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## Employment Relations and the Failure of Sympathy in Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

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In Thomas Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* (1871), lady's companion Cytherea Graye and her mistress Miss Aldclyffe take a walk along a lake on the Knapwater estate. As the two women stop "side by side, mentally imbibing the scene," they see a pair of swans swimming toward them. When Cytherea remarks that "they seem to come to us without any will of their own—quite involuntarily," Miss Aldclyffe meaningfully replies, "Yes, but if you look narrowly you can see their hips just beneath the water, working with the greatest energy" (219). Cytherea prefers to think of the swans as gliding in easy harmony with one another, just as the relationship between mistress and companion often masquerades as one of organic, sympathetic friendship, obscuring the employment contract. The mistress's description of the birds also applies to the women's circumstances in another, more sinister way. For, unbeknownst to the companion, Miss Aldclyffe has begun "working with the greatest energy" against Cytherea: beneath the smooth surface of their life together, the mistress is plotting to destroy her companion's current romance and force the dependent employee to marry her own son. Like Victorian ladies floating about in their crinoline gowns, the striking image of the two swans here—feminine creatures in their beauty and grace only seeming to move in effortless synchronization—enables Hardy to articulate the dangers inherent in employment relations when even culturally idealized bonds between women are subject to the debasing influence of economic conditions.

The mistress-companion dynamic is fundamentally different from the majority of Victorian employment relationships in several respects. It is situated in the domestic space; it is by definition an intimate relationship between genteel women of similar or equal social status in which one is employer and the other employee; and it is unique in that it

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replicates friendship structures while simultaneously attempting to efface the existence of any professional ties. As Devoney Looser writes, "A humble companion was usually single and economically dependent, descended from a gentleman whose fortune had turned or was apportioned to an eldest son" (580). Faced with few options befitting their social station, these young ladies, like their governess counterparts, often procured a position as companion with or through extended family members or by advertising in local papers. Hired to provide company, amusement, and sympathy in exchange for salary or room and board, companions entertained their mistresses through reading, music, cards, or conversation; chaperoned them when they went out or received guests; and served them by running errands and performing similar private commissions. To fulfill these duties, "The companion had, of course, to be a woman of culture and intelligence, widely read, too, and of agreeable personality" (Barnard). Central to the conception of a prospective companion's "agreeable personality" were humility, congeniality, and especially the capacity for fellow feeling and understanding. The companion was expected to be a sympathetic confidante, a perpetual receptacle for everything from frivolous gossip to the most intimate secrets. It was this capacity for sympathy — what Rachel Ablow defines broadly as "the experience of entering imaginatively into another's thoughts or feelings" — which was valued above all else (8).

As I have noted in "Lapdogs and Moral Shepherd's Dogs: Canine and Human Companions in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*," companions blurred the lines categorizing family, spouse, friend, employee, and object. Securely a member of the "upstairs" region of the home, the companion was superior to the domestic staff, but she still existed in an ambiguous position within the household because of her liminal status as neither equal nor servant to her mistress. Companions were often expected to play the role of sycophant and frequently endured disrespect from their employers. Forced to work for their self-preservation despite their social status and victimized by their personal situations as well as the stigma associated with being single, these women often suffered from the coarsening and demeaning effects of their humble, dependent occupation.<sup>1</sup>

By the time Hardy's novels featuring mistresses and companions were published in the later decades of the nineteenth century, employment relations outside the domestic sphere were more sharply defined than ever before. The Industrial Revolution led Victorians to reconsider a relationship that had become as central to the culture as to the family. As traditional codes of paternalism gave way to increasing state involvement in the governance of the workplace, laws were put in place to ensure that working conditions and hours were regulated and that workers' basic needs were met. These statutes could become somewhat blurred, however, when applied to the companion. The companion's relationship to her mistress existed predominantly outside of workplace legislation; the private, genteel, domestic nature of the position, coupled with the fact that this was an intimate relationship between two women, meant that formal employment regulations were not always in place—or were neither broad nor specific enough—to protect the companion from whatever mistreatment her mistress might perpetrate. Because of the insularity of the relationship, a companion not only depended on her mistress for her physical needs and social protection but also had to rely on her employer for less measurable support, such as her mental and emotional welfare. The intimacy of the relationship, magnified by the mistress's demands for emotional availability and sympathy, caused the companion to be vulnerable in more acute ways than employees in other occupations, providing Hardy with a unique vehicle for engaging questions of human rights within employment bonds.

*Desperate Remedies* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) portray the helplessness of the companion against those more powerful in status and wealth who would take advantage of her. While Hardy's companion figures dutifully perform their obligations, his mistress characters manipulate and abuse their higher positions.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, each novel represents the mistress-companion dynamic—wherein confidences are invited and sympathy is, ideally, in abundance—as a fertile site for a kind of transference in which the employment relationship becomes a lightning rod for working through past desires and trauma. Both mistress and companion become screens upon which are projected the other's longing, rage, and anxiety, and this phenomenon complicates the reciprocation of sympathy and consideration. By scrutinizing these



mistress-companion relationships in which libidinal energies interfere with the exchange of intangible responsibilities, Hardy's novels suggest that when the employment association is superimposed upon the culturally idealized female bond havoc occurs within the mistress-companion dyad as well as within the narrative itself. Desire and power supersede sympathy for these mistresses, and the chaos that ensues generates the plots. In both novels, an attempt is made to detour the homoerotic impulses of mistress and companion into alternative heterosexual marriage plots meant to alleviate oedipal tensions, but ultimately neither offers a satisfying resolution. Deploying the mistress-companion dynamic as a model for employment relations in general, Hardy's novels imply that genuine, altruistic sympathy is impossible within employment relationships because of the power structures that intrude and disrupt obligations of reciprocity.

### *I. Redefining Employer-Employee Relations in Victorian England*

In *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), John Stuart Mill remarks that "the generality of labourers" in Victorian England are "practically as dependent on fixed rules and on the will of others, as they could be on any system short of slavery" (210). Workers relied on their employers for their livelihood and, by extension, for their basic human needs. Given this, many felt that it was the duty of the fortunate and powerful to ensure that their vulnerable brethren, whether agricultural laborers, industrial workers, trade apprentices, domestic servants, or otherwise were protected. As Charles E. Baker, author of several tracts pertaining to British law, noted in 1881, "Every advance of general civilization has been marked by an increasing tendency to regard the workman more and more as a man having the right to live and labour for himself and less and less as a mere instrument of toil for the use or pleasure of another" (2). Workplace issues were at the forefront of parliamentary consciousness, and an increasing number of salutary laws across the century represented a new kind of state-sponsored paternalism that would regulate employment relations in statistically measurable ways. A series of Factory and Coal Mine Acts, along with the Employer's Liability Act and other similar legislation, focused primarily on protecting the material rights and physical well-being of the employee. The problem, of course, was that there was no way to calculate, and thus

no means to regulate, the less concrete aspects of the employer-employee dynamic.

Formal law did not address immaterial dangers such as mental or emotional harm and damage to one's reputation, although these considerations were beginning to be discussed in the period. Numerous essays published in the latter part of the century delineate the various responsibilities of the employer to the employee, revealing that many Victorians shared barrister Almaric Rumsey's view that "the rights of one are, so to speak, the duties of the other" (19). In *The Claims of Labour: An Essay on the Duties of the Employers to the Employed* (1845), Sir Arthur Helps exclaims, "What an important relation is that of Master and Man! How it pervades the world" (7). Helps refers to the employer's responsibility to the employee as a "sacred duty," bemoans that "masters seem to have no apprehension of the feelings of those under them, no idea of any duties on their side beyond 'cash payment,'" and argues that wages must be "accompanied by a manifest regard and sympathy" (17, 31, 31). Sympathy is, in fact, the linchpin of Helps's position, but it can be undermined, he suggests, by an imbalance of power. He warns that an "imperfection of sympathy, which prevents an equal from becoming a friend, may easily make a superior into a despot" (52). According to Audrey Jaffe, for Victorians and the scholars who study them:

the term "sympathy" has commonly been used to describe an individualistic, affective solution to the problem of class alienation: the attempt to ameliorate social difference with assurances of mutual feeling and universal humanity. [...] With its ostensible effacement of differences and asserted dissolution of individuals into a common humanity, sympathy thus formulated seeks to efface the social and political problems for which it is offered as a resolution. (15)

In this view, sympathy can serve as a palliative to the disruption of the bonds of "universal humanity" imposed by the employer-employee relationship—a dyad that is almost always defined by class distinctions. As a distinctly emotional mode of interacting, an "affective solution," sympathy can remind both parties of what they share as "mutual" and "common."

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Helps's philosophy on employment relations proposes the concept of reciprocity as a solution to the disparity in power: "It is not to be supposed that any relation in life is one-sided, that kindness is to be met with indifference, or that loyalty to those who lead us is not a duty of the highest order" (71). Helps and other like-minded Victorians believed that there must be an equal exchange of respect, trust, and, above all, sympathy between masters and their employees in every industry. Beyond their wages, employers owed their employees consideration and compassion; in addition to their labor, employees owed their masters diligence and loyalty. James A. Jaffe describes how the best industrial relations in the early to mid-nineteenth century resembled a gift economy "premised upon reciprocal relations in which not only goods are transferred between parties but also obligations" (157). According to this approach, "the injunctions to 'do unto others' and 'love thy neighbor' entailed the notion that a moral society was based upon work relationships that were both equitable and reciprocal" (10). This notion of reciprocity is similarly regarded by Claude Lévi-Strauss as "the most immediate form of integrating the opposition between the self and others" (84). Such reciprocity was of the utmost importance in the mistress-companion relationship because of its intimacy and emphasis on sympathy.

Yet, for Hardy, the normative codes of reciprocity and sympathy that Victorians believed characterized a close bond between two women are corrupted by the power dynamics inherent in the employment contract. The relationships between Miss Aldclyffe and Cytherea in *Desperate Remedies* and Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* are rife with an eroticism that, although culturally considered natural and salutary in such female connections, becomes problematic when the employment affiliation intrudes upon them. The critical inequality of power in the relationship invests the mistress with supremacy and leaves the companion dependent and vulnerable. In Hardy's work, when this occurs, sympathy and the desire born of that fellow feeling become instruments of dominance, not sentiments to be mutually enjoyed. The result is a disruption of the idealized reciprocity of sympathy Victorians identified with the female bond — and aspired to in relationships between employers and employees — a disruption that both narratives attempt to sort out.



## II. *Sympathy and Homoerotic Desire in Desperate Remedies and The Mayor of Casterbridge*

There is an inherent eroticism in the mistress-companion relationships depicted throughout Victorian literature. For Hardy, desire is anchored to, even synonymous with, the shared sympathy between employer and employee. In his novels, these emotions arise out of a likeness or preexisting bond between the women. As Ablow has pointed out, the *Oxford English Dictionary* shows us the ways in which, for those in the nineteenth century as for us, sympathy was understood in terms of similarity: "agreement in qualities, likeness, conformity, correspondence." Across the several definitions listed, the same diction recurs. Entry "1 (a)" even suggests desire is an implicit component or byproduct of sympathy: "a (real or supposed) affinity between certain things, by virtue of which they are similarly or correspondingly affected by the same influence, affect or influence each other . . . , or attract or tend towards each other" (7; my emphasis). Sympathy as a term denoting "fellow feeling" also, of course, depends upon similitude and so can likewise potentially produce desire. Likeness, sympathy, desire, and intimacy are inextricably bound in Hardy's depictions of mistress-companion relationships, and it is with these ties that the superimposition of the employment affiliation interferes as transference compromises reciprocity.

Sharon Marcus, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and others have established that an intense emotional and physical intimacy not only characterized women's relationships in the nineteenth century but was socially accepted as well. Marcus argues that "an ideal friendship was defined by altruism, generosity, mutual indebtedness, and a perfect balance of power. In a capitalist society deeply ambivalent about competition, female friendship offered a vision of perfect reciprocity for those who could afford not to worry about daily survival" (4).<sup>3</sup> In the Victorian construction Marcus describes, the ideal bond of female friendship is in large part defined not only by sympathy but also by a reciprocity and "mutual indebtedness" that is made possible by the "perfect balance of power." This equality in women's relationships with one another rarely existed in reality, but the cultural impulse to construct this ideal betrays Victorian anxieties regarding the cutthroat nature of



the competitive, capitalistic sphere. Smith-Rosenberg emphasizes that "while closeness, freedom of emotional expression, and uninhibited physical contact characterized women's relationships with each other, the opposite was frequently true of male-female relationships. One could thus argue that within such a world of female support, intimacy, and ritual it was only to be expected that adult women would turn trustingly and lovingly to each other" (28). These descriptions of what friendship could offer a woman also serve as apt explanations for why women desired companions. If a Victorian lady could not find adequate friendship with a fellow female, or was not satisfied with those she had, she could purchase this same kind of intimacy by hiring a companion and, as a mistress, also have more control over it. As Betty Rizzo writes, "A woman who found herself empowered over another socially equal adult—her companion—could, possibly for the first time in her life, elect to play one role or the other, the domestic tyrant or the benevolent friend" (13). It is exactly this choice with which Hardy is concerned in *Desperate Remedies* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

In *Desperate Remedies*, the relationship between mistress and companion is eroticized from their first meeting, and the sympathy that quickly develops between them serves to strengthen the sensual charge of their bond. Miss Aldclyffe and Cytherea Graye are each immediately "struck with [their] companion's appearance" (57). Although Miss Aldclyffe initially refuses to hire Cytherea due to her youth and inexperience, she quickly changes her mind when she witnesses Cytherea's graceful movement, "one of her masterpieces," as she leaves the room. As Miss Aldclyffe contemplates, "It is almost worth while [sic] to be bored with instructing her in order to have a creature who could glide round my luxurious indolent body in that manner, and look at me in that way—I warrant how light her fingers are upon one's head and neck," she envisions herself and Cytherea in an erotic tableaux that she is ultimately unwilling to forgo (59). The prospective mistress scrutinizes and objectifies Cytherea, as if she were purchasing a painting (or lover) rather than hiring an attendant. Later, the mistress will admit to Cytherea that she hired her "all because of . . . the shape of her face and body" (76).

On her first night as lady's maid at Miss Aldclyffe's Knapwater House, Cytherea's sympathetic prowess is on full display, and it is this

fellow feeling that enables the two women to learn the details of their common name and history. When Miss Aldclyffe, whose Christian name is also Cytherea, shows Cytherea Graye the portrait inside her locket, the maid recognizes her father in the picture and the women discover their shared past.<sup>4</sup> Cytherea, "marvell[ing]" at the unexpected link between them, cannot help but sympathize with Miss Aldclyffe; despite her employer's hostile reaction to this discovery, she "directly checked her weakness by sympathizing reflections on the hidden troubles which must have thronged the past years of the solitary lady, to keep her, though so rich and courted, in a mood so repellent and gloomy as that in which Cytherea found her" (80). Although at this point Cytherea is only a lady's maid and so without the obligations of a companion to sympathize with her mistress, she shows her capacity in this regard as their mutual name and love for Cytherea's late father create a bond between the women that neither Cytherea can deny.

For Miss Aldclyffe, this commonality that breeds sympathy also heightens—or is expressed through—desire. When, later that same night, Miss Aldclyffe comes to Cytherea's room in order to lie in bed with her, Cytherea admits her because "it was now mistress and maid no longer; woman and woman only. Yes, she must let her come in, poor thing" (82). Cytherea's decision to invite Miss Aldclyffe into her bed is motivated by sympathy ("poor thing") but also by something more. Her contemplation here is important to Hardy's conceptualization of the female bond and how it is degraded by the employment relationship. Because she has quit her position and vowed to leave the next morning due to Miss Aldclyffe's violent response to learning of her parentage, Cytherea *believes* that she and Miss Aldclyffe are now "woman and woman only" as no employment dynamic interferes with their ability to be equal and intimate with one another.

As soon as Cytherea invites Miss Aldclyffe to remain, her imperious mistress of just a few hours before crawls into bed with Cytherea and "freed herself from the last remnant of restraint. She flung her arms round the young girl, and pressed her gently to her heart" (82). Amidst aggressive kissing and fondling, Miss Aldclyffe emphasizes the likeness and resulting sympathy that fuel her desire: "I can't help loving you—your name is the same as mine—isn't it strange? . . . Now, don't you think I must love you?" (83). Yet the commonality she feels with this girl

is not Miss Aldclyffe's only motivation; Cytherea's presence recalls all Miss Aldclyffe's past desire for and pain over losing Cytherea's father. Her suddenly passionate, physical pursuit of Cytherea in this scene suggests that Miss Aldclyffe works through her early loss by transferring her feelings for Ambrose onto his daughter. The mistress of Knapwater is "so repellant and gloomy" and longs to be again what she sees in the "artless and innocent" girl beside her (84). However, when Miss Aldclyffe learns that Cytherea is not as chaste as she presumed, her tone alters dramatically. After discovering that Cytherea has been "kissed by a man," Miss Aldclyffe becomes "as jealous as any man could have been" and begs Cytherea to "try to love me more than you love him—do. I love you better than any man can. Do, Cythie; don't let any man stand between us. Oh, I can't bear that!" (86). Miss Aldclyffe's unexpected but vehement possessiveness further suggests that she is transferring repressed experiences and emotions from the past onto Cytherea. Having lost the father, Miss Aldclyffe wants the daughter all to herself. After all, it was a man who "st[oo]d between" Miss Aldclyffe and Ambrose long ago, ending their relationship.<sup>5</sup>

In *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, Freud describes how psychoanalytic patients are "not satisfied with regarding the analyst in the light of reality as a helper and advisor who, moreover, is remunerated for the trouble he takes . . . on the contrary, the patient sees in his analyst the return—the reincarnation—of some important figure out of his childhood or past, and consequently transfers on to him feelings and reactions that undoubtedly applied to this model" (66). Similarly, Miss Aldclyffe is not content to interact with Cytherea as merely her "helper and advisor"; instead, she uses her as a means for working out her own repressed desires and pain. This "transference-love" is made possible in large part because of the sympathy Cytherea supplies. Freud asserts that such sympathy is a necessary precondition of transference when he states that any "standpoint" taken by the analyst other than "one of sympathetic understanding" will interfere with transference or forfeit the opportunity for transference to form ("On Beginning the Treatment" 375). The mistress-companion relationship mirrors the scene of psychoanalytic treatment in other striking ways as well. Like the analyst-analysand dynamic, the relationship between mistress and companion is one in which the parties are "alone a great deal" and the



companion, like the analyst, serves as a person with whom the mistress "discusses intimate matters" ("Transference" 381). The mistress-companion bond thus offers abundant grounds for transference to develop. Of course, the relationship between an analyst and analysand, like that of companion and mistress, is also an employment liaison in which the physician is hired to assist the patient in sorting out psychological issues. However, where the similarities end, the dangers for the companion arise: in the mistress-companion relationship, the companion is utterly dependent on her mistress and not in the privileged position of authoritative, professional, male physician. While the psychoanalyst has a degree of control over the transference scene, the companion is at the mercy of her mistress's violent loving or hostile transference and whatever manipulative behavior that transference instigates. Furthermore, while transference is a necessary part of the cure for Freud, there is no sense in Hardy that the companion's presence can alleviate the mistress's past traumas; in fact, it is the transference that causes the mistress to engage in activities that are abusive to the companion as well as, ultimately, harmful to herself.

Miss Aldclyffe eventually seems to accept Cytherea's attachment to Edward Springrove and alters her approach when she asks Cytherea to remain at Knapwater as her companion. This shift from lady's maid to companion is significant in that it both recognizes the sympathetic prowess Cytherea has displayed up to this point and elevates her to a more equal and intimate relationship with her mistress. Along with this revised invitation, Miss Aldclyffe vows, "I will be exactly as a mother to you" (89). As if attempting to bind herself to Cytherea forever, as she was unable to do with Ambrose, she asks, "Now will you promise to live with me always, and always be taken care of, and never deserted?" Here, Miss Aldclyffe shifts her relation to Cytherea from lover to mother, another eroticized dynamic. As T. R. Wright points out in *Hardy and the Erotic*, "Much is made of the emphasis on Miss Aldclyffe's motherliness, as if this precluded erotic attraction. . . . But in Freudian terms it is precisely to the pre-oedipal stage of erotic attraction to the mother to which lesbianism reverts" (39-40). We see Wright's claim supported in Miss Aldclyffe's concluding statement: "Put your hair round your mamma's neck and give me one good long kiss, and I won't talk any more in that way about your lover" (89). Although she uses the word



"lover" in reference to Springrove, this choice of diction, along with her request that Cytherea use their bodies—hair, neck, and lips—to bind them both physically and figuratively, shows that Miss Aldclyffe's desire for her new companion has simply been renamed rather than discarded. In addition, Miss Aldclyffe's desire to act as Cytherea's mother suggests she is caught up in a fantasy in which her relationship with Ambrose was consummated, with Cytherea as the offspring of their union. This maternal approach, coupled as it is with another offer of employment, appears to represent a more acceptable form of employer-employee relationship that models itself on older forms of paternalism in the workplace. Miss Aldclyffe's proposal of maternalism suggests she will uphold her obligations of reciprocity within the newly formed mistress-companion contract. The oddly passive grammar in this scene highlights Cytherea's submissive role but also emphasizes that it is the *companion* who will "always be taken care of" and, for a time, Miss Aldclyffe fulfills this promise. However, the imbalances of power in familial relations overlay a new imbalance of power on the employment relationship. This move sets up Miss Aldclyffe's later manipulations when she will perform the role of matchmaking mother, selfishly destroying Cytherea's relationship with Springrove and strong-arming her companion into marrying her son as the fulfillment of her own displaced desires.

Although Cytherea initially believes the pair are "woman and woman only," it quickly becomes clear that Miss Aldclyffe, as the socially superior mistress of the estate in which they lie, is in full control. Miss Aldclyffe's power position in the episode allows her temporarily to pose as Cytherea's equal just as it simultaneously gives her license to take the physical liberties with Cytherea that she does; in turn, Cytherea's eventual realization that she remains the vulnerable dependent in this situation leads her to resist Miss Aldclyffe's erotic advances. Albeit still sympathetic to her mistress's needs, Cytherea is distraught by Miss Aldclyffe's behavior: "This vehement imperious affection was in one sense soothing, but yet it was not of the kind that Cytherea's instincts desired. Though it was generous, it seemed somewhat too rank, sensuous, and capricious for endurance" (86). Cytherea seems to sense here that Miss Aldclyffe's desirous advances are not simply a product of the mistress's affection for herself but, as in transference, a "readiness toward emotion originated elsewhere" (Freud,

"Transference" 382). The kind of relationship Miss Aldclyffe is offering is against Cytherea's "instincts," I argue, not because she rejects same sex affection but because she and Miss Aldclyffe are not equals. This affection is "imperious," forced upon her by a woman who has power over her. In this sense, Hardy's choice of the word "rank" is of particular interest as we might read it in terms of vigor, foulness, and status. Ultimately, Cytherea determines that she will offer this mistress her sympathy, but she is unwilling to reciprocate the erotic desire Miss Aldclyffe displays. This refusal of Miss Aldclyffe's libidinal energies will force the mistress to reroute her desires later in the novel to her companion's detriment.<sup>6</sup>

Fifteen years later, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy establishes a similar mistress-companion dynamic when Lucetta Templeman hires Elizabeth-Jane as her companion. In this novel, however, the unwieldy desire problematized by the employment relationship initially moves in the opposite direction: from companion to mistress. When she meets Lucetta in the Casterbridge graveyard, Elizabeth-Jane is immediately captivated by the physical and, she assumes, emotional likeness between them. As she wonders at how "the personage was in mourning like herself, was about her age and size, and might have been her wraith or double, but for the fact that it was a lady much more beautifully dressed than she," Elizabeth-Jane feels an instantaneous connection with this stranger (204-5). Again, for Hardy, the basis of likeness breeds both sympathy and erotic desire: Elizabeth-Jane's "eyes were arrested by the artistic perfection of the lady's appearance. . . .she allowed herself the pleasure of feeling fascinated. . . . She returned homeward, musing on what she had seen, as she might have mused on a rainbow or the Northern Lights, a rare butterfly or a cameo" (205). Hardy depicts Elizabeth-Jane as a captivated lover first encountering a beloved; she delights in the visual and affective "pleasure" she experiences in gazing upon this woman, so like herself.

Throughout his writings, Freud notes that a patient's transference most often places the analyst in the role of father or mother. Elizabeth-Jane goes to the cemetery to visit her mother's grave and finds a woman there who not only physically resembles herself (and therefore, we might imagine, her mother as well) but one who also appears to be in the same emotional state ("in mourning"). Elizabeth-Jane's awe and the uplifted

state she experiences as she departs suggest that Hardy's heroine has transferred her desires and pain for her late mother onto this "wraith or double." In *Lucetta*, Elizabeth-Jane sees not only a "double" for herself—for her own longing—but also a dazzling reincarnation of her mother. The future companion's sympathetic and erotic investment in *Lucetta* is intense from the very beginning, and later, when distressed under Henchard's ill-treatment, the only way Elizabeth-Jane can endure it is to envision the lady from the graveyard and hope to see her again, just as a child seeks her mother for comfort.

As Elizabeth-Jane returns to the churchyard the following day in search of the anonymous, mesmerizing woman—for where else should she seek the figure of her maternal desire—this time the lady confronts her, and the narrator informs us that "Elizabeth looked up at her as if inquiring to herself whether there should be confidence. The lady's manner was so desirous, so anxious, that the girl decided there should be confidence" (207). Elizabeth-Jane's easy sympathy with and for this stranger leads her to confide her troubles to the lady, who in turn introduces herself as *Lucetta Templeman* and invites Elizabeth-Jane to come live with her as companion. *Lucetta*, too, betrays some need for company and compassion when she admits, "My house is so hollow and dismal that I want some living thing there" (214-15). From this point, Elizabeth-Jane is consumed by her interest in *Lucetta*: "her mind dwelt upon nothing else but the stranger." Unable to wait until the day she is scheduled to assume her companion position, Elizabeth-Jane goes, "almost with a lover's feeling" (210), to High Place Hall to enjoy "standing under the opposite archway merely to think that the charming lady was inside the confronting walls, and to wonder what she was doing" (210-11). Elizabeth-Jane's fantasizing about her future mistress here foreshadows the narrative work the combination of her sympathy and desire for *Lucetta* will later accomplish.

In both novels, homoeroticism in the mistress-companion dynamic, activated by likeness and fueled by sympathy and transference, becomes a sub-text that must be dealt with both through the characters' actions and, especially in the case of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, through the narrative structure itself. For Hardy, Miss Aldclyffe's desire for her companion and Elizabeth-Jane's desire for her mistress are complicated by the employment relationship. In each text, this desire is translated



into a heterosexual liaison that is either orchestrated (Miss Aldclyffe) or condoned (Elizabeth-Jane) by the character whose transference-love cannot thrive in the unequal power dynamics that define the employment liaison.

### III. Rerouting Homoerotic Desire into Heterosexual Marriage

In *Companions Without Vows*, Rizzo articulates how the mistress-companion relationship mirrors that of husband and wife: "The autonomous mistress had the same powers over her companion that the husband had over his wife. She could choose either to exercise those powers autocratically, as she had probably seen her father and husband do, or to work out an equitable arrangement such as she herself would have liked to experience in her dealings with men" (1-2). Due to cultural conceptions of gender as well as economic considerations regarding property rights, there were definitive inequalities of power within the Victorian marriage that often led to a hindrance of reciprocity. Empowered by her role as employer, the mistress could treat her companion as she pleased; consequently, the relationship could begin to echo the problematic power dynamics of the heterosexual marriage. In this arrangement, the "friendship" between women meant to offer relief from inequitable relationships with men offered an outlet for the mistress alone. Thus, marriage and the mistress-companion relationship are alike in that both represent dynamics in which the reciprocity of sympathy and consideration is necessary to the well-being of both parties, and yet definitive inequalities in power hinder that reciprocity.

Throughout *Desperate Remedies* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy repeatedly highlights parallels between marital and employment relations. For example, when Cytherea receives Miss Aldclyffe's initial response to her advertisement, the letter from her future mistress arrives simultaneously with a love letter from Springrove; as Cytherea contemplates them both together, Hardy emphasizes the similarity between the roles of companion and wife. In addition, as Jane Thomas notes, "Because of Springrove's secret engagement to Adelaide Hinton, Cytherea is forced to seek empowerment through employment rather than marriage. However, even at this level her only option remains one of genteel domestic labour—the achievement of the means of subsistence (and substantiation) by servicing the desires of someone more powerful



than herself" (60). Hardy also consistently juxtaposes the marketplace and the details of specific employer-employee relationships with discussions of marriage in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. If marriage is analogous to the mistress-companion employment relationship in Hardy's novels, marriage can also become a substitute for it. Miss Aldclyffe's mobile libidinal desires for her companion, her companion's late father, and her son Aeneas Manston lead her to use her position to destroy Cytherea's previously established courtship plot with Springrove in order to create a new one. With very little regard for her companion's feelings, Miss Aldclyffe works to satiate her needs by producing a marriage between Manston and Cytherea. Lucetta uses the authority of her position as mistress to steal Donald Farfrae from Elizabeth-Jane, who in turn accepts this match as a substitute for her own desire for her mistress. In both novels, the eroticism rooted in the mistress-companion dyad is detoured into a heterosexual marriage that represents a surrogate for the unruly desire problematized by the unequal dynamics of the employment contract.

The sequence of emotional responses and ambivalence manifest in Miss Aldclyffe's vexed relationship with Cytherea bears a striking resemblance to Freud's description of the erratic nature of transference. Freud writes, "In the first place there is the development of an affectionate inclination. . . . Secondly, there are the hostile instead of tender impulses. The hostile feelings generally appear later than the affectionate impulses or succeed them. When they occur simultaneously they exemplify the ambivalence of emotions which exist in most of the intimate relations between all persons" ("Transference" 383). While the transference of her emotions for Ambrose onto Cytherea causes Miss Aldclyffe to experience an intense desire for her companion, it also produces hostile reactions in the mistress as she must find some way of dealing with the return of her repressed passion and pain. In her campaign to marry Cytherea to Manston, Miss Aldclyffe, like Freud's famous patient Dora, crafts a "new edition or facsimile of the tendencies and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious" through transference. For Miss Aldclyffe, as for Dora and so many other psychoanalytic patients, "a whole series of psychological experiences are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person . . . at the present moment" (*Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* 106).

Through her compulsion to repeat and revise her own past with Ambrose via Cytherea and Manston, Miss Aldclyffe seeks mastery and closure.<sup>7</sup>

Miss Aldclyffe's quest to satisfy these impulses does not meet with any objections from her son. Manston is happy to pursue Cytherea as a second wife after the alleged death of his first; he is attracted to her from their earliest encounter.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Manston's desire for his mother's companion is so intense that he urges his mother to manipulate her position as employer of both Springrove's father and Cytherea by blackmailing each of them to ensure the success of his suit. As Manston implies that he will reveal the disgraceful secret of his parentage to the community if she fails to help him, Miss Aldclyffe laments, "How can you turn upon me so when I schemed to get you here — schemed that you might win her till I found you were married" (195). Here, and throughout the rest of the novel, Miss Aldclyffe reiterates that the marriage in question was her own idea and that she in fact brought her son to Knapwater as her steward with the express purpose of marrying him to Cytherea. She wants control over the matter and so stakes her prior claim in repeated efforts to convince Manston to follow her lead.

Just as Miss Aldclyffe blackmails Springrove's father with threats to fire him if he should fail to assist in their cause, she also uses her business relationship with Cytherea as leverage to mislead Springrove himself. Miss Aldclyffe capitalizes on the fact that the exchange of confidences is to be expected between a mistress and her companion when she tells him, "I know Miss Graye particularly well, and her state of mind with regard to this matter" (205). She maintains that she knows Cytherea's mind and thus can attest that her companion no longer has feelings for him but has fallen in love with Manston. Her scheme is successful, as we see in Springrove's reflection that "Miss Aldclyffe had shown herself desperately concerned in the whole matter. . . . Taken in connection with her apparent interest in, if not love for, Cytherea, her eagerness, too, could only be accounted for on the ground that Cytherea indeed loved the steward" (211). Ignorant of the true connection between Miss Aldclyffe and Manston, Springrove cannot see beyond the strong attachment he expects exists between the mistress and her companion. For Hardy, this abuse of power has far-reaching implications. As Ian Ousby asserts, "the episode becomes an essay on

the abuse of power by Miss Aldclyffe and her kind. . . . Hardy's narrative stresses that Knapwater is the administrative centre of the working community, and so creates a perspective that makes Miss Aldclyffe's grand passion seem mere social irresponsibility" (221-2). Miss Aldclyffe is a landowner and thus employs many of the area's inhabitants; her abuse of this power in her dealings with the Springrove men in particular exemplifies how Hardy employs the mistress-companion relationship to critique larger employment dynamics.

Miss Aldclyffe's approach with Cytherea likewise relies upon expectations attributed to the mistress-companion relationship. When her brother Owen falls ill, Cytherea is helpless to offer him any real support and, seeing an opportunity, Miss Aldclyffe takes advantage of Cytherea's dependence upon her: "Think how you might benefit your sick brother if you were Mrs. Manston. You will please me *very much* by giving him some encouragement. You understand me, dear? . . . On your promising that you will accept him some time this year, I will take especial care of your brother. You are listening, Cytherea?" (225). Although her initial presentation of the ultimatum is somewhat subtle, the mistress repeatedly pauses to ensure that Cytherea understands her meaning. Unable to do anything to aid her brother on her own, Cytherea is now reliant on Miss Aldclyffe for her dying brother's needs as well as her own. Later, finding herself "terrified, driven into a corner, panting and fluttering about for some loophole of escape," Cytherea goes to Miss Aldclyffe for comfort and advice, expecting the reciprocation of the sympathy it has been her duty to provide for her mistress (228). However, the mistress betrays her companion again. Abusing not only Cytherea's physical but her emotional dependence upon her, the mistress reproaches her: "Why do you selfishly bar the clear, honourable, and only sisterly path which leads out of this difficulty? I cannot, on my conscience, countenance you: no, I cannot" (228). In a moment of despicable irony, Miss Aldclyffe accuses her companion of selfish and dishonorable obstinacy, twisting the situation to convince Cytherea it is she who is acting cruelly. In this "crisis," the companion "longed, till her soul seemed nigh to bursting, for her lost mother's return to earth, but for one minute, that she might have tender counsel to guide her through this, her great difficulty" (232). This moment recalls the bedroom scene in which Miss Aldclyffe promises to be like a "mamma" to Cytherea.



This is the role the mistress should be enacting according to Victorian ideologies discussed earlier, and the role Hardy seems to believe she would be enacting if it weren't for the disruption of the employment relationship and the way it degrades the female bond. Miss Aldclyffe's exploitation of her companion's dependency in these scenes represents another flagrant betrayal of her obligations as employer, and with no formal regulations far-reaching enough to protect her, Cytherea is totally at the mercy of her mistress's manipulative machinations.

As a "hemmed in and distressed" Cytherea resolves to marry Manston, Hardy is careful to remind the reader of Miss Aldclyffe's underlying motive for bringing the couple together. The narrator describes her preparations for the wedding: "Miss Aldclyffe had arranged that Cytherea should be married from Knapwater House. . . . The capricious old maid had latterly taken to the contemplation of the wedding with even greater warmth than had at first inspired her, and appeared determined to do everything in her power, consistent with dignity, to render the adjuncts of the ceremony pleasing and complete" (243). Mrs. Aldclyffe's determination to orchestrate the wedding herself reflects her feelings of possession of and desire for Cytherea (and her father) being actively relocated onto Cytherea's relationship with Manston. By insisting that Cytherea be "given away" from her home and in accordance with her own plans, Miss Aldclyffe—for a time, successfully—diverts her repressed trauma.

As for the companion, Hardy emphasizes that it is her position as dependent employee that has caused all of her grief:

She considered; in the first place she was a homeless dependent; and what did practical wisdom tell her to do under such desperate circumstances? To provide herself with some place of refuge from poverty, and with means to aid her brother Owen. This was to be Mr. Manston's wife. She did not love him. But what was love without a home? Misery. What was a home without love? Alas, not much; but still a kind of home. (232)

The repetition of "home" in Cytherea's lament emphasizes the companion's defenseless position. Knapwater House is not her own; employees residing within their employer's domestic space have no



home of their own, and the regulations of the public world cannot reach them. Cytherea's status as a companion lies at the root of her distress as it determines her assessment of her position as well as Miss Aldclyffe and Manston's perceptions of what can be done to her. Marrying Manston becomes more or less a direct order—one of the duties Cytherea's mistress expects her companion to fulfill. Distracted and consumed by the reemergence of her own troubled passions, as well as frustrated by Cytherea's rejection of her physical advances, Miss Aldclyffe disregards her responsibilities as employer—her ethical obligation to provide her employee with reciprocal protection, consideration, and sympathy. Miss Aldclyffe is driven instead to manage her companion as a pawn for satisfying her own libidinal drives, and her power in the employment dynamic invests her with the means to manipulate her dependent, helpless employee in this way. Hardy thus explores how the mistress-companion relationship tests the limits of slavery versus employment. Natural human rights are threatened as the boundaries of consent and reasonable expectation are blurred. When Miss Aldclyffe corners Cytherea into marrying her son, she not only manipulates her authority as employer but capitalizes on her companion's emotional and economic dependence as well. Hardy represents a mistress's ability to take control of her companion's body, name, and identity, traversing any ethical boundary of consent. There is no recourse for the dependent companion who is expected to be sympathetic to her mistress's wishes.

With *Desperate Remedies*, Hardy revises the tradition of the manipulative companion who schemes to land a husband found in the fiction of Thackeray, Dickens, and others. In a reversal of the common plot in which the companion is viewed as an insidious threat to the eligible bachelors of her mistress's household, Cytherea does not maneuver within her relationship with Miss Aldclyffe in order to marry and retire from the labor market; instead, her employer forces a husband upon her. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the development of transference in the mistress-companion dynamic also catalyzes a redirection of homoerotic desire into heterosexual marriage, but in Hardy's later novel it is the mistress who takes a husband. Elizabeth-Jane's erotic investment in her mistress as a "new edition or facsimile" of her longing for her late mother in turn creates a kind of counter-transference in

Lucetta, who becomes just as invested in their relationship as Elizabeth-Jane. By pursuing Elizabeth-Jane's suitor, Donald Farfrae, Lucetta reroutes this reciprocal desire and attachment into marriage. Elizabeth-Jane condones this surrogate and not only participates in it but, as a kind of stand-in for Hardy himself, participates in authoring it as well.

When Lucetta meets Farfrae, her attraction to Elizabeth-Jane's love interest is both immediate and immediately manipulative, though perhaps not intentionally malign. As she tells her guest to take a seat because she is expecting her companion back "directly," the narrator informs us: "Now this was not strictly true; but that something about the young man—that hyperborean crispness, stridency, and charm, . . . made his unexpected presence here attractive to Lucetta." Lucetta lies to keep Farfrae present with seemingly little thought for her companion. What the narrative does not make explicit is the possibility that Lucetta instantly desires Farfrae because of his connection to Elizabeth-Jane; however, the fact that she encounters him first and foremost as her companion's suitor colors her perception of the other qualities listed, suggesting this fact also contributes to her reaction. As Farfrae responds—"He hesitated, looked at the chair, thought there was no danger in it (though there was), and sat down"—there is a strong sense of foreshadowing (229). In addition to the parenthetical aside, Hardy's language—the emphasis placed on Farfrae's consideration of the chair and the tone of finality in "and sat down"—indicates that this moment is a turning point in the relationships of the novel's four central characters: Lucetta, Elizabeth-Jane, Farfrae, and Michael Henchard. The new acquaintances' first meeting is full of significant, somewhat ominous comments like these. Hardy interweaves Lucetta and Farfrae's dialogue with the narrator's dramatic assessment of the alternative plot they are presently setting in motion—a replacement courtship plot that will serve as a detour for the mistress's and companion's desires for one another. For example, the narrator reveals that, as Farfrae is ushered out of High-Place Hall, "it [had] entirely escaped him that he had called to see Elizabeth" (235). His meeting with Lucetta has set him on a new trajectory, and Farfrae is unable even to remember the original story. When the narrator ultimately summarizes the pair's attraction with the simple statement "Thus the two," he seems to gesture to a sense of inevitability in this episode. Each is captivated by the other but, "Why



was this? They could not have told" (235). In this novel, then, it is not so much the characters themselves that displace the problematic homoeroticism of the female employment bond but some manifestation of fate that is actually the narrative structure itself. In other words, Farfrae does not become Lucetta's rather than Elizabeth-Jane's suitor by any active scheming by companion or mistress. It is a displacement that simply occurs—"thus the two"—although Elizabeth-Jane will later accept the new relationship, relocating her own desire for Lucetta (and Farfrae) onto this liaison.

On the surface, Lucetta appears a cruel, manipulative mistress who is unable or unwilling to reciprocate the sympathy and consideration her companion affords her. When Elizabeth-Jane returns home, "sweetly unconscious of the turn in the tide, Lucetta went up to her, and said quite sincerely—'I'm so glad you've come. You'll live with me a long time, won't you?'" (236). Hardy is ambiguous as to the mistress's motives here; it is unclear if Lucetta's object in retaining her companion arises out of a true attachment to her or a wish to keep Elizabeth-Jane as an initial excuse for Farfrae's visits. However, an alternative subtext that emerges in Lucetta's "sincerely" fervent desire for her companion to remain, even in the face of losing her lover to her mistress, is the possibility of a kind of counter-transference. Lucetta's own unconscious presumptions and fantasies in response to Elizabeth-Jane's could lead her to desire Farfrae as an affiliated substitute for the companion but also as a kind of replacement father figure for Elizabeth-Jane. In this sense, if Lucetta takes Farfrae as a more suitable erotic replacement for her companion, she also acts to create an alternative family scene in which she may in fact serve as the replacement mother Elizabeth-Jane craves. This scenario, then, recalls not only the oedipal drama played out in *Desperate Remedies*; it also reflects Elizabeth-Jane's own original attraction to Lucetta as a double for her late mother. In this way, we might view *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as Hardy's attempt to offer a kind of cure to the ills represented in *Desperate Remedies*. Using the power of her mistress position more magnanimously, Lucetta endeavors to fulfill her own transference desires as well as those of her companion.

As Farfrae becomes a frequent visitor at High-Place, it does not take Elizabeth-Jane long to detect the attraction between her mistress and her former suitor. When Farfrae comes, and treats Elizabeth-Jane as if he



does not know her, the narrator notes that "Susan Henchard's daughter bore up against the frosty ache of the treatment, as she had borne up under worse things, and contrived as soon as possible to get out of the inharmonious room without being missed" (246). Rather than mourn or fight against the loss of Farfrae, Elizabeth-Jane appears to concede him to Lucetta without hesitation and even initially removes herself from the courtship scene to make room for the relationship to blossom. Hardy's use of the phrase "Susan Henchard's daughter" also highlights the companion's transference and the subtle familial dynamic being established by the narrative here. Rather than turn away from her mistress in hurt or envy, Elizabeth-Jane becomes more fixated on Lucetta, suggesting that she views, and is willing to accept, the couple's relationship as a replacement for her own feelings for each of them.

As in Eve Sedgwick's formulation of the male homosocial triangle, Lucetta's new interest in Farfrae seems to solidify the two women's relationship and the reciprocal desire between them, rather than hinder it. In particular, the courtship between Lucetta and Farfrae serves to strengthen Elizabeth-Jane's ability to fulfill her duties as companion. First, Elizabeth-Jane begins to focus her attention even more intently on her mistress in these scenes, reading Lucetta with the expert eyes of one who can fully sympathize with the other woman's emotions, having felt them for the same man herself. Because "the recounter with Farfrae and his bearing towards Lucetta had made the reflective Elizabeth more observant of her brilliant and amiable companion," we find that "when her eyes met Lucetta's as the latter was going out, she somehow knew that Miss Templeman was nourishing a hope of seeing the attractive Scotchman. The fact was printed large all over Lucetta's cheeks and eyes to anyone who could read her as Elizabeth-Jane was beginning to do" (242). Elizabeth-Jane adroitly reads and interprets her employer, experiencing a true "fellow feeling" as she does so.

Second, Hardy represents Elizabeth-Jane's chaperoning of the romantic exchanges between Lucetta and Farfrae not as passive surveillance but as an active, participatory undertaking. The companion experiences her attachment to both parties vicariously through the lovers' interactions and figuratively authors their courtship rituals. In an extension of the companion's role as chaperone, Hardy grants Elizabeth-

Jane the ability to observe even those moments between the couple that do not occur in her presence. In one striking scene:

A seer's spirit took possession of Elizabeth, impelling her to sit down by the fire and divine events so surely from data already her own that they could be held as witnessed. She followed Lucetta thus mentally—saw her encounter Donald somewhere as if by chance—saw him wear his special look when meeting women, with an added intensity because this one was Lucetta. She depicted his impassioned manner; beheld the indecision of both between their loathness to separate and their desire not to be observed; depicted their shaking of hands; how they probably parted with frigidity in their general contour and movements, only in the smaller features showing the spark of passion, thus invisible to all but themselves. (243)

The companion can "mentally" observe Lucetta's rendezvous with Farfrae because of the careful scrutiny of her mistress she has exercised to this point in the novel and because she once experienced Farfrae's amorous advances herself; the "data" is "already her own." Hardy emphasizes Elizabeth-Jane's ability to be present in the couple's exchanges even in absence through repetition and word play: the companion "witnessed," "beheld," "saw," and is a "seer" in multiple senses. More significant, Hardy also invests his companion with the power to "depict." In effect, the companion writes the scene, transforming a private moment taking place outside of the principal narrative action into an event to be experienced by the companion and reader alike. As she role-plays the parts of both her former lover and the site of her current homoerotic longing while they commune elsewhere without her, her history with Farfrae and her present intimacy with Lucetta suggest that Elizabeth-Jane imagines herself as a substitute for either one. Envisioning the exchange as if she were not only present but a part of the scene, Elizabeth-Jane seems to condone the burgeoning relationship as a suitable surrogate for her own investments in each figure. "Impelled" by her duty as chaperone and by her own investment in each of the parties, the companion's "depict[ion]" is not embittered but fascinated and full of a subdued "passion" that seems to indicate her

full participation in the interaction between the new couple. As in *Desperate Remedies*, the companion loses control of her own action in the narrative due to the desire-driven manipulations of her more powerful mistress; however, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Elizabeth-Jane circumvents her dependent, powerless position within the narrative by becoming an actor in the narration itself.

Shortly thereafter, when Henchard, Farfrae, Lucetta, and Elizabeth-Jane are gathered for dinner at High Place Hall, Hardy uses biblical imagery to further elucidate the companion's relationship to the proxy liaison between Lucetta and Farfrae. Henchard and Farfrae "sat stiffly side by side at the darkening table, like some Tuscan painting of the two disciples supping at Emmaus. Lucetta, forming the third and haloed figure, was opposite them; Elizabeth-Jane, being out of the game, and out of the group, could observe all from afar, like the evangelist who had to write it down" (254). Hardy portrays the two men as disciples, basking in the "haloed" light of Lucetta as the eroticized Christ figure and common object of desire. Elizabeth-Jane is "out of the group," yet only in the sense that she is again the privileged observer. Indeed, Hardy grants the companion the status of author here.<sup>9</sup> As the "evangelist," Elizabeth-Jane is once again in an authoritative "depicting" role, figuratively orchestrating and recording the heterosexual dynamics between those with whom she herself has intense erotic and/or sympathetic attachments. Unlike Miss Aldclyffe's, Elizabeth-Jane's transference-love does not turn hostile; instead, she resembles what Freud describes when he writes that "some women understand how to sublimate the transference, how to modify it until it attains a kind of fitness for existence" ("Transference" 382). In substitution, Elizabeth-Jane appears to find a way to "modify" her expectations in a way that she is willing to accept as an outlet for her desires.

What of Lucetta's responsibility as a mistress to reciprocate the sympathy and consideration Elizabeth-Jane provides for her? After all, in stealing Farfrae, Lucetta not only robs Elizabeth-Jane of the man she loves, she also appropriates her only chance of retiring from the labor market into marriage and motherhood. Throughout the novel, Hardy persists in mystifying the reader's understanding of both the extent to which Lucetta's actions are a betrayal of her companion and the intentionality behind her actions. As early as Farfrae's second visit,



when Farfrae ignores Elizabeth-Jane and focuses all of his attention on her mistress, Lucetta's actions indicate that she is aware of this change and experiences some degree of remorse for it: "Lucetta had persisted in dragging [Elizabeth-Jane] into the circle; but she had remained like an awkward third point which that circle would not touch" (246). Lucetta's persistence simultaneously suggests that she wants to compensate for stealing Farfrae by including Elizabeth-Jane but also that she clearly views her companion as an important part of this courtship. However, the companion cannot literally participate—she cannot be an explicit "third point" in a heterosexual coupling. While Elizabeth-Jane's outsider status allows her the empowered stance of authorship already discussed, this passage also reads like a warning that Lucetta and Farfrae's relationship may not succeed as a suitable surrogate for the mistress and companion's complex libidinal investments.

After she and Farfrae are secretly married outside of Casterbridge, Lucetta asserts that she continues to view Elizabeth-Jane as an integral part of the new household she has constructed. She asks her husband, "Donald, you don't mind her living on with me just the same as before? She is so quiet and unassuming . . . I am sure she would like to. Besides, poor thing, she has no other home" (287). Again, Lucetta's desire to include Elizabeth-Jane indicates that she views her marriage to Farfrae as a kind of solidification or surrogate for the mistress and companion's reciprocal investments just as her confidence that Elizabeth-Jane should desire to remain suggests the belief that her companion is indeed an intentional and amenable part of this heterosexual relationship. Yet, Hardy has Lucetta subtly reveal her power as mistress in this statement: Elizabeth-Jane, she believes, has little choice, "she has no other home." Like Cytherea before her, Elizabeth-Jane appears to have no option but to accept her mistress's redirection of their desires and to participate in the familial scene Lucetta has created. When Lucetta does reveal her marriage to Elizabeth-Jane, the companion "cork[s] up the turmoil of her feeling with grand control" (290). Her "turmoil" has many potential and contradictory causes: her lingering feelings for Farfrae, her passionate distaste for impropriety (the "proper" thing for Lucetta to have done would have been to marry Henchard), her loss of Lucetta, and perhaps, her disappointment at not having witnessed the marriage as a way of gratifying her displaced homoerotic and heterosexual desires. Unlike

Lucetta, who cannot imagine the possibility of her departure, Elizabeth-Jane feels that once this relocation of her desires has been accomplished she can no longer remain as Lucetta's companion. She must step aside, and step *aside* is exactly what Elizabeth-Jane does. Although she leaves High Place Hall, she only moves as far as across the street, taking an apartment from which she can watch Lucetta and Farfrae from her window. Thus, just as in the "seer" scene in which she partakes in Lucetta and Farfrae's relationship from afar, Elizabeth-Jane remains a now passive participant in the new marriage.

#### IV. "Nobody can enter into another's nature truly"

Ultimately, both Miss Aldclyffe and Lucetta Farfrae die, while Hardy's companions are reunited in marriage with their original love interests. With the annihilation of each mistress figure, Hardy's point seems to be that the only recourse to the social ills his novels explore is to do away with the employment liaison altogether, returning narrative focus to the family. However, as the unwieldy oedipal and marital dynamics that pervade each text suggest, this model also fails to provide the reciprocal sympathy Victorians sought in their relationships. Hardy implies that the damage done by the late employers cannot be wholly undone—the "happy" denouements of Cytherea and Elizabeth-Jane are tainted by what came before. The only route to the second marriages is through the reassertion of the female bond, and the final heterosexual pairings that end each novel merely repeat what occurred in the first transference but in another direction.

In *Desperate Remedies*, when Cytherea visits Miss Aldclyffe as she lies upon her deathbed, she still manages to sympathize with her former mistress despite everything she has suffered. Miss Aldclyffe exclaims, "Cytherea—O Cytherea, can you forgive me!" and the two women embrace while "tears streamed down from Miss Aldclyffe's eyes, and mingled with those of her young companion, who could not restrain hers for sympathy" (396). As their tears blend in a manner that is at once highly sentimental and erotic, Hardy portrays a moment of union between the two women. They are finally "woman and woman only"; with the employment relation disbanded and no man to stand between them, Miss Aldclyffe appears at last to see Cytherea for who she is: a loyal and sympathetic friend. When Cytherea and Springrove marry,

moving to Miss Aldclyffe's Knapwater House (left to Cytherea in her will), the Hardyian chorus describes them as "beautiful to see," and the couple seems content. However, critics have pointed out that the scene that closes the novel—in which Cytherea and Springrove row on the lake and try to reproduce their first kiss—reveals the irrevocable damage Miss Aldclyffe's scheming has done to their relationship. The scene recalls Cytherea's walks on the lake's banks with her mistress, and the couple inhabits Miss Aldclyffe's house, the same grounds upon which she married Manston. They have lost their innocence, and rather than work to create new memories, they can only struggle to recapture the passion they once had. They are bound in a static repetition of the past, unable to move forward with their relationship.

While the reunion between Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is not as dramatic as Miss Aldclyffe and Cytherea's, it is worth noting that Elizabeth-Jane also holds no grudges. Instead, she rushes, full of sympathy for Lucetta's distress, to comfort her when she learns of the skimmington ride. Elizabeth-Jane visits Lucetta constantly throughout her illness, mourns her loss intensely, and even after her death the former companion's "mind ran most strongly on Lucetta" and "she would gladly have talked of Lucetta" (365, 373). Not long after Lucetta's untimely demise, Farfrae recommences his courtship with Elizabeth-Jane. Although the pair is married and Elizabeth-Jane "found herself in a latitude of calm weather, kindly and grateful in itself," the famous ending of the novel resembles that of *Desperate Remedies* in that Hardy emphasizes things are not and never can be the same for the couple (410). The narrator remarks that Elizabeth-Jane's "experience had been of a kind to teach her, rightly or wrongly, that the doubtful honor of a brief transit through a sorry world hardly called for effusiveness, even when the path was suddenly irradiated at some half-way point by daybeams rich as hers." Elizabeth-Jane cannot fully enjoy her new status as "Mrs. Donald Farfrae"; her past relationship with Lucetta and its outcomes have taught her that "happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain" (411). Nevertheless, while the literal outcome of her marriage is a reunion with Farfrae, her new status also ultimately solidifies her relationship with Lucetta. These women, mistress and companion, have exchanged this man between them, and the fact that Elizabeth-Jane is now the wife of Lucetta's former husband



can be read as a move to bond herself eternally not only to Farfrae but to Lucetta as well.

By representing the mistresses' flagrant abuse of the power they possess over their dependent companions, Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* show how even culturally idealized bonds between women are not free from the baser influences of the public sphere when the employment dynamic intrudes to cause an imbalance in erotic energy, resulting in a rupture of sympathetic reciprocity. Under the duress of her mistress's campaign to marry her to Manston, Cytherea laments: "Nobody can enter into another's nature truly, that's what is so grievous" (252). Cytherea asserts that true sympathy cannot exist and, throughout these two novels, Hardy implies the same: in a world where economic concerns and power structures intrude everywhere, sympathy and ethical codes of reciprocity cannot thrive. Both sets of marriages, accomplished because of and through transference, attempt to solve this problem but fail to do so in a satisfying way. Hardy's exploration of what happens to the affective bond between women when the employment relation is imposed upon it ultimately has no resolution — just as the questions he raises about employment relations generally remain unanswered. The flimsy, patently unconvincing and problematic marriages that close these two novels are Hardy's "desperate remedy" to a problem for which he, and modernity, have no adequate answer.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more background on the companion, see my work in *Dickens Studies Annual* (41) and *The Psychology of the Human-Animal Bond*.

<sup>2</sup> Situated as he is near the end of the nineteenth century, Hardy exhibits a unique awareness concerning his companion characters and what they reveal about his culture's concerns and anxieties, but he also notably departs from the tradition of his predecessors in literary representations of the mistress-companion relationship. While Thackeray, Dickens, Braddon, Collins, and others explored the possibilities for darker, manipulative forms of sympathy within the mistress-companion dyad, their fiction generally explores the exploitation of sympathy by the *companion* figure. Thackeray's *Becky Sharp*, Dickens's *Rosa Dartle*, Braddon's *Phoebe Marks*, and Collins's *Madame Pratolungo* are key

examples of this phenomenon. Conversely, Hardy is interested in the exploitation of the companion at the hands of the employer.

<sup>3</sup> Lillian Faderman's work establishes that these erotic bonds between women were not born in the Victorian era, but stretch back throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries—even to the Renaissance. "These romantic friendships," Faderman writes, "were love relationships in every sense except perhaps the genital, . . . thus they might kiss, fondle each other, sleep together, utter expressions of overwhelming love and promises of eternal faithfulness, and yet see their passions as nothing more than effusions of the spirit" (16).

<sup>4</sup> Cytherea's father, Ambrose Graye, and Mrs. Cytherea Aldclyffe had once been very much in love, but they were separated by Miss Aldclyffe's secret past and never saw one another again. Ambrose went on to marry another woman whom he did not care for and named his only daughter after his lost love.

<sup>5</sup> We later learn that the young Miss Aldclyffe had to abandon her relationship with Ambrose because she had a previous affair with a cousin, which resulted in the birth of her only child, Aeneas Manston. Miss Aldclyffe is both clearly jaded toward men as well as poignantly disappointed to learn that Cytherea's heart is not free: "I thought I had at last found an artless woman who had not been sullied by a man's lips, and who had not practiced or been practiced upon by the arts which ruin all the truth and sweetness and goodness in us. . . . You are as bad as I—we are all alike; and I—an old fool—have been sipping at your mouth as if it were honey, because I fancied no wasting lover knew the spot. But a minute ago, and you seemed to me like a fresh spring meadow—now you seem a dusty highway" (86). The knowledge that Cytherea's lips have been "sullied" tempers Miss Aldclyffe's desire as it simultaneously strengthens her sense of identification with the girl: "You are as bad as I."

<sup>6</sup> There has been much critical debate regarding this bedroom scene. For example, Richard H. Taylor argues that "it is not clear whether Hardy realized that he was portraying an apparently Lesbian attachment; on the whole it seems likely that he did not understand the full implications of his narrative" (15), while A. Aziz Bulaila asserts that "one cannot but suspect that Hardy's exploration of the lesbian scenes is consciously

done" (66). For Pamela Jekel, "This is too complex a human state to be simply described (and thus set aside) as lesbianism. The whole passage echoes with suggestions of maternalism, nostalgia for Aldclyffe's lost love, her poignant yearning for her own youth, her loneliness" (34). Rosemarie Morgan and Joe Fisher discuss contemporary reactions—or rather, the lack thereof—to the sensual scene. Morgan suggests that the eroticism in the bedroom episode "the women could do with impunity since no male features in these embraces to give them sexual definition. Regarded as the emotional release of maternal or filial wells of feeling they were entirely innocuous; not a single reviewer discerned sensuality or erotic passion" (6). Fisher notes that, had "Tinsley (not a notably fastidious publisher; only Newby and Reynolds had worse reputations), the critics and the circulating librarians" realized the potential meaning behind the scene, "Hardy would have risked prosecution and suppression under the Obscene Publications Act" (26-7).

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence O. Jones has also recognized that the "substitute gratification" Miss Aldclyffe gains from her plans to marry Cytherea to Manston involves her feelings for her companion's father. Jones writes, "Because of a previous illicit affair with her cousin, she was socially ineligible to marry Ambrose Graye, the man she loved. The marriage of her illegitimate son to Graye's daughter becomes her . . . means of symbolically satisfying her love." Thus, Jones reads Miss Aldclyffe as "a victim of her own passions and the social system" (39).

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Hardy represents Manston's desire for Cytherea as rooted in her role as companion, hinting that were she not in such a dependent position he would not have desired her so intensely. For example, in one scene Manston considers Cytherea in terms of her occupation as companion: "A lady's dependent, a waif, a helpless thing entirely at the mercy of the world; yes, curse it; that is just why it is; that fact of her being so helpless against the blows of circumstances which renders her so deliciously sweet!" (150).

<sup>9</sup> Several critics have argued that Elizabeth-Jane serves as Hardy's representative in the novel. Pamela Jekel, for example, remarks, "Elizabeth-Jane comes closest to all the characters in the novel to having the clearest vision, to sharing her author's view of reality. Quiet and



unobtrusive though she seems, Elizabeth-Jane represents a real pivotal point for all the characters, a sort of 'touchstone'" (131-2).

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