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Thomas Hardy’s
Desperate Remedies: “All my sin has been because I love you so” (310) 1

By RICHARD SYLVIA

HARDY’S FIRST PUBLISHED NOVEL, Desperate Remedies, is not a major accomplishment, yet its “surprisingly sensual” character, as Aziz Bulaila points out (65), merits careful analysis and discussion. When it was published in 1871, Hardy’s Victorian readers missed, apparently—or ignored—the “suppressed sexuality constantly working on and below the surface” (Bulaila 65), and indeed modern readers have been slow to notice the erotic aspects of the novel.2 Despite Bulaila’s recent assessment, several basic questions about Hardy’s use of the erotic in Desperate Remedies remain. What, for instance, is Hardy’s motive for ending the novel—quite literally—with a kiss (“And then I put my cheek against that cheek, and turned my two lips round upon those two lips, and kissed them—so” [330])? More importantly, why does Hardy make this closing kiss of Cytherea Graye and Edward Springrove a degraded reenactment of their earlier, more erotic and spontaneous kiss on Budmouth Bay? Why does Hardy include in this romance the lesbian love scene of the two Cythereas, the scene that many readers have been unwilling to accept for what it so obviously is? Why does Hardy, who was admittedly “feeling his way to a method” with Desperate Remedies (1889 Prefatory Note, xxxi), draw so heavily on the Gothic tradition in his presentation of love and desire? Answers to these questions, I believe, all depend on coming to terms with one of the most compelling and least discussed aspects of Hardy’s novel—the complex network of doublings that condition both plot and character.3

Cytherea Graye, the first of Hardy’s young female heroines, who is pursued throughout the story by Edward Springrove and Aneas Manston, has her double in Cytherea Aldclyffe, who has herself been pursued by two lovers, one of whom abused and abandoned her. Cytherea’s two male lovers, Springrove and Manston, are clearly doubles themselves who reach a climax of identification as they fight for Cytherea near the end of the novel, “rolling over and over, locked in each other’s grasp as tightly as if they had been one

1. I have used The New Wessex Edition, ed. C.I.P. Beatty, and provide page numbers parenthetically throughout.

2. Albert Guerard argues, for instance, that Hardy and his audience would not have understood the meaning of the lesbian love scene between the two Cythereas, an argument that Richard Taylor continues, though Taylor does note the “constant sexual pressure” (14) in Desperate Remedies as a whole.

3. Discussions of the double in Desperate Remedies by C.I.P. Beatty and Tofu Sasaki are the most interesting: neither, however, associates Hardy’s use of the double with the Gothic tradition.
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organic being at war with itself" (311). Manston’s marriage to Eunice, who has a double in Anne Seaway, her impostor, impedes his love for Cytherea, as does Springrove’s engagement to Adelaide. Oddly enough Cytherea marries both, first Manston and then Springrove, and, ironically, given the subject of the novel, consummates neither marriage before the story closes. Manston murders his first wife Eunice once, but stores her body in an old shed twice, undoing and then redoing the act to satisfy his anxiety. There are even two manor houses at Knapwater, the newer classical model where Miss Aldclyffe resides and the older Gothic house where Manston resides when he comes to Carriford. Near the older house Cytherea notes two sources of horrid noise when she passes it on her way to Knapwater, the waterfall and the water pump. Two revealing Knapwater dreams are reported by the narrator: the first comes to Miss Cytherea Aldclyffe after her lesbian love scene with Cytherea; the second comes to Cytherea the night before her marriage to Manston and anticipates sexual union with him. And as noted above, the scene that precipitates the romance conflict of the plot, Cytherea and Springrove’s highly erotic embraces in the boat on Budmouth Bay, is quite purposefully reenacted at Cytherea’s request in the closing scene of the novel, but is called up as well with Manston, when she falls under his power at the old manor house the first time she meets him.

Doublings and reenactments such as these create an incestuous and uncanny atmosphere in Desperate Remedies, not only because of the relationships between the characters they suggest—if the Cythereas are doubles, then the heroine’s attraction to Manston is incestuous, as is Miss Aldclyffe’s desire to see her son united with her younger double—but because such returns, as Freud claims, indicate both “repression” of something long known and “regression to a time when the ego was not yet sharply defined from the external world and from other persons” (141). Even though Hardy’s use of this device in Desperate Remedies results in some prolixity, its symbolic relevance is, I believe, undeniable (and I have listed above only the most obvious occasions of doubling in the novel). Freud, of course, was not available to Hardy in 1869, but in the Gothic tradition Hardy found the vocabulary he needed.

Robert Gittings notes that in Desperate Remedies Hardy draws on both the sensation novel of Wilkie Collıns and the older Gothic romance (138). Although readers frequently comment on the sensational overplotting in the novel, little or nothing is made of Hardy’s use of the Gothic conventions that provide him with the love/death conjunction at the heart of the story. In the

4. John M. Hill uses Freud’s idea in interpretation of Hardy’s Desperate Remedies, arguing that Hardy clothes “blameless sexual response . . . in sensations of the uncanny” (5).

5. Hardy was himself involved in “a good deal of flirtation” during 1869, the year he finished the manuscript of Desperate Remedies and worked for Mr. Crickmay, the Weymouth architect, in whose office Hardy befriended the original of Edward Springrove. In his autobiography he notes some of the sensual pleasures he enjoyed during the summer months—most appropriately to the novel, his “rowing in the bay almost every evening” (Life 64). Hardy does not note that during this time he was informally engaged to his cousin Tryphena Sparks.
work of Radcliffe, Lewis, and E.T.A. Hoffmann, Hardy would have found material on doubles and the nature of fear, especially as it relates to desire and relations between the sexes. The fears of the Gothic heroine result from her cultural imprisonment by the value structure patriarchy has put in place to protect her (Ellis x), but also in part derive from within, as David Punter says, “from the ‘disordering’ of ... mind by repressed and uncomprehended desire” (82). In fact, “the subjection of women and the covert social purposes of marriage and marital fidelity” that Punter identifies as the fundamental condition of the Gothic heroine (95) is the condition under which most of Hardy’s female protagonists function, from Cytherea Graye to Sue Bridehead. Moreover, the hidden sin, the threat of incest, the violent abuse and victimization of women, and the likelihood of bizarre, uncanny, even supernatural events—all of which have place in Desperate Remedies—are staples of the Gothic novel, where they are used to probe the relationship between desire and fear. Though Hardy never again writes a novel with as Gothic an atmosphere as this one, it is intriguing that as a young writer, “feeling his way to a method,” he would experiment with Gothic conventions.

In Desperate Remedies, the symbolic representation of sexual desire is centered in young Cytherea Graye, whom Hardy clearly intends as an Aphrodite/Venus figure. The name Cytherea, as R.J. Schork notes, is “Virgil’s repeated toponymic epithet for his hero’s mother, the goddess Venus” (145). From the beginning, Aphrodite/Venus has been considered a double figure; her precursor, Inanna-Ishtar, for instance, is described as “both mother and bride” by E.O. James (qtd. in Pratt 105), a relationship clearly appropriate for the two Cythereas of Desperate Remedies. In addition, as Aphrodite evolves during the classical and medieval periods, she becomes a polarized image of good and evil. Swinburne, whose poetry Hardy admired in the late 1860s, has the chorus of Atalanta in Calydon lament this double aspect of Aphrodite in celebration of her birth:

Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire; 
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid. 
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid; 
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath; 
But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

For they knew thee for mother of love, 
And knew thee not mother of death. (724-28; 760-61)

6. For discussion of the place of the double in literary history, see John Herdman, The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction.
7. Hardy perhaps plays with Gothic conventions too self-consciously at times in Desperate Remedies. For example, in description of the old manor house, Hardy has Cytherea on passing it for the first time ask, “Do they tell any horrid stories about it?” (48), a rather precious echo of Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey, Austen’s parodic treatment of Gothic. On the other hand, Hardy’s epigraph for Desperate Remedies from Scott clearly indicates his interest in the relationship of artificiality and romance.
8. C.J.P. Beatty discusses the link between the two Cythereas of the novel and the Aphrodite/Venus myth; he discounts, however, the Gothic elements of the story—“these no doubt exist; but they can be exaggerated” (20). Kevin Moore also underestimates the importance of Gothic conventions in Desperate Remedies.
Associated particularly with death through Adonis and Hermes, Aphrodite is also the “goddess of the poet, and above them all of Sappho” (Grigson 110).

Certainly the Gothic romance has depended on the doubleness of the Aphrodite archetype. One of the most direct statements of it comes from E.T.A. Hoffmann, who introduced the double to the nineteenth-century reading public (Herdman 2). At the turning point of his novel *The Devil’s Elixirs*, published in translation in the 1820s, Hoffmann’s Gothic hero/villain, Brother Medandus, laments his lost love:

But you who are of my spiritual kin—you, too, must believe that the supreme rapture of love, the fulfilment of the miracle, is manifested in death. For this is the message of the mysterious prophetic voices from that primeval age which cannot be conceived in human terms; and as in the ritual mysteries of Antiquity which the children of nature celebrated, so for us, too, is death the hallowed feast of love. (166)

Understanding the double character of love also leads M.G. Lewis in *The Monk* to have Ambrosio consummate his sensual desires with the violent rape of his sister among the decay of human flesh in the tombs below the Capuchin convent; the same attitude underlies the fear of Radcliffe’s heroine at Udolfo and, indeed, the sexual tension in Austen’s parodic treatment of Gothic in *Northanger Abbey*. Desire is both the delight of life and its archenemy, to be coveted and abhorred. This doubleness, however, is not a given, but a product of historical circumstances. Although a double figure, Aphrodite always retains the power to bring about “a normal human sensuality, both heterosexual and homosexual,” according to Annis Pratt (146). When a culture degrades sexual desire by accepting and promoting the love/death conjunction, as Gothic does, the “damage affects both genders, though women are apt to come off worse for the experience” (Pratt 160). In *Desperate Remedies*, I am suggesting, Hardy explores the particular way in which his culture continues the degradation of Aphrodite.

His exploration focuses on Aphrodite herself. As Cytherea’s dark consort, Manston, says, “All my sin has been because I love you so” (310), and though his sins are many and extraordinary—deceit, murder, attempted rape—and drive the sensational plot of the novel in the second half, Hardy’s center of interest is Cytherea and her situation as a nineteenth-century single woman who, with the sudden death of her father, is thrown into the world to fend for herself to the degree that her brother and a patriarchal society will allow. In fact, the varied sexual responses of Cytherea Graye—to Springrove, Miss Aldclyffe, and Manston—condition the “sensational” conflicts that arise throughout the novel. Her responses also indicate Hardy’s thoughts about the nature of love and suggest his motives for using gothic conventions to locate the impediments, both internal and external, that Cytherea faces.

Readers of *Desperate Remedies* have had a difficult time coming to terms with Hardy’s Aphrodite. Marlene Springer, for instance, finds Cytherea innocent, “contentedly virginal” (27-28); more appropriate to my purposes, however, Richard Taylor identifies Cytherea’s “complex and resilient sexuality” (14). Even though she constrains her sexuality to comply with her culture’s...
expectations, Cytherea manages to present herself as a true goddess of love. From the first mention of Edward Springrove, for instance, Cytherea begins to think of him as a romantic partner and indeed fantasizes romance even before he appears:

The contemplation of her own left fourth finger by symbol-loving girlhood of this age is, it seems, very frequently, if not always, followed by a peculiar train of romantic ideas. Cytherea’s thoughts, still playing about her future, became directed into this romantic groove. She leant back in her chair, and taking hold of the fourth finger, which had attracted her attention, she lifted it with the tips of the others, and looked at the smooth and tapering member for a long time.

She whispered idly, ‘I wonder who and what he will be?’ (15)

This is, of course, a sexually charged moment the narrator describes. It is hard to miss the phallic implications of the lifted finger and the self-induced pleasure Cytherea feels in its contemplation. The heroine, the passage suggests, is young but alive to sensation and the culturally sanctioned implications of her sexuality. In this way Hardy creates in Desperate Remedies what Taylor calls “constant sexual pressure” (14). There should be no surprise, then, that the affair between Cytherea and Edward Springrove—who has a “healthy freshness” about him, as his name and role as springtime consort to Aphrodite suggest—advances so quickly.

When they meet for the first time, Cytherea, thinking it is her brother behind her rather than Springrove, walks a narrow plank to board the steamboat that will return her from her holiday excursion to Lulwind Cove. In this scene, Hardy plays with the idea of Aphrodite’s sea birth, presenting Cytherea as a determined—if timid—lover:

“No—please don’t touch me,” said she, ascending cautiously by sliding one foot forward two or three inches, bringing up the other behind it, and so on alternately—her lips compressed by concentration on the feat, her eyes glued to the plank, her hand to the rope, and her immediate thought to the fact of the distressing narrowness of her footing. (21)

As Springrove bounds up behind her, she thinks that she is addressing her brother Owen: “‘Where have you been so long?’ she continued, in a lower tone, turning round to him as she reached the top” (21-22). She recognizes that the man is not her brother (“unknown trousers; unknown waistcoat; unknown face”), and the boat—and their love affair—is immediately underway. “Off went the plank; the paddles started, stopped, backed, pattered in confusion, then revolved decisively, and the boat passed out into deep water” (22).

Their growing attraction climaxes in an extraordinarily erotic moment on Budmouth Bay, a bay whose name suggests incipient sexual pleasure. Again water evokes the fertile power of Aphrodite, as Cytherea and Springrove set out in a rowboat this time, on a day when “[e]verything on earth seemed taking a contemplative rest, as if waiting to hear the avowal of something from his [Springrove’s] lips” (37). But before the avowal comes the embrace:

9. These comments by the narrator are the kind of intrusive generalizations by an authoritative male figure that Judith Wittenberg finds symptomatic of Hardy’s need to control and punish women (53-54), a position based, in part, on her reading of Desperate Remedies.
She breathed more quickly and warmly: he took her right hand in his own right... He put his left hand behind her neck till it came round upon her left cheek.... Lightly pressing her, he brought her face and mouth towards his own.... (37)

The description of the kiss is a splendid example of Hardy's ability to create the erotic moment, the scene building to actual physical contact between man and woman, a rarity in the Victorian novel:

... pressing closer he kissed her. Then he kissed her again with a longer kiss.

It was the supremely happy moment of their experience. The 'bloom' and the 'purple light' were strong on the lineaments of both. Their hearts could hardly believe the evidence of their lips. (37)

Two things are important. First, Cytherea is nearly passive in this scene, though it is clear she assents and encourages Edward. Second, the narrator is calculatedly honest when he says, "It was the supremely happy moment of their experience," and the action of the novel bears this out. Almost immediately, Edward admits that he has kept something from Cytherea he cannot divulge—his previous engagement to Adelaide, of which Cytherea learns only much later—and this mystery disturbs and perplexes her. The healthy, unimpeded expression of her sexuality, then, is compromised, as indeed is Edward's, by the passive role she plays throughout the novel and by those who would scheme to deceive her. Love is whole and spontaneous only fleetingly, for Cytherea's erotic response to Springrove is quickly ruined: "Cytherea's short-lived bliss was dead and gone. O, if she had known of this sequel would she have allowed him to break down the barrier of mere acquaintanceship—never, never!" (38).

When this scene is reenacted at the close of the novel, Cytherea is a wiser, more experienced woman, but unfortunately she is incapable of the spontaneity and openness that characterize the original erotic moment. The closing scene is poignant because, in fact, Cytherea and Springrove must know that they have lost a great deal, even as they attempt to recreate the scene on Budmouth Bay as exactly as they can. On their wedding night at the lake at Knapwater, Cytherea remembers their first embrace in anticipation of the consummation of their love:

'O, Edward,' said Cytherea, 'you must do something that has just come into my head!'
'Well, dearest—I know.'
'Yes—give me one half-minute's row on the lake here now, just as you did on Budmouth Bay three years ago.' (33)

But as Hardy would have it, they fail to recreate the erotic sensibility of the earlier scene, and though their attempt is touching and romantic, it is not pleasurable, does not suggest the open passion of the original because Cytherea and Edward are too self-conscious and too constrained by their culture. They have learned that passion is never free of danger:

10. T. R. Wright in *Hardy and the Erotic* discusses Hardy's ability to present female subjects who suffer "from libidinal drives which remain outside their control and beyond the accepted limits of their society" (49).
But what exactly has happened to Cytherea's sexual sensibilities between the first and the second embrace? Why must she correct Edward and, indeed, attempt to deny her own passion (“I couldn’t then help letting”)? If much is lost, what is gained, if anything, by way of the events that come between these two moments of embrace? Performing this ritual reenactment is a positive experience for Cytherea since with it she attempts to privilege the direct, innocent expression of her sexuality on Budmouth Bay, but the reenactment also clearly measures the degree to which she fails to recapture that erotic moment. In the end the recreated scene shifts attention to what has happened between the two boat scenes—pushes the reader, that is, to reconsider Cytherea's ordeal, now that its consequence is so poignantly apparent, rather than to consider her future happiness.\(^{11}\)

A large part of what happens to Cytherea between the two embraces with Springrove depends on two characters: Miss Aldclyffe, Cytherea's Aphroditic double, and Manston, Springrove's double. Each has an erotic scene with Cytherea comparable to the original boat scene with Springrove, and in each the heroine is forced to confront her own sexuality. It is important to recognize that Cytherea's fate is largely the result of Springrove's initial deceit, which distresses her so thoroughly that she decides to advertise for a position as lady's maid, a position that Owen, her brother, terms "a disgrace" (40). This begins her association with Miss Aldclyffe and Knapwater House. And though he struggles to do the right thing by Cytherea and, indeed, finally saves her from the violence of Manston, Springrove is not an ideal lover any more than Manston is the complete villain. In fact, Hardy has Springrove, not Manston, voice a cutting and prophetic estimate of how relations between the sexes are conducted. Owen tells Cytherea:

'He [Springrove] says that your true lover breathlessly finds himself engaged to a sweetheart, like a man who has caught something in the dark. He doesn't know whether it is a bat or a bird, and takes it to the light when he is cool to learn what it is. He looks to see if she is the right age, but right age or wrong age, he must consider her a prize. Sometime later he ponders whether she is the right kind of prize for him. Right kind or wrong kind—he has called her his, and must abide by it. After a time he asks himself, "Has she the temper, hair, and eyes I meant to have, and was firmly resolved not to do without?" He finds it is all wrong, and then comes the tussle—' (18)

\(^{11}\) Balila argues that *Desperate Remedies* ends happily (73), as does *Kurjiaka* (88), but this is true only from the characters' limited point of view.
Springrove remarks obliquely here about his hidden engagement to Adelaide, but the hunter imagery obviously suggests woman as passive victim of the male need to trap, imprison, and control—the situation for Cytherea from the moment she enters the world of romance. Even Cytherea's brother Owen, much like Lady Constantine's brother Louis in *Two on a Tower*, urges her to marry Manston, a man she does not love, though she feels a strange attraction to him, because union with him will ensure the economic security she has not been able to provide herself.12

Manston, then, is merely the darkest aspect of a pervasive patriarchal plot to entrap Cytherea in one way or another. He and Springrove are clearly equated throughout the story. Besides falling in love with Cytherea and marrying her, they both have previous "engagements," both apply for the same position as steward at Knapwater; both, ironically, are deemed most suitable to fill the position, Manston by Miss Aldclyffe and Springrove by her agent, Mr. Nyttleton. And eventually both do fill the position. Manston is even unaccountably drawn to Springrove when they first meet in passing. But it is in pursuit of Cytherea that the two are most intensely linked, ending in the altercation when they are entwined as "one organic being at war with itself" (311). Manston thinks that Cytherea loves Springrove, and Springrove, for a time, thinks Cytherea loves Manston.

Even Cytherea equates the two after her first meeting with Manston at the old manor house has triggered an erotic response:

One moment she was full of the wild music and stirring scene with Manston—the next, Edward's image rose before her like a shadowy ghost. Then Manston's black eyes seemed piercing her again, and the reckless voluptuous mouth appeared bending to the curves of his special words. (114)

Ironically, Manston never does kiss Cytherea. Even when he proposes marriage in the church, "the embodiment of decay" (189), and Cytherea accepts him, she will not kiss him, her refusal calling up, of course, the kiss on Budmouth Bay. Fittingly, Springrove breaks in on Cytherea before consummation of her marriage to Manston with the news that Manston's former wife lives, and again breaks in on the pair as the Gothic villain attempts to rape her. (As originally submitted to the publisher, Cytherea's double, Miss Aldclyffe, was a rape victim.)13

Though the kiss is withheld from Manston, he nevertheless triggers an intensely physical response in Cytherea. The scene of their initial meeting is in this respect a dark reenactment of Cytherea's initial meeting with Springrove on the steamboat and the scene on Budmouth Bay. But here, at the old manor house, Manston's personal energy has an urgency about it that

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12. Sasaki discusses how Cytherea views and, thereby, "reenacts or 'doubles' her father's fall" from the tower at the opening of *Desperate Remedies* (81). Besides the psychological identification between the subject seeing and the object seen, Cytherea falls into economic distress at her father's death, a condition that her culture does not easily allow her to rectify without association with another man.

13. For discussion of Hardy's resistance to this change, see Gittings 142-43.
controls Cytherea from the beginning. Manston is a vampiric figure, a conventional Gothic villain who plays the organ with an intensity that mesmerizes Cytherea the first time she meets him, with his “eyes penetrating and clear,” his lips “full and luscious,” and his “wonderful, almost preternatural, clearness of ... complexion” (109). For Cytherea he is taboo; she fears him and is fascinated by him too.

Instead of the calm of Budmouth Bay, the scene with Manston is conditioned by the thunderstorm that drives her inside, the horrid sound of the waterfall, and the pounding of the pumping engine—that is, by enormous energy and steady force. Cytherea is charged by the touch of Manston’s clothes, by the power of his organ playing, and by the “general unearthly weirdness” of the manor house itself:

She was swayed into emotional opinions concerning the strange man before her; now impulses of thought came with new harmonies, and entered into her with a gnawing thrill.... She found herself involuntarily shrinking up beside him, and looking with parted lips at his face. ... She was in the state in which woman’s instinct to conceal has lost its power over her impulse to tell; and he saw it. Bending his handsome face over her till his lips almost touched her ear, he murmured, without breaking the harmonies—

‘Do you very much like this piece?’
‘Very much indeed,’ she said. (113)

But Manston, though clearly in control, does not kiss Cytherea and, indeed, practices a strange, unaccountable restraint in relation to her throughout most of the novel, even while thinking that he must have her: “‘she shall be mine,’ he says—‘I will claim the young thing yet.’”

Cytherea does not know exactly what has happened to her, yet recognizes Manston’s power over her:

‘O, how is it that man has so fascinated me?’ was all she could think. Her own self, as she had sat spell-bound before him, was all she could see. Her gait was constrained, from the knowledge that his eyes were upon her until she had passed the hollow by the waterfall, and by ascending the rise had become hidden from his view by the boughs of the overhanging trees. (114)

From a psychological point of view, Manston brings to Cytherea and the story the threat of imminent death and the equation of love and death that ruins the bloom of Springrove’s and Cytherea’s passion. With Manson, voluntarily acting to fulfill her own desire is out of the question for Cytherea. Not only does Manston murder—unintentionally—his wife Eunice, he commits suicide by hanging, “his features ... scarcely changed,” according to the turnkey who finds him, and leaves a confession in which he identifies himself as a death-in-life figure:

I am now about to enter on my normal condition. For people are almost always in their graves. When we survey the long race of men, it is strange and still more strange to find that they are mainly dead men, who have scarcely ever been otherwise. (319)

Yet his passion for Cytherea has been so strong that he has been willing to sacrifice his own safety to ensure it and marriage with her.

Symbolically what is most interesting about Manston’s association with
death relates to his origin. He is the illegitimate son of Cytherea/Aphrodite herself—that is, of Cytherea Aldclyffe, double of the novel’s young heroine. Love itself gives birth to Manston, which accounts for Cytherea’s immediate attraction to him, but love that inhabits a “fallen” world conditioned by repression rather than openness, denial rather than acceptance. Manston, as noted, restrains himself physically at least for a time in regard to Cytherea, but Miss Aldclyffe has led a life of repression and denial most exquisite. Hardy originally had Miss Aldclyffe the victim of—and Manston the progeny of—rape; in the revision, Miss Aldclyffe is simply seduced by her cousin. This, of course, leads to the denial of her true love, Ambrose Graye, Cytherea’s father. Miss Aldclyffe lives estranged from her own father, and in order to maintain her reputation, disowns her own child. Her life is desperately restrained, her erotic sensibilities repressed. She is, indeed, complicit in her own destruction.

What Patrick Roberts calls the “notorious bedroom scene” between the two Cythereas (51), the erotic nature of which others try to deny altogether, is simply Miss Aldclyffe’s attempt to express her long-repressed erotic feelings. Because the object of Miss Aldclyffe’s desire is Cytherea, the image of her own young self, the seduction suggests an ananistic self-interest on the part of Miss Aldclyffe. She claims that Cytherea seems her “own child,” as they lie in bed together, but her kisses are sexual in nature, even if the narrator faintly claims that they are “motherly,” and Miss Aldclyffe takes on the role of the jealous lover when Cytherea does not respond:

‘Why can’t you kiss me as I can kiss you? Why can’t you!’ She impressed upon Cytherea’s lips a warm motherly salute, given as if in the outburst of strong feeling, long checked, and yearning for something to care for and be cared for by in return. (65)

But Cytherea is not stimulated erotically by Miss Aldclyffe’s attentions; indeed, she is troubled by the sexual nature of her embraces:

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 and capricious for endurance. (68)

Miss Aldclyffe instructs Cytherea quite explicitly on the vagaries of man’s affection during the course of this scene, as she seeks primarily her own gratification; apparently she receives it since she falls into a deep, post-coital-like slumber:

Miss Aldclyffe seemed to give herself over to a luxurious sense of content and quiet, as if the maiden at her side afforded her a protection against dangers which had menaced her for years; she was soon sleeping calmly. (70)

The dangers that have menaced her are many—men, in particular, the consequence of denying her sexual instincts, more generally, and the fact of her own death, most profoundly. Miss Aldclyffe dreams in her deep slumber of what really concerns her as a forty-six-year-old woman who is still very much infantilized by her father and the male culture that imprisons her:
'O such a terrible dream!' she cried, in a hurried whisper, holding to Cytherea in her turn; 'and your touch was the end of it. It was dreadful. Time, with his wings, hour-glass, and scythe, coming nearer and nearer to me—grinning and mocking: then he seized me, took a piece of me only.... But I can't tell you, I can't bear to think of it. How those dogs howl! People say it means death.' (72)

Cytherea has been sleepless, thinking about "the ecstatic evening scene with Edward: the kiss, and the shortness of those happy moments" (70), oblivious to the role she has played in Miss Aldclyffe's dream ("and your touch was the end of it"). She has also been listening to the distant waterfall, "the water-wheel in the shrubbery by the old manor-house, which the coachman had said would drive him mad" (71), and—without identifying the sound—to the death rattle of Miss Aldclyffe's father in the room below.

Death and love are thoroughly intermixed by both Cythereas. Miss Aldclyffe avoids death with Cytherea's touch, but retains the horror of its imminence, and the horror besides of something taken from her violently by death/love, even as she avoids its grasp. Lesbian love does not end in death, the dream suggests, and it seems fitting that with her connection to Cytherea, momentary and one-sided as it may be, Miss Aldclyffe is released from the imperious rule of her father.

Aphrodite does not restrict her ministrations to the heterosexual; she is the goddess of love between women, as the case of Sappho and her girls suggests (Grigson 19). Miss Aldclyffe appears to Cytherea in a vision at the very moment of the older woman's death. Miss Aldclyffe's supernatural presence makes it clear that her erotic feelings for Cytherea continue even after death, despite the fact that she gave up acting on them long before and worked instead to ensure that her progeny—Manston—had possession of Cytherea. As an apparition, Miss Aldclyffe is as repressed as she was as a living being: 15

It was about four o'clock in the morning when Cytherea, though most probably dreaming, seemed to awaken—and instantly was transfixed by a sort of spell, that had in it more of awe than of affright. At the foot of her bed, looking her in the face with an expression of entreaty beyond the power of words to portray, was the form of Miss Aldclyffe—wan and distinct. No notion was perceptible in her; but longing—earnest longing—was written in every feature. (323)

In wanting to make Manston, her son, Cytherea's husband, "the husband of my true lover's child" (322), Miss Aldclyffe attempts to regain love indirectly in her own life. "To die unloved is more than I can bear! I loved your father, and I love him now" (322), she claims on her deathbed. As the narrator responds to her, he uses her first name, a rarity in his commentary, emphasizing, of course, her connection with the heroine: "That was the burden of Cytherea Aldclyffe" (322).

14. Judith Wittenberg discusses the relationship of death and sexuality in Desperate Remedies to "peeping/eavesdropping and a guilty fear of being seen" (158).
15. Bulaila suggests that Miss Aldclyffe's lesbianism is the reason for her trouble keeping maids-in-waiting at Kaapwater (68).
What will be the burden of Cytherea Graye? She has been so thoroughly equated with Cytherea Aldclyffe by way of their shared identification with Aphrodite that it is difficult to be sanguine about her future. Both have the beauty and statuesque quality of the goddess, both are associated with movement and undressing. Cytherea cannot continue as Miss Aldclyffe’s lady’s maid because she is too much a goddess in her own right. Hardy also includes the appearance of swans to support the mythic character of the doable Cythereas in a scene that, though largely unimportant in the development of the plot, has tremendous symbolic significance. One May morning, near the middle of the novel when Cytherea is alienated from Springrove and not yet beset by Manston, Miss Aldclyffe takes her to the summerhouse. Soon, “[t]wo swans floated into view in front of the women, and then crossed the water towards them,” and the two Cythereas discuss how the swans move, or more particularly, whether or not one should detect the work that goes into their seemingly effortless grace:

“They seem to come to us without any will of their own—quite involuntarily—don’t they?” said Cytherea, looking at the birds’ graceful advance.

“Yes, but if you look narrowly you can see their hips just beneath the water, working with the greatest energy.”

“I’d rather not see that; it spoils the idea of proud indifference to direction which we associate with a swan.”

“It does; we’ll have “involuntarily”. Ah, now this reminds me of something.”

“Of what?”

“Of a human being who involuntarily comes towards yourself.” (176)

Cytherea may wish that love display a “proud indifference to direction,” but this is not the case even in her own situation, as Miss Aldclyffe knows Cytherea will discover. Miss Aldclyffe and Manston will nearly force her to marry him by threatening Springrove’s family with ruin if he attends to her and by promising security for her oddly lamed and inept brother. In the end, she has no choice but to marry Aeneas, death itself.

In a moment of self-deception Cytherea even imagines that she could come to enjoy physical union with Manston. “Act in obedience to the dictates of common sense ... and dread the sharp sting of poverty” (194), her brother Owen tells his sister. Many women scheme to do just that. But Cytherea does not wish to be corrupted: “Scheme to marry? I’d rather scheme to die” (194). In this case, her union with Manston involves both, though the scheme is not of her own making. Cytherea’s premonition of the event has been as horrid as Miss Aldclyffe’s vision of her own death, and of course the reader is meant to equate the two, for Cytherea is also the victim of her repressed desire; “she was using all her strength to thrust down” (189) her love for Springrove, because she takes it as her noble duty to provide for herself, Owen, and Manston’s well-being: “even Christianity urges me to marry Mr Manston” (188). Cytherea has no real choice in the matter, a fact that becomes graphically clear in her dream, as she pictures herself a conventional Gothic prisoner, chained in her rapist’s dungeon:
...she fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamt that she was being whipped with dry bones suspended on strings, which rattled at every blow like those of a malefactor on a gibbet; that she shifted and shrank and avoided every blow, and they fell then upon the wall to which she was tied. She could not see the face of the executioner for his mask, but his form was like Manston’s.

(195)

When she awakes, the world is covered in ice, “a scheme of the great Mother,” she hopes, “to hinder a union of which she does not approve” (196).

Cytherea marries Manston, but does not consummate her union with him; neither is she raped, as her double was originally; Springrove’s timely returns prevent both events. But she is altered by her introduction to the experience of love, and it is this alteration that Hardy laments in *Desperate Remedies*. Doublings in the novel suggest as well that her future with Springrove will be different in degree but not in kind, and that perhaps the only path to happiness is by way of mutual repression and manipulation, a fairly close approximation of marriage as depicted in Hardy’s later novels.

Gothic shadows do not overtake Cytherea, but they do alter her understanding of love. By requesting reenactment of the scene on Budmouth Bay, Cytherea accepts the place of manipulation—of scheming—in love, having realized that a “proud indifference to direction” is not possible. Indeed, as the novel draws to a close and Manston’s crimes and Miss Aldclyffe’s complicity are revealed, the tangles of the sensational plot and of the Gothic love interest converge in the idea of the “scheme,” which underlies both. Manston uses the word *scheme* several times in his pre-suicide confession; Miss Aldclyffe’s will is described as a “scheme” by the locals, since with it she leaves the Knapwater estates “to the wife of Aeneas Manston” (328) in an attempt to make her illegitimate son master without openly claiming him as her own. Even though Cytherea, as Manston’s widow, waives her right to the property, not wanting anything through Manston, the legacy is settled on her future children, since Parson Raunham, next in line to inherit, does not want the estates either. Indeed, even the Crown rejects the property, deciding the events do not constitute a case of forfeiture by felony (329). Aphrodite’s children—Hardy’s future heroines—will not escape the price of the Cytherea Aldclyffe/Manston legacy.16

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16. Hardy reread *Desperate Remedies* in 1889 to prepare for its first republication; that year he was working on *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, and I am reminded of his title for Phase the Fifth, “The Woman Pays.” Lawrence Jones discusses how Hardy’s reading of his first novel had some effect on *Tess*. 

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