself as Midwinter, who is accepted by Allan at their first meeting and who is accepted as a brother at the end of the novel (815). This resolution reiterates Midwinter's viability as someone worthy of equal footing with Allan and thus England. For in saving Allan, Midwinter underscores who and what he really is. It is only when he accepts his colonial inheritance and becomes complicit in everything embedded in it—and then tries to use that tainted inheritance to establish a domestic sphere for himself—that he is, however unwittingly, dangerous. And Gwilt's death helps to cement this identity since she cannot remain alive. She would always be a danger to Allan, one inextricably linked with Midwinter despite his devotion to Allan and intent to never do Allan any harm. In her death, both in its very fact and the way it comes about, Collins returns Midwinter to a state in which he proves to be no longer dangerous and to be worthy of Allan and thus England.

Although Midwinter's initial rejection by the Victorian society described in Armadale is shown to be unfair and based on "contamination" out of his control, showing the ways in which he is later complicit in similar contamination serves to highlight the injustice of his childhood marginalization. And it is only when he attempts to use his West Indian inheritance to support a domestic sphere that Midwinter's difficulties are, Collins suggests, arguably "deserved." As Armadale demonstrates, the willing participation in imperial endeavors, particularly colonialism, damages all who are tied to
it, regardless of whether they are actually contaminated by it or merely thought to be. In that case, those innocent of the taint are forced to suffer from it as much as, if not more than, those who are immediately guilty of colonial crimes.
Chapter Three: "It Is the Man Himself": The Count and the Contamination of Men in Dracula

On its surface, Bram Stoker's 1897 Dracula is a horror novel that pits men against an ancient monster. But Dracula is also a sensational, darkly thrilling fin de siècle novel that shares its part of the Victorian era with other tales of monsters, invasion, and degeneration, such as The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886), The Picture of Dorian Grey (1890), and H. G. Wells's The War of the Worlds (1897). As Patrick Brantlinger notes in Rule of Darkness, works like these explore "themes of regression, invasion, and the waning of adventure [that] express the narrowing vistas of the British Empire at the time of its greatest extent, in the moment before its fall" (253): they all suggest a late-Victorian anxiety about national identity, human identity, and the integrity of the British Empire. What Dracula does a bit differently from these works is conflate these concerns with an anxiety about the state of the British family, specifically the husband/father figure. Many of Britain's foreign conquests and colonial interests remained viable at this time, but the nation still faced growing opposition and rebellion across the globe, as evidenced by the Anglo-Boer War at the end of the century, the Irish Question, the 1885 massacre of General Gordon and his troops at Khartoum in the Sudan, and "the emergence of Bismarck's Germany after the defeat of France in 1871[, which] confronted England with powerful threats to its naval and military position and also to its preeminence in trade and industry" (Christ and Robson 988). This opposition on a global-political scale also existed alongside an increasing anxiety about the state of British society in general, particularly the role and vitality of men. As a result, these intertwined
worries prompted the need for men, who represented Britain abroad, to reassert their social supremacy through status and economic means. The problem then becomes, how, in *Dracula*, each of these issues feeds the next, revealing the British anxiety about identity and cultural solvency, beginning with the protector of the family unit. The fate of an empire that exposes itself to contamination through citizens who fall prey to greed and seek personal gains abroad at its expense becomes extremely important, as does the issue of what happens when, instead of being the conqueror and consumer, England opens itself, via its men, to danger from a foreign influence.

Through the terrible adventure that Jonathan Harker embarks on, initially in an effort to secure a better professional and social standing, Stoker's novel suggests that an unchecked desire for wealth and status opens England, through the men who are its agents abroad, to an insidious foreign corruption that strikes at the very heart of the Empire: it contaminates first the men like Harker, who aggressively, proactively come in contact with it, and then through them, it infiltrates England itself and contaminates the women who form the moral center of the middle-class English family. Because this corruption has been invited into the heart of the Empire by its male citizens, all English venues are needed to expel that contamination and restore equilibrium to both the domestic sphere and the individuals who occupy it.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the British Empire no longer stood as the most influential power in the world. As the century came to a close, England's military supremacy, trade and industry, and influence and prestige were on the wane, and a sense of cultural enervation began to pervade the late Victorian social climate. In other words,
the conflict represented by Count Dracula's penetration into England represents a fear of imperial and racial dilution, a direct response to the global turmoil and declining influence the English had begun to feel. For instead of continuing to expand, the British Empire had begun to contract in multiple ways: geographically, as previously subjugated populations rebelled; militarily, as the British military suffered defeats; and politically, as Britain's global influence as an industrial force was challenged by shifting powers in Europe and the Americas. Understandably, along with this contraction came an anxiety about England's ability to reassert its supremacy in the global arena since there were, by this time, far fewer lands and peoples to conquer and "civilize." As Patrick Brantlinger puts it, novels like Dracula "frequently [express] anxiety about the waning of opportunities for heroic adventure" (239), and vampires, Stephen Arata posits, are generated by "racial enervation" and the "decline" of empires. They are produced, in other words, by the very conditions characterizing late-Victorian Britain (456). Since the global-political landscape had changed throughout Victoria's reign, thanks in part to the Empire's nineteenth-century expansion, a new way to influence the world became necessary once the more traditional avenues began to prove less available. This "new way" took on the form of reinforcing England's cultural superiority by packaging it as a desirable commodity: "selling" the pinnacle of civilized life, as embodied in Britishness.

Dracula addresses this idea of Britishness as commodity by focusing on the Count's keen, rather sinister interest in purchasing and otherwise acquiring all things English. Jonathan Harker, the character most responsible for the Count's presence in England and the character whose words both open and close the novel, quickly comes to
realize that the Count has been acquiring not only the English language and English property, but he has also been studying English laws and customs, evidenced by the numerous shelves laden with "books . . . of the most varied kind—history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law—all relating to England and English life and customs and manners. There were even such books of reference as the London Directory, the 'Red' and 'Blue' books, Whitaker's Almanack, [and] the Army and Navy Lists" (30-31); the Count also reads an English Bradshaw's Guide shortly thereafter (34). Each of these books records and disseminates various facets of British life, from incidental customs, to the military, England's infrastructure, its politics, its flora and fauna, and even to its train timetables, which is knowledge any resident of the country would, if not innately understand, know how to acquire with little difficulty. In packaging Britishness in the form of books to be purchased, owned, and digested, Stoker shows that at this point in time, England makes it easy for outsiders like the Count to acquire the same kind of general knowledge as a native Englishman. In fact, the Count is so successful at learning about English business and law, Harker's own profession, that Harker remarks in his diary that "[f]or a man who was never in the country, and who did not evidently do much in the way of business, his knowledge and acumen were wonderful" (45). The Count's access and ability to absorb all of this information about England and the workings of the Empire's governmental seat underscores the idea that Britishness is a commodity to be bought and sold, packaged and marketed by the country itself. And for Britain to be a commodity that can be sold by the English, specifically to be purchased lawfully by those neither natively English nor even imperial citizens, this
further suggests that ownership of Englishness, and thus Englishness itself, can be considered transactional rather than innate.

This troubling, problematic idea of England and Englishness as commodities is further demonstrated in the Count's ability to acquire not just one, but several pieces of property scattered around England from Yorkshire to London, all of which are legal, binding purchases that Harker is sent to oversee and guarantee (36). In fact, during a late-night conversation, the Count goes so far as to remark on "my dear new country of England" (37), as though the country itself has become his possession through his purchases. Of course, since he now owns several homes in various places throughout England—more, even, than Harker himself, who owns no home, is not yet married, and is not yet the provider and protector of a household—the Count's assertion is not as thoroughly inaccurate as it should be. He is not a citizen of the Empire, let alone English, but as someone who is now a man of property, he possesses something that Harker, an up-and-coming solicitor, cannot yet claim. This is a very uncomfortable idea, that someone not English can lay a greater claim to property in England than an actual Englishman, and only underscores the troubling concept of England and Britishness as a commodity.

Even more alarmingly, the Count claims Harker as a possession when he protects Harker from his vampire wives: "This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him" (55). Further, the Count poses as Harker by dressing in his clothes, all for the purpose of having his own foul deeds of murder ascribed to the Englishman (62). Seen in conjunction with the Count's acquisition of English property, this claiming of Harker and
claiming to be Harker is sinister and disturbing. As an Englishman, Jonathan Harker is a citizen of one of the most powerful empires at the time, despite that empire's impending decline. For him to be relegated to a subordinate, helpless role, as one in need of protection rather than one who protects, and for him to have his identity and character stolen so easily at the Count's whim, suggests that he is himself a commodity, something to be bought, owned, kept, and used, just like the homes the Count can now claim as his. Harker's importance as a British citizen, one who goes out into the world as a representative of civilization and cultural superiority, is eclipsed by his impotence in his inability to protect himself from the Count's women and the Count's theft of his identity.

Furthermore, the Count's acquisitional acumen somewhat parallels the situation in which the Empire placed itself at this time. Dracula has made the next logical leap in his quest for supremacy over the English: after absorbing the English language, British culture, and British manners through books, he has acquired British land and now claims both an actual citizen and that citizen's identity. In the eyes of a conquering race, the steps are linear and inevitable. After all, as the Count admits, his has always been a conquering race, and theirs is the desire to rule (42-43). His actions have been those of a leader preparing to invade, one who will manage to infiltrate with the unintentional (but no less useful) help of the nation he wishes to subdue. And as Harker's experience intimates, making information about England, English property, and even English citizens something to absorb, purchase, and claim opens the Empire's center to the danger of an insidious invasion, one that proves to be partly of the Empire's own making.
Stoker's conceptualization of Britishness and England as commodities not only suggests the danger of ownership by those who might be able to turn that fact to their advantage, but it also connects to the fear of contamination through dilution or deracination, which were anxieties the English struggled with on at least two levels in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The first level dealt with the influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe, immigrants whom the Victorians considered dirty, diseased, and contaminated. These immigrants did not represent the far-off nations that the Empire colonized; instead, they belonged to different, nearby empires, like the Russian Empire, which in a way made them more insidious because they were closer geographically and easily traveled. As Jimmie Cain notes in "Racism and the Vampire: The Anti-Slavic Premise of Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897)," "Foremost among . . . [Victorian] apprehensions was the belief that Jews spread disease and contamination. . . . As . . . anti-Semite John Foster Fraser lamented in the Yorkshire Post, England had no provisions for preventing the influx of 'smallpox, scarlet fever, measles, diphtheria' with the 'unwashed verminous alien' from Eastern Europe and Russia" (127). While Count Dracula is not Jewish, as a denizen of Transylvania, he represents a very Eastern European immigrant: one from a region that is very close to Russia, and one who is intimately linked both with vermin, in his control over rats and ability to climb like a lizard or insect (320, 49). Stoker also connects the Count with unwholesome, miasmic air in his ability to turn into an insidious, creeping mist (308), suggesting a link to illness, another stereotype ascribed to Jews as well as Eastern European immigrants. Furthermore, the Count arrives in England via a Russian ship, the Demeter (109), and as Cain also suggests, Count Dracula
can be seen as an "analogue" for the "rapacious" and "licentious Russians" of a travelogue Stoker wrote with his brother (133). Each of these links on its own is suggestive; taken together, they show that in constructing the Count, Stoker has deliberately created a being that embodies the widely ascribed traits of European immigrant groups of whom Victorians were suspicious, whom they believed to be detrimental to their social and personal health, and whom they did not claim as their own, preferring instead to label them as unclean, undesirable Others. As a result, Count Dracula takes on the characteristics of a sort of über-alien Other who would, in Harker's observation, be capable of "[creating] a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" of London (71). In other words, in his role as a vector for vampirism, which acts as something very like a debilitating and fatal disease, Count Dracula could infiltrate England and slowly begin to change its citizens into something other than English; indeed, they would become something other than human, as well. This connection between the symptoms of vampirism and illnesses like those the Eastern European immigrants were held responsible for strongly suggests that such a comparison would have occurred to most of Stoker's readers; thus, in encouraging this connection between the undesirable immigrants and the terrifying Count, Stoker reflects the reactionary attitude regarding the danger of immigration by those who devalue—or pollute—British society through the introduction of disease and their chaotic, uncivilized ways.

The second level of Victorian anxiety regarding contamination that might lead to deracination dealt with in Dracula is embodied in Harker's experiences both on his
travels to Dracula's castle and once he becomes the Count's prisoner. At first, acting very much the British traveler, Harker remarks on the quaintness and rustickness of the superstitious countryfolk he meets on his way to the Count's castle (9-10, 13), describing them with the same sense of cultural superiority in evidence when he remarks on the less orderly workings of transportation as he makes his way eastward: "It seems to me that the further East you go the more unpunctual are the trains. What ought they to be in China?" (9). This tone is important because the closer Harker gets to the Count, the more his attitude changes. He goes from viewing the country's native population in a paternalistic way, as quaint and superstitious, to finding himself practically infected with their fear and concern as he goes from accepting a woman's crucifix out of a desire not to offend her (12), to touching it, talisman-like, in an effort to protect himself from the Count and stave off his own hysteria (41), to eventually counting on the crucifix to protect him in his sleep (48). These instances, along with Harker's instinctual horror of the Count, serve as what Patricia McKee describes as expressions of the Victorian fear of racial and human devolution: "Stoker's travellers thus pose two possibilities of racial degeneration of concern to late Victorians: that the Englishman abroad will be absorbed into an alien and primitive culture because of his own internal weakness; or that a stronger, more primitive race will invade from without and assimilate the English" (45). In Dracula, of course, both options are represented: the former in Jonathan Harker, particularly in his rapid descent into the same superstitions he initially finds quaint and rustic, and the latter in the Count himself. However, McKee's theory does not fully cover Harker's experience. Although his diary at first reads like a typical traveler's journal, Harker is far from a mere
traveler enjoying the Transylvanian countryside or attempting research for his own travelogue, and while he does nearly succumb to the illicit desires that the Count's women raise in him (54), the fact remains that he is in Transylvania, at Castle Dracula, to assist the Count in purchasing English land and in relocating to London. This, rather than the shameful, forbidden desires the vampire women raise in him, is Stoker's point of where the crux of Harker's contamination lies, as Harker's business leads him to Count Dracula and prompts him to continue his transactions with the Count even after he becomes suspicious of the Count's intentions.

Harker's other experiences, as Dracula's prisoner and once Harker returns to England, also exemplify the anxiety of the English traveler abroad absorbing foreign contamination, becoming deracinated, and becoming psychologically impotent. These instances are notable in that while Harker finalizes the Count's purchases of English property, he acquires some of the superstitions of the simple peasants whose quaint country ways he gently mocks. This acquisition represents a form of cultural contamination or deracination. More importantly, though, Harker also exhibits instances of devolution, of acting less like a civilized, reasoning human being and more like a frightened animal and a madman. For instance, when Harker first realizes that he is Dracula's prisoner, he loses his reason and "[behaves] much as a rat does in a trap" before he is able to collect himself and think rationally once again (40). Not long after, he is driven mad by the knowledge that his actions will help Dracula infiltrate England (71), and he eventually succumbs to brain fever, which is (in his own words) "to be mad," as a result of his experiences (138). As Katie Harse notes in "'Stalwart Manhood': Failed
Masculinity in *Dracula,*" Harker's "shattered nerves" are "evidence of his diminished manhood" (239), but Harker's debilitation both within the castle and once he escapes goes beyond a diminishment of his manhood.

One of the hallmarks of vampirism is that it infects a person and erases his or her humanity. While Harker's loss of reason is not as extreme as Lucy Westenra's loss of her soul, which prompts her to feed on children instead of care for them (270-71), the fact remains that for a time, neither Harker nor Lucy are fully functional, civilized beings. They are more like "creatures" of one sort or another: Harker bereft of all his reason like a frightened animal, and Lucy a fiend. Both degenerative states are a direct result of contact with the Count, and though that contact differs between the two victims, since the results are fairly similar, a reasonable conclusion is that both have been contaminated by their association with the Count. As Sos Eltis notes, Dracula's victims, from his wives to Lucy Westenra, clearly degenerate "to the level of the animal" (456), and even though Harker's degeneration resembles that of a prey animal rather than a predator, his response to Dracula is nonetheless animalistic, clearly connecting Lucy's actual vamping and his experiences that seem to reflect vamping.

Further connections between Lucy's situation and Harker's exist in physical manifestations of their contact with Dracula. While the Count arrives in England looking young and healthy, Harker is still weak and fragile in both mind and body (223), and when Mina is bitten, Harker's vitality is sapped further still, leaving him with the appearance of "a drawn, haggard old man, whose white hair matches well with the hollow burning eyes and grief-written lines of his face" (388). Again, the similarity to
Lucy while she dies is striking: as the Count drains her blood, he saps her vitality.

However, when Mina is vamped, Harker is the one whose physical health and youthful energy are noticeably drained away.

Although the women are the ones who are attacked and bitten, Harker is the first point of contamination, indicating that the responsibility for Dracula's presence in England goes back to him. He is the first one to come in contact with the Count, and he is the first one to be infected by the corruption and degeneration the Count represents. His physical and mental wellness after his experiences in Transylvania and in reaction to the Count's presence in England are similar to the debilitation and dehumanization that Lucy suffers once she has been infected and suggest that Harker, too, is infected in some way. Furthermore, whether Harker's debilitation is a loss of his masculinity, his vitality, or his humanity, his diminishment as a result of contact with the Count is also problematic in that it renders him unfit to support a domestic sphere. Loss of masculinity and vitality mean that he will be unable to act as a proper husband in providing for his wife, perhaps even in impregnating her. Loss of humanity divorces him from his identity as an Englishman, and as something less than a viable citizen, Stoker suggests Harker most certainly does not qualify as "proper" protector material.

Harker's condition is important not only because it affects his ability to head a viable domestic sphere, but also because it demonstrates his culpability in allowing Dracula entrance, both into England and into himself. If, as Eric D. Smith suggests, the real horror of *Dracula* is that "[the Count's] victims freely choose to admit him; that in order to be effective, Dracula must already be present in his victim as the desire to accept
vampiric transformation” (82), then a vampiric influence heavily implies both desire and culpability on his victims’ part. Although Harker does not undergo a full vampiric transformation—that horror is left for Lucy and threatens Mina—his own responses to the Count belie his responsibility in bringing Dracula to England. For one, Harker is unsettled by the Count from the very outset. Dracula's physiognomy is highly suggestive: he has pointed ears, sharp teeth, hair in the center of his palms, and rank breath that causes Harker to draw away from him (28-29). These features describe a man who seems far less a man than some sort of throwback to primitive, prehistoric humanity, utterly uncivilized and highly suspect. His very features mark him as a brute and thoroughly alien, yet Harker is determined to see his business with this unsavory man through to the end. In this determination, Stoker shows that Harker puts his business concerns over his natural fear, endangering himself and England.

Further, once Harker has managed to escape the castle, to make his way back to civilization, and to begin to recover from his brain fever, he has no interest in understanding what caused his illness or what passed between him and the Count. He tells Mina to keep his diary safe and him ignorant of its contents "unless, indeed, some solemn duty should come upon [him] to go back to the bitter hours, asleep or awake, sane or mad, recorded here" (138). Harker is understandably reluctant to revisit events that stole his reason from him, but the fact remains that he is responsible for bringing Dracula in to endanger England. What is more, his diary contains information critical to stopping the Count since Harker knows Dracula has acquired properties, in addition to his London house, in Whitby and Exeter (36). In wishing to remain ignorant of his experiences,
Harker fails to protect England or to accept culpability for inviting the Count in; furthermore, in insisting that he does not want to know anything of what happened, he effectively sets up the circumstances surrounding Lucy's vamping and eventual death. After all, Mina has just come from Whitby to nurse Harker back to health, and Lucy was already showing symptoms of Dracula's influence when she left. If Harker had accepted his responsibility in the matter, Lucy might have been saved, and the Count might have been stopped before he could get started on his bid to subjugate the English. But Harker's failure to fully assume his responsibility allows the Count to destroy Lucy.

Unfortunately for Harker, this is not the only mistake he makes, nor is it his only attempt to shirk his duty to set right his mistakes in assisting the Count's invasion. Harker also tries to shift the responsibility for facing his experiences to Mina by giving her his diary to keep and asking her to remain ignorant with him; she, of course, agrees since he is now her husband (139). Both actions show Harker attempting to divorce himself from his guilt in assisting the Count's endeavors to infiltrate the Empire, and asking Mina to collaborate is particularly problematic since he is, as her husband, meant to be a protector. However, his actions up to this point suggest that he is no true protector and thus in no way suitable to fulfill the father/husband role in a domestic sphere. He continued to assist Dracula in his desire in purchasing English property, and although Harker did try to escape from Transylvania, the fact remains that he was suspicious and unsettled from the outset, yet he allowed his business with Dracula to take supremacy over his own good judgment. As Willis asks, "if Jonathan Harker so maligns Dracula's foreignness[,] why is it that he continues to offer him the opportunity to import it to
Britain?” (319). The answer is that the desire for social and economic influence overrides Harker's natural defenses and, as a result, is his—and England's—downfall, suggesting that England's men have become too refined to protect themselves or their nation. This desire leads to the commodification of Britishness and unwise choices that endanger England by opening it up to polluting, degenerative forces, beginning first with Harker and then shifting to Lucy Westenra once the Count reaches the English shores. In this situation, as Harker's choices suggest, business is improperly viewed as more important than self preservation.

Business is of particular significance in Dracula because it is the commonality that links most of the instances of infection, corruption, and deracination that occur, not only among the women, but also the men, particularly Jonathan Harker, who bears the brunt of the Count's debilitating influence. After all, business is the reason that Harker leaves London for Transylvania in the first place. And the problem with Harker's business is that in expediting the Count's purchases of English property and helping him come to a clearer understanding of British business practices, among other things, Harker is in essence inviting Count Dracula, a being whom he almost immediately considers suspect, into the heart of the Empire. Furthermore, he does so in binding, legal contracts, a hallmark of English civility and advancement, and as a result, Harker facilitates the treatment of England and Englishness as products.

Of course, this is not the entirety of Harker's sin in transacting with the Count. The most significant feature of Harker's dealings with the Count is the fact that he brokers deals for English property in an effort to further his social and professional
standing. This is his first assignment as a full solicitor, not a clerk (25), and although he protests in his diary that he does it to maintain his employer's reputation (46), as a full solicitor, his own livelihood and reputation rest on his performance at Castle Dracula—his performance in selling off English property and allowing the Count a firm foothold in London and its surrounding areas. Martin Willis describes this situation as a "cultural desecration" Harker visits on Transylvania, along with his "economic exploitation" of the Count (319). But Stoker describes transactions and exchanges between the Count and those set against him throughout the novel, not just in Transylvania, and to ignore these transactions is to ignore the significant connection between business and commodification; the culpability of the men who participate in the commodification process or set business over protection of the vulnerable domestic sphere; and the contamination that affects those men and those associated with them, thereby making them unsuitable for assuming the role of protector and provider of a domestic sphere.

As the first point of contact for the Count, Harker is the party most responsible for his presence in England, but the business-related culpability contained in the novel does not rest solely with him. Stoker makes it clear throughout that all of the men fail at being adequate protectors, and almost without exception, those failures are linked to the men's preoccupation with their own business. For although Harker is responsible for letting the Count into England, the rest of the men fail just as badly at protecting Lucy and Mina who, as women and future mothers, traditionally represent the moral center of the British family and thus the heart of the Empire. In terms of Lucy Westenra, the intelligent and seemingly well-prepared quartet of Quincey Morris, Dr. John Seward, Arthur Holmwood,
and Dr. Abraham Van Helsing are not enough to protect her despite Van Helsing's knowledge of vampires, Morris's abilities as a hunter, Seward's medical acumen, and Holmwood's love for Lucy and willingness to use whatever resources his wealth and position afford him in an effort to save her. The first point of failure for Lucy (aside from Harker) is Arthur Holmwood, who, rather than looking after her himself, entrusts her health and safety to proxies in the form of Seward, Morris, and Van Helsing. Holmwood is absent, seeing to business for his sick father, when the vamping makes her noticeably ill (155), returning just in the nick of time to provide blood for her first life-saving transfusion (159). He disappears again, leaving her in Seward and Van Helsing's care, and eventually sends Morris to look after her while he continues to deal with his ailing father (193), only returning when his father seems to be rallying. In each instance, Holmwood is elsewhere while Lucy is critically ill. Lucy is Holmwood's fiancée, and he fails to recognize that as the future mother to his children, her health is crucial to the continuation of his family line. Instead, Holmwood remains with his father and sends proxies to watch over her. Unfortunately, Seward and Van Helsing are distracted by their own pressing business, and as a result, they, too, prove to be inadequate protectors. As Holmwood's proxies, their failure to save Lucy is his responsibility as much as it is theirs.

As medical doctors with additional responsibilities, both Van Helsing and Seward are the very model of the late Victorian professional man. However, the fact that these businesses cause them to be absent from Lucy at the moment when she is in the greatest need suggests that Stoker finds fault in business taking precedence over protection of the vulnerable, whether the vulnerable be the heart of the Empire in the form of England or a
woman who is meant to be the mother of future generations. Tellingly, during the night of Dracula's final, fatal attack on Lucy, Van Helsing is back in Amsterdam, and Seward, who does not get Van Helsing's telegram in time, is busy catching up with his own work, the interesting and possibly career-making patient Renfield, at the asylum (183-84). In each case, the doctors unintentionally neglect Lucy, who remains at home with a terminally ill mother and no other protection than a flock of silly, ineffectual maidservants (191). The men's professional concerns take precedence over the protection of someone who cannot protect herself and who has proven that she requires the extra care. But those with the ability to adequately shield her are busy with their own work even though, after repeated attacks, it seems certain that their priority ought to have been Lucy. They, like Holmwood and Harker, fail miserably in their duty to act as protectors, and though such is not their intent, the result of their decisions remains devastating. In failing to protect her, they also bear responsibility for her in her fully polluted, vampiric state, which demonstrates Stoker's critique of the professionalization and commercial domination that take precedence over protection of the family.

Lucy's fate and the Count's initial penetration into England, however, are not the only cautionary examples Stoker provides. In addition to the message behind Lucy's ordeal, Stoker underscores the absolute necessity of self preservation and effective protection through Mina Harker's vamping. Her initial vamping occurs when the men are out searching Carfax (312), and the more important event, when Dracula infects her with his own blood, occurs while Harker sleeps beside her and the rest of the men are busy with planning further measures against the Count and speaking to Renfield (357-63).
Harker has already proven to be an inadequate protector and provider for their small domestic sphere; the stupor he falls into when the Count forcibly infects Mina only reinforces the fact of his inadequacy (364). But the other men's inadequacy is highlighted here, too. Despite everything they learned once Lucy had been infected and died, both as a human woman and an Un-dead fiend, they still place their own concerns above providing protection. Arguably, since Van Helsing, Seward, Holmwood, and Morris's business at this point in the novel is the expulsion of Dracula from England, the hunt for him more than qualifies as being of utmost importance. However, the fact that all of the men ignore signs of Mina's fatigue that mirror Lucy's own symptoms suggests that the men are, once again, focusing on the concerns they are more interested in (345). This point is emphasized by Stoker when the Count gloatingly points out that his ability to vamp Mina, who is their "best beloved one," was possible because the men did not "keep their energies for use closer to home" (370). The warning is clear, though the men have not recognized it.

As Katie Harse explains, "Dracula is a novel primarily about men" that contains "enthusiastic tributes . . . [acting as] a definition of ideal manhood, . . . a standard which the heroes often fail to achieve" (229). In the case of men as protectors, this proves to be all too true. After all, the men's mistakes, made over and over again, are the chances the Count needs to fully enact his plan to conquer the British Empire, and they fail to recognize the opportunities they inadvertently afford him. Each time, the men have a chance to do things differently, to learn from their mistakes and prevent further infection from the Count. But they are slow to learn, and their preoccupation with what they
consider to be their priorities distracts them from what Stoker positions as the real priority in the novel: protecting the vulnerable center of home, whether that be the women and future mothers of British citizens or London, the commercial center of the Empire itself.

Stoker draws further connections between business, commodity, and Dracula's contamination in the way the Count gains strength while weakening those aligned against him, suggesting that Stoker sees a parallel between the way the Empire's strength and England's racial integrity are weakened by selling English property to Others and by allowing undesirable immigrants on English soil. At their heart, Dracula's acts of vampirism, both the draining of blood and infection by forcing ingestion of his own contaminated blood, are transactions that have dire, debilitating consequences. As Shohini Chaudhuri points out, the way that vampires propagate is significant in that it entails an exchange, not just a straightforward invasion: "Human blood is drained out of the body, and then replaced by a foreign fluid—a metamorphosis which entails the change of the very substance of the body, and the installing within of the other" (185-86). This description is also true of the Count's legal presence in England. By "installing" his money in the British economy and replacing British ownership of certain London and outlying properties with his own foreign, patently Other ownership, Dracula deracines his victims and the country in which they live, having been invited to do so by Harker's continued pursuit of the Count's business even after Harker found him suspicious. But the Count's actions do not just contaminate and weaken Harker, Lucy, and Mina. They also weaken and pollute the men associated with Lucy and Mina. William Hughes observes
that "the Count's male victims, though unbitten, are paradoxically infected, debilitated, and subjected to progressive degeneration through contact with the vampire" (94-95).

This contact is through Lucy, who acts as an intermediary of exchange, because, as noted by Christopher Craft, it is through her that Dracula manages to acquire the blood of the men (447). After her first few encounters with the Count, Lucy's blood volume is dangerously low, necessitating a transfusion from Holmwood (159), and then subsequently from the rest of them in their turn: Seward (167), Van Helsing (175-76), and Morris (194). This is the next blood that Dracula takes from her, not her own. And in having their blood taken, the men suffer both physical and mental debilitation. The physical symptoms of transfusion include a "terrible feeling" (167), and faintness and weakness (168), and the mental symptoms, present after Dracula takes their blood from Lucy, include Van Helsing's hysterics (255) and the other men's fits of weeping, mostly described in terms of childlike tears (218, 395, 296).

In each case, Seward, Van Helsing, Holmwood, and Morris exhibit varying levels of debilitation and degeneration, moving from strong, robust masculinity to "feminine" hysteria and childlike weeping. And in each instance, the regression takes place only after Dracula has acquired their blood by draining Lucy. In a way, these episodes are similar to the degeneration Harker suffers, but since their contact is mediated via Lucy, the effects prove to be less severe. However, it is important to note that none of the men escape Dracula's weakening influence, as none of the men can avoid indirect contact with him, nor can they avoid their culpability in failing to protect Lucy from the Count's continued assaults. And in failing Lucy, they also fail the Empire, since failure to protect her not
only fatally disrupts the domestic sphere she is meant to be a part of, it also could result in the creation of more vampires via her contamination as an Un-dead fiend: a bastardization of her now-defunct domestic sphere. In this, Stoker suggests that all of England, including the men, are subject to being drained by foreigners.

However, Stoker describes a way for the damage to be undone. After cautioning that it takes only one man to upset the balance by taking advantage of commodification for personal gain, Stoker intimates that if men from the middle and professional classes and above work together toward the common goal of expelling the corrupting, polluting Other, equilibrium can be restored. This restoration is demonstrated in the way that the men, along with Mina Harker, finally pool their knowledge, abilities, and resources to best the Count, drive him from England, and exterminate him utterly. Up to this moment, no one man, not even two or three of them working in tandem, has been enough to thwart the Count. They have worked toward the same purpose, but rather than combine all of their energies and resources, they have been dividing themselves, still focusing partially on their own interests without paying proper attention to both protecting that which is vulnerable to contamination and expelling that which contaminates. But once Mina is infected, the men truly start to work in concert and without distractions, at which point they begin to best the Count, which suggests that this full social cohesion and focus are what Stoker deems to be most effective against an infecting presence like Dracula’s. Each of the group has skills or resources in hunting, business, or psychology that prove invaluable in the fight against the Count. In showing that each man has a necessary role and that each man, including the one initially responsible for his presence in England, is
crucial in the effort to remove the contamination that Dracula represents, Stoker suggests that the damage done to England and the domestic spheres so important to the Empire's strength can be prevented, but only if those men focus their abilities in the proper manner and refrain from letting desires for personal gain and their own business take precedence over collective citizenship and their utmost responsibility as husband/father figures. Only when the contamination is fully expelled and the lessons of proper priority are learned can the men assume their place at the head of healthy, viable domestic spheres.

Stoker also reinforces his contention that men working together is necessary to the health of English families, the nation, and the Empire in the baby that Jonathan and Mina have at the end of the novel. Their son is born on the day that Quincey Morris died and shares the names of all the men who fought to defeat Dracula (485), which further suggests that collaboration of all the men is necessary to the survival of the English, from the individual family members to the family unit and the nation itself. Without each of the men from the different professional and economic venues represented in the novel, little Quincey Harker would never have been born, and the healthy continuation of the English race would not be possible.

Unlike earlier novels dealing with sensational subjects that explore the detrimental effects of empire on wives/mothers and children, the more vulnerable members of the domestic sphere, Dracula focuses on the member who acts as the agent of empire. In Dracula, the focus is on the husband/father, the one who actually acts as an agent of the British Empire's interests. And in Dracula, as exemplified most clearly in Jonathan Harker and to a lesser extent in the other men, the husband/father cannot escape
the contamination or corruption, nor can he escape his responsibility for actively inviting it in under the guise of strengthening his position for the benefit of his domestic sphere and the Empire. That motivation proves to be a lie, as Stoker shows through Harker's experiences of losing his health and sanity and of almost losing his wife due to his shortsightedness and irresponsibility. The message is clear: pursuits of empire are worthwhile only when they do not invite corruption into either the domestic or even national spheres. To do so only endangers the men meant to serve as protectors, and if they cannot fulfill their roles, Stoker cautions, the corruption could conceivably spread with catastrophic consequences.
Conclusion

With all of the social, technological, scientific, and global-political changes taking place during the Victorian era, it is little wonder that the people of the middle class spent much of the nineteenth century trying to determine their place in the world, nor is it surprising that many of the works at the time would focus on exploration of Britishness in varying ways, from the individual to the family to national and racial identity. This exploration, depicted metaphorically in the sensation novels of the time, examines the ways in which the expansion of the Empire might cost the British on multiple levels, particularly the members of the middle-class family, who were considered to be the building blocks of the Empire. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Wilkie Collins's *Armadale*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* are all novels that grapple with the national and personal identities of the main characters, and this confusion about identity reveals an anxiety about the state of the British family in relation to the expansion of the Empire. In each case, imperial expansion is detrimental to the integrity of individual members of the family contaminated by imperial expansion, and then those members in turn disrupt the integrity of their family sphere as a whole, leading to instability that, by the time of *Dracula*, threatens the heart of the Empire and has the potential to endanger millions of unsuspecting British citizens.

In *Lady Audley's Secret*, the question of identity revolves around the mother, whose identity changes when her husband abandons her. In describing Helen Talboys's fall from young, respectable wife and mother to a dangerous, unnatural creature responsible for disrupting more than her own domestic sphere, Braddon shows that
imperialism is dangerous unless proper provisions are made for those left unprotected when the men leave for foreign shores. Helen's very identity comes into question as a result of the actions she takes to support herself, suggesting that imperialism is an endeavor that risks first the core of an individual, then that individual's family and community.

Wilkie Collins's *Armadale* also explores the importance of identity as tied to expansion of the Empire and the economic returns of former slave holdings. Collins critiques the institution of colonialism much in the way that Braddon critiques the laws and social climate that remove viable options from women left unprotected. The way Collins presents colonialism shows that it has far-reaching effects not only on those who engage in it and are thus corrupted by profiting from human misery, but also on those innocent of any questionable morality.

*Dracula*, too, explores the question of identity, and seeks to define Englishness and question foreign imperial policy. Stoker's treatment of the dangers of imperial endeavors is much more extreme than either Braddon's or Collins's, but since the end of the nineteenth century represented a significant shift in the power and influence of the British Empire, British anxieties about the position of the Empire in the world were higher. In dealing with the loss of influence and military and trade-related setbacks, Stoker writes to the English who were even more concerned with what their global endeavors had done and would continue to do to the heart of the Empire, from the country itself down to its individual families and citizens.
Each author uses the main characters' plights to highlight the problems embedded in imperial concerns and dangerous to the English family as a whole and nation and Empire itself. In all three novels, danger resides in acts meant to expand the Empire's influence in some way without English society having proper provisions in place to protect those left behind, and all three novels reveal anxieties of England facing a modern crisis of imperial costs and the dignity and integrity of the English citizen. Each novel casts serious doubt on the viability of imperialism as practiced in the nineteenth century, revealing that the authors consider it to be a problematic institution that works only at the cost of those whom it is ultimately meant to elevate: the British family and nation.
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