# "People don't want to marry me. People want to marry me. I don't want to marry people": Marriage-Plot Subversion Through Repetition in Anglo-American Fiction of the 1920s

by

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Abstract

"PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO MARRY ME. PEOPLE WANT TO MARRY ME. I DON'T WANT TO MARRY PEOPLE": MARRIAGE-PLOT SUBVERSION THROUGH REPETITION IN ANGLO-AMERICAN FICTION OF THE 1920S

by

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This dissertation considers how H.D.'s *HERmione* (1927), Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), Edith Wharton's *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922), and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Unpunished: A Mystery* (1929) undermine the monolithic love-plot tradition, forging new narrative possibilities. Changing gender conventions characteristic of the 1920s insist that women's development neither culminates nor terminates with marital union, but continues afterwards by shifting away from the repressive marriage-plot tradition toward a liberatory counter-tradition. These narratives employ various modes of repetition that change the kind of stories they tell and the role that marriage plays in them. This repetition of the established tradition—with difference—allows writers to co-opt the tradition to develop a counter-tradition. I consider three major types of repetition used as tools for subversion: repetition with difference of the love-plot tradition; repetition within a text of plots, characters, or motifs; and linguistic or rhetorical repetitions that heighten the effects of the other two types.

My dissertation analyzes how these novels, through sentence- and narrative-level repetition, both use and break the sequence of "restrictive sexual-marital ideology"

(Boone 10) to create alternative scenarios for women protagonists. In reiterating the non-traditional lives these characters lead, the repetitions critique marriage conventions, offering options other than conventional marriage plots. My project begins with what can be read as courtship plots, *HERmione* and *Orlando*, then moves to a courtship- and wedlock-plot hybrid, *The Glimpses of the Moon*, and ends with the only one of the four novels that involves a wedlock plot from beginning to end, *Unpunished*. The epilogue considers Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928), which subverts the marriage-plot tradition without exploding the restrictive ending, exposing through repetition the confinement of marriage and the marriage plot.

Although three of the four novels depict protagonists who marry, none saves the marriage for the ending of the novel, nor are the protagonists denied autonomy—or a story—once married. Instead, these plots repeat with difference the rigid marriage-plot tradition, reworking narrative conventions of courtship and marriage. By re-positioning marriage in the narrative sequence and making the marriage plot not climactic, these novels offer women characters stories beyond their nuptial vows.

# Acknowledgements

*Something far and far within kept repeating something that had no words, to which words fitted.*

H.D., *HERmione*

I find myself, after all of this writing, surprisingly at a loss for words, although not without thoughts of thankfulness and gratitude. My dissertation committee, Mary Ann Caws Anne Humpherys, and Wayne Koestenbaum, guided and encouraged me thought my coursework, my orals, and my prospectus approval before giving me advice, and assistance for my dissertation. I am particularly indebted to my dissertation director, Anne Humpherys, for her invaluable support and mentorship at each stage of this endeavor, and especially for her willingness to work with my schedule and make share her insights throughout the summer. Her mantra, "It's just a dissertation!" has ebbed and flowed through my mind since I first began working on my prospectus.

I am grateful for the Lynn Kadison Dissertation Year Award, which helped me to finish my dissertation during the year of support. The Communication Fellowship that I have at the Bernard L. Schwartz Communication Institute at Baruch College not only provides me with financial support but also fosters a collaborative approach to learning both between instructor and student and among colleagues. The Writing Fellowship that I was awarded provided, in addition to financial support, valuable mentorship. I am particularly thankful to Hildegard Hoeller, whose Edith Wharton senior seminar I supported during my last semester in the Writing Fellows program. Working with her and with this class introduced me to *The Glimpses of the Moon*, and acquainted me more formally with Wharton studies.

In my sophomore year at Brown University, I had the pleasure of taking a modernist fiction course taught by E. Tamar Katz, in which I first encounterd H.D.'s writing, first read *HERmione*, and first learned that I could read these modernist texts as deviations from the marriage plot. I was so taken with *HERmione* that two years later I wrote my Honors thesis about it under the advisement of Keith Waldrop and James Egan. It was an intellectually rich experience that I still value dearly, one that has remained with me as I worked through this dissertation.

The English department at the Graduate Center generously sponsors dissertation workshops, and I benefited greatly from those in which I participated, led by Anne Humpherys and Glenn Burger. These workshops offered me the space to work through my ideas and get feedback from faculty and students while my work was still at the draft—or note—stage. My own small dissertation group, Lisa Brundage, Helen Davis, Kate Noel Moss, and Tina Meyerhoff, made working on my dissertation feel less like an isolated process and more like a group activity. The exchange of ideas and resources, as well as the humor, friendship, and collaboration that have developed among the five of us is invaluable to me. I look forward to continuing to work with this group as I move on to my next project.

I wrote most of this dissertation at the Mina Rees Library at the Graduate Center, from an enviable vantage point that offered me a view of the corner of 34th Street and Fifth Avenue and the Empire State Building—a far cry from the subterranean library at the Graduate Center prior to our move to the B. Altman building. Having friends working nearby made the library more welcoming, but two in particular, Alina

Gharabegian and Ruth Garcia, made my daily existence in the library a comfort and a place to seek motivation and advice.

My friends and family offered tremendous support, often without knowing exactly what I was doing. My sister and brother-in-law and my parents often got what little free time I had, making me laugh and helping me relax. Coming from a family of educators, I grew up loving books, making each experience a learning experience, ask questions—even though I didn't let my family ask many of me lately—and viewing everything with imagination.

Eric, my sounding board, my editor, my inspiration, my motivation, my strength, my reason to get home at night from the library, your love and support make this possible. I dedicate to you this to which I have dedicated myself.

Table of Contents

# Introduction

## "Such repeating always has in it a little changing": Repetition With Difference and the Love-Plot Tradition

Gertrude Stein posits at the start of "Portraits and Repetition" (1935) that "the strange thing about the realization of existence is that like a train moving there is no real realization of it moving if it does not move against something and so that is what a generation does it shows that moving is existing" (165). This extrapolation of modern relativity asserts that it is in relation to the static that movement is perceptible, whether it be the movement of a train or of existence. In this dissertation, I consider how the monolithic love-plot tradition is undermined; the novels I discuss show, like Stein's example of the train, their movement to forge new possibilities. The social and cultural changes of the 1920s show that women's development neither culminates nor terminates at the point of marital union, but continues afterwards. To that end, the novels I focus on, *HERmione* (1927) by H.D., *Orlando* (1928) by Virginia Woolf, *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922) by Edith Wharton, and *Unpunished: A Mystery* (1929) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, move away from the repressive tradition of the love plot toward a more liberatory counter-tradition by reflecting the changing gender roles or emerging options for women characteristic of the post-Great War era. To do so, these narratives employ various modes of repetition that change the kind of story they tell and the role that marriage plays in the different stories. It is the repetition of the established tradition—with difference—that offers writers a means of co-opting the tradition to develop a counter-tradition. Repetition in various modes offers these writers a method that can not only delay the marriage-plot ending of the story, but also avert it entirely or change it significantly, thus developing different stories.

Although many writers of the 1920s wrote within the love-plot tradition, described by Joseph Allen Boone in *Tradition Counter Tradition* (1987) as "upholding a restrictive sexual-marital ideology" (10), my dissertation examines what happens to the love-plot tradition—or, rather how it can be broken—to move away from that that tradition and offer women characters narrative roles after marriage. The 1920s were, in America and Britain, both depressed and prosperous. It was simultaneously the postwar era of the Lost Generation, damaged bodies and psyches, shellshock, and—perhaps because of the feeling that since life was short it should be enjoyed—it was also the roaring, giddy decade of the flapper, the Charleston, jazz, and automobiles. Women's enfranchisement, lower birthrates due to family planning and birth control, shifts in women's employment after the Great War, greater educational opportunities, and the increased use of divorce to end unhappy marriages contributed to a new social status and greater autonomy for women. Even the shorter hemlines had great ramifications—a woman's dress in 1928 required less than half the material a seamstress would have used to make a dress in 1918, and afforded a more liberating lifestyle to women, who could now ride bicycles or move their bodies to the music of the 1920s (Shannon 86).

Boone's *Tradition Counter Tradition*, a study of love plots, sexual hierarchies, and their impact on social and fictional order, describes three love plots repeated, with variations, often enough to establish the love-plot tradition: the courtship plot with its comic ending of marriage; the seduction plot, an inversion of the courtship plot that "transforms would-be lovers into sexual antagonists, and division replaces union as the endpoint," so that it ends not comically in marriage but in tragically in death or ruin; and the wedlock or domestic plot, which involves the story after marriage, and can have a

comic or tragic ending (10). The traditional love plot as Boone describes it involves the "fictional idealization of the married state as the individual's one true source of earthly happiness" (9). These plots lead to the same resolution, which insists that female, though not male, development lead to marriage. Marriage in these plots is not only necessary for female self-realization, but also represents the end of that realization or development of the woman's story. Thus, to counter the love-plot tradition is to "decenter the presumed universality of the dominant sexual order—and with it the fictional order of marriage—by revealing its constructed and ever partial nature," and instead offer depictions of women's lives outside the tradition (21-22).[1]

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) addresses the problem of the expected sentence as sequence for the writer to whom this is not the natural order: "Mary is tampering with the expected sequence. First she broke the sentence: now she has broken the sequence. . . . Perhaps she had done this unconsciously, merely giving things their natural order, as a woman would, if she wrote like a woman" (81). The idea of feminist writing breaking the expected sentence and sequence has become a mantra both for women writers in the twentieth century and critics of their writing, much like the notion of a woman's need to have a room of her own—and the phrase *a room of one's own*—has. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, in *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (1985), begins the chapter entitled "Breaking the Sentence; Breaking the Sequence," with a longer selection from the section of Woolf's

[1] Although Boone's *Tradition Counter Tradition* was written in 1987, it remains the most comprehensive discussion of the love-plot tradition, and thus I refer to his argument and definitions to support my argument about the ways in which the novels I discuss work against the tradition. Other texts, such as Ann duCille's *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction* (1993) and Davida Pines's *The Marriage Paradox: Modernist Novels and the Cultural Imperative to Marry* (2006), enhance this discussion and move beyond Boone's parameters.

essay that I have excerpted above. DuPlessis discusses how feminist approaches to writing and narration demand that the hegemonic tradition be broken, by means of breaking the androcentric sentence and sequence of conventional narratives. The novels I focus on use the love-plot tradition to develop a counter-tradition, or, as DuPlessis says using Virginia Woolf's language, to break the sentence and sequence of the male voice and replace it with one that will allow women to express their "thought without crushing or distorting it" ("Granite and Rainbow" 81). DuPlessis argues in *Writing Beyond the Ending* for a movement beyond the tradition, noting that both political and narrative structures in the form of "the ideological character of the romance plot," must be called into question: "The attempt to call into question political and legal forms related to women and gender, characteristic of women's emancipation in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is accompanied by this attempt by women writers to call narrative forms into question." Breaking the sentence and breaking the sequence, as DuPlessis argues, "are ruptures with conventional literary practice"; the former "severs dominant authority and ideology," as the latter critiques narrative, "restructuring its orders and priorities" (x).

Ellen G. Friedman and Miriam Fuchs show the importance of Woolf's idea of breaking the sentence and sequence in their collection of essays on generations of women's experimental writing in the twentieth century by entitling it *Breaking the Sequence: Women's Experimental Fiction* (1989). They begin this collection with an introductory essay, "Contexts and Continuities: An Introduction to Women's Experimental Fiction in English," in which they similarly argue that the experimental women writers such as Stein, Woolf, and H.D. "undermin[e] the patriarchal assumption that inform these

[traditional] narrative modes." Rather than follow the "dominant fictional structure" in which "Plot linearity [. . .] implies a story's purposeful forward movement" ultimately driving the narrative toward totalizing closure," these writers, by "exploding dominant forms [. . .] also producre an alternate fictional space, a space in which the feminine, marginalized in traditional fiction and patriarchal culture, can be expressed" (4). Feminist theory—and feminist narratology specifically—questions the traditional, androcentric ways of telling stories, as well as the androcentric stories that are told. Twentieth-century feminist writing attempts to turn away from these traditions by breaking, as Woolf said, the sentence and the sequence. If the first suggests that women must forge a new vocabulary or dialect, telling stories in a new way, altering the narrative down to the level of the word, it follows that they must also forge new tales altogether, changing what happens in the story and pushing it to extend beyond the traditionally-restrictive closing point. DuPlessis argues in *Writing Beyond the Ending* that breaking the sentence rejects not only grammar "but rhythm, pace, flow, expression: the structuring of the female voice by the male voice, female tone and manner by male expectations, female writing by male emphasis, female writing by existing conventions of gender" (32), demanding that stories be told in a different way—that the story-telling must change—such that dominant structures no longer shape "muted ones," such that the writing represents her thought.

In *Changing the Story: Feminist Fiction and the Tradition* (1991), Gayle Greene defines the tradition as "the canon of 'great books' that dominates the study of English literature." She discusses what she terms *feminist fiction*, "writing against [the tradition] but also writing within it, finding it both constraining and enabling [. . .] interrogat[ing] the

meanings of the conventions they enlist" (3). Feminist fiction, then, is involved in both tradition making and unmaking, as it "performs complex negotiations with the works of the past, negotiations which are both appropriations and subversions" (7). As others have discussed before her, Greene's argument critiques the tradition in which "the love story allows woman one end: her 'end,' both in the sense of 'goal' and 'conclusion,' is a man" (12). Greene discusses much more recent texts than I consider in this dissertation, and thus represents this movement of subverting the tradition as ongoing, one that is not resolved and must continue to move against tradition to change the story. In doing so, though, Greene questions the methods available for making such a change: "how can a writer disrupt linearity and still remain comprehensible?" (15). She warns against the methods of disruption of "sentences and sequences [that] often disrupt sense as well and become, like avant-garde experimental texts, inaccessible and esoteric."

Greene's warning would exclude experimental writers such as Stein and H.D., both of whom effectively use defamiliarizing writing techniques to break the sentence; neither should be discounted simply because her sentences disrupt the traditional linear sentence. Although Greene discusses repetition as a method for changing the story, "as a means to a transformed present and new possibilities for the future, allowing repetition in order for there to be escape from repetition, in order for there to be progress or change," her argument is weakened by her exclusion of experimental writers who use repetition not only in reordering the sequence but also reordering the sentence to move away from the tradition (16). This dissertation analyzes how *HERmione*, *Orlando*, *The Glimpses of the Moon*, and *Unpunished*, through repetition at the sentence and the narrative level, both use and break the love-plot tradition's hegemonic sequence to create

alternative situations and marriages for protagonists. In reiterating the non-traditional lives the women protagonists lead, the repetitions critique the marriage conventions. Catharine R. Stimpson, in the series preface to Boone's *Tradition Counter Tradition*, considers the critique of the tradition as necessarily intertwined with the methods of revising the narrative that these novels use: "The revolt against the ideology of marriage was inseparable from a revolt against established principles of narrative structure, which then became a matrix of modernism" (viii). The novels I focus on offer the protagonists, through repetition, options other than conventional marriage. Using Boone's distinctions of the types of love plots as a framework, my project begins with what can be read as courtship plots, *HERmione* and *Orlando*, then moves to a hybrid of a courtship and a wedlock plot, *The Glimpses of the Moon*, and ends with the only one of the four novels that involves a wedlock plot from beginning to end, *Unpunished: A Mystery*. The epilogue considers Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928) as a novel that repeats the love-plot tradition without exploding the restrictive ending, but rather subverting it by exposing through repetition the confinement of marriage and the marriage plot. This discussion serves as a counterpoint in that it does not offer the protagonist an escape from the restrictive sexual-marital ideology of the courtship tradition nor from the literary conventions depicting black female sexuality; instead, *Quicksand* reveals the stifling effects of repeating the love-plot tradition.

Although each of the novels, except for *HERmione*, depicts a protagonist who marries, none saves the marriage for the ending of the novel, nor are the protagonists denied autonomy—or a story—once married. Instead, these plots distort the rigid love-plot tradition by repeating it with difference, which allows them to rework the narrative

conventions of courtship and marriage so that they evolve until they are no longer the constraining plots that end protagonists' stories. By shifting the positioning of marriage in the narrative sequence and making marriage, wedlock, and the love plot evolve into something not climactic, these novels offer women characters stories beyond their nuptial vows. Further, though the novels contain in the foreground this examination of new types of marriage, the backgrounds repetitiously present more traditional marriages. These other marriages, often loveless, sexless, or unfaithful, reflect the polarized gender roles from which the protagonists are working to break free, making clear the critique of the conventional. They represent, as in Stein's metaphor about movement, the static form against which the protagonists' movement is visible. I consider three major types of repetition used as tools for subversion: the repetition with difference of the love-plot tradition; repetition within the text of plots, characters, or motifs; and linguistic or rhetorical repetitions that heighten the effects of the other two types. Through the course of my argument, I also briefly address relevant inter-textual repetition among texts by the same author, but since such examination necessarily moves beyond a given narrative's parameters and undermines its narrative integrity, it is less relevant to this dissertation.

Stein's writing serves as a perfect example of the use of repetition at the level of the sentence to undermine and subvert the patriarchal order. Although her writing is considered repetitious, which in "Portraits and Repetition" she comments on, "every time one of the hundreds of times a newspaper man makes fun of my writing and of my repetition he always says the same theme, that is, if you like, repetition, that is if you like the repeating that is the same thing" (167), Stein refutes the description of her work as

repetitious. Instead, she questions repetition's existence altogether: "Then also there is the important question of repetition and is there any such thing. Is there repetition or is there insistence. I am inclined to believe there is no such thing as repetition. And really how can there be" (166). She distinguishes between *repetition*, which would be an identical copy, and *insistence*, which takes into account the difference in emphasis: "That is what makes life that the insistence is different, no matter how often you tell the same story if there is anything alive in the telling the emphasis is different. It has to be, anybody can know that" (167).[2] "Portraits and Repetition," then, in Stein's terminology, is replete with insistence, not repetition, and it reiterates—albeit slightly differently—the definition of insistence: "Then we have insistence insistence that in its emphasis can never be repeating, because insistence is always alive and if it is alive and if it is alive it is never saying anything in the same way because emphasis can never be the same not even when it is most the same that is when it has been taught" (171).

Acknowledging the accepted definition of repetition but refuting it, Stein argues "This as I say made what has been called repetition but, and you will see, each sentence is just the difference in emphasis that inevitably exists in the successive moment of my containing within me the existence of that other one achieved by talking and listening inside in me and inside in that one" (198). Stein's differentiation between repetition and

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[2] Stein's argument in "Portraits and Repetition" seems to contradict her earlier discussion of repetition in *The Making of Americans* (written between 1906 and 1911, published 1925), in which "Every one then has a history in them by the repeating that comes out from them [. . .] there is repeating then always in every one" (191). Although she acknowledges difference between repetitions, she still terms them repetition: "There is always repeating in every one but such repeating always has in it a little changing." Her views change by the time she writes "Portraits and Repetition," seen not only in the shift in the definition of repetition and the addition of the term insistence, but also specifically in Stein's claim that "also as there was in The Making of Americans no repetition" (177).

insistence inserts her into theoretical debates about whether repetition can exist, since no two moments can ever be identical—there is always something different, even if it is as miniscule a difference as Stein's example of the difference from frame to frame in a moving picture: "just as the cinema has each time a slightly different thing to make it all be moving" (179). What Stein refers to as insistence I have chosen to refer to as the more commonly-understood *repetition with difference*, which calls attention to both the replication of the original and the deviation from the original which necessarily exists. What Stein does not explicitly acknowledge in her discussion of insistence is the importance of the repetition, not only of the change in emphasis. Throughout this dissertation, when I consider repetition—which is necessarily repetition with some level of difference—whether in form or in content, I am interested in how the repetition both copies and deviates from the original, however imperfect the copy, and however vast or minute a difference.

Stein's argument against repetition is grounded in the difference, such that even the same word is not repeated because the insistence changes emphasis from utterance to utterance. In *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982), J. Hillis Miller surveys relevant theories of repetition, but perhaps most relevant to this discussion is Gilles Deleuze's "two formulations: 'only that which resembles itself differs,' 'only differences resemble one another'" (Miller 5). Miller aptly notes the importance of repetition in both the form and the content of a narrative, asserting that "Any novel is a complex tissue of repetitions and of repetitions within repetitions, or of repetitions linked in chain fashion to other repetitions" (2-3). His focus on the identification of "the various forms of recurrence in novels" and the meanings these recurrences generate relies on the

similarities, as he argues that "In a novel, what is said two or more times may not be true, but the reader is fairly safe in assuming that it is significant" (1, 2). Although Stein might argue that nothing is said more than once in her writing, what she considers insistence, regardless of the changes in emphasis, underscores what is important: "That is it is never the same moment it is never the same emphasis at any successive moment of existing. Then really what is repetition. It is very interesting to ask and it is a very interesting thing to know" (185).

In addition to drawing from Stein's and Miller's discussions of repetition, my theoretical consideration of repetition also draws largely from narratology. Gérard Genette's discussion of what he terms narrative frequency in *Narrative Discourse* (1980), perhaps the first in narratology, considers the permutations writers use to relay events occurring many times in a story, requiring an understanding of repetition "which eliminates from each occurrence everything belonging to it that is peculiar to itself, in order to preserve only what it shares with all the others of the same class, which is an abstraction" (113). This kind of repetition focuses on the similarities rather than the differences. Genette argues that there are four permutations of frequency, "or, more simply, repetition": narrating once what happened once, "Yesterday I went to bed early"; narrating *n* times what happened *n* times, "Monday, I went to bed early, Tuesday I went to bed early, Wednesday I went to bed early, etc."; narrating *n* times what happened once, "Yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed early, etc."; and narrating one time, or rather, at one time, what happened *n* times "every day of the week I went to bed early" (114-116). A fifth possibility, narrating *n* times what happened *m* times, which Genette claims lacks example, is not included in his

schematic—although it is in future discussions of frequency, such as in Mieke Bal's *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985, revised 1997). Bal terms this frequency category the *varisingular*, referring to "various events, various presentations, unequal in number" (1985 79, 1997 113).

In this dissertation, I focus most on a combination of the first three forms of frequency; that is, I consider the many instances of telling seemingly singular events, but in which the seemingly unique events are actually similar enough to other events to be considered repetitions with difference. Although Genette accounts for stylistic variations in the second permutation, such as "Yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed before it was late, yesterday I put myself to bed early," in this dissertation I argue for linking iterations far more disparate than Genette's stylistic variants, rather than considering them as different events altogether. This conflation, what Bal describes in *Narratology* as "different events or alternative presentation of events, which show similarities," highlights the narrative pattern in which the similarities become our focus, but without ignoring the differences (1985 77). My use of the term *repetition with difference* coincides with Bal's discussion of *resemblance*, which takes into account different degrees of likeness.[3] Two texts do not resemble each other absolutely—otherwise they would be identical copies—but their summaries can "have striking elements in common. The degree of resemblance is determined by the number of terms the summaries share" (Bal 1985 146).[4]

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[3] In *Changing the Story*, Greene offers another version of this concept, what she terms *repetition with re-vision*, a specific type of repetition with difference, to describe a kind of repetition that uses the past to create new possibilities, "a return to the past that enables a new future" (16).

[4] As an example of the impossibility of one text repeating another exactly, both Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1983), and Bal note Jorge Luis Borges's "Pierre

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1983), in considering Genette's discussion of frequency, the relationship between the number of times something occurs and the number of times it is narrated, notes the relevance of repetition, "a mental construct attained by an elimination of the specific qualities which it shares with similar occurrences" (56). However, she continues by casting doubt on the concept of repetition as a series of similarities, in which she argues "Strictly speaking, no event is repeatable in all respects, nor is a repeated segment of the text quite the same, since its new location puts it in a different context which necessarily changes its meaning" (56-7). Rimmon-Kenan's view, much like Stein's in its focus on the implicit and explicit difference between one iteration and its reiteration is not contradictory to what I am positing, but rather emphasizes the nuanced differences between the kinds of repetitions I will consider. Miller's consideration of different types of repetition, at the level of the word, the image, the event, and the history, as well as Bal's discussion of the importance of repetition in the construction of character, instead relies on the seemingly similar in the repetition of what is necessarily somewhat different. Peter J. Rabinowitz, in *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and Politics of Interpretation*, discusses the use of repetiton when it is different, such as the way that repetition creates expectation. He cites the example of "Little pig, little pig, let me come in," in which each repetition signals the same actions, but each repetition is based on the difference inherent in what

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Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," about a man whose goal is to also write *Don Quixote*, which he does, word for word. However, although he only manages to complete a few chapters, as Rimmon-Kenan notes, "all identical in every word to the corresponding portions of Cervantes's text," the result, "coming from a French Decadent esthete and from a retired Spanish soldier takes a completely different sense, the former gaining in richness from the intervening changes in history and culture" (*Narrative Poetics* 57). Bal notes in the later edition of *Narratology* in reference to the Borges story that "even two literally identical texts are not really identical. Similarly, two events are never exactly the same" (111).

the reader comes to expect (132). When the expectations of repetition are not fulfilled the result is surprise. Each of the narratives I discuss use repetition to create expectation and also to subvert expectations. Relying on both similarity and difference in repetition, the narratives create expectations by establishing elements of the coupling tradition, and create what Rabinowitz considers surprise when those expectations are not met.

The repetitions of the love plot but with difference afford these novels the space to deviate from the tradition and offer women characters freedom outside of the constricting marriage plot as the only path to female development. Instead, these narratives use the tradition to show how they deviate from the teleological marriage-as-end-goal trajectory.[5] In my first chapter, "'Her Gart went round in circles': *HERmione* and the Almost-Marriage Repetitions," I show how H.D.'s novel uses repetition as a rhetorical mode and a narrational mode to highlight the way in which Hermione's plot repeats the marriage plot yet never actually has her marry. One kind of repetition that Miller discusses in *Fiction and Repetition*, that "events or scenes may be duplicated within the text" (2), can be seen here in that having failed out of college, Hermione looks to her engagement to poet George as an escape from the stifling patriarchy of her home life; when that, too, proves stifling, she engages in other options, such as a relationship with a woman, Fayne, instead of George, or a career as a nurse. Her decision at the end of the

[5] Although psychoanalytic theory also discusses the use of repetition in fiction, I have chosen not to include that approach, which focuses on repetition as a confining rather than a liberating force. Rimmon-Kenan discusses "narration-as-repetition" through psychoanalytic theories in "Narration as Repetition: The Case of Günter Grass's *Cat and Mouse*," part of *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature* (1987), describing the "double-edged" nature of that repetition: "it may lead to a working through and an overcoming, but it may also imprison the narrative in a kind of textual neurosis, an issueless re-enactment of the traumatic events it narrates and conceals" (178). In the texts I discuss here, repetition does not trap the protagonists but instead opens up the narratives to provide more options than the traditional narrative structures of the love plot would allow.

novel to travel to Europe as she had intended to do on her honeymoon, but without getting married, and to fund the trip with the money that would have been her trousseau, shows the liberatory possibilities that repetition with difference can offer women characters.

The fragmentary, repetitive style of the narration, itself non-linear and counter-traditional, and the images and motifs repeated in breaking the love-plot tradition underscore Miller's argument that the "repetition of verbal elements: words, figures of speech, shapes or gestures, or, more subtly, covert repetitions that act like metaphors" (1) create what I consider a multivalent repetitive mode. DuPlessis's discussion of the breaking of the androcentric sentence and sequence is particularly relevant in this chapter, in which the narration sometimes has a Steinian quality of repetition—or insistence—which depicts Hermione's thinking, and emphasizes why the traditional structure, whether of marriage, of artistic inspiration, or of thinking, speaking, or writing, will not "sustain her" (23). The quotation in this dissertation's title, drawn from *HERmione* (5), exemplifies this multivalent repetition, and shows how it works in relation to the traditional narrative drive toward marriage as the goal in plots of women's development.

In my second chapter, "'Was it marriage?': Androgyny, Clothing, and Repetition in *Orlando*'s Fiction of Marriage," although Virginia Woolf's Orlando does marry, it is not saved for the end of the novel nor is it cast as the pinnacle of Orlando's achievement. Instead, there are numerous instances of proposals or courtships, both when Orlando is a man and, after the shift in the middle of the novel, when Orlando is a woman, and across the span of nearly four hundred years of Orlando's life, that distort the traditional

courtship plot. The narrative uses linguistic repetition to highlight the repetition in the plot, but unlike in *HERmione*, the repetition is more logical and rhetorical. The rhetorical repetitions cluster around the instances of courtship, as well as around moments of gender ambiguity caused by obscuring clothing. Clothing, which usually repeats a person's gender, and gender, which is normalized into two finite forms, are repeatedly exploded constructs in *Orlando*, serving to undermine the convention of marriage as joining two characters, one decidedly male and the other decidedly female. Judith Butler's discussion in *Gender Trouble* (1990) of the cultural constructs of gender as necessarily repetitive informs my consideration of the relationship between characters and their genders, between gender and clothing, and between gender and marriage.

Whereas in the first two chapters, the repetition of marriage options, or narrative replacements for marriage, undermines the traditional progression of the heroine's movement toward marriage, the next two chapters begin with the marriage already in place. In Chapter Three, "'You lucky lucky girl! You clever clever darling!': Repetition and the One-Year Marriage Experiment in *The Glimpses of the Moon*," Edith Wharton's novel begins with Nick and Susy Lansing already on their honeymoon. The plan that they have devised for their marriage, that they will marry each other for love, live off the wedding gifts and generosity afforded to them by several of their friends, and part ways in a year or when the money runs out in favor of a more lucrative option that will finance their upper-class lifestlyes, is a repetition with extreme difference of the marriage plot. This undercutting of the marriage-plot tradition through the characters' plan to divorce and remarry is inherently repetitive, and the language in the text emphasizes the repetitive nature of marriage in the age of divorce.

Although *The Glimpses of the Moon* begins with the Lansings already married, their honeymoon does not last long. Instead of the year or longer that they have planned for, they separate after only a few months, and the plot switches from wedlock to courtship. Other couple's marriages serve as models or anti-models for Nick and Susy, such that they are not only repeating a literary convention but also a narrative construct of marriage established by the narrator. Miller accounts for this type of repetition in *Fiction and Repetition*: "Motifs from one plot or character may recur in another within the same text" (2). That Nick and Susy ultimately reconcile at the novel's end, offering a repetition of the happy ending expected of a marriage plot, is itself a repetition with difference, both of the marriage they had at the beginning, and of the traditional marital closure, which has been undermined and revised by the novel's love-plot complications.

In the fourth chapter, "'A man can die but once!': The Husband-and-Wife Detective Team and the Repetitions of 'a Five-Fold Murder' in *Unpunished: A Mystery*," Charlotte Perkins Gilman presents Jim and Bessie Hunt who, although they have been married for four years, still seem like honeymooners. The narrative is a repetition with difference not only of the love-plot tradition but also of the detective-fiction tradition; their marital status is never in question, and their wedlock plot instead chronicles their teamwork in the case of Wade Vaughn, who has been found murdered in at least five ways. The five-fold murder offers a model for repetition with difference; the act of attempted murder can be repeated *ad infinitum*, but, as Bessie points out, "A man can die but once!" Thus, the second act is necessarily different from the first. As a team, Jim and Bessie repeat the steps of the murders as well as the repeated attempts to frame the family oppressed and terrorized by Vaughn. Their investigation reveals Vaughn to be

the true criminal through uncovering—by repeating their history—the family's suffering. Among the offenses are unhappy, forced marriages across generations that represent another of Miller's repetitions: "A character may repeat previous generations, or historical or mythological characters" (2). The utopian marriage that Jim and Bessie maintain serves as an instructive example of what marriage should be, which is acknowledged in the couplings that end the novel.

Whereas these novels use repetition to distort or re-mold the tradition into a counter-tradition that offers freedom or independence to the protagonists, thus exposing the traditional love-plot's confining nature, in my epilogue, "'It would, she thought, be simply the same old thing': *Quicksand*'s Patterns of Courtship and the Monotony of Marriage," I show how Nella Larsen's Harlem Renaissance novel, *Quicksand*, instead of using repetition to open the restrictive love plot, uses it to reveal how the marriage-plot tradition condemns Helga Crane to a near-death existence of repetitious pregnancy and physical pain in her marriage to a respectable Southern preacher. Helga's options prior to marriage—numerous suitors, a career, travel adventures, much like Hermione has or imagines for herself in H.D.'s novel—are replaced with the most confining option of all. Throughout *Quicksand*, Helga repeats her pattern of devoting herself to something, tiring of it, and moving on; once she becomes a wife and mother, she cannot repeat her life-pattern, and is instead trapped in a different kind of repetition, a monotonous one. The novel's conclusion repeats the love-plot tradition, but in likening marriage to death, in leaving the protagonist without life-options, it destabilizes that tradition by subverting the need for marital or any type of closure.

Ann duCille's *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction* (1993), complements the insights I have borrowed from Boone in earlier chapters, examining "the subversive ways in which the marriage convention has been claimed by black women writers in particular, as a trope through which to explore not only the so-called more compelling questions of race, racism, and racial identity but complex questions of sexuality and female subjectivity as well" (4). Although the treatment of *Quicksand* in an epilogue might seem to marginalize a text that is finally beginning to be included in the canon, I have placed it as such to acknowledge the distinction between African-American traditions of marital-sexual conventions in relation to the white, Western, canonical tradition such as those that Boone writes about, as well to use it as a counterpoint to the other novels I discuss in this dissertation because of its use of confinement rather than liberation as a conclusion. To borrow from Molly Hite's *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narratives* (1989), *Quicksand* uses narrative closure to reveal "*en*closure, ultimately trapping the heroine" (5). All of these narratives recognize what Hite points to as "received notions of plot, character, sequence, even grammatical structures" as a part of the dominant literary tradition (7). Using a variety of repetitions, these novels attempt to "overthrow or evade the terms of her inherited tradition," or, as duCille writes, to "mak[e] unconventional use of conventional literary forms" (3).

# Chapter One

## "Her Gart went round in circles": *HERmione* and the Almost-Marriage Repetitions

In H.D.'s 1927 novel *HERmione*, unpublished until 1981, Hermione Gart's plot of development chronicles her failing out of college, her engagement to George Lowndes, her affair with Fayne Rabb, her breakdown after discovering George and Fayne's affair, her recovery, and her future plans funded by her trousseau. Her story, then, involves several repetitions and distorted repetitions of the marriage plot, which haunt her choices. What she seeks in trying these roles—student at a women's college, fiancée, lesbian, working woman, traveler, companion—is a different narrative path than the one traditionally associated, for women, with marriage. The narrative repeats elements of the love-plot tradition to create the expectation that Hermione's engagement to George will lead to marriage and a honeymoon in Europe. However, Hermione's story throws wrench after wrench in this narrative machine. The repetitions of the marriage scenario and other replacements for marriage, culminating in several options funded specifically by her trousseau, reach a point of absurdity, and thus ridicule traditional ideals of women's life-options and provide a critique of the opportunities for women in the new century. Through these repetitions by means of alternative scenarios, Hermione is able to break the love-plot tradition and open a possibility for a counter-tradition.

*HERmione*'s narrative structure supports the plot repetitions; the narrative, written in a fragmented style, repeats itself on many levels: plot, story, narration, sentence, word, image. As J. Hillis Miller discusses about novels in general in the introductory chapter of *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982), "On a small

scale, there is repetition of verbal elements: words, figures of speech, shapes, or gestures, or, more subtly, covert repetitions that act like metaphors" (1-2). These smaller repetitions, together with larger-scale repetitions at the level of "events or scenes" or whole plots, form "a complex tissue of repetitions" (2). Miller uses the example of the color red in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Ubervilles* to demonstrate this network of repetitions; in *HERmione*, there is no shortage of examples of words echoing into repeated phrases, developing into images, around which events occur. Repetition of the word *her*, echoed in Hermione's nickname, Her, becomes linked to phrases such as "I am Her" and to the novel's repetitive collage-like modernist style, simultaneously commenting on gender, grammar, and self-hood, which figure largely into events that make up the narrative's so-called complex tissue. The relationship between Hermione and the narrator offers another layer of repetition. Always focalized through Hermione, the narrative switches among direct discourse, indirect discourse, and free indirect discourse, as well as narrated monologue,[1] and between heterodiegetic and autodiegetic narration, often repeating the same ideas or observation in each narrational mode.[2] Linguistic repetition, which is itself multilayered in the narrative because of the multiple iterations of the same moment in

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[1] Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* provides an excellent discussion of these different ways a narrator depicts a character's thoughts. However, because of the unique nature of the narration in *HERmione*, it cannot be classified exactly according to the types she identifies.

[2] As Mieke Bal states in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1997), "narrator and focalizer are not to be conflated" (147). The focalizer is who sees or perceives what is narrated, whereas the narrator tells those perceptions. The narrator can be the focalizer, and there can be numerous other focalizers throughout a text even if it has only one narrator. In the case of *HERmione*, the narration shifts between autodiegetic—first-person—narration and heterodiegetic—third person but not a character in the novel—as well as occasionally to second-person narration, further emphasizing the fragmented, multiple quality of the narrative. The heterodiegetic narrator focalizes as does Hermione, and, as I discuss later in this chapter, Hermione uses other characters to focalize through an additional lens.

different narrative modes, also creates a sense of Hermione's uncertainty about herself, in that she repeats others' words, her own words, the narrator's words, as well as words from poems. This repeated language, a key to the nature of Hermione's interiority and a component of the text's impressionistic use of a modernist style of pastiche, as well as stream-of-consciousness narration, is found not only in the sequencing of ideas and sentences, but also in the repetition that occurs between what the narrator tells and what Hermione thinks, says, or narrates herself.

Fragmentary in its finished creation, *HERmione*'s language can be rhythmic, melodic, and certainly poetic, yet at the same time can disorient, distract, and cast doubt on the future of the protagonist's predicament: "Words were her plague and words were her redemption. [. . .] Almost, almost she heard words, almost, almost she discerned the whirr of arrows. [. . .] Almost words would work charm . . . but not yet" (67). Hermione's "predicament," her "dementia," what can best be described as her breakdown, has already begun when she leaves college for failing a mathematics course on conic sections.[3] It develops further as she ends her engagement to George Lowndes and then her relationship with Fayne Rabb, and is largely characterized by a repetitious dissociation with language. This problematic relationship with language manifests itself

[3] *Conic sections* refers to the study of the shapes that result when a plane intersects a cone: a circle, an ellipse, a parabola, and a hyperbola, depending on the angle of intersection. The symbolic significance of conic sections in *HERmione* is great, since it not only represents the mathematical-scientific world of Carl and Bertrand Gart, Hermione's father and brother, but also can represent the tree imagery throughout the text, in which Hermione views trees as "cones of green set within green cones" (71). Circles also figure prominently throughout the text, from the opening line about Hermione going round in circles to tree imagery, circular logic, etc., and although they are not referred to specifically, ellipses, parabolas, and hyperbolas also offer a symbolic representation of the veering, slanted motion of the text. Since a cone can be thought of as an infinite series of smaller and smaller circles, concentric circles, which in particular figure heavily throughout the text, can be read as a collapsed cone.

in her name, which offers her a grammatically troubled identity, in which words and syntax cease to signify what they traditionally signify. Her adoption of other characters' vocabularies further indicates her tenuous relationship to language.

Moreover, much like Hermione's auditory and linguistic perceptions, which fail to operate as expected, her visual perception alters her perception of her surroundings, offering her instead a more modernist lens onto her previously Victorian world. Although they interfere with her interaction with the world around her, these problematic perceptions change the way that Hermione experiences sensory or linguistic information, providing her with an unconventional perspective that she can use to work her way through her predicament. Shifts in focalization and narrator emphasize Hermione Gart's crisis of character, chronicling her struggle to develop as a writer and as a woman. Not strong enough to withstand the controlling influences of her Victorian mother, her scientist father, her fiancé George Lowndes, or her lover Fayne Rabb, Hermione is permeable to their ideas, vision, and language, letting them affect what she says and how she hears and sees, which further complicates her already problematic struggle for identity-development. This struggle is reflected in the repetitions of language and of plot, further developing that complex tissue of repetition.

**"her entire failure to conform to expectations was perhaps some subtle form of courage"**

Narratives that break the sentence and sequence by writing a different story in a different way, what Molly Hite, in *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narratives* (1989), calls "attempts to write other-wise, to create an

experimental syntax and structure that would not merely expose but would refuse altogether the prevailing constructions of gender and genre," have been misread as failures in that they do not repeat the expected tradition. Writing that works against "received notions of plot, character, sequence, and even grammatical structures," or that "attempts to overthrow or evade these terms of her inherited tradition," rather than being valorized as innovative, is "reinscribed as the failure inherent in the very concept of feminine literary endeavor" (6-7). Paradoxically, the woman writer's break from the traditional sentence and sequence, her attempt to "de-story the old story" (DuPlessis *Pink Guitar* 24) is read as a failure either because it does not replicate the tradition, or because it attempts to but fails. It can be difficult for a writer to break the sentence, as Virginia Woolf's Mary Carmichael does in *Life's Adventure*, in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, without being accused of simply avoiding sentimentality, or ornate and flowery writing (81). What are these "thorns" that a woman can use to prick her story out of the garden of florid writing? The "woman's sentence" that Woolf refers to calls for writing unafraid of gender as an issue, for not falling under the control of male judgment that her artistic "vision is seen as peculiar, incompetent, marginal" (DuPlessis *Writing Beyond the Ending* 33). Thus women should not remove gender from their writing but should create a space for their genders instead of writing into one assigned by the male hegemony of the canonical literary world.[4]

[4] This chapter benefits from Woolf's arguments about women writers and women's writing, as well as other critical work that has developed since *A Room of One's Own*; however, my aim is not to enter into the discussion about the male or female sentence, or the different writing men and women produce. Rather, my focus on gender and the sentence and sequence is to examine the way in which narrative can, in the words Friedman and Fuchs, "rupture conventional structures of meaning by which the patriarchy reigns in order to give presence and voice to what was denied and repressed" (15).

H.D.'s sentence in *HERmione*, although it renders a narrative that more appropriately can depict Hermione's dilemma, makes her a target for critics who expect the traditional sentence. For instance, Norman Holland argues in "H.D. and the 'Blameless Physician'" (1969) that her "strength lies in her rendition of detail: her weakness is in structuring those details into a poetic, characterological, or still more acutely, fictional whole." Rather than read her style as accomplishing a different goal, or as depicting a different character, Holland considers it a weakness. His criticism continues:

> Poems, fiction, even essays like *Tribute to Freud* [. . .] become a series of isolated images or events linked by free associations, often through mythological themes. At the very sentence level, her boundaries tend to be ill-defined. A sentence modifier from one sentence will seem to apply to the next. [. . .] The word to which a pronoun or adjective refers may be one or two sentences back; the reference itself may be twinned or multiple. (475)

Although he wrote his article, which focuses largely on H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, more than a decade before the posthumous publication of *HERmione*, Holland's description of H.D.'s style seems to apply to this narrative. What Holland criticizes in H.D.'s writing style are precisely the aspects that allow her writing to break the sentence and to adroitly construct on the page the disorientation that Hermione experiences.[5]

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[5] Although Holland does not overtly critique H.D.'s style as too feminine, his argument that her writing style reflects her psychosis is one that would not be considered for a male writer. Christine Coffman, in her recent book, *Insane Passions: Lesbianism and Psychosis in Literature and Film* (2006), critiques at length Holland's 1969 article, as well as his longer works that take up similar issues, *Poems in Persons: An Introduction to the Psychoanalysis of Literature* (1973, revised 1989), and his 2000 electronic

In *HERmione*, breaking the sentence with the use of incomplete sentences, non-linear phrasings, free direct discourse, and the inconsistent use of orthographic cues such as the use of quotation marks and phrases such as "said Hermione," is only one part of the creation of a dominant voice. Next the writer must break the expected order of the text, which involves creating new fabula, since to break the sequence the writer must script new possibilities within the narrative rather than use traditional stories or phenomena. According to DuPlessis, breaking the sequence means rupturing habits of narrative order. Breaking the sequence of the traditional plot of female development does not require that the narrative be rid of all androcentric components, such as courtship, marriage, etc., but rather that these tropes cannot have the same importance or place in the narrative so that they cannot take control of the story. *HERmione* breaks away from a patriarchal, canonical structure by breaking the marriage plot with great frequency. It also challenges the traditional role of the woman as muse rather than artist, with Hermione ultimately refusing to be George's muse, as well as traditional notions of closure, with the final twist of Fayne waiting for Hermione in the workroom, and the traditional containment of women characters in narrative constructs of marriage, spinsterhood, or death.

The sequence that *HERmione* breaks, the traditional marriage plot, turns swiftly away from the expected outcome, and then even away from the refigured outcomes. If the hegemonic tradition represents the pairing of woman and man as the goal of the text, culminating in marriage, H.D.'s text represents a multitude of other outcomes. The

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book, *Poems in Persons: A Psychology of the Literary Process*, as well as critical work in response to Holland's.

narrative initially creates the hegemonic expectation, where a young woman looks to her suitor to marry her, take her away from her home life, and then whisk her away to Europe for their honeymoon: "I'm going to swirl to Europe. Doesn't everybody go there on a honeymoon?" (98). Hermione longs for this outcome despite her parents' disapproval of her relationship with George, who has been accused of being involved in a sex scandal at the college where he teaches. According to DuPlessis, Hermione wants George to take her away from her family so that he is the one making the decision and is therefore the one responsible (*Pink Guitar* 22). A large portion of the narrative focuses on their relationship, revealing how problematic it is, particularly through George's interfering with Hermione's already troubled connection with language and vision. As her family begins to accept this relationship, though, Hermione begins a relationship with Fayne, a friend of a Bryn Mawr classmate, exchanging the heteronormative marriage plot for a homosexual coupling that will foster her development as a writer. As the reader adjusts to this new version of the coupling plot, the text breaks again, cutting Hermione's ties with Fayne when Hermione discovers that Fayne has been unfaithful to her with George. This discovery drops Hermione into an even deeper predicament than the beginning of the novel. Her nervous breakdown, which also represents a male hegemonic assertion of female frailty—particularly emotional frailty—introduces Hermione to Nurse Dennon, and to the possibility of nursing as a life-calling. She decides that she will use her trousseau money, intended for her marriage, to obtain training to fulfill this goal, repeating but with a difference the traditional marriage-plot sequence again by re-allocating her trousseau money to develop a career that will replace her need for marriage. She then abandons this potential career to use her trousseau

money to take a trip to Europe with Jimmie Farrand, her neighbor and not a romantic interest. In the last paragraph of the novel, she considers her trousseau, deciding that "Gran left it for my marriage . . . this will be my marriage," thus redefining what marriage can be (234). The narrative seems to settle on this platonic relationship for the re-sequenced ending, in which Hermione plans to take what would have been her honeymoon trip instead with a non-romantic associate. However, the narrative subverts closure and unsettles the ending, when, as Hermione returns home from her walk that has taken her to the Farrand's, she finds that Fayne has been waiting for her in her workroom. In ending this way, the narrative avoids closure.

Rather than use the sentence that Woolf's Mary Carmichael tries to break, *HERmione*'s fragmentary and erratic narrative style does not stifle its protagonist, serving instead to represent on the page what Hermione calls her "predicament." The narrative has broken the sentence from the first page, although Hermione cannot entirely claim the sentence for herself until the end of the novel. The reader, like Hermione, "went round in circles," (3) setting off on a circular path, rather than a linear one. *HERmione*'s narrator, in keeping with the internal, stream of consciousness style, moves around without offering the reader an indication of the sequence of events or who is present in the scene. The narrator does not always indicate who is speaking, or to whom. Located in line with Hermione's consciousness, the narrator can do away with hegemonic demands on standard written language, providing instead a stream-of-consciousness, non-linear narrative where referents are often obscured or blurred.[6] Hermione stutters,

[6] There is no textual basis to confirm the gender of the narrator, although the narrator's close alignment with Hermione suggests that the narrator is also female, possibly even Hermione at an

not only in her speech but more importantly in her thoughts. The narrator's representation of Hermione has broken past the need for conventional coherence and presents a more mimetic text that more closely depicts Hermione's state of mind, her logic, and her vision of her surroundings.

The narration randomly shifts throughout the novel from third to first to—less frequently—second person in mid-sentence, at the start of paragraphs, at the start of new sections, and shifts back just as inexplicably. Narrated monologue, without sufficient pronouns to distinguish who is narrating or thinking, often confuses the shift. The novel begins with third-person narration alternating with Hermione's quoted speech or thought:

> Her Gart went round in circles. "I am Her," she said to herself; she repeated "Her, Her, Her." Her Gart tried to hold on to something; drowning she grasped, she caught at a smooth surface, her fingers slipped, she cried in her dementia, "I am Her, Her, Her." (3)

The second section of the first chapter expresses many of the same ideas that the narrator expresses in the first section, except that Hermione's first-person voice, not quotation, alternates with the narrator's. This kind of narrator-shifting is typical throughout the novel, creating a unique narrative quality:

> Her Gart stood. Her mind still trod its round. I am Her Gart, my name is Her Gart. I am Hermione Gart. I am going round and round in circles. Her Gart went on. Her feet went on. Her feet had automatically started.

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older age, or even Hermione removed from herself and narrating in third person, although these possibilities are purely speculative and do not hold in all situations.

> So automatically she continued, then stumbled as a bird whirred its bird oblivion into nearby trees above her. Her Gart. I am Her Gart. Nothing held her, she was nothing holding to this thing: I am Hermione Gart, a failure. (4)

The repetition of ideas told by different narrators—the narrator who begins the novel and Hermione—creates an odd inversion. In this sequence of narration, first by the external narrator then Hermione, it seems as though the narrator has access to Hermione's mind in a way that Hermione herself does not; it could be read as Hermione repeating the narrator, seeing as the narrator sees. However, this is not the case, since there are moments when this repetition works the other way, such that the third-person narrator echoes what Hermione has already narrated. Furthermore, although the narrator often narrates things first, followed by Hermione's iteration of the same observation, in order for the narrator to have access to them, Hermione must have said or thought or experienced them first.[7] However, there are moments in which the narrator knows what Hermione cannot, revealing the narrator's wiser, perhaps older position: "Hermione Gart could not then know that her precise reflection, her entire failure to conform to expectations was perhaps some subtle form of courage" (4). The tense difference—past for the narrator, present for Hermione—in the narration serves as evidence of the sequence of the origination of the ideas, inverted then by the telling of the story, and can, sometimes, help distinguish who is narrating or who is focalizing.

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[7] Although I discuss this issue at greater length in Chapter Four, when the format of the detective novel illustrates the function of retelling in the narrative, this example between Hermione and the narrator shows that the character experiences in the present what the narrator necessarily describes in the past tense.

There are moments, though, when it is impossible to determine who the narrator is, Hermione or external narrator, or which one is focalizer.

Hermione's struggle to develop as an artist, rather than a muse/wife or a scientist/daughter, intersects with the struggle to break the phallocentric sentence. The narrative seems not only to break the sentence and sequence, but words as well; words become disconnected from their meanings, or overwrought with meaning, so that the mystical connection that things and language have detaches words from their usual denotations. That things could be writing, "Things, a bird skimming across a window, were a sort of writing on a wall," suggests an equating of object—in this case a bird—and the language used to signify that object—the writing on the wall—in hieroglyphic fashion (125). This view of language connects with the idea earlier in the novel that "This forest was reality. There, the very speaking of words, conjured up proper answering sigil, house and barn and terrace and castle and river and little plum tree. A whole world was open. She looked in through a wide doorway" (62). Claire Buck, in *H.D. and Freud: Bisexuality and a Feminine Discourse* (1991), addresses this connection in her discussion of H.D.'s use of a signifier-signified relationship that "occlude[s] the gap separating being and meaning, by establishing an essential rather than conventional relationship, because the natural world is itself posed as meaningful—'birds', for example, are a kind of writing" (50). This scenario, in which "The language is conceived of as unmediated, implying that there is a fixed link between signifier and signified, and sign and referent," makes more sense in Buck's discussion of *Palimpsest* (1926), which H.D. wrote just before *HERmione*. The protagonists in each of the three sections of *Palimpsest* have a stronger hold on language than Hermione does as each struggles with

issues of translation; in *HERmione*, Hermione's relationship with any language is slippery as she struggles to translate between thoughts in her head and words, and vice-versa. Although Buck convincingly argues for a system in which "words have occult power like the 'sigil,'" Hermione does not operate in this system—which is why, despite the fact that "the whole world was open," Hermione only "looked in through a wide doorway," rather than participating in it directly. The project to "oppose and challenge a repressive and exclusive language marked as phallocentric" emerges in H.D.'s fiction of the 1920s as she "thematises sexuality and gender through the figure of the would-be writer," such that "the figure of the artist represents sexuality and identity as inextricably linked to language, writing and representation" (Buck 42).

Although words have strong connections to their referents, when the meanings deviate, Hermione cannot make sense of them. When sister-in-law Minnie calls Hermione's father *father*, Hermione cannot rationalize it since he is not Minnie's father (15). The word is repeated several times in close proximity, each time with a different meaning associated with it. Hermione's conception of what a father is, does not resemble what the word conventionally—or even unconventionally—means: "'Father' went with a river, a leap out from a boat, a forest where oaks obligingly dropped cups and saucers, acorns and their scattered woodhusks. [. . .] 'Father' was a run forward, a plunge backward; that thing had now no visible embodiment" (15-16). Even this inventive meaning of the word *father* ceases to function as a signifier for her, instead morphing into something unwordlike: "Words beat and sizzled and a word bent backward like a saw in a sawmill reversed, turned inward, to work horrible destruction" (15). The word loses meaning, becoming instead a repetitive, onomatopoeic sound. In

Hermione's reality, words do not operate as they would in another's reality; to Hermione, "Words beat and formed unformulated syllables," even though words do not usually beat, an action usually associated with drums or waves or fists (25). Furthermore, the notion of words taking the form of unformulated syllables is problematic, since words without formulated syllables are not words but utterances, sounds without formal internal units, perhaps the sound of a stutter. The conversation surrounding her fails to convey its meaning, since it does not operate in her syntax.

The failure of words to indicate significance also occurs in Hermione's relations with George. His habit of using foreign terms in particular makes his words hold no literal meaning, only repetitive sound in Hermione's ear:

> Words make tin pan noises, little tin pan against my ear and words striking, beating on it, bella, bella, bella, molta bella, bellissima. [. . .] Anyway, far away the voice of George making circus tent noises, little far away miniature Punchinello shouting outside a tent, Bellissima. [. . .] She heard the words far and far, little circus tent flap went flap-flap and outside it was Punchinello, a harlequin sort of person with patchwork clothes with patchwork languages, bursting into Spanish or Italian or the sort of French that no one ever tried to think of speaking. (43)

Here, words make the noises usually associated with rain falling into a metal pot or the like, not something that conveys meaning and allows two people to communicate. Although George thinks that he sounds impressive, to Hermione he sounds ridiculous, like circus tents flapping, which leads her to free-associate from circus tents to George being a harlequin. Hermione, who does not know Italian, cannot make sense of what

George says, making his language come across as a repetitive stutter in her ear, even if it is not stuttering from his mouth. His ridiculous manner influences her, though, and as which I will address shortly, she attempts to speak like him at several points throughout the novel,. Her reality, a pastiche of several perspectives, is a composite of the multiple techniques she uses to gain access to her interior and exterior. Thus, although her relationship with words disconnects her from her world and furthers her state of dementia, it simultaneously breaks the expected meaning of words and makes room for a new relationship to language. This different perception of language emphasizes the process through which Hermione adjusts what she observes.

**"George puts everything out of focus"**

The notion of focalization is an interesting tool to consider the representation of Hermione's predicament in which words and focus fail her. Although Hermione is the only character-focalizer in the novel, she speaks with other characters' words and observes through their eyes. In using other characters' perspectives to express herself when she cannot, Hermione uses them as her lenses onto the world. In this way, George and Fayne are not simply the focalized objects of the narrative, but vehicles of Hermione's focalization. They become what I call *second-degree focalizers*: the narrative never directly focalizes through them, but does so indirectly by focalizing through Hermione, who in turn uses their vision and words to see and describe the world around her. Often she becomes subordinated to her love-interests' power because they control what she sees and the language she uses to describe it. It is significant here that Hermione focalizes both on and through George and Fayne, not only because her

reliance on other characters' vision highlights her own failing, subverted focus, but also because her vision is further convoluted by looking both through and at something simultaneously. The narrator uses the image of a glass window to create illusions of size and distance in cinema to describe Hermione's visual perception. She can focus near and far simultaneously, destroying aspects of depth: "The window was square and they were looking (looking at the window) at a flat screen. Things out of the window, across the window seemed to be on the window, against the window, like writing on the wall." (125). The figure of the zero-depth window not only suggests this convoluted vision of looking at and through something simultaneously, but also suggests a movie screen, which collapses moving things, near and far, into one plane, as well as visual art movements such as cubism.

Often Hermione's perspective changes and her focus and depth-perception falter as she seems to use both microscopic and telescopic lenses simultaneously, focusing too closely on objects or seeing them too far away. Focalizing through her science-oriented father and brother, Hermione's vision is distorted in the double lens of the microscope/telescope perspective, such that "[she is] tired of things that make molecule pattern and pattern like planets rotating round the sun and planets making just so much of a slight variation in their so set circle" (110).[8] This technique distorts her environment

[8] Charlotte Mandel, in her article "Magical Lenses: Poet's Vision Beyond the Naked Eye," links Hermione's impulse to look through both microscope and telescope to H.D.'s own struggle with the male power controlling her vision, father and brother for Hermione, father-astronomer and grandfather-biologist—and perhaps Freud as well—for H.D., which she draws from H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, written in 1944: "my father's telescope, my grandfather's microscope. If I let go (I, this one drop, this one ego under the microscope-telescope of Sigmund Freud) I fear to be dissolved utterly" (116). H.D. discusses several lenses in this section of *Tribute to Freud*, such as the "two convex lenses that I called bell-jars," magnifying glasses, and window glass, and her observation that "I saw the world through my double-lens; it seemed everything had broken but that. I watched snow-flakes

so that she does not have the proper tools to formulate a scheme of herself in her surroundings. Because her view is so close-up or so removed, the descriptions reveal her fragmentary vision, narrow in focus, lacking breadth, and with odd perspective. The narrative reveals the camera-like ability of Hermione's eyes:

> It was George about to bend, he was near, he was coming nearer, he was small, he could never, never come near for Hermione looked far and far and George was a midge and a leaf was the size of a house and an acorn-cup would shelter herself . . . for . . . I am a tree planted by the river of water. George did not know that, was midge under peony, I am the word tree. (73)

George's presence distorts the scene for Hermione, bringing him close to the focal lens and pushing her "far and far." Instantly, though, the lens shifts, and instead of being in a close-up, large, George becomes tiny—a midge—and Hermione large—a tree. The camera lens becomes another repeatedly-used means of focusing in the narrative, one used with great ability, as Linda Wagner-Martin suggests: "At the heart of each of H.D.'s fictions lies an image (a detail, a scene, or a refrain) used with cinematic impact" (150). This distortion of perception emphasizes the process through which Hermione visually adjusts what she observes. Her warped perception of scale and distance offers insight into her interactions with her surroundings. The narration details not only what she sees but also how she sees it, how her perspective changes, how her eyes work as a camera.

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through a magnified pane of glass" (116-118). These references to microscopes and lenses have valence in *HERmione*, which frequently refers to optics.

Hermione's mind cannot form a cohesive landscape without the use of cinematic techniques, the zooming in and panning out which create a composite image of her perception of herself in her surroundings:

> Precinematographic conscience didn't help her. Later conscience would have. She would later have seen form superimposed on thought and thought making its spirals in a manner not wholly related to matter but pertaining to it and the peony petals magnified out of proportion and the people in the room shrunk to tiny insects while the teacups again would have magnified to hemispheres. (60)

Here, her vision, as distorted as it is, can only make sense in a cinematic world. Disregarding distance, Hermione sees insects blend into her surroundings as though they were viewed on the same scale when instead they are closest to her eyes, much closer than anything else around her. This odd focus results in misconstrued perceptions of her environment:

> . . . buzz . . . ping . . . a mosquito flung brass weight against her, giant mosquito flung brass weight against her, giant mosquito as big as a chicken hawk flung against her face. She felt the weight of his weighted heavy gauze wings, wings like grey wire gauze, his wings cut her cheek, gauze of metal cut her cheek bone. Hand lifted automatically from the pillow, bang, jip . . . but she hadn't got him. Her own hand (bang-jip) against her cheekbone was less heavy than that edge of wing that had brushed her. (85-86)

That the mosquito not only appears large but also feels large against her cheek reveals how Hermione's perception is influenced by her vision—quite different from Hermione's earlier view of an insectile George appearing as small as a midge under a leaf, but nevertheless related, as the repeated motif of insects is used to convey scale and Hermione's warped sense of large and small, and near and far. The repetition of this metaphor, as Miller suggests in his discussion of small-scale repetitions, becomes linked to the larger concern about Hermione's loss of perspective.

At once fragmentary and cinematic, the narrative incorporates modernist artistic techniques that simultaneously alienate Hermione from her surroundings and provide her a means of recovery. The narrative uses multiple methods to convey Hermione's internal and external worlds. Evidence of this artistic multivision pervades the text. In her self-proclaimed dementia, Hermione's perception of depth, distance, and magnitude reveals her cinematic eye, in her ability to distort an object into some alternate existence of it. DuPlessis addresses the narrative's cinematic focus in *H.D.: The Career of that Struggle* (1986), noting that:

> The racing mind and passionate desire of late Victorian Hermione, then, prophesy some of the major artistic and cultural breakthroughs of the modernist era: cinema, non-representational art, psychoanalysis and textual feminism. There are freeze frames, strange camera angles, intense close-ups of objects, fades, interesting montages or super impositions of eyes, of pools, of concentric circles—describing Fayne and Her, H.D. makes Her's mind work cinematically. In Her's visualisations occur

> wonderful avatars of such modern styles as constructivism, cubism, surrealism, impressionism and abstract painting. (66-67)

Thus, to develop both a self- and world-view, Hermione realizes that no one view can encompass everything; she must incorporate several different views to formulate her perspective.

Despite its fragmented structure—or perhaps because of its fragmented structure—, the novel conveys a sense of cohesion, suggesting that the random and seemingly haphazard narration and focalization instead represent the fragmentary stuttering of Hermione's body—eyes included—and that her failure to perceive according to the aesthetics of realism has instead offered her the wealth of artistic possibilities for her development as an artist herself. *HERmione*'s heterodiegetic narrator does not attempt to impose a unified order on Hermione's identity, instead affording Hermione the multiplicity of views and perspectives necessary to allow her to "climb out of [her] own predicament" (54). As a Modernist text, *HERmione* radically devalues aesthetic unity, favoring instead a repetitive, jagged, fragmented expressiveness, one that can better represent all that she experiences by not attempting to represent it all at once in one way. Her focus, a pastiche of several perspectives, is fragmentary, yet not lacking. Early in the text, the narrator shows that earlier forms of visual representation alone cannot offer Hermione the perspective she needs:

> Her eyes, too wide, opened, blurred over the impression. Like the first colour-impressionist she saw blobs, perceived matte colour as pure tone. The wood-lilies were thumbed in from a laden palette. Orange was put in, with a thumb against Van Dyke brown of seasoned woodwork. Her

> let eyes refocus, saw things clearly, mid-Victorian "interior." The mid-Victorian "interior" became again classic, Flemish, something out of a long gallery, "Flemish school" from those eternal volumes laid flat, with charts and diagrams, on a carpet, threadbare upstairs, downstairs with woolly fringes before an open fireplace. Every sort of school of painting must sustain Her. (23)

Not only will the mid-Victorian represent her, so will the cinematic, the cubist, the surrealist, and so on. Hermione's artistic vision represents the novel's aesthetic, which also resists classification.

Inextricable from her problematic perception is the sense that "George puts everything out of focus" (134). But before Hermione realizes that, before she wonders "why couldn't George ever let me alone to see things in my own way, to enjoy things even if they are provincial?" (133), before she calls off her engagement to George and involves herself with Fayne, Hermione looks at her world through George-tinted lenses. Their engagement shapes her perspective and vocabulary such that this love plot takes over her identity. She adopts his habit, repeating phrases of his throughout the novel, revealing his impact on her perspective: "'It's *agacé*.' The thing annoyed her, *agacé* is the word. George was *agacé* by this, by this in what he called Gawd's own country. Gawd's own god-damn country. *Agacé. C'est agaçant*. The screen door was horribly *agaçant*" (31).[9] George's habit of infusing his speech with foreign phrases irritates Hermione, as

[9] Other examples of Hermione's use of George's language abound: "*Sauvé. Bien sauvé* as George would say" (40); "His voice was low, sursurring, (it was his word) somewhere" (64); "I wrote (George said) choriambics like some forgotten Melic" (154); "I'm being cryptic, pep-igrammatic as George says" (164).

quoted in part earlier: "Words make tin pan noises, little tin pan against my ear and words striking, beating on it, bella, bella, bella, molta bella, bellissima, you are, he was saying bellissima and he must see Bellissima. Why didn't he talk English on the telephone?" (42). George, as her fiancé, imposes his patriarchal sentence on Hermione, who incorporates his language into her own, suggesting that in repeating his words, she sees the world as George does, or at least tries to. She replies to George with his vocabulary: "*C'est agaçant. 'C'est agaçant,'* she managed over the telephone pronouncing it distinctly [. . .] 'It's terribly *agaçant*'" (43).

To understand the particularly intricate relationship between narrator and focalizer in *HERmione*, it is useful to track the use of George's vocabulary in these passages. Very often, the narrator and Hermione repeat each other, creating a layering of the same language and ideas. In the first quotation above, not only does Hermione use George's vocabulary, as seen in the quoted speech, but the narrator does as well, as seen in the section after the quotation marks, an example of the narrative's second-degree focalizing through George. At other times, such as in the second quotation above, it is unclear—or rather, impossible to know—who is narrating or focalizing. Thus, in the telephone conversation, the narrator says *C'est agaçant* before it appears immediately afterwards in quotation marks. Regardless of the complexities of the narrator's relationship with Hermione, unless one were to consider that initial utterance a quicker than usual shift from third- to first-person, then the heterodiegetic narrator, too, uses George's language, and in that, also second-degree focalizes through George. By repeating George's language and vision and focalizing through him, Hermione's sentence is facilitated and therefore not her own.

Hermione struggles with the task of removing George from her sentence, claiming it for herself. Fundamentally she has incorporated his words into her speech because she has no vocabulary of her own during their involvement. Her sentence has been usurped, has been unable to form under his controlling supervision. Within their relationship, Hermione must resist becoming what George's mother Lillian deems her: "'Your mother called me Undine'" (120). As "Undine. Or better the mermaid from Hans Andersen," she has no voice, and must use his words and his ideas to communicate what she sees. In her struggle to find her own vision, she relies on her lovers for verbal, visual, and artistic inspiration. Until she reclaims herself by developing an autonomous voice as a vehicle to express herself and not someone else, she is no different from Andersen's Little Mermaid, having relinquished her voice and vision (190).[10]

As long as George is Hermione's love-interest, he will continue to usurp her linguistic control. Although Hermione moves toward removing George from her sentences as she ends their engagement and thus this iteration of the marriage plot, she never accomplishes this completely. Fayne notices Hermione's tendency to use George's words, and in criticizing her, "Oh George, George. I thought we had crossed George out, made a clean (so to speak) slate of this Lowndes person" (177). Fayne is asking Hermione to break her sentence, to clean George from it, to create a sister-sentence, a woman's sentence. Yet the problem does not lie only in Hermione's repetition of

[10] Hermione conflates the story of Undine with The Little Mermaid. Although both involve magical forces that intervene to offer each character the chance to marry human men, which Undine succeeds in doing but the Little Mermaid does not, neither finds success in marriage, and both stories end with mystical alternatives to death rather than happily-ever-after love plots.

George's ideas, since she comes to echo Fayne's as well: "Fayne says we are underdeveloped, are all of us racially babies in development or sort of moles. We have, she says, only mole eyes that see in the dark, that we are in the dark" (171).[11] In her dementia, Hermione's perception of depth, of distance, of magnitude becomes cinematic in her ability to distort an object into some alternate form. This supports the assessment that Hermione could better develop her writing with Fayne since Fayne does not control her every word, perception or gaze. With Fayne, Hermione had the opportunity to regulate both her vision and Fayne's. Likening her fine-tuned perception to her father's scientific endeavors offers Hermione a legitimacy that she lost when she failed conic sections. In echoing Fayne, Hermione is herself an example of a creature who, without another's perspective, is in the dark. With Fayne, unlike with George, Hermione has some power to regulate observation: "The two eyes of Fayne Rabb were two lenses of an opera glass and it was Hermione's entrancing new game to turn a little screw, a little handle somewhere (like Carl Gart with his microscope) and bring into focus those two eyes" (146-147). In this version of the coupling plot, Hermione has the opportunity to regulate both her vision and Fayne's. Likening her fine-tuned perception to her father's scientific endeavors, aided by microscope lens, offers Hermione a legitimacy that she lost when she failed conic sections, and that she cannot have under George's influence.

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[11] There are numerous references to race throughout the narrative, but this statement is perhaps more linked to the discussion of lineage and eugenics that emerges, such as in discussions of how deeply rooted Hermione's mother's family is in Pennsylvania as opposed to her father's, or how relatively short Minnie's American lineage is, or more generally that "In Europe were races who had sent out their more energetic and more mystically-inclined offspring, their scourings and their scions to Pennsylvania" (9). Pages 46-47 involve an impersonal passage about the term *alien* as it applies in Europe and America. Andrew Lawson's " Helen in Philadelphia: H. D.'s Eugenic Paganism" in *Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880-1940: Essays on Ideological Conflict and Complexity*, (2003), provides an in-depth consideration of race and eugenics in *HERmione*.

Whereas in her coupling with George, he dictated not only what she should look at but how she should look at it and how she should come to talk about it, coupling with Fayne offers Hermione the chance to claim control over her vision while still looking through another's eyes.

In escaping George's control, Hermione frees herself from his gaze. Thus when she ends her relationship with George, he is no longer the focalized, nor the second-degree focalizer, and Hermione is released from being, to borrow John Berger's term, the *surveyor* of herself through George's eyes. Berger's idea that every woman must "survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life" represents Hermione's situation prior to her relationship with Fayne (Berger 46). With Fayne, Hermione finds a twin-sisterhood, blurring the surveyor/surveyed roles, as well as the roles of focalizer and focalized. The narrative marks this shift through a rejection of George's perspective: "*Agacé*. George should see Fayne. Things are not *agaçant* now I know her." (158). Hermione does slip back into George's language and perspective at times, returning his second-degree focalization to the narrative and highlighting Hermione's inability to take control firmly of her own vision.[12]

[12] In the process of recovering from her breakdown, Hermione replays conversations in her mind as a means of healing herself. One such conversation between Hermione and Fayne has Fayne tell Hermione that "You are as George says heartless," showing how Fayne, involved with George, also uses his language and thought instead of her own, and thus also focalizes through George. These recollections, repetitions of earlier events, although they represent further iterations of the same occurrence as Genette discusses, also represent differences in those repetitions, because Hermione's mental situation is necessarily different while she recovers from her breakdown. Further repetitions, such as Fayne repeating George, which repeats Hermione repeating George earlier in the narrative, emphasize the highly recursive nature of these moments.

**"Names are in people, people are in names"**

Hermione Gart's predicament is complicated not only by words in general but by her name specifically. She is either Hermione, a name with weighty literary connections, or Her, a shorter but no less complex alternative. Whereas the name Hermione has two prominent literary referents—the daughter of Helen in myth, and the character who was turned into a statue in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*—possible connotations of the nickname Her are seemingly endless and at the least somewhat confusing: object, possessive pronoun, generic female, divine, life-affirming, gender-confirming, self-as-stranger. Although there are repeated references to Greek mythology, which "existed for Her in the vaguest outline. It existed for Her in so much as Pennsylvania existed" (18), as well as to "small, red Temple Shakespeare" (31) and to recurring images of marble, statues, and things being frozen, to replicate "Hermione from the *Winter's Tale* (who later froze into a statue)" (66), these references are not nearly as frequent as the words *Her* and *her* throughout *HERmione*. The novel opens with this nickname before readers know what to make of it; "Her Gart went round in circles" prompts the question of what a Gart is instead of offering useful information about the novel's protagonist. In using the nickname before the proper name, in using it at the start of a sentence, where capitalization rules make *Her* indistinguishable from *her*, the novel ensures confusion for its readers. The third sentence also begins "Her Gart" before readers have had a chance to figure out just what a Gart is and to whom it belongs. Before finishing the first paragraph, readers' minds, too, are going round in circles.

Hermione's name further represents this stammering when she begins to break the male sentence from a grammatical standpoint, as seen in word repetition that results

from not deleting according to standard rules of grammar. The narrator uses both "Her" and "her" in the same sentence such as in the third sentence of the novel, emphasizing the repetition with difference of *Her*, *her*, and *she*: "Her Gart tried to hold on to something; drowning she grasped, she caught at a smooth surface, her fingers slipped, she cried in her dementia, 'I am Her, Her, Her.' " According to Susan Stanford Friedman and Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "The name Her has different valences in the two relationships. With George, Hermione's nickname 'Her'—always grammatically awkward as a subject—signifies her object status with conventional heterosexuality" (212). Hermione's nickname holds a different valence when she is with Fayne, which I will address shortly. Hermione's fluctuation between "Hermione" and "Her," along with the fluctuation between "Her" and "her," emphasizes the multiplicity of roles that she can play—object, subject, just any woman, and ultimately all women, the collection of more than woman, such as the coupling of sister-Fayne and sister-Hermione. These repetitions that occur between nickname and pronoun further break the androcentric sentence by undermining the conventions of grammar.

Shifting from a name like Hermione, with its literary significance, to the name Her changes the protagonist into the generic, into any female, and makes her dilemma any woman's dilemma. Thus we are given the liberty to read the novel not only as Hermione's story, but as the story of Her, or of any woman, making the novel one concerned generally with women characters' social and artistic development. DuPlessis also acknowledges this reading of Hermione's nickname: "Whenever H.D. writes 'Her realizes' or 'Her says,' she is using the wrong form of the pronoun in subject place; and every time this ungrammatical usage occurs, one is jarred into a recognition of the

situation of generic woman" ("Romantic Thralldom" 408). Another reading of the capitalized *Her* is as reverential, that the protagonist has divine stature, echoing the *He* and *Him* of religious writing. Yet if the first paragraph establishes this with the assertions "I am Her," the second paragraph destroys this notion: "But Her Gart was then no prophet" (3). However, this phrasing leaves open the possibility of some later prophesy, which comes in a mantra-like repetition later in the novel: "God is in a word. God is in a word. God is in HER. She said, 'HER, HER, HER. I am Her, I am Hermione . . . I am the word AUM' [. . .] I am the word. . . the word was with God . . . I am the word . . . HER" (32). Her name signifies both an empowerment of the character, where Hermione becomes Her, a sort of über-woman, and an invocation of the generic, which can be read as belittling. Both are contained in her name, creating an oscillation between supreme importance and nothingness.[13] Hermione's nickname, repeating simultaneously the generic and the divine, points to the contradictory nature of her name.

That Her is simultaneously Hermione's nickname—a proper noun—and a repetition with difference of the third-person female objective and possessive pronouns underscores Hermione's struggle toward self-discovery. She must overcome this displacement from subject to object, from person to pronoun that results from the ungrammatical shift that her nickname prompts. Through the repetition with difference, the capitalized nickname calls attention to the repetitions of the word *her* throughout the narrative, shifting the reader's perspective by casting a magnifying lens on the otherwise unnoticed pronoun, therefore foregrounding its presence. Susan Stanford Friedman

[13] H.D. calls attention to this distinction in her later novel *Bid Me To Live*, in which she contrasts the English word *person* with the homophonic French word *personne*, meaning nobody.

discusses this "disturbing disruption of grammar" as highlighting Hermione's "object status," in that "'I am Her' is correct from the standpoint of naming but incorrect in relationship to pronouns. This ambiguity emphasizes that linguistic objectification embodies a corresponding cultural objectification of which Hermione gradually becomes aware" ("Portrait" 33). This realization, essential for Hermione to "climb" out of her "predicament" (*HERmione* 54), is a difficult one from the object position in which she finds herself.

The narrator conveys Hermione's dilemma of identity through the attempted assertion of her identity, as seen in the repetition of her name, "I am Her, Her, Her" and repeated statements such as "She said, 'I am Hermione Gart precisely.' She said, 'I am Hermione Gart,' but Her Gart was not that. She was nebulous" (3). Attempting to secure her selfhood, Hermione frequently uses the words *precisely* and *exactly* but the words fail to pinpoint who she is. Her identity is, at the beginning of the novel, too unformulated to be precise or exact. Although the narrative repeats Hermione's name and nickname frequently, perhaps in an effort to claim her identity or reassure her that she has an identity, the effect is instead more of a stutter or stammer. The word *Her* or *her* occurs 13 times in the novel's first paragraph, itself is only 65 words long. Not only does "the repeated statement of identity [do] little to convince the reader," as Martin-Wagner suggests, but it fails to convince Hermione as well (153). Instead, the repetition shows Hermione's slipping grip on her own nebulous identity.

That Hermione's nickname is also a possessive pronoun is an oddity, since Hermione does not appear to possess anything. Rather, she seems to be slipping away from herself: "Clutching out toward some definition of herself, she found that 'I am Her

Gart' didn't let her hold on. Her fingers slipped off; she was no longer anything" (4). In her efforts to grasp at something, she tries to anchor herself in her name, but that slips away from her. Reading the sentences with *I* rather than *Her* as the subject call attention to the grammar shift brought about by Hermione's nickname. Adelaide Morris, in her science-influenced reading of H.D.'s writing, described Hermione's name as "a mass-energy that manifests now as object, now as subject, now as possessive pronoun, now in some indeterminate form that seems to contain all the others. Always in a flurry of self-referentiality and usually with a grammatical wrench, Her doesn't fit."[14] The narrator uses grammar and science to underscore Hermione's predicament. Having failed out of college, Hermione has no autonomy or sense of who she is. Since she failed specifically at conic sections, she no longer feels she has a place in her scientific family, thus negating her last name as well: "Gart, Gart, and the Gart theorum of mathematical biological intention dropped out Hermione. She was not Gart, she was not Hermione, she was not any more Her Gart, what was she?" (4). Hermione's failure in conic sections not only takes away her identity as a college student and as a potential scientist, but also as a member of the Gart family, since failing at math or science seemingly disinherits her from the Gart family.

Another interesting grammar consideration in the narration is the repetition of words such as pronouns or prepositions that are often deleted after the first mention in sentences with multiple parts. In the novel's third sentence, the narrator contrasts the anomalous capitalized *Her* by not deleting *she* in many places where others would to

[14] This passage appears in both "Strange Attractors: Science and the Mythopoeic Mind" (161) and "Science and the Mythopoeic Mind: The Case of H.D." (204).

subscribe to standard grammar rules: "Her Gart tried to hold on to something; drowning she grasped, she caught at a smooth surface, her fingers slipped, she cried in her dementia, 'I am Her, Her, Her'" (3). Instead of providing the expected sentence, "drowning she grasped, caught at a smooth surface," by not deleting the word *she* in the sentence, the narrator calls attention to the subject-object conflation to emphasize Hermione's objectivity. This kind of repetition also occurs in situations that do not involve the pronoun *her*, such as in the last sentence of the first paragraph: "it was predictable by star, by star-sign, by year," when instead it could have read "by star, star-sign, and year." Beginning the novel in this way, not only is the poetic, vocalic quality of narration emphasized, but also the significance of grammar and the importance of repetition in Hermione's narrative of self-discovery and development are foregrounded.

Because of her "cunning nickname" (Friedman "Portrait" 33) that moves the object into the subject place and creates a disturbing disruption of grammar that points to her object status, Hermione must grapple with issues of identity, how she exists outside the norm, outside convention. The paradox of Hermione's name and nickname complicates her pursuit for autonomy in that one is too grand and the other too insignificant, midge-like.[15] Nurse Dennon, as she cares for the bed-ridden Hermione, brings to the surface the problem with her name:

> "What is your name Miss Dennon?" "Amy." "May I call you Amy?" "Please do Miss Gart." "My name's Hermione." "Please do—Her—Hermione. It seems quite too beautiful a name to be used in

[15] In H.D.'s earlier semi-autobiographical novel, *Paint It Today*, the protagonist's name is Midget, suggesting that like *Her* for Hermione, the character personifies in some way this diminutive name.

> conversation." "Yes isn't it? They call me Her. I am called Her." "That seems a little—I mean a little too short." "Yes, that's my way. I am too—too remote you know and too—too silly. I am both." (200)

This conversation between Hermione and Nurse Dennon succinctly repeats the paradox of having a name that is in one iteration too remote, beautiful, or weighty, and in its nickname form too silly, short, or generic.

Hermione's reiteration of the converse statements "Names are in people, people are in names," and "People are in names, names are in people," further links her with the nickname *Her*, with objectivity, and with otherness, by emphasizing the importance of naming through the equation of people and names (5, 131). These repeated statements about names and their converses depict a *mise-en-abyme* repetition, in which there is an infinite telescoping of names embedded in people and more deeply embedded people in names, and further embedded names in people, and so on, underscoring the weight that Hermione places on names as identity. The notion of *mise en abyme* is particularly relevant in discussing *HERmione* because it not only depicts a kind of repetition, but it reflects changes in size or scale as the difference between repetitions.

As much as Hermione's nickname underscores her object status when she fails out of college, feels out of place in family, falls in love with George, gets engaged, and becomes George's muse for his artistic pursuits, when she falls in love with Fayne, the nickname takes on a different significance. With Fayne, Hermione is able to develop as an artist. Their relationship is not troubled by gender dynamics as Hermione's relationship with George is, in which Hermione's object status serves to "stress her 'object' status within the conventions of heterosexual marriage," as Susan Stanford

Friedman writes in reference to her colleague Rachel Blau DuPlessis's assertion (*Psyche Reborn* 41). Instead, Hermione has the sister she has always wanted, unlike her sister-in-law Minnie, whom Hermione dislikes and resists calling her sister. Using this ambiguity of name, Hermione shares her name with Fayne to indicate their sisterhood, their bonds, the twin-ness of their souls: "I know her. Her. I am Her. She is Her. Knowing her, I know Her. She is some amplification of myself like amoeba giving birth, by breaking off, to amoeba. I am a sort of mother,[16] a sort of sister to Her" (158), indicating what Friedman and DuPlessis refer to as a "fusion" that renders "subject and object indistinguishable (*Signets* 212). In viewing Fayne as a sister, and in playing off their same gender, Hermione shares her nickname with Fayne. Although it can be confusing to read, since both are called Her, in ascribing the nickname to both Hermione and Fayne, it becomes less of a burden of gendered objectification and more of a celebration of lesbian desire.

Hermione's nominal associations with Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* are also problematic. How can she aspire to a character whose husband defames her by falsely accusing her of adultery and leaves her for dead, and who lives in exile for sixteen years, depicted to the outside world as a statue?[17] This association affords her no greater access to the "natural shape of her thoughts" (Woolf *Granite and Rainbow* 81), no greater self-definition:

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[16] Many critics take up the issue of maternal identification or matrisexuality in *HERmione*. This has not been my focus, which has instead been to show how removed Hermione is from her family, mother included, and how she resists becoming, like her mother is for her father, the muse rather than the thinker.

[17] Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* involves plots about Hermione's marriage and her daughter's courtship, both of which problematize the depiction of patriarchal power, in the form of King Leontes.

> There was a small red Temple Shakespeare one side of Eugenia's picture, the other side was a blue book matching it. The *Mahabharata?* One of those translations anyway. Temple Shakespeare. I am out of the Temple Shakespeare. I am out of *The Winter's Tale*. It was my grandfather's idea to call me something out of Shakespeare. Her picked up the limp volume. Leather was limp and smelt of innumerable compartments in her mind. Leather, smelling like that, wafted through and through innumerable compartments bringing dispersed elements and jaded edges together, running like healing water across an arid waste of triangle and star-cluster and names of biological intention. Atoms were held together like limp grasses gone arid, filled with healing rain drops. *Lilies of all kinds* . . . I am out of this book. (*HER*mione 31-32)

This leather-bound text cannot represent Hermione, young and vital, because it is old and limp and lifeless. Miller describes one type of repetition as "A character may repeat previous generations, or historical or mythological characters" (2). Hermione layers the repetition of her name with the character's by repeating that she is "out of Shakespeare," which does not place her closer to any text, cannot make her part of a literary tradition, and which offers her nothing to strive for, since she does not want to become Shakespeare's Hermione, statue-like, immobile. For Hermione, who does not want to repeat Shakespeare's Hermione's path, she must also break the sequence of *The Winter's Tale* to free herself from that fate. Thus to avoid becoming frozen as a statue or dominated and mistreated by a powerful husband, she must break away from *The Winter's Tale*, from her literary heritage.

Aligning Hermione with the Helen of Troy myth[18] and with *The Winter's Tale*, the broken sentence of *HERmione* becomes the broken sentence of the Helen myth, of Shakespeare's play. These are the texts that trap her; theirs are the sentences, the sequences she must break, since to be "out of this book" traps her within a confining plot rather than offering her an identity in which she can thrive. She constantly resists the literary canon, claiming that "Dostoevski rang no bell. A conversation that should have slipped on oiled grooves, inevitably to Turgenev did no such suave thing" (58). Just before she is bed-ridden, Hermione comes to resist the sentence and sequence of the literary tradition, claiming that "I am not Hermione out of Shakespeare. Hermione out of Shakespeare was more or less one person like the person who went with Orlando. Have you noticed in Shakespeare everybody goes with someone? Almost everybody" (192). Hermione rejects this name that her grandfather assigned to her as a sign of the patriarchal control that necessitates coupling and leads her, like Shakespeare's Hermione, into the non-life of a frozen woman, a statue.[19] Thus *HERmione* not only breaks the sentence of the masculine tradition through its use of narration, unconventional sentence structure, and the broken word, but in doing so breaks the sequence, since she will not allow herself to be paired up with someone simply because everyone in Shakespeare or the Western canon pairs off. In denouncing the literary impulse that insists on coupling for almost everyone, Hermione rejects the identity that patriarchal, traditional scripting attempts to encode into her.

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[18] H.D.'s epic poem, *Helen in Egypt*, can also be seen as breaking the sentence and sequence of the masculine-told myth, exonerating Helen from the myth's hegemonic politics.

[19] Throughout *HERmione*, we find images of marble, statues, and frozen things, linking her to Shakespeare's Hermione, who is depicted as having turned into a statue. A few examples can be found on pages 161, 162, 163, 175, and 177.

Hermione views her mother as an example of why she resists the proscribed coupling tradition; Eugenia is the woman whose sentence she is breaking, not only in the grammatical or structural sense, but also in her refusal to be condemned to a life like her mother's. The text frames the struggle to break with antiquated notions of the roles women can hold by giving an extreme example of woman as domestic rather than intellectual, and secondary to her husband. Hermione finds this in her mother, who sacrifices herself for her husband. A conversation they have demonstrates why their relationship is so problematic for Hermione, and why Eugenia cannot act as a role model in Hermione's life if Hermione is to become a modern, independent woman:

> "Why are you always knitting? Only old ladies knit and knit like you do." "I am an old lady. I can knit in the dark. I can't sew in the dark. Your father likes the light concentrated in a corner. He can work better if I'm sitting in the dark." Father, your father. Eugenia sitting in the darkness, the green shade, fixed now here, now there over the just one blazing electric light, just one concentrated circle of light across the half of a desk, strewn with papers, only Gart's papers were always piled in little heaps, folded up in little bundles. (79)

This blatant subordination of the woman to her husband typifies the patriarchal order of knowledge, in which the man basks in the light while leaving his wife in darkness, where she cannot act as an intelligent individual but must function blindly instead, no different than a non-sentient spider. Eugenia relinquishes herself to the unenlightened corners, shunned from the glory of the circle of illumination at the desk near the papers, none of which does she have. Hermione wants more than this for herself; she does not want to

sit in the dark, nor does she want a husband who will deny her illumination—she does not want to be an old lady knitting, but a woman with papers of her own.

Eugenia represents the Old (as opposed to New) woman, one who sacrifices illumination for her husband, one who seeks no inspiration from him, but rather just to inspire while peacefully existing in the dark. The "shock of learning a whole array of psychosocial rules and orders valorizing maleness" (DuPlessis *Writing Beyond the Ending* 36) not only wedges a space between Hermione and Eugenia, but also distances Hermione and her father and brother, already distant since "Science, as Bertram Gart [her brother] knew it, failed her [. . .] Science, as Carl Gart [her father], as Bertrand Gart defined it, had eluded her perception" (6). She cannot share a connection with her father after she has failed conic sections, when all science is alien to her. Instead Hermione's closest adult relation is with the maid, Mandy, who, like Hermione, woman and queer, is doubly marginalized for being both woman and black.[20]

In rejecting the traditional sequence of the marriage plot because it does not allow her to develop her own artistic vision, *HERmione* also becomes a quest novel, recounting a woman's search for her own empowerment, authority, and achievement through Hermione's quest to become independent and to develop as a poet. The text must then show Hermione breaking away from her knitting-in-the-dark mother if she is to break away from the patriarchal system. At the narrative level, the shift away from the traditional opens the possibility for Hermione's coupling with Fayne or her independence, both of which make the quest to become a writer, rather than a muse,

[20] Class could also be added to this equation, making Mandy triply marginalized. Class is a complicated issue in *HERmione*, since it is also intertwined with the rural/urban divide.

more feasible. Although DuPlessis suggests that the opposition between the love plot and the quest narrative, written about but unreconciled in culturally-formative nineteenth century texts, becomes divided as either the love plot or quest plot in the twentieth century (*Pink Guitar* 33), in *HERmion*e, the lesbian love plot between Hermione and Fayne, rather than the heterosexual one between Hermione and George, encourages Hermione's quest to become a writer.[21]

Hermione fluctuates between her alliance with family, then her affections for George, then Fayne, then more oscillation between the two, and finally Nurse Dennon, Jimmie Farrand, and perhaps back to Fayne. Ultimately, Hermione oscillates between herself and people on the outside. This oscillation represents a further breaking of the sequence, one that does not rely solely on a romance plot, heterosexual or homosexual, to drive the story, instead extending the possibilities to a self-driving scenario. H.D. highlights the need for this break in the love-plot tradition by pushing the narrative from one in which Hermione must have George, then she must have Fayne, to one in which what she truly needs is herself, and to experience the self-actualization necessary for her to attempt her artistic endeavors.

The significant difference in Hermione and Fayne's repetition of the marriage plot stems from the fact that their relationship is not simply a shift from heterosexual to homosexual coupling; rather, through their amoeboid-twinning, Hermione learns to reject the passive position of muse. Hermione, despite her inclinations to be a writer in

[21] DuPlessis continues by discussing how H.D. finally reconciled these two plots in her own life in her memoir about her relationship to Ezra Pound, *End to Torment*. Her claim that "The love and quest plots can also be reconciled if one changes the nature and focus of the love" would support my claim that shifting to a lesbian love plot offers space in the narrative for the quest plot. However, this is not the shift to which DuPlessis refers; rather, she considers the fictional child of H.D. and Pound at the center of *End to Torment* as the fusion of the two plots (*Pink Guitar* 33-34).

her own right, fills the role of muse to George when they are together, not only inspiring his work but also parroting his witticisms back to him; perhaps the only words he inspires in her are his own. During their engagement, Hermione comes to see that George does not encourage her writing but rather ignores it to focus their attention on his artistic endeavors. Rather than remain voiceless and powerless, she decides that she must break the parasitic relationship and develop her own artistic ambitions. Instead, with Fayne as her twin, as her "*O sister my sister O fleet sweet swallow*" (158), as Her, and eventually as HER, Hermione does not need to fear becoming like her mother, sitting in the dark, since Fayne would never request such a scenario. That they are both Her and HER, that is, that Hermione considers herself and Fayne the same person, suggests that Hermione's path to herself must involve not simply a relationship, and not simply a lesbian relationship, but a relationship that fosters self-actualization to break free from the expected sequence. Hermione's rejection of George and her claim that "Anyhow I love—I love Her, only Her, Her, Her," although it prompts George to call her Narcissa, emphasizes at once her rejection of the heterosexual love plot, her conflation of herself and Fayne through naming, and the role that repetition plays throughout the narrative (170). In saying that she loves *Her*, Hermione conflates the lesbian love plot and the quest for self-fulfillment.

Hermione's shift from muse to artist points to important patterns supported by the narrative, which seems to question what it means that the heterosexual relationship keeps Hermione from realizing her artistic goals, while the homosexual one liberates her. This is not to intimate that the narrative suggests some clear-cut distinctions about the role of gender and sexuality in the production of art, but rather that these relationships

highlight and problematize the Man=Artist/ Woman=Muse paradigm. The novel, then, moves to shift this paradigm, or to reappropriate space for the woman artist.[22] *HERmione* is certainly not the first text to attempt to recalibrate the gender roles associated with the artist/muse relationship, but through its unique narrative style, it echoes the protagonist's artistic vision; its rejection of George and Hermione's relationship further underscores the departure from traditional narrative structures. Thus Hermione frees herself from a potential lifetime of playing the muse to suitor turned fiancé turned husband by breaking their engagement and, in doing so, the traditional sequence of the marriage-plot. In Hermione and Fayne's relationship, both can be artists and both can be muses, since there is flexibility and movement in their roles. Whereas heterosexuality stifled her, she finds freedom in her lesbian relationship; she finds encouragement in Her/HER/Fayne/*O sister my sister O fleet sweet swallow* such that she develops her own aesthetic.

**"I will creep back into the shell in order to emerge full fledged, a bird, a phoenix"**

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[22] Susan Stanford Friedman's "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: H.D.'s Rescriptions of Joyce, Lawrence, and Pound" (1991) highlights H.D. and Pound's literary intertwining, and traces throughout *HERmione* evidence of H.D.'s response to Pound's *Hilda's Book*, establishing H.D.'s *HERmione* as evidence of the muse breaking free of her position to embrace her own artistic undertaking. Jacob Korg, in *Winter Love: Ezra Pound and H.D.* (2003), sees the relationship between H.D. and Pound as it is represented in the writing of *HERmione* as one much less liberating and instead one of H.D.'s writing as a haphazard attempt to do what Pound does expertly: "The text of *HERmione*, like most of H.D.'s fictions, reflects a freedom and variety of style characteristic of the Modernism in which she and Pound participated. The paratactic passages of interior monologue recording the heroine's jumbled thoughts create the impression of discontinuity seen in Pound's mature style." (116). Throughout the chapter entitled "Pound in H.D.'s Fiction," Korg casts Hermione in the shadow of George and H.D. in the shadow of Pound without complicating this dynamic.

Hermione's breakdown, which has already begun at the start of the novel, culminates in her lengthy combination rest-cure/talking-cure convalescence after discovering that George and Fayne are having an affair, at which point "she caught at a straw that sank, and sinking, whirled Her into obliteration with it" (193). It can be seen in two ways: as the replication of the antiquated sequence that depicts women as feeble, emotional beings prone to madness and breakdowns, or as a means for her to form her chrysalis and emerge as a powerful force ready to go to Europe without a husband or to handle Fayne in her little workroom. The former represents what Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteen-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), consider a nineteenth-century struggle with the master plot for women, not farfetched for Hermione, a daughter of nineteenth-century parents with Victorian values and mentalities. Gilbert and Gubar state that "in a dynamic generational confrontation [. . .] [the] dominant culture is the father and women are either sage daughters or mad wives in relation to patriarchal power" (49). Hermione has failed to become the sage daughter and resists the role of wife, two roles that loom over her and push her deeper into feeling like a failure and into her dementia. However, despite Hermione not filling either role, her breakdown puts her under the control of patriarchal power as she is made to endure a resting cure under a nurse's care.

Reading Hermione's breakdown as a separation from the world that enables her to gain control over language to break the sentence breaks the sequence of past literature. This gynocentric reading of Hermione's breakdown as a pre-empowerment phase embraces her re-orientation with language as part of this process. Before her convalescence, Hermione became detached from words; once she emerges, she has

repaired her breakdown of language. Her recovery involves time spent alone, away from the male sentence and its non-functioning component words. Breaking the sentence, as DuPlessis describes it, involves a rupturing of language and tradition to let it develop "a female slant, emphasis, or approach" (32). This development is necessary for Hermione's transformation by the end of the novel, when she decides to travel to Europe on her own terms, and for the reintroduction of Fayne at the very end of the story: "Practical and at one with herself, with the world, with all outer circumstances, she [Hermione] barged straight into Mandy in the outer hallway. "Oh, Miss. I thought you was back long since. I done left Miss Fayne all alone upstairs in your little workroom" (234). Fayne's return at the novel's end reintroduces the coupling plot and suggests that this is the relationship that has potential, rather than one with George or even with the Gart family, which underscores the difference in Fayne and Hermione's relationship as a repetition of the love plot tradition. After recovering from her breakdown, Hermione is more in control than she was in her self-described predicament, and thus Fayne's return, although it signals the coupling tradition, and does in fact come at the end of the novel, differs from the expected sequence since Hermione is the position of authority to decide to reconcile with Fayne or not. By not including Hermione's response to Fayne's visit, the narrative leaves off at the moment when Hermione must first exercise her new-found power. One reading of the post-breakdown section could interpret her plans to travel to Europe as swayed by her Europe-bound neighbor Jimmie Farrand, instead of reading Hermione as having autonomy. However, the novel ends with Hermione in a position in which she cannot follow someone else,

and must choose her sequence—and her next sentence. It has taken the entire course of the novel for her to find herself in this position of authority.

The novel's ending represents a clean break from the male literary tradition, in which totalizing closure is favored, or rather quite necessary.[23] With Fayne waiting in her little workroom, Hermione finally takes the position of power in a relationship. Here the novel attempts to transcend the oversimplifications of Freud's oedipal drama or the traditional love plot by placing the female protagonist in the position of authority, giving her the chance to choose her future. That the story ends without informing the reader of Hermione's choice, or if she even enters the room in which Fayne waits, further destroys the androcentric plot. Many critics have been uncomfortable with this ending, and thus attempt to provide some closure. Unfortunately, their closure breaks H.D.'s sentence and sequence and re-sets it back to the way they think it should be:

> As is so often the case in H.D.'s work, however, the resolution that ends one set of conflicts opens into the beginning of a new process. The last sentence of the novel contains an enigma that can only be unveiled in another novel. [. . .] The next novel in the "madrigal cycle," *Asphodel*—next, that is, in terms of chronology of H.D.'s life—opens with Fayne and Her regarding the statue of St. Joan in Rouen and realizing that they too could have been burned as witches. In point of fact, H.D. went to

[23] The traditional ending has been read as some Freudian extension of the orgasmic experience: complete. Susan Winnett's "Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure," which provides a feminist address of the sexual in the textual experience, offers another approach to using bodily pleasure as a metaphor for narrative sequences.

> Europe in 1911 with Frances Gregg and her mother, not with the neighbors. (*Signets* 214)

Although readers and critics may wonder about H.D.'s intentions—why she provided some semblance of closure for the novel, with Hermione returning home with plans to travel to Europe with Jimmie Farrand, only to force the plot open again in two lines with the return of Fayne—suggestions of an analogous trip in H.D.'s life, or of another narrative's depiction of the travels of a character named Hermione, offer no insight into the textuality of Hermione's story, nor into its jarring ending. Reading H.D.'s, or *Asphodel*'s Hermione's, experiences into the story, although they might explain Hermione, cannot explain *HERmione*. Such a reading will not illuminate the understanding of this narrative of Hermione's story, or of the broken sequence.

The editors of the published edition also chose this approach to the novel, offering autobiographical information about H.D. by including "A Postlude," excerpted from *End to Torment*, H.D.'s memoir of her lifelong relationship with Ezra Pound, as a means of contextualizing *HERmione*. To read the events of another text, *End to Torment, Asphodel*, as the conclusion of *HERmione* denies the text the effect of its final lines, and appeals more to curiosities about H.D. and less to critical studies of the novel both as story and as literary construction. Looking for the answer elsewhere is an attempt to rationalize the novel's end to ease the tension or ambiguity of the final sentence, the tension of the break from expected androcentric sequence.

# Chapter Two

## "Was it marriage?": Androgyny, Clothing, and Repetition in *Orlando*'s Fiction of Marriage

Although *Mrs. Dalloway* or *To The Lighthouse* might seem like the more appropriate choices to discuss Virginia Woolf's response to marriage conventions in her fiction, I find *Orlando: A Biography* a much richer example. *Orlando* complicates depictions of characters' genders, often obscured by clothing, as either ambiguously or variously gendered. These depictions undermine the replication of a traditional coupling plot by repeating but subverting traditional gender roles. At the same time, repeating instances of courtship echo the coupling-plot tradition, but in non-traditional ways as a means of subverting that tradition. The clustering of various forms of repetition, at the level of word, image, and event, around repeated instances of courtship highlight the novel's repetitious mode. Throughout the narrative, moments of repetition call attention to the traditions and motifs they embody and subvert—courtship, marriage, attire, gendered behavior, time. These moments coincide with moments of rhetorical repetition, which take various forms throughout the narrative and serve to emphasize these repetitions of subverted gender roles or courtship traditions. Orlando's marriage to Rosina Pepita, when he is a man in Turkey is downplayed, and her marriage to Shel, although it is treated as significant, does not come at the end of the novel, nor is it used to mark, as conventionally it would, the culmination of Orlando's development.

When, after the three figures, Chastity, Purity, and Modesty, have left Orlando's room in Turkey, and the trumpets have sounded, Orlando, having slept for seven days, finally awakens to "THE TRUTH!" (137), he arises from his bed "in complete nakedness before us" such that "we have no choice left but to confess—he was a woman." The

absence of clothing affords the viewer, in this case the narrator,[1] a view of Orlando's naked form, prompting the revelation of Orlando's new state; it is precisely because of the absence of clothing that "Truth! Truth! Truth!" must be told, since there was no hiding what Orlando's nakedness revealed (137). Repetition of the word *truth* underscores the importance of this moment in the novel,[2] in which Orlando is naked, alone, not speaking or doing. Existing in a vacuum, Orlando's sexed body is at the forefront, yet the context through which Orlando could be culturally determined is diminished, thus demonstrating what Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, considers the "radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders" (6). This pause is brief. Presumably, with Orlando stripped of clothing, the viewer could see Orlando's sex, the bodily form that distinguishes, in this case, the old male self from the new female self, not only because the absence of clothing removes a physical barrier to Orlando's biology, but because clothing, which repeatedly obscures or defines gender throughout the novel, could not be used at that moment as a mask/masque for concealing or asserting Orlando's gender. Gender, Orlando's narrator makes clear, is both expressed in clothing and influenced by clothing. Thus, when Orlando awakens from his long slumber as a naked woman, there is no clothing to betray or influence

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[1] Since *Orlando* is a fictional biography, the narrator is a fictional biographer. Identified in the narrative as male, he is a first-person limited narrator who uses as narratorial *we* rather than *I*. Although a biographer would be limited in his access to Orlando's thoughts and private moments, this biographer sometimes acts as an omniscient narrator, such as in this instance in which he can view Orlando even though he could not have been there, nor could any record of this solitary moment exist on which he could base his account. Thus, in narrating what no one could have seen—Orlando's naked woman's body—the biographer acts as an omniscient narrator. At other moments in the text, however, he uses his limited access to the subject as an excuse for omissions or abrupt departures.

[2] "Truth! Truth! Truth!" is an example of *epizeuxis* or *palilogia*, the repetition of a single word, with no other words in between. Throughout *Orlando*, various types of rhetorical repetition serve as a mechanism for emphasizing repetition in the narrative.

what the body represents. Yet the bodily form alone does not stand in for gender in Orlando, since the pause ends and Orlando must negotiate her gender after studying her naked self in the mirror.

Paradoxically, clothing is both vitally important and utterly unimportant in the novel. The narrator theorizes generally about men and women that "Had they both worn the same clothes, it is possible that their outlook might have been the same too." In asserting that the construct of gender is influenced by clothing, and that a change in costume might promote a change in outlook, the narrator suggests that one's interaction with the world results from one's clothing; since the clothing one wears is dictated by one's gender, one's interaction with the world is necessarily a function not simply of gender but ultimately of clothing. Different wardrobes afford a man the opportunity to keep "his hand free to seize his sword" while a woman is instead occupied with the less productive task of using her hand "to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders" (188). Clothing dictates social scripts, in which the man has the opportunity to exercise power and wield a sword while a woman, regardless of her desire to bear arms, must spend her time ensuring that she does not accidentally bare her shoulder.

The narrator offers another, quite contradictory, view of clothing in the next paragraph, "Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath," which asserts that it is not one's clothing that dictates action or behavior but instead some core identity that is expressed in the clothing one wears. As proof of this idea, the narrator offers Orlando as an example: "It was a change in Orlando herself that dictated her choice of a

woman's dress and of a woman's sex" (188).[3] In arguing that Orlando's change dictated both her attire and which gender she would align herself with—that clothing is merely a depiction of one's interior self—the narrator has contradicted his assertion that clothing dictates the way we think. Here, gender is paradoxically both something that is influenced by what is on the outside and something inside that we express through exterior manifestations such as clothing.

Gender identity throughout *Orlando* is paradoxical in that it can be read as binary—man or woman—and as something more fluid—a sort of both/and dynamic in which Orlando is both man and woman. Both of these views exist within the text, making the notion of gender itself both/and a binary and a fluidity. This complexity recalls the theory of wave/particle duality of light, which describes light as behaving simultaneously like both matter-based particles and spectrum-based waves. That Woolf was aware of the New Physics in the 1920s, and had at least a popular understanding of it, makes this a particularly useful analogy. Although some might argue that likening gender in *Orlando* to a dualism is reductive, and inherently binary, my reference to duality refers not to gender but to the model for considering gender. That is, the duality is comprised simultaneously of both considerations of gender, the *vacillation*[4] and the *mixture*, to use Woolf's terms, that the narrator describes, not a duality of man and woman or male and female. Wayne Narey, in his discussion of Woolf's writing and its relationship to Einstein, "Virginia Woolf's 'The Mark on the Wall': An Einsteinian View

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[3] In stating that Orlando's sex change dictated her change in clothing and gender, the narrator contradicts other claims he makes that Orlando did not change at all when she changed from male to female.

[4] Woolf's use of the term *vacillation* captures both the meaning of indecision and that of swaying or fluctuation.

of Art" (1922), acknowledges that physics theories such as the relativism of time were "in the air" in the Teens and Twenties (36). He reads into Woolf's writing "the transmutation of a new artistic form, the desire to turn historical fiction into a time/perspective-oriented structure through a motif of light and relativity" (40). Gillian Beer, in her discussion of Woolf's later fiction and the influence of—and on—physics, "Physics, Sound, and Substance: Later Woolf" (1996), acknowledges that "Just as chaos theory at present teases and stimulates non-scientists, so wave-particle theory at the end of the 1920s and through the 1930s caught the imagination" (113). Both scholars describe a decade in which artists and scientists alike were challenged by "crisis and upheaval" in the world, such that rather than specifically tracing influence, we find both artists and scientists reacting to the same climate. Parallels can be seen between the theory of wave-particle dualism that Louis de Broglie presented in 1923 and, throughout the novel, the both discrete, particle-like "vacillation from one sex to the other," that the narrator describes, in which "often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above," and the more fluid, wave-like "mixture" such that "Whether, then, Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided" (189-190).

**"He was young; he was boyish; he did but as nature bade him."**

In their article "From He and She to You and Me: Grounding Fluidity, Woolf's Orlando to Winterson's Written on the Body," Lisa Haines-Wright and Traci Lynn Kyle use different terminology to describe Orlando's gender, considering it as "always both and more" (179). The novel begins with a description of Orlando as a boy; dashes set

off an aside regarding rather important information about Orlando's appearance and his sex at the opening of the novel: "He—for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it—" (13). The notions that one's sex could be beyond question and also that clothing could at least in part mask one's sex are not only repeated on several other occasions in the narrative, but also are particularly relevant in the telling of Orlando' life as described by the narrator-biographer. This is the first of many instances in the novel in which a character's gender is obscured by clothing, only to be revealed in somewhat dramatic fashion, such as when the trumpets sound to signal the so-called truth when Orlando is revealed to be a woman. The occurrence of this revelation at the start of the narrative then both foreshadows Orlando's sex change—in that the narrator's insistence on the extreme unquestionability of Orlando's gender does not assure the reader but instead calls Orlando's gender into question—and reiterates it, while surreptitiously insisting on a fluidity of the representation of gender, since the denial implies that in other instances there could be doubt.

Before the reader knows from the aside to question Orlando's gender, the text begins with the larger typeset of the word *he*, since it begins the chapter, which is then juxtaposed by the statement about Orlando's otherwise incontrovertible sex being obscured by his clothing. The first sentence continues by describing Orlando's violent actions, "of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters," suggesting his place in a lineage of men, "Orlando's father, or perhaps his grandfather," who participated in such violence by "[striking the head] from the shoulders of a vast Pagan

who had started up under the moon in the barbarian fields of Africa" (13).[5] Gender is not simply correlated with the clothing that one wears, nor can it be read through essentialized traits. This opening description plays with the notion of essentialism by feeding the reader essentialized images that the narrator uses to confirm Orlando's masculinity before ultimately undercutting it.

The novel's opening sentence's assertion that despite the ambiguous clothing, Orlando is not both genders but is exclusively male seems to contradict Haines-Wright and Kyle's notion that Orlando's gender is always both and more. Although the narrator's claim about Orlando's masculinity is important enough to occupy the opening lines of the text, it is set apart with dashes and relegated to an aside, prompting the reader from the first line of the narrative to question the narrator and any absolutes when gender or sex is in question. In insisting on the undoubtedly male identity of the novel's protagonist, the narrator casts doubt on both the claim and his reliability. If one reads Orlando's gender as always a mixture, then the narrator's assertion indicates his narratorial unreliability from the narrative's inception. Furthermore, to return to the scene in which Orlando becomes a woman, the narrator insists that "Orlando had become a woman—there is no denying it." The narrator's insistence on the undeniable nature of what he reports raises the possibility of its deniability; the narrator's vehemence makes his statement suspicious by protesting too much. In an attempt to counter-argue against those who might claim that "Orlando has always been a woman" or that "Orlando is at this moment a man," the narrator, in the presence of Orlando's naked

[5] Throughout the novel, race is otherized, problematically depicted as a peculiarity or oddity, particularly in contrast to the novel's depiction of England and English ways as proper or civilized.

female form, states that "Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since" (138). Here, the narrator, in shifting into a binary view of gender in which Orlando was one and is now the other, and reasserting the construct of polarized gender, attempts to bolster this certitude by using Orlando's age as a marker of identity. However, age is an already-exploded construct in the novel, since Orlando has been thirty for no less than one hundred years at this point. Age offers no certainty when gender or clothing fail to identify Orlando, and instead further undermines the narrator's authority.[6]

Orlando's masculinity is further asserted early in the narrative in his sexual appetite and his ease of engagement and disengagement with women. Although "the names of at least three [women] were freely coupled with his in marriage," initiating Orlando into the courtship tradition, he found fault with each of them. This is the first mention of Orlando's involvement in a traditional system of marriage rather than one of pure debauchery (31). However, the first mention of Orlando's entrance into this traditional system, one in which a man chooses one woman to marry, is already undercut by the repetition of engagements, each called off because Orlando finds the fiancée flawed, making this is no less than his third repetition of the courtship ritual—although the narrator spares the reader the numerous other similar tales.[7] As a man, Orlando can be freer with his engagements and with ending them without harm to his reputation than

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[6] I have discussed time as a manipulated construct in the telling of Orlando's story in "Deviation and Acceleration: Time in the Story and Narrative of *Orlando*" (2006).

[7] Although in this dissertation I more often consider instances of one event—or similar events—being narrated several times, this moment in the narrative is an instance of Genette's fourth category of frequency, in which multiple events are narrated at once in one telling. Thus the narrator acknowledges the repetition of debauchery and courtship, yet narrates only a select few.

a woman could. The lack of importance of these engagements is underscored both by the frequency of their repetition and by the relatively slight attention paid to them in the narrative: the three engagements are described in two pages, even though the first courtship took place in no less than six and a half months. Instead the biographer shifts focus and offers a detailed description of the Great Frost before introducing Sasha, the great love of Orlando's life as a man, or perhaps altogether.

Although still engaged to Lady Euphrosyne, Orlando becomes taken with the Russian princess he comes to call Sasha, even before he can confirm her gender. In describing Orlando as attracted to a character of yet undetermined gender, the narrator again relies on essentialized gender traits and ambiguous clothing to complicate Orlando's ability to identify Sasha as a woman. This "figure, which whether boy's or woman's," is ambiguously gendered because of her clothing, "for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex." Here, again, clothing complicates how a character is perceived. However, this figure "filled him with the highest curiosity." Without knowing any more than build, "about middle height," and attire, "very slenderly fashioned, and dressed entirely in oyster-colored velvet, trimmed with some unfamiliar greenish-coloured fur," Orlando is taken with this figure. Despite the uncertainty of gender, "these details were obscured by the extraordinary seductiveness which issued from the whole person" (37). Clearly Orlando can be seduced regardless of the seducer's gender—or the absence of a distinct gender. Sasha, in her first appearance, defies gender categorization by seeming to be either a boy, since "no woman could skate with such speed and vigor," and "legs, hands, carriage, were a boy's," or a woman, since "no boy ever had a mouth like that; no boy had those breasts;

no boy had those eyes which looked as if they had been fished from the bottom of the sea." The notion that Sasha could be a boy—and note, there is no chance that Sasha could be a man or a girl, but specifically a boy or a woman, drawing a parallel between boys and women—troubles Orlando, who "was ready to tear his hair out with vexation that the person was of his own sex, and thus all embraces were out of the question" (38). That is, this figure seems to be a boy, so that despite Orlando's intense desire for this person, he would not be allowed to act on these desires. This is not the same as suggesting that Orlando could not or would not desire the person were she revealed to be a boy: although Sasha's gender is undetermined, Orlando's fascination and desire is evident.

When the figure is deciphered and it is finally revealed that "She was a woman," a declaration that is repeated with slight variation when Orlando is revealed as a woman later in the novel, Orlando celebrates in animalistic fashion, baring his teeth and biting the air. His celebration, an instance of performed male aggression, is in no way limited by the fact that Lady Euphrosyne "hung upon his arm." Despite his fiancée's proximity, any woman other than Sasha is now in his past, and cast in an unappealing light; love, he realizes, considering his past affairs, "had meant to him nothing but sawdust and cinders." Instead, even before Orlando addresses her, Sasha, without her knowledge, awakens love in Orlando, melts his frozen veins, and invigorates his masculinity. The passage that precedes their first spoken exchange asserts each character's gendered sexuality. In his imagination, Orlando's "manhood awoke," such that "he grasped a sword in his hand," and "charged a more daring foe than Pole or Moor." The phallic imagery, suggested by mention of his awakened manhood, the sword, and even the pun

on Pole, is matched in the second part of the sentence by vaginal imagery: "he dived in deep water, he saw the flower of danger growing in a crevice." Before the two ever speak, before the biographer reveals that Orlando, thanks to his mother's maid who taught him perfect French, is one of few people who can communicate with the Russian princess, the reader already knows from this highly-sexualized imagery to expect that "Thus began an intimacy between the two which soon became the scandal of the Court" (40).

Orlando's use of clothing to obscure identity through clothing is not limited to gender performance; he also uses clothing to hide his nobility and shift classes. Early in *Orlando* the biographer suggests, although he does not even attempt to substantiate it, that Orlando might have had a "certain grandmother" of lower stock than the rest of his blue-blooded family (28). This infiltrator in his blood is blamed for his impression that "the cheek of an inn-keeper's daughter seemed fresher and the wit of a game-keeper's niece seemed quicker than those of the ladies at Court" so that "hence, he began going frequently to Wapping Old Stars and such places at night" (28-29). However, since he is a man of a finer lineage, Orlando uses clothing to obscure his nobility and goes in disguise: "wrapped in a grey cloak to hide the star at his neck and the garter at his knee" (29). In disguise, he can listen to men's stories and songs of travel hardships, and can have the women, who "were scarcely less bold in their speech and less free in their manner" than the men. The biographer tells of one instance in which Orlando and a woman were caught in the act of "illicit love in a treasure ship" (30). Rather than enumerate the many adventures that Orlando comes to hear of or be party to in disguising himself as a commoner, the biographer simply tells us that Orlando left this

life because "he began to be a little weary of the repetition," of the stories his new friends would tell, since "a nose can only be cut off in one way and maidenhood lost in another." Rather, he returns to his noble life in which "the arts and the sciences had a diversity about them which stirred his curiosity profoundly" (31), thus differentiating life in pubs and treasure ships from literary, learned nobility. When Orlando sleeps for seven days, for the second time in the novel, before he becomes a woman,[8] war has broken out in Turkey, and the rioters kill many of the English, and would have killed Orlando as well had they not, upon breaking into his room, mistaken his sleeping for death, and thus "left him untouched, and only robbed him of his coronet and the robes of the Garter" (133). These stolen items of attire signified Orlando's gender when he wore them, since a man wore the garter on his leg while a woman wore it on her arm, and also served as indicators of Orlando's rank. Losing them signifies a shift away from Orlando's previous life as a nobleman.

**"and dressed herself in those Turkish coats and trousers which can be worn indifferently by either sex"**

Orlando's deathlike sleep in Turkey serves as a break in the narrative, one that could mark the ending of Orlando's story, that could prompt the biographer to "take the pen and write Finis to our work!" (133), suggesting that this is the end of Orlando the man's life and that the new narrative is that of Orlando the woman. This break in one

[8] The first occurrence of Orlando's lengthy slumber happens after Sasha leaves him. Although the initial seven-day coma does not lead to a shift in Orlando's identity, it heightens the repetition in the narrative not only surrounding the second incident, but also the repeated use of unrealistic time spans and other fantasy-based occurrences

sense provides a clean start for Orlando as a woman, but it also reveals that it is not such a departure for this character since, although she "remained precisely as he had been" despite becoming a woman, "The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity"; Orlando still maintains the memory, "back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacles," of her life as a man (133). This present state of complete change and complete recollection is yet another example of the wave/particle dualism, in that what is seemingly contradictory, change and stasis, is simultaneously possible.

When Orlando is no longer covered by bedsheets after his lengthy slumber in Turkey, and it is finally revealed that "he was a woman" while trumpets blare, the repetition of the revelation, set off with a long dash, repeats the structure of the opening sentence about Orlando's gender. The truth that is revealed by Orlando's nakedness, that "he was a woman," resonates with other moments of gender revelation, such as when it is revealed that Sasha is a woman. The parallel between the revelation about Orlando's new sex and Sasha's revealed identity is marked by one significant difference, however, that of the pronoun used to identify the character. When Sasha is revealed, the narrator writes "She was a woman," since even before her identity is known in the narrative she is referred to with feminine pronouns (37-38). When Orlando's new identity is revealed, the narrator repeats this format but uses the masculine pronoun: "he was a woman" (137). This grammatically and semantically uncomfortable construction sets the repeated revelation apart from the earlier one, and emphasizes the oddity of the situation as a linguistic one. Although Orlando's newly transformed body has been identified as a woman's, there has yet to be a nominal—or pronominal—shift. The transition is a

three-stage process; moving Orlando from a *he* to the gender-neutral but plural middle-ground of *their*: "The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity," suggests that both Orlandos—or perhaps many Orlandos—are present in the woman's body. The shift finally occurs, but again in an awkward way: "His memory—but in future we must, for convention's sake, say 'her' for 'his,' and 'she' for 'he'—her memory, then, went back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle" (138). When the narrator makes the change, it is, as Marjorie Garber claims in *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, "in effect a pronoun transplant" (134), rather than a substantive change in identity.

How this change could have occurred is of little concern for the narrator, who, leaving the matter for "biologists and psychologists [to] determine," moves on to dressing Orlando after "Chastity, Purity, and Modesty, inspired, no doubt, by Curiosity" attempt to cover Orlando's naked womanly form with "a garment like a towel" but are unsuccessful (138). Instead, shortly afterwards, Orlando dresses herself in "those Turkish coats and trousers which can be worn indifferently by either sex" (139). Thus rather than donning gendered attire, Orlando chooses a more neutral costume to begin life as a woman. Furthermore, this clothing is marked not only as outside of Western notions of gender representation, but wholly outside of Western traditions.[9] This attire

[9] It is problematic that the clothing that the narrator considers gender-neutral is non-Western: Russian, Turkish, gypsy, Chinese. It seems more likely that the narrator is not adept in reading other cultures' gender codes, particularly non-Western ones. The insensitivity shown in the cultural assumptions made about non-Western clothing is echoed in the "Dreadnought' Hoax, planned by Woolf's brother Adrian Stephen, in which Woolf and four other friends dress in costume to represent themselves as the Emperor of Abyssinia and his suite. Stephen notes in his written description of the hoax, *The 'Dreadnought' Hoax* (1936, 1983) that in this version of the prank, "a repetition of the other [. . .] a few years later" (29), the imposters "had to have their faces blackened, to wear false beards and moustaches and elaborate Eastern robes" (32). The repetition of the

provides Orlando a transition into life with the gypsies, a life that allows her to temporarily ignore her gender.

While living outside of England, the woman Orlando wears two distinct costumes: one decidedly non-Western and, according to the narrator, non-gender-specific, the Turkish trousers that she puts on after her naked form reveals her change, and then the "outfit of such clothes as women then wore" in early 18th century England, appropriate to her gender, rank, age, nationality, and so forth, which she wears on her return voyage to England. The first costume correlates with the period when Orlando purportedly does not consider the change she has undergone; the second helps to orient Orlando into the new life she will have as a "young Englishwoman of rank" upon her return to English society (153). Regardless of her costume, Orlando's clothing choices call attention to the repeated use of clothing in the narrative to represent the body in a way that is culturally identifiable, and at times, ambiguous. Clothing, and cross-dressing especially, underscore the constructedness of gender categories since cross-dressing is a critique of binary thinking, what Garber refers to as "something that challenges the possibility of harmonious and stable binary symmetry" (9-12). Much as the way wave-particle duality explodes the notion of binarism, since it proves that two opposite attributes must exist simultaneously to explain the behavior of light, Garber's discussion of Orlando's gender reflects identity beyond a binary, such that "Whatever Orlando *is*, her clothing reflects it: the crossing between male and female may be a mixture (a synthesis), but it is not a confusion, a transgression" (Garber 135). Orlando, through

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previous event, the use of clothing to assert or conceal identity, Woolf's cross-dressing, and the Western view of non-Western gendered clothing, all link the hoax with important aspects of *Orlando*.

clothing and bodily change, is able to regulate a fluid identity. However although Garber claims such a fluidity is not a confusion or transgression, Woolf uses Orlando's both-and-more gender to insist upon sexual transgression as a means of exposing and disrupting the traditional system of gender binaries.

Leaving "such odious subjects" as "sex and sexuality" to "other pens," *Orlando*'s narrator attempts to establish this biography as a narrative unconcerned with sex and sexuality, shifting his attention away from Orlando's change and towards her present situation. The narrator describes her actions without referring to her position as a man changed into a woman, even though this is the reader's expectation: "Orlando had now washed, and dressed herself in those Turkish coats and trousers which can be worn indifferently by either sex; and was forced to consider her position" (139). The description that follows ignores Orlando's sex change and instead considers her situation after the uprising in Turkey and after her room was ransacked. In choosing to clothe herself in gender-neutral attire rather than use clothing to repeat a gender role and establish herself as a woman, Orlando, much like the narrator, also refuses to contemplate her change.

Clothed in Turkish trousers, Orlando now has a place to keep pistols, since wearing trousers means she has a waistband and a belt. The jewelry that she brings with her, "several strings of emeralds and pearls of the finest orient which had formed part of her Ambassadorial wardrobe," all that remains of her men's wardrobe, finances her travels; ultimately, before sailing back to England, she will use the money from the sale of one pearl to buy women's clothing in an effort to conform to her culture's notion of what she should wear. Pistols and pearls, both rather charged sexual symbols, worn

together further emphasize Orlando's body as the site of "always both and more." Turkish trousers not only offer storage for weapons, but also allow for a different travel experience, since in escaping from Constantinople, "Orlando swung her leg over it [the donkey]" (140), which would be difficult to do in Western women's clothing of the time.

In choosing to wear Turkish trousers, Orlando marks her body not as female but as foreign in contrast to her English identity, an interesting choice considering how foreign her body is to her at this point in the narrative. The use of non-Western attire and the foreign setting for Orlando's change from man to woman distances the situation from the Western tradition or from Western values and customs. Unlike the situation of gender ambiguity at the novel's opening caused by Orlando's disguising clothing, which is quickly allayed by his essentially masculine behavior of swinging a sword at the head of a dead man killed by several generations of his male lineage and thus ensuring that his actions code him as masculine, Orlando's actions once she has become a woman are not sufficient to signify what her clothing cannot. This moment in the narrative seems to suspend the contemplation of gender norms while Orlando uses clothing to delay thinking about her sex change.

Refusing to consider her change from man to woman, Orlando lives with the gypsies in a seemingly genderless existence. Since the narrative contains no reference to her gender while she lives with the gypsies, it is not until she leaves them, puts on Western women's clothing, and embarks on her journey to England that the narrator reflects on Orlando's Turkish trouser existence, her new gender, or her refusal to consider her new womanhood: "It was a strange fact, but a true one that up to this moment she had scarcely given her sex a thought." The narrator considers Orlando's

choice of wardrobe as an important factor in her refusal to consider her change or to conform to gender roles of either her previous or current gender, theorizing that "Perhaps the Turkish trousers, which she had hitherto worn had done something to distract her thoughts; and the gipsy women, except in one or two important particulars, differ very little from the gipsy men," although those important particulars are never described (153). According to Marjorie Garber in the "Turkish Trousers" section of *Vested Interests*, "The vogue for Turkish trousers, extremely ample in cut and worn in Turkey by men as well as women, became a fact of English women's fashion with the opening of trade and travel to the Middle East" (312). Thus, even though the trousers were appropriate attire in Turkey for men and women, in England they marked the wearer as female, and would not have been appropriate attire for a man. In referring to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters describing her stay in Turkey during her husband's ambassadorship to Turkey, which coincides with the dates of Orlando's position there, Garber notes that a woman's dressing habits were "though entirely feminine, also virtually identical to the items worn by men,[10] thus calling into question non-Western gender differentiation.[11]

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[10] In describing the freedoms afforded to Turkish women by their unrecognizability and virtual interchangeability, since they were required to wear two veils when in public, Garber does not discuss the veils as marking them as women. Thus although the veils allowed women to pass as members of a different class or as an anonymous woman—"there was no distinguishing the great lady from her slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her" ("To Lady Mar," 111, in Garber 313),— they did not allow them to pass as men, despite the similarity of the attire for men and women.

[11] Both Garber and *Orlando*'s narrator assert without complication that Turkish trousers were ungendered. However, I must imagine that to some extent this is an outsider's view, and that within Turkish culture at the time, there would have been some distinction, no matter how trivial, between the costumes men and women wore. The narrator often comes to the same conclusion about the gender-neutrality when it is non-Western clothing in question. On the other hand, Bilge Nihal Zileli's discussion of the difficulty of translating *Orlando* into Turkish, since *o* is the word for *he* or *she* and *onun* for *his* or *her*, suggests a cultural laxity in demarcating gender categories.

While living among the gypsies, Orlando surely conforms to a gypsy gender role since "[the gipsies] were even prepared to consider letting her marry among them" (142). Even in her nearly genderless existence with the gypsies, Orlando, whether she wanted or tried to, participated in a culture of marriage. This repeated motif of marriage-plot possibilities is particularly striking since she does not consider her womanhood within the context of such a gender-defining construct as marriage, and does nothing to enact or encourage that possibility. Her denial of gender, or rather her choice to ignore it, does not prevent her community from reading her and considering her marriageable, although there is no textual indication that they consider her as an eligible *bride*. Since the narrator alludes to contact Orlando must have had with the gypsies prior to his lengthy slumber in order to plan his escape, it is not impossible that they still consider Orlando to be a man. There is no textual evidence of how or if the gypsies read Orlando's gender, only that they were ready to consider the possibility of her marrying among them. Marriage, in this communal society, necessarily holds a different meaning than marriage in a much more individualistic society, such as Orlando's native England.

The narrator's phrasing, that the gypsies *were even prepared to consider* letting Orlando marry among them, expresses tentativeness, repeating marriage as a potentiality, not as a possibility or an actuality. This phrasing establishes Orlando as an outsider living among the gypsy community, despite the narrator's earlier mention that Orlando may have gypsy lineage. That is, even though Orlando might be the descendant of a gypsy, and the narrator reports that the gypsies "looked upon her as one of themselves," she is enough of an outsider that marrying among them required consideration from the elders, rather than being inherently acceptable. Orlando also senses difference between

herself and the gypsies, which "made her hesitate sometimes to marry and settle down among them forever," a discomfort that is no doubt a function of her Englishness (147). Thus although her gender is obscured or ignored, her nationality is too much a part of Orlando's identity, despite her possible mixed heritage, for her to conceive of marrying among the gypsies.

Kirstie Blair, in her discussion of the figure of the gypsy as a code for lesbian desire, understands the gypsy as both feminized and otherized. According to Blair, the image of the gypsy, "marked as other in terms of race, class, and religion," and "always haunted by implications of deviant sexuality, wayward femininity, and other transgressions against dominant societal standards," served as an image of the lesbian writer; referring to gypsies situated lesbian sexuality within the established framework of the gypsy culture, "blurring the boundaries between same and other, familiar and strange" (142-143). In quoting from Konrad Bercovici's *Gypsy Blood*, another novel of the 1920s that uses the gypsy culture to bring in open sexuality, "she needed no ceremony, no priest, no law, no Bible. . . . She was the free child of a free race" (136, in Blair 147), Blair underscores how important the unconventional is to the queer character of twentieth-century fiction, asserting that "Unconventional female desire. . . cannot either be encompassed in the oppressive framework of traditional marriage or indulged outside it" (147). I argue that *Orlando* offers the space for unconventional female desire to exist outside traditional marriage, both outside of marriage altogether, such as when Orlando enjoys her multi-partnered sex life, or within nontraditional marriage, such as in her marriage to Shel, which I will address later in this chapter.

**"so much tee-heeing and haw-hawing that Orlando thought she must have escaped from a lunatic asylum"**

When Orlando first encounters the Archduchess Harriet Griselda of Finster-Aarhorn and Scandop-Boom in the Roumanian territory, both Orlando and the reader sense that something is odd. The narrative calls attention to the Archduchess's oddity and lays the groundwork for suspicion about her gender identity, describing her as a "very tall lady" who repeatedly lurks outside of Orlando's home, unlike "any other woman thus caught in a Lord's private grounds," in that she is not afraid, and different from "any other woman with that face, headdress, and aspect [who] would have thrown her mantilla across her shoulders to hide it" (113-114). Without knowing yet that the Archduchess Harriet is the Archduke Harry in drag, both Orlando and the reader are suspicious of her appearance and behavior. Not only is the Archduchess socially inappropriate for her gender—she is more forward than a woman of her position should be—she is inappropriate in body. She is more than six feet tall, does not cover her shoulders as a lady should—a womanly attribute that, as I have discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the narrator discusses when describing how women's clothing, in differing from men's clothing, affords women different abilities and outlooks—, and is "dressed somewhat ridiculously too, in a mantle and riding cloak though the season was warm," suggesting that she dresses in what is available to her rather than what is appropriate, becoming, or self-expressive (116).

The Archduchess's manner, "so much tee-heeing and haw-hawing," suggestive of a man's performance of what he perceives to be a womanly or effeminate demeanor, seems to calm down after Orlando invites her in for wine (114). Once inside, "her

manners regained the hauteur natural to a Roumanian Archduchess," yet the topics of her conversation with Orlando, such as wine, "firearms and the custom of sportsmen in her country," reveal knowledge "rare in a lady." Despite the mounting evidence of appearance, knowledge, attire, and manner, all rather unladylike, Orlando does not guess that he is being tricked. He knows, though, that he does not wish to encounter the Archduchess again, and avoids her after she leaves until it is no longer possible as a gentleman for him to ignore her daily presence outside his home, when "on the fourth [day] it rained, and as he could not keep a lady in the wet, nor was altogether averse to company, he invited her in" (115). In the course of their discussion about a suit of armor, yet another unusual area of knowledge for a lady, the Archduchess has the opportunity to fit the shin-piece to one of Orlando's "shapeliest legs that any Nobleman has ever stood upright upon," shifting attention away from the Archduchess's odd body and towards Orlando's awe-inspiring one, making Orlando's the objectified body.[12] With the focus on Orlando's leg, the narrator enumerates reasons why Orlando becomes "so suddenly and violently overcome by passion of some sort that he has to leave the room" (116). The passion that arrives, personified as two inseparable women, first appears as the white one, "smooth and lovely," but soon turns into the other, black,

[12] Orlando's legs are repeatedly admired in the text, both when Orlando is a man and a woman. The narrator calls attention to the repetition of praise when he admires them here for a third time: "That he had a pair of the shapeliest legs that any Nobleman has ever stood upright upon has already been said" (116). When Orlando sails for home after becoming a woman, a "sailor on the mast" nearly falls to his death after glimpsing Orlando "[toss] her foot impatiently, and [show] and inch or two of a calf," thus revealing the danger in a good pair of legs once they belong to a woman (156). It is ambiguous whether the detail of Orlando's shapely legs is offered as proof of his fine form, or, considering that women are more often objectified for their physical features such as shapely legs, as a suggestion of Orlando's effeminacy.

"hairy, brutish. . . . Lust the vulture, not Love, the Bird of Paradise" (116-117).[13] Among the many reasons the narrator considers as the cause for this passion, the most troublesome is "the natural sympathy which is between the sexes" (116)—although "there could be no doubt of [Orlando's] sex" (13), the Archduchess's is not so incontrovertible, even though her identity as a man has yet to be revealed, as to be the reason Orlando begins to feel passion.

The notion that passion arises merely because Orlando is a man and the Archduchess a woman suggests a heterosexuality innate in both parties, which cannot hold in *Orlando*. The narrator has already shown how taken Orlando was with Sasha before her gender was confirmed, and although it is made clear that Orlando would not have acted on homosexual feelings had Sasha not been a woman, her ambiguous figure, possibly a woman's, possibly a boy's, still aroused in Orlando a strong desire. Furthermore, the narrator has depicted the Archduchess in such a way that even though she has not yet revealed herself as the Archduke Harry, it is reasonable to question her sex, or at the very least, her appeal to the opposite sex. The Archduchess as a woman is less appealing than Sasha as an androgynous mystery or a boy potentially, and her oddity, in part a result of her mannishness, her poorly-performed womanliness, and her only somewhat convincing cross-dressing, contributes to her lack of appeal. Despite Orlando's forcing the Archduchess to leave, her presence nearby makes Orlando uncomfortable. It is not clear whether the narrator refers to the Archduchess or to Lust the vulture in cautioning that "the harpy is not so easily banished as all that." In either

[13] The racial implications of the depictions of Love and Lust are worthy of consideration, particularly in light of the race dynamics established in the novel's opening scene's treatment of Orlando slicing at the head of a Moor, among other instances.

case, since the Archduchess's proximity meant that "his home was uninhabitable" (118), Orlando requests a position overseas and begins his post as Ambassador Extraordinary to Constantinople to escape the Archduchess and that which she has brought upon him.

When Orlando returns from Turkey as a woman, she is no longer a suitable object of desire for the Archduchess, who can reveal herself as the man she has always been, unlike Orlando, who has undergone more of a change than at the level of attire. In the midst of a rant essentializing women for their inability to leave anyone alone, prompted by the Archduchess's persistence, Orlando suddenly finds herself alone in a room with a man: "and behold—in her place stood a tall gentleman in black" (178). The Archduke Harry, having removed his Archduchess clothing, which lay in a heap in the fender, has replaced the Archduchess, yet the Archduke always existed within the Archduchess, whether as a duplicate self in different clothing or one self in a double layer of clothing, it is not clear. If the narrator is correct that clothing influences outlook, what then is the conclusion about a character who wears two layers of clothing simultaneously, one set marked as feminine, the other masculine? What change necessarily occurs when the outer layer, the women's attire, is removed? If clothing, however, is a symbol of what is beneath, then the shedding of the feminine clothing to reveal the Archduke's attire must be not simply a physical shedding but a coming-out or re-emergence of the Archduke from underneath the drag cover of the Archduchess. Unlike Orlando, whose sex change was evident from her naked form, the Archduke does not appear unclothed, which leaves some ambiguity still in his identity. Even the phrasing of the Archduke's newly revealed identity, although it calls attention to the newly configured form, does not make explicit that a change occurred as much as it

emphasizes a replacement of one for the other: "in her [the Archduchess's] place stood a tall gentleman in black" (178). The contrast between the narrative's revelation about Orlando and about the Archduke is notable, since there is virtually no narrative space devoted to the Archduke's change. By having one replace the other, there is even a grammatical ease in the phrasing since there is no pairing of *he* and *woman* in this sentence. There is a need for clarification, as with the pronoun transplant when Orlando becomes a woman, when the Archduchess reveals that she is the Archduke: the narrator refers to Orlando's companion still as "the Archduchess," then "the Archduke," before finally clarifying that "The Archduchess (but she must in future be known as the Archduke) told his story" (179).

Recalling that as a woman, she should not be alone with a man, Orlando rather femininely "felt seized with faintness" until recovering enough to join the Archduke in "[acting] the parts of man and woman for ten minutes with great vigour" before "[falling] into natural discourse" (178-179). Thus the narrator draws a distinction here between their conscious repetition of gender roles, which can be acted out, and conversation that is in some way natural, unperformed, or ungendered, suggesting that Orlando and the Archduke fell out of character when performing the parts of man and woman and were instead afterwards their natural, ungendered selves. This is not the first time that the narrator suggests that one can exist outside of gender constructs; Orlando's time spent living with the gypsies also represents a time relatively free from gender for a number of reasons, including what the narrator considers the unisex quality of gypsy clothing. The story that the Archduke Harry tells once he and Orlando have finished acting out their gendered parts is one of deliberate gender self-construction:

> that he was a man and always had been one; that he had seen a portrait of Orlando and fallen hopelessly in love with him; that to compass his ends, he had dressed as a woman and lodged at the Baker's shop; that he was desolated when he fled to Turkey; that he had heard of her change and hastened to offer his services (here he teed and heed intolerably). (179)

Here the Archduke reveals that he regulates his homosexual desire through cross-dressing. His initial desire for Orlando, much like Orlando's initial desire for Sasha, originates outside of heteronormative rules, but in neither instance does the man pursue the other man. Unlike the situation with Orlando—still a man—and the momentarily androgynous Sasha, in which Orlando acknowledges that if this person were of his own sex, "all embraces were out of the question" (38), the Archduke chooses to transgress this rule and regulate his homosexuality through the performative act of cross-dressing as a woman, in hope of engaging with Orlando. In choosing to pursue Orlando despite the forbidden nature of his desire, the Archduke participates in a model of compulsory heterosexuality that, in the narrative, perpetuates the love-plot tradition that insists upon only men and women coupling, not men and men. Orlando does not need to consider such a transgressive act because Sasha is revealed to be a woman, but his expression of this heteronormative rule reveals his participation in the established rules of courtship.

Ironically, the tee-heeing, which initially seemed in the Archduchess to be a performance of what the Archduke perceived as a womanly trait, is instead part of the Archduke's behavior even when he reveals himself as a man—his behavior has not changed despite his dropping the drag performance. Thus he appears too mannish when

he is a woman, but behaves too womanly as a man.[14] His gender, perhaps also always both and more, is always at odds with customary ideas of desirability, rather than affording him multivalent appeal. The Archduchess's behavior, once the Archduke's identity is revealed, emphasizes cross-dressing as a consciously constructed performance of gender, but the Archduke's behavior is certainly no less performative in its approximation of the chivalric ideal. Orlando, in response to the Archduke's crying during his proposal, remembers that although she knew "from her own experience as a man" that men cry, as a woman she "should be shocked when men display emotion in their presence, and so, shocked she was" (180). Clearly Orlando is influenced by the socially constructed norms scripting men and women's behavior, which demand that men not cry publicly, and that women be shocked if they do. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler notes that "the replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual origin," and asks "which possibilities of doing gender repeat and displace through hyperbole, dissonance, internal confusion, and proliferation the very constructs by which they are mobilized?" (31). *Orlando* contains several instances of this replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames such that the constructs are displaced, or at the very least, revealed as constructs. In negotiating her new gender, Orlando must remember to behave as a woman in a way that would seem second nature if she had been born a woman. Orlando's change in gender shows the constructed status of gender, that it is learned, refined, and performed. This does not coincide entirely with her sex change,

[14] It is not unreasonable in the scope of the novel to consider the Archduke's foreignness as a contributing factor of his oddity or his lack of virility or femininity in comparison to the male or female Orlando, respectively.

since she first cloaks her woman's body in the gender-neutral attire of the gypsies and lives in a quasi-genderless state until she decides to leave them and return to England.

Orlando's experience with the Archduke, in addition to repeating the experience with the Archduchess, is repetitive in itself, which calls attention to Orlando's idea that if this is love, "there is something highly ridiculous about it" (179). When the Archduke tells Orlando on a Tuesday that he will return the following day, rather than simply stating that he returned every day that week, the narrator reports that "He came on Wednesday; he came on Thursday; he came on Friday; and he came on Saturday" (180).[15] This rhetorical construction uses the conventional structure of time to emphasize its repetition. Each visit repeats certain events, such as the Archduke declaring his love for Orlando, or his knocking over the fire irons and Orlando picking them up. Orlando finds herself trapped in these ritualized visits, such that she was "at her wit's end what to talk about and had she not bethought her of a game called Fly Loo . . . she would have had to marry him, she supposed; for how else to get rid of him she knew not" (181). Here, the repetitious nature of their relationship, coupled with the Archduke's persistent presence, would have led to marriage had Orlando not subverted the tradition and instead developed a new repetitious activity—a betting game involving flies landing on sugar lumps—to distract the Archduke and delay marriage. Unlike Peter Brooks's notion in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (1984) that narrative delay can postpone pleasure until the climax of the novel, marriage in this case is undesirable to

[15] The repetition here is virtually identical to Genette's example of his second category of frequency, in which a given number of events are told in the narrative that number of times. However, this simplified example shows how repetition with difference can figure into Genette's model. The events are so similar that they do not represent individual events, but instead the repetition of the same event. Perhaps a better example of Genette's second category would be a series of events that were different for each day specified.

Orlando and thus should be avoided altogether. *Orlando* avoids the male sequence of climax and denouement that Brooks's theory draws on, and instead works to break the masculine sentence and sequence.

Fly Loo, however, after many repetitions of it, becomes so boring that Orlando devises a method of cheating at it to anger the Archduke and thus drive him away. When the Archduke realizes what Orlando has done, their reactions seem telling of each character's gendered behavior: the Archduke "broke down completely" (183)—which the narrator has already shown was shocking behavior for a man in the company of others—recovering somewhat only to have the "chivalry of his heart" and his "proud head" injured by Orlando's bold—and boyish—move to keep him away, "by dropping a small toad between his skin and his shirt," since "rapiers are forbidden." The depiction of Orlando's response to the Archduke's reaction emphasizes Orlando's constancy in contrast to the Archduke's changeability: "She laughed. The Archduke blushed. She laughed. The Archduke cursed. She laughed. The Archduke slammed the door" (184). Here the Archduke's first reaction is blushing, a feminine trait, before the more masculine cursing and slamming, whereas Orlando's response, one of confidence and control, is repeated with each of the Archduke's responses.

The anaphoric repetition of *she laughed*, an example represented in the narrative as three separate repetitions of laughter using exactly the same words, rather than as one continuous laugh, and of *the Archduke* underscores the narrative's repetition of courtship and the trope of the woman unable to rid herself of the undesired suitor. In repeating Orlando's laughter in the face of the Archduke's progression toward leaving, the narrative echoes Orlando's repeated attempts to rid herself of the Archduke's company.

Thus Orlando's repeated laughter emphasizes her unfeminine behavior in a situation brought about by her resourceful solution—cheating, concealing a toad in her clothing and then slipping it in between the Archduke's skin and his clothing—to her predicament as a woman. The repetition in the sentence is not necessary to convey what happened, which could have been expressed as effectively by stating "she laughed as he blushed, cursed, and slammed the door." However, this simplified version omits the interactive nature of the situation, Orlando's steadiness in the situation, and the humor that repetition brings. Furthermore, the repeated portions of the sentence amplify the other uses of repetition, such as the repetitions of genre and of gender. This is similar to, in the previous scene, when the Archduke Harry continues to call on Orlando, which is depicted through the repetition of the days of the week; both amplify the repetition inherent in the Archduke's use of clothing and gender roles to replicate traditions of gender identity and heterosexual coupling; this further accentuates the narrative's repetitive nature by itself calling attention to repetitiveness.

The Archduke's final appearance in *Orlando* comes as Orlando forgets "that ladies are not supposed to walk in public places alone." She is able to avoid feeling "gravely discommoded by the pressure of the crowd" that has gathered around her when "a tall gentleman at once stepped forward and offered her the protection. It was the Archduke" (191). His return not only repeats Orlando's inability to avoid him but offers yet another opportunity for a marriage proposal. Orlando wonders "Was it impossible then to go for a walk without being half suffocated, presented with a toad set in emeralds [which the Archduke has made to show he had forgiven her for putting a toad in his

clothes], and asked in marriage by an Archduke?" (191-192). This brief encounter with the Archduke emphasizes that Orlando's life story is one of repeating courtships.

**"she found it convenient at this time to change frequently from one set of clothes to another"**

When Orlando cross-dresses as a man, she has the fortune of having "remained precisely as he had been" (138),[16] such that the "clothes she had worn as a young man of fashion," a "black velvet suit richly rimmed with Venetian lace" still "fitted her to perfection" (215). Unlike the Archduke's Archduchess attire, which is inappropriate for the season and fashion, Orlando's suit, although "a little out of fashion,"[17] made Orlando look "the very figure of a noble lord," quite a different image for going trolling than when Orlando as a young man traded such clothing for those that would allow him to pass among the lower classes in pubs and with women, yet with the similar effect of allowing Orlando to pass. Sneaking away "secretly out of doors" (215), Orlando's sartorial transgression extends beyond clothing as she strolls Leicester Square at night and attracts the company of a woman "of the tribe which nightly burnishes their wares, and sets them in order on the common counter to wait the highest bidder" (216). This is the first description in the novel's post-change section of Orlando's congress with a

[16] The narrator reminds the reader of how after changing from man to woman, Orlando "remained [. . .] fundamentally the same" (237), yet this insistence is belied by the narrative's description of Orlando as changing and learning as she lives as a woman (such as in the passage on pp. 174-175). The insistence of sameness prompts the reader to look for change, thus negating the narrator's assertion.

[17] Changes in fashion would be another marker of the passage of time in the narrative. However, the narrator downplays the change in fashion even though many years have passed since Orlando was a man.

woman, especially since her encounter with the Archduchess after returning from Turkey as a woman did not remain as such.

Cross-dressing yet again is not only a physical passing but a grammatical one, as the narrator notes that "Through this silver glaze the girl looked up at him (for a man he was to her)" (216). In calling Orlando *him*, the narrator must be focalizing through the woman, rather than self-focalizing or focalizing through Orlando, since both narrator and protagonist know Orlando's grammatical or gender identity when the narrator definitively shifts from using the masculine to the feminine pronoun. In marking this slippage that reveals how the woman sees Orlando, the narrative asserts that the clothing on the outside really is the defining factor of one's gender—or that how one is perceived determines gender, since clothing is the marker by which others determine gender in the absence of other distinguishing factors. This still does not resolve the question raised earlier in the narrative of whether the clothing genders the person or the person chooses specific clothing to depict gender. In this case, although Orlando has made the choice to don men's clothing, the distinction is a grey area in that these are not merely men's clothes but her clothes, and in that it is impossible to determine from the narrative whether she put on the clothing to attract a woman, or if she wanted to attract a woman because she put on the clothing. Since Orlando's gender is, to use the narrative's terms, a vacillation and a mixture, a both/and like the wave/particle duality, she has a "mixture in her of man and woman, one being uppermost and then the other, that often gave her conduct an unexpected turn," so neither conclusion would be productive—or rather

both conclusions would be (189). [18] Picking up this woman and walking arm in arm "roused in Orlando all the feelings which become a man," which suggests that the masculine clothing, regardless of causality, is in line with Orlando's manly feelings. However, once they are alone, "Orlando could stand it no longer," quickly shedding her costume—"In the strangest torment of anger, merriment, and pity she flung off all disguise and admitted herself a woman"—which suggests a vacillation in Orlando's character that makes her no longer interested in donning men's attire, or acting or being the part (217).

In revealing herself as a woman by removing her masculine costume, Orlando repeats other instances in the novel when characters disrobe to reveal a different sex than their clothing would convey, such as when Orlando shows her naked form upon becoming a woman, as well as when the Archduchess's disrobes to reveal himself as the Archduke. Echoing these moments of revealing through undressing suggests a third option for the interaction between sex and clothing: not only can clothing shape gender or express it, but clearly, it can also hide one's sex. This truism of clothing obscuring sex is repeated throughout the narrative, whether in a matter-of-fact fashion, such as in the novel's opening or Orlando's life in Turkish trousers, or as a grand revelation, such as Sasha's entrance into the novel, which builds up to the revelation that she is a woman through closer inspection, rather than by stripping her of clothing. However, the notion

[18] The wave/particle duality continues to serve as a metaphor in this discussion of gender as both a mixture and a vacillation; it is both like a wave—fluid, part of a spectrum or continuum—and like a particle—discrete, defined. Rather than describing gender as a wave-like mixture or a particle-like vacillation, the narrative continually describes gender as both.

that clothing masks gender is not theorized overtly in the narrative in the way that clothing's impact on behavior and its depiction of gender are.

Much like the scene in which Orlando, having woken up a woman, appears naked, this scene no doubt has Orlando in some degree of nudity, since she has removed "all disguise." In the former, Orlando is alone—save Purity, Chastity, and Modesty—in her nakedness, whereas in this scene, Orlando is alone with a woman of more questionable morality, and although she has removed her clothing, she is not referred to as naked. The Archduke, in removing his Archduchess clothing, never appears nude, suggesting that he has kept his Archduke clothing on underneath his costume, lest he compromise his underlying identity. Reference to a Mr. S. W.'s philosophy on women's relationships provides cover for the seemingly compromising situation of a half-dressed Orlando alone in the room with a prostitute, as the narrator asks, based on this purportedly-scientific theory, that if "it is well known (Mr. T. R. has proved it) 'that women are incapable of any feeling of affection for their own sex and hold each other in the greatest aversion,' what can we suppose that women do when they seek out each other's society?"[19] Rather than answer this question, the narrator, as in other difficult situations in the narrative, claims "immunity" from such an issue, concluding simply that "Orlando professed great enjoyment in the society of her own sex" (220). This avoidance of the issue of what women do when alone together is an example of what Adam Parkes calls, in borrowing the term from one of Vita Sackville-West's letters (318),

[19] Adam Parkes, among others, discusses the illicit nature of male homosexual acts in 1920s British law and culture in contrast to female homosexual acts, which were in essence deemed not to exist. In his article, "Lesbianism, History, and Censorship: *The Well of Loneliness* and the SUPPRESSED RANDINESS of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*," Parkes notes that "When Sir Chartres Biron silenced [Radclyffe] Hall at the trial, he indicated that, unlike male homosexuality, lesbianism remained unspeakable in the public discourse of Britain between the wars" (448).

"SUPPRESSED RANDINESS." Parkes uses this term to call attention to the numerous gaps, avoidances, and uncompleted phrases that "[enforce] a kind of self-censorship which illustrates Woolf's typical restraint in dealing with sexual topics" (447). Including these gaps ensures that "Sapphism is to be suggested" (Woolf *Diary* v.3 131). However, to argue that lesbian desire is only suggested, rather than "*stated*," as Parkes does (447), would be to read the text with an uncritical eye, rather than with one that the text has thus far trained its reader to have. The narrator's tone, the gaps in key places, cannot be ignored. Rather, they prompt the reader to be suspicious, inquisitive. In demonstrating Orlando's use of clothing to manipulate her gender, and therefore to queer her sexual liaisons, the narrative calls attention to its sapphic undercurrent.

Vacillation not only describes Orlando's gender identity, but also her sartorial representation or manipulation of that identity: "What makes the task of identification still more difficult is that she found it convenient at this time to change frequently from one set of clothes to another" (220). This layered repetition—repeating gender tropes through clothing, repeatedly doing so by changing from one into the other and then back again—signals the importance of this plot point in the novel's discourse about sexuality and courtship. The vacillation of Orlando's gender, which might confuse the narrator-biographer or certain implied readers, is not confusing to Orlando, who "had, it seems, no difficulty in sustaining the different parts, for her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive; nor can there be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied" (220-221). Orlando thrives on the benefits of vacillation, manipulating it such that "From the probity of breeches she turned to the

seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally" (221). Yet the narrative spends only another two paragraphs on such matters, quickly leaving the subject behind rather than engaging with it further. These two paragraphs emphasize Orlando's vacillation, and in doing so suggest a repetition of Orlando's daily activities such that the reader can imagine Orlando passing not one day but every day in such vacillating activity.[20] The chronology of the typical day reveals that the vacillation is not merely a polar shift from male to female but consists of various shifts in gradations and possibilities. The day begins with Orlando wearing "a China robe of ambiguous gender," finds her in knee breeches suggestively "clip[ping] the nut trees," and in flowered taffeta receiving a marriage proposal—which shows her participating in heteronormative courtship. When, later in the day, she dons clothing that allows her to "become a nobleman complete from head to toe" so that she can go out as a man in search of "adventure," it no doubt—based on Orlando's past as a nobleman—signifies Orlando's costumed sexual escapades, among other pleasures. Perhaps on the other extreme of Orlando's sartorial vacillation, she is "seen to dance naked on a balcony," indicating that she performs her gender not only with clothing but also with her naked form (222).

**"All was dark; all was doubt; all was confusion."**

Although Orlando is described as "enjoy[ing] the love of both sexes equally" (221), the liaison which leads to Orlando's pregnancy is unnarrated, if it happened at all. Hinted at more than revealed, Orlando's pregnancy manifests itself more as a change in

[20] This is an example of what Genette describes as the iterative, in which a single narrative moment represents what occurs more often in the chronologic version of the story.

attire for Orlando than a change in body. The voluminous fabric and the crinoline she must wear in her condition make the clothing seem more of the burden of pregnancy than the child she is carrying. The narrator points out two major concerns that the so-called spirit of the age, that is, the Victorian era, has with Orlando's pregnancy: that she is unmarried, and that her sex has yet to be determined by the courts, which also must determine to whom Orlando's property belongs, what should become of the marriage to Rosina Pepita and the three children born from that marriage, and whether Orlando is dead. The problem with the pregnancy is presented as a problem of sequencing, since Orlando resists the order that the spirit of the age wants her to replicate:

> The blushes came and went with the most exquisite iteration of modesty and shame imaginable. One might see the spirit of the age blowing, now hot, now cold, upon her cheeks. And if the spirit of the age blew a little unequally, the crinoline being blushed for before the husband, her ambiguous position must excuse her (even her sex was still in dispute) and the irregular life she had lived before. (236)

The consideration of a sequence of a woman's life—childhood, coming of age, engagement, marriage, pregnancy, giving birth, motherhood and death—is important, since often women's courtship plots do little to chronicle the transition into motherhood and even less to depict life afterwards. Orlando's pregnancy is disorderly in both senses: it resists traditional narrative authority as it exists beyond the limits of the courtship-plot sequence.[21] Orlando's situation is mitigated by her life leading up to her pregnancy and

[21] The narrative makes up for this transgression by delaying Orlando's son's birth until years later (295), and then once he is born, by barely mentioning him in the story.

her ambiguous position, not the least of which results from her yet-to-be-determined sex. That Orlando's sex must be determined by court case is already presented as absurd, but it is made even more so when Orlando becomes pregnant before the courts are able to determine her sex.

Further concern from the spirit of the age comes as Orlando tries to write. Orlando becomes blocked from writing, creating only inkblots, until a tingling takes over her body. Narrowing its focus "in her hands; and then in one hand, and then in one finger of that hand," the tingling ultimately "contract[s] itself so that it made a ring of quivering sensibility about the second finger of the left hand." What she finds on her hand, not a wedding band but "nothing but the vast solitary emerald which Queen Elizabeth had given her," prompts her to ask, "And was that not enough?" Despite the ring's monetary and historical value, "The vibration seemed, in the oddest way (but remember we are dealing with some of the darkest manifestations of the human soul) to say No, that is not enough," which is to say that the Queen's jewels are no substitute for marriage, or that Queen Elizabeth's favor no longer suffices in the age of Queen Victoria. This "hiatus, this strange oversight," Orlando's lack of wedding ring, instills in Orlando a sense of shame "without in the least knowing why" until she "instantly perceived what she had never noticed before," that others have a wedding band in the place where she has tingling of the second finger of the left hand (240).

Orlando's sudden observation that "the whole world was ringed with gold" is expressed in a repetitive rhetorical pattern. The narrator first enumerates an outing of Orlando's, followed by what wedding-ring observations Orlando makes there: "She went in to dinner. Wedding rings abounded. She went to church. Wedding rings were

everywhere. She drove out. Gold, or pinchbeck, thin, thick, plain, smooth, they glowed dully on every hand." (241). This pattern, which pre-figures the passage in which Orlando questions the validity of her marriage, which I will address shortly, indicates an insistence on repetition: rather than simply stating that wherever Orlando went, she saw wedding rings, the narrative uses repetition to further emphasize this point that Orlando, single and pregnant, is surrounded by married people.

To suggest that Orlando is only first noticing wedding rings cannot be to suggest that Orlando is first noticing that people are married—as a man, Orlando was engaged several times, and his marriage in Turkey to Rosina Pepita had not yet been annulled. Rather, it is perhaps a commentary on the changing customs surrounding marriage that saw an increase in the use of wedding rings, which were, in the Victorian era, still uncommon among men. With a lifespan of several centuries, Orlando has the distinct vantage point to observe gradual changes to the coupling tradition. However, it is not merely the addition of wedding bands that the narrator highlights, observing that "Couples trudged and plodded in the middle of the road indissolubly linked together. The woman's right hand was invariably passed through the man's left and her fingers were firmly gripped by his" (242). Rather, the narrator also suggests a more narrow coupling, in which wedlock is the only romantic coupling, and as such it is kept firmly in grasp.

Such observations, though, heighten Orlando's awareness of her wedding-ring lack: "Her ruminations, however, were accompanied by such a tingling and twangling of the afflicted finger that she could scarcely keep her idea in order. They were languishing and ogling like a housemaid's fancies. They made her blush" (242-243). Perhaps more

erotic than problematic, this tingling can be read as the spirit of the age re-appropriating Orlando's sexual desires, regulating her promiscuity and sexuality. The tingling becomes a problem here not so much for the discomfort it causes Orlando's finger, nor for the corresponding lack of a mate, but for the effect of such lack, which prevents Orlando from thinking clearly, and in turn prevents her from writing. In her desperation to return to creativity, "There was nothing for it but to buy one of those ugly bands and wear it like the rest. This she did, slipping it, overcome with shame, upon her finger in the shadow of a curtain; but without avail. The tingling persisted more violently, more indignantly than ever" (243). Clearly the spirit of the age is not so easily tricked or appeased that a fake wedding ring could suffice. That Orlando would attempt this hoax suggests the hollowness of the ritual to her, if merely purchasing her own ring and putting it on herself could fulfill it. Her attempt, however, is not couched in terms of marrying herself, nor of being her own bride. This is not to suggest that Orlando, having lived as both genders, could be both groom and bride, but that Orlando is so influenced by the coupling tradition that rather than envision a life in which she is self-sustaining, she must find a mate, even if it is as unconventional as being nature's bride, which I will discuss shortly.

Now even more removed from the erotic tingling that made her blush and lose her train of thought, Orlando must placate the spirit of the age in deed, not simply in appearance. Despite her lack of interest in finding a husband, which the narrator reminds the reader of by referring back to the scene when the Archduke departed, noting that "the cry that rose to her lips was 'Life! A Lover!' not 'Life! A Husband!'" (244), Orlando finds that the problem has gotten larger than just the tingling of a finger:

"Though the seat of her trouble seemed to be the left finger, she could feel herself poisoned through and through, and was forced at length to consider the most desperate of remedies, which was to yield completely and submissively to the spirit of the age, and take a husband" (243). It is peculiar that wearing the ring alone is not sufficient to conform to marriage traditions, which are steeped in performative elements, in a novel that places so much value on the performative value of costume, particularly on how attire frequently stands in for gender.[22] The spirit of the age is preparing Orlando for her new role in a way that simply wearing a wedding band could not, since yielding and submitting are important qualities in a Victorian wife,

Although Orlando accepts her fate by acknowledging her need to marry, she conflates marriage with death on more than one occasion. The narrator, in relaying Orlando's internal monologue, notes that "each man and each woman has another allotted to it for life, whom it supports, by whom it is supported, till death them do part. It would be a comfort, she felt, to lean; to sit down; yes, to lie down; never, never, never to get up again." Thus for Orlando, giving in to the coupling tradition means having someone to support and to be supported by, but it also represents a death-like finality. In keeping with the death imagery, the tingling of Orlando's finger now becomes heavenly, "as if angels were plucking harp-strings with white fingers and her whole being was pervaded by a seraphic harmony" (245). Death in this light seems perhaps more other-worldly, rather than the end of a life. Instead of death representing the life-option other than marriage, the two become conflated, such that for Orlando, to marry would

[22] Orlando's wearing a wedding ring without getting married seems to be the equivalent of unconvincing or bad crossdressing, such as the Archduke Harry's drag performance of the Archduchess Harriet.

be to lie down and die. The narrator goes one step further and equates death with womanhood when he enumerates the charges against Orlando in her court case: "(1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing" (168).

After unsuccessfully attempting to marry no one by buying her own wedding band and wearing it, Orlando decides that she will marry nature. Her assertion in the narrative, "'I have found my mate,' she murmured. 'It is the moor. I am nature's bride,'" is yet another repetition of a courtship that will not end in marriage (248). In choosing this version of coupling, Orlando believes that the moor will be her mate. In calling herself nature's bride, Orlando accepts the position of bride, marking herself as a woman in a heteronormative tradition, which she also does when she puts on the wedding ring, since women, not men, were the wearers of wedding rings in Victorian England. Although she puts herself into a gender role, bride, she undermines this by making her betrothed nature rather than a person, and thus gender-ambiguous. That Orlando's mate could be the moor, a plot of grassy land, is just as implausible as it being a Moor, perhaps a relative of the one whose head Orlando swung a sword at in the novel's opening passage. This play on the word *moor* for *Moor*, a man of Moorish ethnicity, since a woman of the same background would not be referred to as *the Moor*—we have Shakespeare's *Othello* as an iconic referent of the Moor as a man—suggests that Orlando would marry a man. In this way, Nature, as the Moor, becomes masculinized.

In his article, "'I am nature's bride': Orlando and the Female Pastoral," Roger Hecht also considers Orlando's desire to become nature's bride as masculinizing nature. However, he finds the ascription of the male gender to nature—because nature must

take on the role of the groom to Orlando as bride—as problematic. If nature is traditionally depicted as female, this reversal of the order "toss[es] aside the long-standing patriarchal hierarchies of groom/bride, male/female, culture/nature," in that which "upsets the established social and sexual paradigm which dominates Western culture, that which has gendered nature as feminine" (22). Such binaries hardly exist in *Orlando*. Nature takes on many different roles throughout the novel, thus exploding the notion of nature having a narrow characterization. Thus, to say that Orlando being nature's bride necessarily characterizes nature, her groom, as male, is to miss the fluidity of gender throughout the novel. Although Hecht presents an argument for reading Orlando's courtship with nature as part of the novel's commentary on landscape, instead of reading it as a meaningful inversion of sexual tropes, his examples further the need for a discussion of sex roles, which he wants to avoid.

Orlando has coupled with both men and women, so assuming that as a bride she would necessarily couple with a man is somewhat unfounded, at least in her world. Compulsory heterosexuality, which Adrienne Rich discusses in her essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1982), makes sense in this instance only as a performative impulse, in that by calling herself *bride*, Orlando means to do all of the things that a bride does, including marrying a bridegroom. Compulsory heterosexuality also seems a logical response to the normalizing efforts of the Victorian spirit of the age. However, the narrative undermines the use of such a conventional concept of marriage by coupling Orlando with nature, a non-human, non-individual force. To break the sequence this far but still cling to compulsory heterosexuality would be uncharacteristic of the narrative.

One important oversight in Hecht's assertion that by becoming nature's bride, Orlando makes nature male, is that Orlando's declaration aims to pin down her gender. By requiring Orlando to marry, the spirit of the age is offering Orlando an ultimatum: conform to Victorian ideas of gender and marriage, or forever lose the ability to write. In taking on the role of bride, in putting on a wedding ring, Orlando participates in the system of marriage as a woman, thus conforming to Victorian notions of gender. However, by choosing to marry nature, regardless of which gender nature is depicted as, Orlando undermines the role of bride and, consequently, of woman, since nature is not something one—man nor woman—can actually marry.

In arguing that as a woman, Orlando's relationship to nature is a departure from the "existing pastoral tradition where the landscape serves as a feminine muse to the masculine poet," Hecht raises an interesting point, since Orlando's relationship with any tradition is subversive (22). When Orlando is a man, his choice to write is a subversive one in that he hides his writing from his family since they would not approve. When Orlando is a woman, she continues to write even though writing is not appropriate in the gypsy culture, or, later, for a woman in Western culture; nature continues to be a muse for her. Can nature not serve as a muse for women writers? Is Orlando, with her woman's body, limited to what culture deems appropriate for women? Hardly. Nature has served as inspiration for Orlando from his late boyhood days when he first began writing "The Oak Tree" through his maturation to manhood, to her relatively genderless existence with the gypsies, to her writing as a woman. Rather than considering Orlando's change as one that has left everything else the same, Hecht credits Orlando's mid-novel change with promoting a change in landscape, from one of "gender hierarchy and

dominance" to one "with a near genderless landscape of mutual support and empowerment" (22-3). In making this comparison, Hecht confuses gender domination with gender, which is why he considers the novel as moving toward genderlessness. Rather, the novel continues to support that notion of gender as always both and more, throughout Orlando's many changes.

Coupling with nature is not a new phenomenon in the novel. When Orlando is a young man, he throws himself at nature when he is frustrated. In one such instance from the beginning of the novel, there is clearly homoerotic imagery as he couples with a masculine-depicted nature:

> He sighed profoundly, and flung himself—there was a passion in his movements which deserves the word—on the earth at the foot of the oak tree. He loved, beneath all this summer transiency, to feel the earth's spine beneath him; for such he took the hard root of the oak tree to be [. . .] it was the back of a great horse that he was riding [. . .] anything indeed, so long as it was hard, for he felt the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to; the heart that tugged at his side; the heart that seemed filled with spiced and amorous gales every evening about this time when he walked out. To the oak tree he tied it and as he lay there, gradually the flutter in and about him stilled itself; the little leaves hung [. . .] his limbs grew heavy on the ground [. . .] as if all the fertility and amorous activity of a summer's evening were woven web-like about his body. (19)

The phallic imagery of the oak's roots as hard and spine-like, protruding beneath Orlando, a feeling he loved, and the suggestion of the orgasmic gales and flutter and post-coital rest reveal a sexualized relationship between Orlando and nature from the beginning of the narrative. Nature here is masculinized, and the homoerotically-charged relationship is not problematic. What changes from this early passage to the one in which Orlando wants to marry the moor is the spirit of the age's need to regulate Orlando's sexuality into one of marriage.

Having decided to be nature's bride after tripping, falling to the ground, and breaking her ankle, Orlando engages with nature in what, too, can be considered a homoerotic coupling, although this time lesbian:

> giving herself in rapture to the cold embraces of the grass as she lay folded in her cloak in the hollow by the pool. "Here will I lie. (A feather fell upon her brow.) I will be cool always. These are wild birds' feathers—the owls, the nightjars. I shall dream wild dreams. My hands shall wear no wedding ring," she continued, slipping it from her finger. "The roots shall twine about them. Ah!" she sighed, pressing her head luxuriously on its spongy pillow, "I have sought happiness through many ages and not found it; fame and missed it; love and not known it; life—and behold, death is better. I have known many men and many women," she continued; "none have I understood. It is better that I should lie at peace here with only the sky above me—as the gipsy told me years ago. That was in Turkey" (248-249).

The description here of Orlando as "folded in her cloak" beside nature's "hollow by the pool" suggest clitoral and vaginal images, respectively. The roots, rather than depicting the phallus that Orlando wanted to straddle in the earlier passage, are not penetrating and instead "twine about" her hands. This passage reads as a coded answer to the earlier question about what women do when they are alone together; however, Orlando's choice to, in essence, bed down with nature, is described as a rejection of both heterosexual and homosexual coupling. Although Orlando's interaction with nature is still erotic, it ultimately ends in her equating the peace she feels with death.

**"If one liked him, was it marriage? If one liked other people, was it marriage?"**

In declaring that her "hands shall wear no wedding ring" and removing her pseudo-wedding ring because nature will instead have the tree roots twine around her fingers, Orlando inadvertently prepares herself to be available again to courtship, instead of representing herself as already married (248). Still lying on the ground because of her injured ankle and her attachment to nature, Orlando meets Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire, as he dismounts his horse to help her:

> "Madam," the man cried, leaping to the ground, "you're hurt!"
>
> "I'm dead, Sir!" she replied.
>
> A few minutes later, they became engaged. (250)

Rather than Orlando play dead, or remain nature's bride, she and Shel quickly become engaged. That Orlando could get engaged and married, give birth, or even say these words were she dead is absurd, and a disruption of the life sequence available for female

protagonists in narratives, which would script her either to die or to marry, or, perhaps, to marry and then die, but certainly not to die and then marry—although if any character could master this impossible feat, Orlando is a prime candidate. Although many critics argue that when she is a woman, Orlando is never attracted to a man in the novel, and that the quickness of their courtship and convenience of their marriage reveal the perfunctory nature of their relationship as a means of conforming to the heteronormative constructs of courtship and marriage, my analysis of this scene is a departure from these readings.[23] Although their meeting is staged as a chivalrous horseman rescuing a damsel in physical distress, the absurdity of both Orlando's response to him and their immediate engagement prompts me to read this scene not as a ceremonial attachment, but as a much more sexually explicit coupling: that a few minutes after meeting, Orlando already supine, "they became engaged" in sexual activity. The blank line between their meeting and their becoming engaged stands as a gap of silence signifying something that should remain unspoken, much like the other gaps and omissions of sexually explicit narration. Immediately following their so-called engagement, the scene depicts their post-coital morning-after: "The morning after as they sat at breakfast, he told her his name," since their engagement in love-making was so hasty that they had neglected to exchange introductions (250).

The narrative depicts Orlando's relationship with Shel as replicating the courtship tradition in perfunctory yet non-standard, subverting that tradition. Thus although they meet, get engaged, and ultimately get married, they subvert tradition by making a

[23] Both Parkes, 450 and Hankins, 187-188, argue for the hollowness of Orlando's relationship with Shel.

mockery of what it means to be engaged—both in terms of the traditional timing of an engagement, and in the sexually suggestive way their engagement can be read. On an even more basic level, a traditional courtship plot necessarily involves a woman and a man, which explains why Orlando, as a man, could not have courted Sasha had she not been a woman, despite his desire. In Orlando's relationship with Shel, we find on the surface a man and a woman, yet which is which, to what degree, and when is complicated. Shortly after Orlando and Shel become engaged, as they come to learn about each other, Orlando's request for Shel not to leave when the winds change reveals more information about the lovers' identities:

> "Oh! Shel, don't leave me!" she cried. "I'm passionately in love with you," she said. No sooner had the words left her mouth than an awful suspicion rushed into both their minds simultaneously.
>
> "You're a woman, Shel!" she cried.
>
> "You're a man, Orlando!" he cried.
>
> Never was there such a scene of protestation and demonstration as then took place since the world began (252).

By qualifying this statement with "since the world began," the narrator not only suggests Orlando's seemingly infinite lifespan, but also frames Shel and Orlando's protestation and demonstration as repetitive, since it repeats all the instances that have occurred over an immeasurable amount of time. In a narrative that repeatedly shows how clothing can conceal or depict gender, clothing can also be removed, which is no doubt how Orlando and Shel choose to demonstrate the bodily form that remains hidden underneath, underscoring the uncertainty that clothing can produce if one distrusts surface identities.

This is yet another instance of clothing being removed to reveal the identity hidden—or, perhaps as it seems to be in this case, replicated—underneath. This is not to suggest that what is underneath is truer, but that each character wants to see both the underneath and surface identity of the other.

Although Orlando and Shel may appear to be a woman and a man, respectively, that each considers the other to be of a different sex leads to another ambiguity in the text. One way to consider this passage is to conclude that either Orlando is a woman and Shel is a man—the identities they possess on the surface, which satisfy the basic requirement for repeating the traditional marriage plot—or that Shel is the woman and Orlando the man, which, although it would subvert their surface identities, would still allow them to marry according to the heteronormative coupling tradition. However, examined more closely, Orlando, who claims to be a woman, is engaged to someone she intuitively believes is a woman, and Shel, who claims to be a man, is engaged to someone he believes to be a man. No gender is stable here, so it is impossible to tell whether Orlando and Shel are simply a heterosexual couple, more complicatedly a heterosexual couple in which each passes as the other sex, a gay male couple in which one passes as the opposite sex, a lesbian couple in which the other passes as the opposite sex, or something more of a mixture of any or all of these permutations.

Gender ambiguity repeatedly concerns Orlando and Shel, such that they not only repeat the questioning of the other's sexual identity but also the act of proving that identity:

> "Are you positive you aren't a man?" he would ask anxiously, and she would echo,

> "Can it be possible you're not a woman?" and then they must put to the proof without more ado. For each was so surprised at the quickness of the other's sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman, that they had to put the matter to the proof at once. (258)[24]

Implicit in each lover's doubt is an essentialized notion of identity for the other, to which neither conforms. This passage not only reiterates how different each character is from the traditional role they hold in the fiction of a courtship plot they pretend to act out, but also shows that each is repeatedly surprised to see the other as deviating from that role. Of course, their repeated questioning of each other's gender could merely be a performative prompt to "put the matter to the proof," and thus to remove their clothing and have sex.

Once Orlando's court case is settled, so that Orlando's sex "is pronounced indisputably, and beyond the shadow of a doubt (what I was telling you a moment ago, Shel?) Female," and the winds change, making it possible for Shel to resume his travels to Cape Horn, Orlando and Shel can finally marry (255). Unlike their unique romance, in which they both get acquainted with each other and reveal an uncanny immediate knowledge of the other, suggesting that their relationship functions outside the

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[24] Woolf's discussion of the woman-manly and man-womanly minds in the last chapter of *A Room of One's Own* seems to complement this passage, since in it she argues that a person's mind contains some balance of both man and woman, and that balance determines how we interact with others, each of different balances themselves. Although there is a binary in this system, man and woman, there is also a fluidity between the two. In Orlando and Shel's relationship, one's individual balances complement the other's, transgressing notions of what a woman or man can think, feel, or believe—or how either can express those feelings (97-105).

conventions of interpersonal interactions, their wedding is rushed and quite perfunctory. All of the characters involved perform the required rituals to make it a wedding, but in such a hurried, harried manner that the rituals lose all significance. Their wedding, which conforms in name only to nuptial traditions, is too noisy and chaotic for the key parts to be heard, such that at a pause in the "uproar . . . one word—it might be 'the jaws of death'—rang out clear." Nature conspires to undermine the ceremony, providing "a clap of thunder, so that no one heard the word Obey spoken or saw, except as a golden flash, the ring pass from hand to hand" (262). These references to the ritualized language of the marriage act, the one heard and the other obscured but said, are the only words provided from the ceremony, words that hardly represent the relationship Orlando and Shel have developed.

When Shel leaves, immediately following the ceremony, there seems to have been no opportunity for them to consummate the marriage. Instead, there is the double-entendre that "they rose with the organ booming" and the suggestive mounting and riding, which is logically describing Shel getting on a horse—itself a sexually loaded image—but is not explicitly stated, and finally an orgasmic sequence of their calling out of each other's names, "the words went dashing and circling like wild hawks together among the belfries and higher and higher, further and further, faster and faster, they circled, till they crashed and fell in a shower of fragments to the ground" (262). The calling of each other's names signals the beginning of their sexual climax, which is represented by repetitive language that intensifies as the crescendo builds, ultimately standing in for that consummating climax. Immediately afterwards, Shel leaves for the Cape and Orlando, now married, resumes her solitary life.

In Shel's absence, Orlando relies on her wedding band as proof of her marriage, despite the mere "golden flash" in which the ring was exchanged and her previous emptying the wedding ring of meaning when "she had put it there herself before she met Shelmerdine, [which] had proved worse than useless." The ring now becomes ritualized in Orlando's daily life, as she repeatedly "turned the ring round and round, with superstitious reverence, taking care that it should not slip past the finger joint," as though removing the ring would negate the marriage. She emphasizes repetition in the act of wearing a wedding ring when she echoes traditional wisdom about wedding-ring customs, stating "like a child cautiously repeating its lesson" that "The wedding ring has to be put on the second finger of the left hand . . . for it to be of any use at all" (263). The ring's use, which is to mark Orlando's body as married, functions in a way that a cloak and breeches marked her as a man, or his garter marked him as noble, which is significant since the ring's referent, Orlando's husband, is absent.

When the narrator considers Orlando's doubts about the legitimacy of her marriage in the Victorian era, it becomes clear that it is not only the absence of her husband but her nonconformity that she fears will de-legitimize her marital status:

> Yet, she could not deny that she had her doubts. She was married, true; but if one's husband was always sailing round Cape Horn, was it marriage? If one liked him, was it marriage? If one liked other people, was it marriage? And finally, if one still wished, more than anything in the whole world, to write poetry, was it marriage? She had her doubts. (264)

This repetitious moment, which calls readers' attention to the question of the rigid definition of what a marriage—Victorian or otherwise—is and what it cannot be,

highlights what Orlando's marriage is and is not. The rhetorical structure here of the conditional, beginning with *if*, followed by the same question, *was it marriage* represents the conflation of the repetition of gender roles, love plots, and rhetorical repetition.[25] In this passage, the repetition at the start of the phrases, with "if" is an example of *anaphora*; the repetition of the question "was it marriage?" at the end of the phrase is an example of *epistrophe*, creating a mirroring of repetition at the start and end of the sentences. The passage begins and ends with the reiteration of Orlando's doubt. Furthermore, the substance of the repetition reveals the narrative's repetition in thought of the marriage tradition, but shows how Orlando's story deviates from the conventions of marriage. That is, each question, in following a repetitive format, draws parallels between the subversive quality of being a wife whose husband is away, of liking one's husband, of liking other people, and of writing poetry. Other than, perhaps, liking other people, these qualities are not subversive, untraditional, or marriage-negating; rather, they should be commonplace. However, the rhetorical pattern, along with the satiric tone, emphasizes how radical it is to like one's husband or other people, or to have poetic aspirations as a woman. In referring to her husband in the first question, Orlando makes each question implicitly a wife's question, a woman's question. The assumption in Orlando's questions, that a marriage necessarily involves a woman living with her husband, not liking him or anyone else, and not having any artistic outlet, moves beyond marking her as unconventional; it instead suggests an even more confining definition of

[25] Throughout *Orlando*, moments of rhetorical repetition are often found in the narration rather than in quotations of Orlando's speech, but they represent Orlando's thought pattern rather than the narrator's. Monika Fludernik, in *The Fictions of Languages and the Languages of Fiction* (1993) discusses the repetition of sentence constituents as often a sign of rhetorical and emotive discourse, particularly as it often "a conspicuous clue for a free indirect discourse reading" (236).

marriage than tradition—in this case, the spirit of the age—would endorse. The answers to these questions must be "yes," since it seems that the spirit of the age is satisfied with Orlando's marriage to Shel—unlike when Orlando did not fulfill the spirit of the age's mandate to marry, instead feigning marriage by wearing a wedding ring without getting married.

Christy Burns's assertion in "Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions Between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*" (1994) that in this passage, "Orlando reflects on the way her marriage—which turns out to be strikingly nontraditional—has given her an odd freedom," and that "Orlando takes the category that is forced upon her (marriage), but she subverts it by negating many of its more traditional constraints," echoes my reading of this passage's depiction not only of Orlando's subversive marriage to Shel but also of the instability of marriage as a tradition (Burns 355). Although Burns glosses over the "was it marriage?" passage without considering what each question suggests or what role its rhetorical structure of repetition plays in Orlando's negotiation of her newly-married identity, her following discussion on theories of identity and the repetition of gender models provides a useful link between my consideration of the rhetorical repetition in the passage and Orlando's refusal to "*just imitate* the model," which makes her "not deterministically bound to repeat the conventional model of 'woman'" (Burns 356). Burns aptly considers Judith Butler's discussion in *Gender Trouble* of the critical task of "locat[ing] strategies of subversive repetition" in "precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity" (Butler 147). Repetition is key to Butler's description of both the development and destruction of gender norms: "The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to

repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, *to displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself" (Butler 148). Orlando's repetition of gender norms certainly displaces the gender norms she—or he—repeats, but it is not merely a repetition but a repetition with difference, or as Burns writes, "parodically repeat, yes, repeat—but with a difference" (Burns 356).[26] This repetition with difference drives the repetition throughout the narrative, but nowhere is it as layered as in this emblematic "was it marriage?" passage, in which repetition with difference describes the narrative's position on gender roles, marriage norms, as well as the rhetorical method employed to carry out those repetitions. In layering the different repetitions, the narrative calls attention to the use of tradition in developing a subversive counter-tradition.

Shortly after this highly repetitive passage, another passage makes similar work of rhetorical repetition, *conduplicatio*, the repetition of a word in various places throughout a paragraph, and *mesodiplosis*, the repetition of a word or phrase in the middle of clauses, to highlight another instance of repetition as a mode of displacing gender norms:

> Surely, since she is a woman, and a beautiful woman, and a woman in the prime of her life, she will soon give over this pretence of writing and thinking and begin to think, at least, of a gamekeeper (and as long as she thinks of a man, nobody objects to a woman thinking). And then she will write him a little note (and as long as she writes little notes nobody objects to a woman writing either) and make an assignation for Sunday dusk; and Sunday dusk will come; and the gamekeeper will whistle under the

[26] Woolf deftly uses parody in *Orlando* to convey her undermining of the dominant form of gender and marriage. She notes in her diary as she develops her ideas about *Orlando* that "Satire is to be the main note—satire & wildness" (vol. 3 131).

> window—all of which is, of course, the very stuff of life and the only possible subject for fiction. (268-9)

In repeating the word *woman* as well as the structure of the parenthetical aside containing the same language and sentiment about women's social limitations, along with references to Sunday dusk, and acknowledgement of the traditional subject matter of fiction, the narrative subverts traditional gender norms as they intersect with the traditions of writing more generally. The layering of different modes of repetition emphasizes the narrative's commitment, as Burns describes it, "*to displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself" (356).

This displacement of norms pervades the narrative at the level of the sentence and sequence, creating an alternate mode of expression and a rejection of the convention of what marriage and writing about marriage should be; as Boone describes, the countertraditional "asserts a subversive attack upon the evolving hegemony of the marriage tradition in Anglo-American fiction" (2). *Orlando,* through the repetitive mode of the narrative, breaks the sentence and sequence, affording Orlando the space to move beyond the confining tradition so that she can simultaneously be married, like her husband and other people, and pursue her writing. In doing so, the novel successfully represents what Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* insists her fictional Mary Carmichael in writing *Life's Adventure* must do, as a rule, breaking the sentence and sequence "not for the sake of breaking, but for the sake of creating" (81).

# Chapter Three

## "You lucky lucky girl! You clever clever darling!": Repetition and the One-Year Marriage Experiment in *The Glimpses of the Moon*

When Allen F. Stein set out to write *After the Vows Were Spoken: Marriage in American Literary Realism* (1984), he found that the section on Edith Wharton's writing was too large to fit in one chapter, that the "sheer mass of marriage stories by James and Wharton and the complexity with which they frequently render both their ideas on wedlock and the themes with which they connect it, necessitated three chapters on each of this pair, chapters in which some works are treated only cursorily" (17). His discussion of both the often-discussed novels, such as *The House of Mirth* (1905) and *The Age of Innocence* (1920), and the more obscure short fiction provide an excellent survey of marriage in Wharton's work. However, Stein omits *The Glimpses of the Moon*, a novel with particular relevance to the troubled depiction of marriage throughout Wharton's oeuvre.

In *The Glimpses of the Moon*, Nick Lansing and Susy Branch live within the upper-class but without the necessary pocket-book. Although they greatly enjoy each other's company, neither has the money necessary to support them in the upper-class they have been born into, so they must either marry for money or not marry at all. Instead, they devise a plan to support their "mutual liking," to extend what is to Nick "the one complete companionship he had ever known": to marry, live off the gifts and generosity afforded to newly-weds, and consider divorce after a year, or when the money runs out, if a better match or opportunity arises (9, 15). The plan is founded on the premise that through divorce each can repeat the marriage act to keep in good financial and social standing. Thus, although the love-plot includes their union in wedlock, it is far from

traditional. The sacrifices Susy must make to finance their plan—making compromises and doing favors to ingratiate herself to wealthy friends in exchange for gifts and financial support—outrage Nick and prompt him to leave her well before their plan stipulates. The end of the first part of the novel, all of the second, and most of the third, chronicle their lives apart after Nick leaves, before they ultimately reconcile in the penultimate chapter. However, their plan shows how deliberately they can use repetition to manipulate the traditional sequencing of marriage, from courtship to union—and from union to separation, and ultimately to reunion. *The Glimpses of the Moon* repetitiously follows Nick and Susy's plan as it begins as a wedlock plot with their honeymoon, recalls in flashback their courtship, returns to their honeymoon, shifts to two courtship plots after Nick leaves Susy and each gets involved with a wealthy potential spouse, and concludes with the couple's reunion. Repetition of their courtship and union, echoed in repeated images and language, calls attention to both the traditional components of the love-plot and the deviation of their love-plot from the tradition.

Words, images, locations, habits, each repeat throughout the narrative, and especially in scenes focused on some aspect of the love-plot. As J. Hillis Miller explains in *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982) about how repetition informs his reading, "I try to attend to the threads of the tapestry of words in each case rather than simply to the picture the novel makes when viewed from a distance. This necessitates my focus on details of language in each novel" (3). The mention of the image of the moon is one such thread that figures prominently in the first two chapters as Nick and Susy begin their honeymoon in Como and recurs throughout the first part of the text. Although the moon and moonlight disappear after Nick leaves Susy, far exceeding the

natural moonless period of the new moon, the moon returns, albeit "cast[ing] her troubled glory on them," at the novel's end (297).[1] Cigarettes and coffee appear frequently, emphasizing consumption in the repetitious daily habits of the characters.[2] What Miller would consider larger-scale repetitions are emphasized in the narrative by smaller-scale repetitions of words or images. For instance, the movement within Europe, not only Nick and Susy's but other characters' as well, suggests a repeated restlessness and placelessness typical of the post-war period. Laura K. Johnson, in "Edith Wharton and the Fiction of Marital Unity" (2001), glosses the restlessness in noting the repetition of water and water imagery. She reads passages such as "The current of idle activity on which they were both gliding was her native element as well as his; and never had its tide been as swift, its waves as buoyant" (*Glimpses* 204-205), as "underscor[ing] the constant danger of dissolution" (962). Burton Rascoe, in a review of *The Glimpses of the Moon*, "An Entomologist of Society" (1922), comments on the repetitious nature of the plot: "For Susy and Nick we can, after 200 pages, only wonder how Mrs. Wharton is going to contrive to find another rent-free house for them on the face of Europe. After so many pages of sponging incidents, after so many acceptances of material favors in return for debasing acts, the story becomes frightfully repetitious"

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[1] Many critics have noted the image of the moon as a recurring symbol in *Glimpses*, such as Adeline Tintner, who links the images of the moon to the depiction of the moon in the Tiepolo fresco that Nick visits in Venice. The novel's title comes from *Hamlet*: "That thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel/Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,/Making night hideous and we fools of nature/So horridly to shake our disposition/With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?" (I, iv). Here, "the glimpses of the moon" refers to the fitful moonlight, which applies as well to the intermittently-present moon in Wharton's novel as a symbol of the Lansing's waxing and waning relationship.

[2] Helen Killoran cites Nick's repeated coffee-drinking, insinuating that his need for caffeine has reached a point of drug addiction. However, his coffee-drinking is not so frequent in the narrative, far less often than the smoking of cigarettes throughout. The mention of both coffee and cigarettes describes the daily habit of the characters, rather than their evil addictions.

(311). Whereas Rascoe views the novel's repetition as an indication of "the same sort of inevitability about [*Glimpses*] as there is when, set in motion upon a given track, a locomotive arrives eventually at a given terminus," this layering of repetitions is an important rhetorical, narrative mode that effectively serves to develop the repetition in the plan for Nick and Susy's marriage (310).

The novel establishes in the first two chapters not only Nick and Susy's plan for marriage but also different models of marriage within their social set. Ursula and Fred Gillow each look outside of their marriage for sexual opportunities, including with Nick and Susy, using their abundant wealth to aid their affairs, which is morally repugnant to Nick and Susy. Also unacceptable to them is Nelson and Ellie Vanderlyn's marriage, because Ellie is notorious for extramarital affairs and, later in the novel, because Ellie, without having made it explicit from the start of her marriage, thinks nothing of divorcing her husband and leaving her daughter to marry someone wealthier. In contrast, Nat and Grace Fulmer, two impoverished artists, have chosen to marry not for money but for companionship, and they "may after all be having the best of it," managing and living an unglamorous life with their five children, about which Susy initially says she "couldn't live as they do for a week" (17). Dale Bauer's discussion in *Edith Wharton's Brave New Politics* (1994) of the debate in the 1920s surrounding companionate marriage provides other models of marriages to consider against those in *Glimpses*. Unlike procreative marriages in which couples come together to have children, companionate marriages could allow not merely for trial marriages, but could also allow for childless marriage if a couple so desired—here, morality, birth control, abortion,

divorce, and many other social issues converge.[3] The marriage that Nick and Susy Lansing plan for themselves, based on the companionate marriage, is a temporary one. Perhaps one of the important distinguishing features between their relationship and Ellie Vanderlyn's temporary marriage to Nelson which has produced Clarissa, their eight-year-old daughter, is that the Lansings have not had children. Bauer's discussion calls attention to the fact that Nick and Susy were not expecting, despite being young, attracted to each other, and honeymooning for months in the most ideal of locations, which could suggest their use of some method of birth control other than abstinence.[4] Bauer's reading of the novel demonstrates the argument for companionate marriage in which birth control "has allowed the couple to come to a temperamental and economic negotiation of their independent needs" (136). Since Nick and Susy plan to end the marriage after a year or so, there would be no reason to conceive a child if it could be avoided; a child would suit neither their budget nor their nomadic lifestyle while honeymooning at their friends' homes nor their plan for new marriages after the year.

The community to which Nick and Susy belong represents repetition as a mode of life, in that the couple is juxtaposed against "their peers, whose short-lived relationships propel them like pinballs through a constantly shifting world. These lost souls circulate autonomously through a culture based on perpetual movement" (Johnson 962). The narrative describes this society as, in a section focalized through Nick, "In that squirrel-wheel of a world of his and Susy's you had to keep going or drop out," and in a

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[3] Although *companionate marriage* might seem to imply a marriage merely of companions, not lovers, Bauer uses the term to refer to marriages based on love that are not procreative.

[4] Andrea Tone's *Devices and Desires: A History of Contraceptives in America* (2001) provides an excellent discussion of what birth control would have been available in the 1920s.

section focalized by Susy as "the queer social whirligig from which she had so lately fled" (107, 120). Susy finds herself having "turned and turned about in her agony like a trapped animal in a cramping cage" (118). These metaphors for the repetitive, unproductive, directionless movement of the leisure-class set echoes the repetition of the Lansings' plan for marriage followed by divorce and again marriage, and of marriage as it is generally depicted in the narrative.

As Susy predicted, friends curious to see Nick and Susy, "a novelty as married people," visit them in Venice since "It was such fun to pop down and see them: it made one feel romantic and jolly" (19, 20). Despite this popularity, Nick resents their guests' presence, feeling that he is "the superior of his habitual associates," and "flatter[s] himself that Susy would share this feeling" (57). When instead the friends' presence animates Susy with "an inward glow which had given her a new beauty," Nick becomes "vaguely irritated," at their differing stances, and "when he asked her how she liked being with their old crowd again his irritation was increased by her answering with a laugh that she only hoped the poor dears didn't see too plainly how they bored her." Here, Nick paradoxically expects Susy to repeat his attitude and yet is annoyed when she does: "The patent insincerity of the reply was a shock to Lansing. He knew that Susy was not really bored, and he understood that she had simply guessed his feelings and instinctively adopted them: that henceforth she was always going to think as he thought." Nick becomes increasingly disillusioned about Susy's desire to conform to his view, testing her by suggesting that "all the same, it's rather jolly knocking about with them again for a bit," to which Susy, as expected, responds, "Yes, isn't it? The old darlings—all the same!" (57). Nick "forg[ets] that five minutes earlier he had resented her being glad to

see their friends" and instead fears that Susy's "independence and self-sufficiency," which had been for Nick "among her chief attractions," seem at risk of disappearing, which concerns him since "if she were to turn into an echo their delicious duet ran the risk of becoming the dullest of monologues" (57-8). Although Johnson reads Susy as having a contractual marriage, as per their plan, but striving for marital unity, in that she "retreats from contract into the romantic 'solution' of marital unity" (948), Nick and Susy continually struggle to borrow the best aspects of both of these types of marriages and do away with the parts that do not suit them.[5] Nick's frustration with Susy's repeating his ideas back to him shows his preference for a companionate marriage of two individuals joined by a contract, rather than the scenario implicit in marital unity, since he prefers that Susy maintain her point of view and not become subsumed into his identity.

Much as in Chapter One, in which a consideration of focalization traces Hermione's unformed, fragmentary perspective on her world, examining the focalization in *Glimpses* also reveals a disunity; switching between Nick's point of view and Susy's, the dual-focalized narrative counters the argument that Nick and Susy strive toward marital unity. The narrative, which begins with Nick and Susy already on their honeymoon, details the Lansing's plan for their marriage through repeated reference to their *plan*, *bargain*, or *experiment*, and more thoroughly through flashbacks to their courtship.[6] Susy

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[5] Contractual marriage mirrors a business contract, in which two parties come together for mutual but separate interests and renegotiate as they see fit. In marital unity, the husband and wife become one unit, such that they no longer have separate interests or needs; customarily, the wife's identity is subsumed into the husband's, particularly in legal matters. Johnson's article discusses both of these terms as it traces the legal history of marital unity in the United States.

[6] These flashbacks to their courtship in the first two chapters of the novel, examples of external analepsis, are important because they reconstruct more thoroughly in the narrative what is otherwise offered only in fragments in the present-day narration or otherwise unnarrated. Other instances of flashback in the narrative are internal analespsis, examples of narrative repetitions since they repeat

focalizes the first chapter, Nick the second, so the narrative offers both characters' points of view by varying the focalization from the start. Through the dual focalization both in the present of the narrative and in the reconstruction of the past, the reader is able to piece together a narrative of what brings Nick and Susy to the point at which the novel begins. The shift in focalizer from one chapter to the next shows both points of view, insisting that the two characters maintain their individual perspectives and identities; this is a particularly important distinction in the scene above, in which Nick fears Susy is giving up her identity to adopt his point of view.

Alternating as focalizers, Nick and Susy each offer a perspective on the events in the novel. Thus, after this scene in which Nick worries that Susy might sacrifice her independence in favor of becoming an echo of him, the chapter ends, and the next one, focalized through Susy, centers on the secret that Ellie has confided in Susy but has insisted Susy not tell Nick. If the previous chapter, seen from Nick's perspective, highlights his concern that Susy would sacrifice her independence to echo his thoughts and preferences, the next chapter begins by highlighting the independent business Susy is engaged in. Johnson also acknowledges the shifts in point of view in much of the narrative, but misreads the ending as representing the merging of their two persepectives into one, Nick's: "while two-thirds of the novel is narrated from Susy's point of view, the closing scene is narrated from Nick's. Susy's voice is absorbed, and she is seen in relation to her husband" (964). Instead, throughout the novel, the ending included, when one character focalizes, the other's point of view is obscured. Although the

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what has already been narrated. These internal analepses are examples of an event occurring once but being narrated multiple times, which is one type of frequency that Gérard Genette discusses in *Narrative Discourse* (1980).

narration does not shift back to Susy's focalization before the end of the novel, the narrative does not preclude Susy's individuality. Rather, neither Nick nor Susy is given the final word; instead, the narrator asserts narrative control and focalizes the last paragraph.

**"'You talk like the hero of a novel—the kind my governess used to read.'"**

Nick and Susy's love-plot is not only read into the narrative by the reader but is also figured in by the characters through repeated references to novelistic traditions. Conscious of the already-written quality of their honeymoon scene, "a lake so famed as the scene of romantic raptures," Nick and Susy are "rather proud of not having been afraid to choose it as a setting of their own" (3). Hildegard Hoeller, in *Edith Wharton's Dialogue with Realism and Sentimental Fiction* (2000), uses this example to argue that "Wharton renders Nick and Susy as both sentimental characters and authors of their own sentimental fiction," who "will be able to live on the revenues—in the form of wedding gifts—of their invented and enacted love plot" (131). Once on their honeymoon, however, the plan they devise becomes their reality: "Using their own sentimental story for realistic ends, they are drawn into it just as much as their 'readers.' It becomes their truth" (132). Throughout the narrative, repetition of writing references and metaphors emphasizes the consciously constructed marriage plot that their plan scripts for them.

Told in flashback, Nick and Susy's meeting focuses on writing, both his professional writing and Susy's fictionalization of an alternate life:

> It was at one of their earliest meetings—at one of the heterogeneous dinners that Fred Gillows tried to think "literary"—that the young man who chanced to sit next to her, and of whom it was vaguely rumoured that he had "written," had presented himself to her imagination as the sort of luxury to which Susy Branch, heiress, might conceivably have treated herself as a crowning folly. Susy Branch, pauper, was fond of picturing how this fancied double would employ her millions: it was one of her chief grievances against her rich friends that they disposed of theirs so unimaginatively. (7)

Unlike Susy's fictional alter ego who has millions to afford her a life married to a writer, Susy is reliant on the financial support she gets, such as from Ursula, her "friend and patroness" (8): "Ursula does a lot for me: I live on her for half the year. This dress I've got on now is one she gave me. Her motor is going to take me to a dinner tonight. I'm going to spend next summer with her in Newport." Susy suggests that Nick, also single, is not as free as he believes, likening Ursula's sponsorship to the control Nick's publisher has over him, "'A business claim, call it,' she pursued," emphasizing how her life mirrors his situation as a writer (11). Nick has neither wealth nor a career that will earn him any wealth, since his writing is not the kind that will earn him much money, so although Susy wishes he would write a novel instead of volumes V through X of an encyclopedia, she realizes that his writing is too good to have a high market value: "if it were the kind that she could bear to read, it probably wouldn't bring him in much more than his encyclopædia. Miss Branch had her standards in literature. . . ." (9).

Once they arrive in Venice, Nick begins writing his novel in earnest. Strefford, their friend who lends them his villa in Como for the start of their honeymoon and visits them at the Vanderlyns' estate, is more interested in "the last chapter of her history," than the "philosophic romance" that Susy brags Nick is writing (41). Although she likens Nick's book to Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, a more telling comparison is to *Glimpses* itself: in their story, Nick and Susy philosophize about romance, in a different sense of the word. Much like the Lansings themselves, "The mere fact that [Nick] was engaged on a philosophic romance, and not a mere novel, seemed the proof of an intrinsic superiority." In actualizing their plan to marry for a year, they re-write the marriage plot based on their philosophy that they should not need to remain unwed or marry solely for money; much like Nick's writing, their philosophic romance is not "a mere novel" but a repetition with difference that affords them the chance to extend their relationship despite what society would dictate for their life-scripts (47).

The book that Nick wants to write—and that Susy would want to read—represents financial limitation for the Lansings. While Nick writes his book, their limited income leads Susy to compromise herself to ensure a beneficial writing environment for Nick. Vulnerable to Ellie Vanderlyn's request for assistance in hiding her affair, implicitly in exchange for summer residence in the Vanderlyn villa, Susy consequently mails letters from Ellie to her husband so he believes Ellie is at home instead of away with her lover. Later, Susy accepts Ellie's thank-you gift for her role in concealing the affair, a valuable sapphire, as a financial reserve. The bracelet is not only a symbol of the conflict at the end of the first part of the novel, but also a necessary complication in their plan and their self-guided story. Although Nick returns Ellie's thank-you gift to him, a

pearl scarf pin, Susy, always planning for her financial future, cannot trade the financial security the bracelet offers for a clean conscience, knowing how difficult it is to manage without gifts from her friends. When she chooses to free herself of her friends' control, her role as a governess suggests a different life-path than the love-plot, but one no less literary.

At the novel's end, Nick reveals that "During the cruise I did a couple of articles on Crete—oh, just travel-impressions, of course; they couldn't be more. But the editor of the *New Review* has accepted them, and asks for others. And here's his cheque, if you please! . . . And it makes me awfully hopeful about my book." The success of his articles brings promise of the "glorious future that awaited *The Pageant of Alexander*," his book, in addition to two hundred dollars, exactly enough money for Susy to retrieve Ellie's bracelet from the pawn shop and return it to Ellie (294). Thus Nick's writing and the money from its sale, along with the promise of more from the publication of Nick's book, allows Susy finally to return the bracelet that has represented not merely her poverty but her enslavement to material possessions and the people who use them to manipulate her.

The narrative's penultimate paragraph ends with the last spoken words of the novel: "'Wake up; it's bedtime'" (297). This repetition of Nick's earlier, "'Wake up,' he whispered, 'it's bedtime'" from the first chapter focalized through Nick, frames the narrative (20). Even their posture is repeated, as "her sleeping head on his knee, clasped in his joy as the hushed world was clasped in moonlight" (20) is overtly echoed at the novel's ending, "her head on his knees, as she had done on the terrace of Como on the last night of their honey-moon" (296); Nick utters his repeated line as "He stooped

down" at the beginning (20), and as "He stooped closer" at the end (297). Although these are not exact repetitions, their recurrence not only links the beginning and end of the narrative as it signals the resumption of their idyllic honeymoon, despite the new, dingier location, but also emphasizes the writerly role that Nick and Susy have in telling their story, since they are aware of the repetition. Tricia M. Falwell also notes this repetition in *Love and Death in Edith Wharton's Fiction* (2006), asserting that "the novel ends with Nick and Susy in the same physical position as at the beginning, yet at a different place both emotionally and spiritually" (121). The nearly identical aspects of these scenes have different valences at the beginning and ending of the novel; like Gertrude Stein's notion of insistence, the recurrence of these lines at the beginning and end of the novel is necessarily different because the "emphasis can never be the same not even when it is most the same" ("Portraits and Repetition" 171). In addition to the new location and the time elapsed, Susy has certainly changed from the beginning to ending. In framing the story with this contradictory statement, "'Wake up; it's bedtime,'" Nick enacts the contradictory nature of their story, in which they challenge the dominant culture but live according to their old-fashioned values. The repetition signals the close of the narrative frame.

**"A year—yes, she was sure now that with a little management they could have a whole year of it!"**

Cynthia Wolff's often-quoted dubious assessment in her biography of Wharton, *A Feast of Words: The Triumph of Edith Wharton* (1977), that "reiterated references to *The House of Mirth*" in Wharton's correspondence with publisher Appleton, coupled with her

"insistence that *The Glimpses of the Moon* could, despite its modernity, be acceptable as a prewar novel, reinforce the careful reader's uneasy sense that Wharton has begun—probably entirely without realizing it—to borrow from her own earlier work." As evidence of such, she argues, "Nick Lansing and Susy Branch are almost caricatures of Selden and Lily Bart," which undermines not only the later novel's merits but also Wharton's literary skill (346). Wolff's critical comparison continues: "Wharton picks up a good many turns of language and situation that had been used meaningfully in *The House of Mirth* (undoubtedly they rang in *her* ear with significant resonance); in this novel, however, the verbal tricks do not coalesce into a meaningful fictional whole" (347). Although little is written on *Glimpses* in comparison to the vast criticism on *The House of Mirth*, much of the more recent criticism considers the connection between the two texts in a more positive light than Wolff, challenging the earlier criticism that casts *Glimpses* as "inconsequential [. . .] relatively inconsequential [. . .] inferior," "a light-fingered work at best," and "the weakest of her novels" (McDowell 41, 105, 142; Lewis and Lewis 418; Nevius 196).

Throughout her career, Wharton repeatedly alluded to her earlier work, creating a tapestry, to borrow Miller's analogy, that calls upon readers to recognize the recurrent threads. Helen Killoran, in *Edith Wharton: Art and Allusion* (1996) challenges Wolff's claim of Wharton's unintentional borrowing by addressing the frequent use of what she calls *autoallusion* evident throughout Wharton's fiction; Hildegard Hoeller, in *Edith Wharton's Dialogue with Realism and Sentimentality*, similarly argues that the "parallels to the earlier novel allow us to see in *Glimpses* yet another self-reference in Wharton's writing" (126). *The House of Mirth*, Wharton's 1905 novel about Lily Bart and her attempts to use

marriage to maintain her position—albeit moneyless—in the wealthy class in New York, figures in *Glimpses* as Susy finds herself in much the same position as Lily; they both come from elite New York families but without the necessary funds to maintain their status, relying instead on friends' wealth and generosity. Both see marriage as a tool to remedy the discrepancy between their social status and their small pocket-books, yet neither is willing to marry purely for money, particularly in light of their friends' ghastly marriages as examples. Similarities extend beyond character parallels to repeated scenes, such as Lily visiting Selden unchaperoned in his apartment in the Benedick, repeated when Susy visits Nick in his run-down, sparse apartment, also fleeing quickly by "out the door and down his steep three flights before he could stop her—though, in thinking it over, she didn't even remember if he had tried to" (*Glimpses* 12). Susy's suggestion of working—"Why shouldn't I earn my living trimming hats?" (220)—is jokingly self-referential in its repetition of or allusion to Lily's failed attempt to support herself by working in a hat-making factory, rather than sloppy, forgetful writing on Wharton's part. *Glimpses* works as a repetition of the earlier version, an updated, modern retelling, in which the new milieu of Europe in the 1920s instead of turn-of-the-century New York dictates values, such that Nick and Susy base their plan for their temporary marriage on the unstigmatizing ease of divorce.

The change in the attitudes about and the availability of divorce is not the only difference between *The House of Mirth* and *Glimpses*. Whereas the former considers Lily's marriage options and failed courtships throughout the text, *Glimpses* begins with Susy and

Nick married, automatically making this repetition different.[7] Although Susy's marriage fails after a few months, she remains in control of her life in a way that Lily cannot; Susy's self-empowerment through her ability to manage, which is repeated throughout the narrative, stands in stark contrast to Lily's inability to manage her money or her social interactions. Hoeller also notes this contrast between Lily and Susy, who, "with a clear sense of her own interests" "is neither silent nor impractical. She is, instead, a 'manager' 'whose habit it was to speak her meaning clearly when there were no reasons, worldly or pecuniary, for its concealment,'" and thus "appears at the beginning of the novel to be strong and capable of managing her difficult existence at the fringes of the upper class" (132).[8] By manipulating the system of marriage and her marriage-plot, Susy controls her life as much as someone who lives off others can.

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[7] Melanie V. Dawson, in "'Too Young for the part': Narrative Closure and Feminine Evolution in Wharton's '20's Fiction" (2001) notes this difference between the novels as well, referring to Susy as "Lily's literary descendant," but instead of existing "in a perpetual state of readiness on the marriage market," she begins the novel on her honeymoon (96). Tricia M. Farwell, in *Love and Death in Edith Wharton's Fiction* (2006), also acknowledges this shift in love-plot order in what she considers Wharton's depiction of "a realistic notion of love," noting that *Glimpses* "begins not with a courtship or even a desire to enter the Republic of Spirit, but with the couple already living in their Republic. They have the 'imagination' to create such a special place" (107). Using Lawrence Selden's concept of "Republic of Spirit" Farwell emphasizes the different path that Nick and Susy take to ensure at least a little happiness before they must succumb to financial pressures and marry instead for money.

[8] Hoeller continues her comparison by pointing out the similarities between Selden and Nick, both dilettante figures who also hang on to the upper class despite their criticism of Lily and Susy's ways of getting by: "Wharton exposes Nick's 'rough-and-ready code' as a Selden-like 'republic of spirit' with rather arbitrary rules" (132). The arbitrary nature of Nick's moral code will continually appear as problematic in the narrative, prompting him to leave Susy and end their marriage. Although Nick's moral code repeats Selden's but with significant differences, the difference that emerges between Lily and Susy has greater impact on the difference between the two narratives. Claire Preston, in *Edith Wharton's Social Register* (2000), similarly argues that "Whartonian men are mostly dilettantes (if they have any aesthetic interest at all)" (46). She likens Nick, "a social marginal," to Selden, who is also "valued for his ornamental properties: he is useful to his hostesses when they are entertaining intellectuals or feel like having a mild flirtation." Yet Nick is also "a male version of Lily," whom Preston describes as both "perform[ing] little crucial services" for wealthy friends but unwilling to lower herself to "certain kinds of behavior" (159-60). Both Nick and Lily take positions as paid companions when they can no longer support themselves on their friends' motivated generosity, which to them allows them to maintain their moral righteousness.

Susy and Nick's plan to live off their wedding gifts and their friends' generosity for at least a year necessitates keen managing, for which Susy has a particular aptitude. Although Nick and Susy's marriage is better off because of their mutual affection and because, as Harriet Gold explains in "Marriage in *The Glimpses of the Moon*" (2000), "Nick marries Susy because she is his intellectual equal," their companionship is only part of the equation (13). Their place as moneyless, family-less hangers-on in upper-class society has much to do with why they marry each other, and, ultimately, why they split, since they have differing views on how to maintain their tenuous social position. Susy repeatedly uses the word *manage* to describe how she will take care of the finances to make their plan work: "A year—yes, she was sure now that with a little *management* they could have a whole year of it! 'It' was their marriage, their being together, and away from bores and bothers, in a comradeship of which both of them had long ago guessed the immediate pleasure, but she at least had never imagined the deeper harmony" (7, my emphasis). The word underscores her resourcefulness and her adept ability to economize, find opportunities, and direct their finances.

Susy's managing by ingratiating herself to her wealthy friends and surviving on their generosity has already supported her in her single life. She repeatedly employs this way of life before she and Nick meet, and continues to do so even after they begin to see each other socially. The contrast between Susy's practicality and Nick's moral idealism is established early in the narrative in a scene in which Susy visits Nick to tell him that her friend Ursula Gillow has requested that she and Nick end their relationship because Ursula, although married, is interested in Nick. At Ursula's request, Susy avoids Nick socially by "manag[ing] soon afterward to get taken to Canada for a fortnight's ski-ing,

and then to Florida for six weeks in a house-boat" (12). In contrast, Nick has no plan, only a set of moral codes to which he thinks he adheres. Although some readings of the novel argue that Susy's managing degrades marriage by showing how she has made her marriage with Nick a business relationship, such an argument would ignore the already existing business aspects of marriage evident in earlier Wharton texts, such as *The House of Mirth*.[9]

A life of managing is foreign to Nick, so Susy's plan seems to him "as mad as it was enchanting: it had thoroughly frightened him" (19). His apartment testifies to his unfamiliarity with managing: "There was nothing in it, absolutely nothing, to show that he had ever possessed a spare dollar—or accepted a present" (10). Although Nick has never considered living this way, he realizes that "Susy's arguments were irrefutable, her ingenuities inexhaustible." Gold's assertion that "Nick endorses Wharton's philosophy marriage [sic] as a union of companions rather than a union of economic interests" (5) only accounts for part of the premise of Nick and Susy's marriage. It is not as though the two decided that they would disregard the importance of economic interests and

[9] The novel's depiction of marriage as entangled with commerce and material culture, although on a different level than in Wharton's earlier novels, shows how the women in *Glimpses* have become consumers of marriage much as they are of other material possessions. Janet Beer, in *Edith Wharton: Traveller in the Land of Letters* writes that "The conversion of marriage into big business by women disenfranchised from the commercial world and thus forced to imitate its structures and processes within their own allotted domain is by now fully established." A consideration of the business of marriage might seem obvious and already done in Wharton studies; however, the popularization of divorce changes the market of marriage, making it into a much more consumable commodity, and a transaction meant to be repeated as often as the market will allow. Dale Bauer, although she touches only briefly on *The Glimpses of the Moon* in her book, *Edith Wharton's Brave New Politics*, argues that Wharton's later works consider women's "necessary shift from the home into corporately-informed sexual management," and within that sees Susy's need to manage as a "necessary enterprise of the modern woman (65-66). Susy's managing, as a recurring motif, serves as a constant reminder of the changing economy, even the changing domestic economy. Bauer also addresses gift-exchange, discussing, for instance, Ellie's gifts to Nick and Susy, which she argues shows the novel's "meditation on gift exchange," and "suggests how closely aligned Wharton's understanding was with anthropology's analysis of gift-giving," particularly in how it "signifies a show of power" (75).

marry whomever they wanted—which perhaps is the case with Nat and Grace Fulmer. Rather, since they are romantically interested in each other but would otherwise be prevented from marrying for love because of their financial situations, they develop their plan that affords them love and wedding gifts for the year and the option for divorce at the end of the year or when the gifts run out. This "partnership for [their] mutual advantage" is founded both on their companionship and their economic interests, not one instead of the other, since they both benefit from the economic boost of marrying (42). As contradictory as it may seem for two people who love each other to plan for their divorce, this is the only way that they can be together, even if for so brief a time as one year, and is preferable to the alternative, which is to have "some one who combined the maximum of wealth with at least a minimum of companionableness" (8). Susy knows that Nick is "exactly the opposite: he was as poor as he could be, and as companionable as it was possible to imagine," but that being together is preferable (8); Nick as well acknowledges that their life together is "so immeasurably better" (57). Whereas Lily Bart, in *The House of Mirth* often considers sacrificing companionship for economic security but is never able to make that exchange, nor is she able to sacrifice economic security for companionship in her relationship with Lawrence Selden, Nick and Susy's plan is what allows them to marry and form a romantic and financial alliance, rather than individually fall victim to the pressures of life on the margins of the upper-class.

The narrator details the plan to manage:

> In the first place, there would be all the wedding-presents. Jewels, and a motor, and a silver dinner service, did she mean? Not a bit of it! She

> could see he'd never given the question proper thought. Cheques, my dear, nothing but cheques—she undertook to *manage* that on her side: she really thought she could count on about fifty, and she supposed he could rake up a few more? Well, all that would simply represent pocket-money! For they would have plenty of houses to live in: he'd see. People were always glad to lend their house to a newly-married couple. It was such fun to pop down and see them: it made one feel romantic and jolly. All they need do was to accept the houses in turn: go on honey-mooning for a year! (19-20, my emphasis).

Managing is Susy's job in the marriage. The more Susy is able to secure invitations to visit friends' vacant homes, the longer their wedding gifts—in the form of checks, not objects—will last, which will allow them to remain longer in their marriage of love and delay the marriage of necessity that awaits them after the money runs out and they divorce. When the novel begins, they have already managed to secure their friend Strefford's villa in Como, one of many offers available to them. Nick accepts Susy's managing without questioning how she does it or what compromises she makes to ensure a comfortable honeymoon year for them. Nick reveals his deliberate ignorance, since such luxury can hardly come without compromise. Although Nick has a high moral code by which he thinks he lives, he conveniently ignores the possibility that Susy's managing might violate his code, instead enjoying both his high morals and the life of ease wealthy friends have afforded the honeymooning couple.

Nick's acknowledgement of Susy's managing while in Venice reveals a sharp shift in his sentiment only a month or so after the couple's first fight, which centered around

Nick's revulsion by Susy's managing. As the couple prepares to leave Como at the end of the first month of their honeymoon for Nelson and Ellie Vanderlyn's estate in Venice, it is already apparent that Nick is suspicious of the compromises that Susy is willing to make for the sake of managing. Her insistence on negotiating a favor from the next guests' chauffeur to minimize the cost of the train to their next location prompts a conversation in which Susy repeats *manage* twice in a short passage, and Nick notices that "he had grown to shrink from even such harmless evidence of her always knowing how to 'manage'" (25). Rather than insisting that they travel independently and without accepting favors, Nick acquiesces to Susy's managing. However, Nick again questions Susy's use of the word when she tells Nick that she has managed to persuade Ellie to leave Venice before her husband arrives, since he does not know what Susy is hiding about Ellie's recent whereabouts. Again the narrative reflects Nick's growing concern with Susy's methods, putting Nick's repetition of the word in quotation marks to question not only what Susy has done but also her philosophy of personal economics. When he questions, "You 'managed'—?" Susy notices his inflection, "fanc[ying] he paused on the word ironically" (68). He does say the word ironically, and when he uses the word throughout the narrative, it is represented in quotation marks to signal that ironic intonation.

Both the Como and Venice moments of Nick's questioning Susy's managing prefigure a rift between them. The first comes just before they disagree about whether they should take the cigars their friend Strefford has left at the Como villa; the second comes just before Nick learns that Susy has made compromises to allow them to stay at the Vanderlyns' Venice estate. Mention of both the cigars and the thank-you gifts from

Ellie recurs throughout the narrative as a reminder of Nick and Susy's differing morals. Each case violates Nick's firm sense of his moral code, his "short set of 'mays' and 'mustn'ts'" (22). Early in the novel he acknowledges that Susy may have a different code, or feel different pressures than he does:

> There were things a fellow put up with for the sake of certain definite and otherwise unattainable advantages; there were other things he wouldn't traffic with at any price. But for a woman, he began to see, it might be different. The temptations might be greater, the cost considerably higher, the dividing line between the "mays" and "mustn'ts" more fluctuating and less sharply drawn. (22-23)

Despite this early view that Susy, as a woman, might find herself under different pressures, in both the situation with the cigars and with his discovery of Susy's complicity in Ellie Vanderlyn's affair, Nick does not consider Susy's reasons, nor does he even ask what her reasons are; he summarily decides that she acted immorally. Although Susy's moral belief in both cases is in keeping with Nick's own moral code, she acts against what she believes is right to extend the comfort of their honeymoon for Nick's sake. Instead, in the situation with the cigars, Nick's anger at Susy's decision to take Strefford's remaining cigars rather than leave them for the next guests mars their honeymoon, and the situation with Ellie Vanderlyn's affair, in which she enlists Susy's help in deceiving Nelson in exchange for Nick and Susy's use of the Venice estate, sparks Nick's abandoning Susy.

Nick's rigidity and his moralizing, rather than merely representing, as Gold claims, that "Nick and Susy misunderstand one another only because they think that they

must follow the rules defined by rich members of the fast, international set rather than the ones defined by Nat and Grace Fulmer" (14), force him to break away from Susy earlier than their arrangement stipulated. Despite Susy's hope that establishing a companionate marriage will support them while their wealthy friends remain interested in the newness of their newlywed identity, and that they can move on to new marital options when that interest—or, specifically, the financial support—runs out, Nick cannot understand the compromises that Susy feels she must make in life, nor does he want to. Gold's account of their relationship does not take into account this central conflict, and therefore underestimates the importance of the culture of exchange and management in the novel.

When Nick and Susy have parted, the memory of Susy's managing repeatedly haunts Nick. In comparing Susy with his next potential love interest, Coral Hicks, Nick remembers Susy's good traits, but not without also remembering how she wasted her abilities on plotting her despised method of getting by:

> He wanted above all things to get away from sentiment, from seduction, from the moods and impulses and flashing contradictions that were Susy. Susy was not a great reader: her store of facts was small, and she had grown up among people who dreaded ideas as much as if they had been a contagious disease. But, in the early days especially, when Nick had put a book in her hand, or read a poem to her, her swift intelligence had instantly shed a new light on the subject, and, penetrating to its depths, had extracted from them whatever belonged to her. What a pity that this exquisite insight, this intuitive discrimination, should for the most part

> have been spent upon reading the thoughts of vulgar people, and extracting a profit from them—should have been wasted, since her childhood, on all the hideous intricacies of "managing"! (151)

Although Nick can see Susy as an intelligent, insightful person, he cannot reconcile her using her skills to read people and plan a life based on her intuitions about material exchange rather than to derive meaning from books. Nick's judgment highlights the value he places on writing or the arts, but also stresses his disconnection from the actual material needs that Susy must consider to survive. However, early in their stay in Venice, in a passage focalized by Nick, he expects Susy to manage, and even considers it as her vocation, as he parallels her managing and his writing; Nick "beg[ins] to hope they might have the palace to themselves for the remainder of the summer. If they did, he would have time to finish his book, and Susy to lay up a little interest on their wedding cheques; and thus their enchanted year might conceivably be prolonged to two" (55-56). His wish not only affirms his reliance on Susy's managing and reiterates his commitment to their plan and his desire for it to extend beyond the one-year minimum that they have agreed to remain together, but also views his writing and her managing as parallel, a view he no longer has when he bemoans her misused talents.

When Susy confides in Strefford, her friend turned fiancé,[10] that she and Nick did not merely enforce their plan and go their separate ways as she had stated more publicly,

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[10] Strefford has throughout the novel made his interest in Susy known. Early on in Venice, he tells Susy that if his uncle and cousin were to die—making him the heir of the Altringham fortune and name—he would want to marry her. At that point she replies "Even if Nick chucks me, don't count on *me* to carry out that programme. I've seen it in practice too often," insinuating that Strefford's repeated affairs make him too promiscuous for her (43). On the same night that Nick leaves Susy, and informs her by telegram that he is "taking the express to Milan presently" to "work this thing out by [him]self," Susy also receives a telegram from Strefford, which she does not read, but which informs her of an accident that has in fact killed his uncle and cousin, thereby passing to Strefford

she, too, ascribes their split to this difference between her managing and his involvement with writing: "And Nick—who was thinking of his book, and of all sorts of big things, fine things—didn't realise . . . left it all to me . . . to manage . . . ." Verbalizing her and Nick's differences to Strefford, Susy "stumbled over the word [manage], remembering how Nick had always winced at it," explaining "Nick's inability to understand that, to keep on with the kind of life they were leading, one had to put up with things . . . accept favours" as the true reason for their separation (131).

In arguing that "Nick becomes the vehicle through which Wharton portrays an optimistic vision of marriage once the marriage vows have been spoken," Gold undermines the message of the middle section of the novel, ignoring the significance of Nick and Susy's separation (14). Although their marriage seems to be a highly functioning one—unlike the so many dysfunctional ones depicted throughout Wharton's writing career—it ceases to function when they disagree on how Susy should have handled what to them is Ellie Vanderlyn's immoral request for their help in concealing her affair. Rather than taking a unified stance, Nick and Susy see the matter differently, and Nick decides he can no longer live with Susy. His decision marks the point at which their union is not ideal, not a meeting of the minds, and not one that represents what Gold calls a "lasting tie between a man and a woman" (14). Instead of working out their differences within the marriage, Nick needs to escape it, terminating or attenuating their relationship. Susy, who believes that she has compromised her values to help them both

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the inheritance previously mentioned and making him eligible for Susy's consideration as "some one who combined the maximum wealth with at least a minimum of companionableness" (8). Susy resists, not wanting to make a commitment until she knows what the fate of her marriage to Nick is, but eventually concedes and becomes involved with Strefford. Throughout the narrative, letters and telegrams repeatedly appear with great impact on the plot; an examination of this repetition would further enlighten a discussion of *Glimpses*.

stay afloat, finds herself in a rather different position to negotiate her finances once she has separated from Nick. It is here that she begins to change her mind about what she is willing to compromise, and ultimately decides that she would rather sacrifice wealth and comfort and instead live a life "doing something useful and even necessary, and earning her own keep" (247).

The trade-off for managing is the manipulation of the hangers-on by the wealthy, which comprise some of the most disturbing repetitions in the novel, underscoring how material possessions offer power. As early as the first chapter, the narrative reveals how Susy and Nick are manipulated: Ursula Gillow's request that Susy stop seeing Nick because, although married, she is interested in pursuing him splits them apart. Susy concedes because she relies on Ursula's financial support. Ellie's request that Susy mail letters from Venice for her so that Nelson does not know Ellie is elsewhere with her lover forces Susy either to comply or give up the comforts of the Venice estate. Susy's survival is based on her obeying the wishes of her moneyed friends, since she cannot manage without them. At the end of her stay with Violet Melrose, after Nick has left, Violet asks Susy to cancel her next plans and watch the Fulmer children so that Grace can accompany her husband on the tour Violet is planning to sponsor, offering a piece of jewelry in exchange. Although Susy has begun to reject such bribes in exchange for her freedom, her freedom is still at risk, since in asking Ursula if she could visit—her purported excuse for not watching the Fulmer children—she finds that although she is welcome at their home in Scotland, Ursula adds a catch at the last moment: "'And you *will* let Fred make love to you a little, won't you, darling?'" (167). There are, Susy comes to realize, scenarios in which "in that strange world the parts were sometimes reversed,

and the wealthy preyed upon the pauper," such as when Violet, "a harmless vampire in pearls who sought only to feed on the notoriety which all her millions could not create for her," decides that she should be Nat Fulmer's patron, if not more (120-21).

When, later in their separation, Susy learns that the affair she helped conceal for Ellie Vanderlyn, her involvement in which precipitated Nick's leaving, actually took place at Strefford's Como villa immediately after Nick and Susy left, and that it was Ellie's lover's chauffeur who helped them get on their way to Venice, Susy has a violent physical reaction: "She remembered Nick's reluctance to use the motor—she remembered his look when she had boasted of her 'managing.' The nausea mounted to her throat" (214). Susy's revulsion is not merely that she and Nick benefited from the affair both at the Venice estate and in leaving Como, but that she foolishly thought there was no consequence in arranging for a ride to defray the cost of the next leg of their travel. Nick's initial hesitance to accept the ride proves prescient, whereas Susy's managing shifts from an innocent exchange of favors into a nauseating complicity in an immoral extramarital affair. From this point on, when Susy thinks of the term *manage*, it is with irony, embarrassment, or physical impact since "she could never forget that he had left her because he had not been able to forgive her for 'managing'" (275).

In the final chapter, when Nick and Susy finally reunite, they still cannot escape the weighty word, or Susy's habit. When they begin to plan their second honeymoon and Nick shies away from bringing the Fulmer children, who are under Susy's care, she attempts to assure him by telling him that "'they won't bother you. Just leave it to me; I'll manage—'" (287). The impact of the word does not go unnoticed despite their reconciliation: "The word stopped her short, and an agony of crimson suffused her

from brow to throat." As Susy attempts to have the five children travel with them on their second honeymoon, she tells Nick of her plan: "'I'm sure I can ma—arrange easily,' she hurried on, nearly tripping again over the fatal word" (288). Repeating this word throughout the narrative, from the point of union to separation to reunion, shows how intertwined Susy's ability to handle the couple's financial life is with their ability to survive as a married couple. Although Susy has come to reject her wealthy friends and their spending practices, she still recognizes the need to survive financially, while also recognizing Nick's distaste for managing, and hence she stops herself from repeating the word and finds an alternate way of describing what she must do, "arrange easily." The word shows Susy's resiliency, suggesting that she is able to work her way through any situation, even if Wharton intended, in repeating the word at the close of the novel, to criticize Susy's values or her business-like approach to life.

Much like the repetition of *manage* throughout the narrative, the cigars Susy attempts to take from Como and the gifts that Ellie Vanderlyn gives to Nick and Susy to thank them for their help in concealing her affair figure repeatedly in the narrative as reminders of the material exchanges Susy has made to support her life with Nick and prolong their marriage, and of Nick's refusal to participate in a marriage based on material exchange. As much as Susy's managing to arrange for the chauffeur to drive her and Nick part of the way on their trip to Venice irritates Nick, her suggestion that they reward the driver with a few of Strefford's cigars prompts the couple's first fight of their newly-married life, since it leads Nick to learn that Susy has packed the remaining cigars in their luggage rather than leaving them for the next guests. Although Nick enjoyed the cigars during their stay without qualms about depleting his host's supply—in fact, the

second chapter, which is the first that he focalizes, opens as "Lansing threw the end of Strefford's expensive cigar into the lake" (13)—, he cannot fathom taking the cigars with them when they leave, a prime example of Nick's arbitrary system of "mays" and "mustn'ts." Susy's indiscretion angers Nick: "Before she moved [to remove the cigars from their luggage] there was a pause so full of challenge that Lansing had time for an exasperated sense of the disproportion between his anger and its cause. And this made him still angrier" (26). Rather than handling the situation rationally, Nick lets anger come between them, which lingers into the next part of their honeymoon.

Although Nick allows "the ridiculous and mortifying episode of the cigars" to inform his view of Susy's lax morality, so much so that "For a few hours the prospect of life with Susy had seemed unendurable," he does not acknowledge Susy's motivations (77-8). As the narrative shifts into a chapter focalized through Susy, however, the narrator explains her actions and clears her of immorality in the eyes of the reader. Susy "could not understand what had made her take the cigars. She had always been alive to the value of her inherited scruples: her reasoned opinions were unusually free, but with regard to the things one couldn't reason about she was oddly tenacious. And yet she had taken Streffy's cigars!" (29). As she works through the shame of Nick's judgment of her morality, she realizes that he is the reason she took the cigars:

> She had taken them—yes, that was the point—she had taken them for Nick, because the desire to please him, to make the smallest details of his life easy and agreeable and luxurious, had become her absorbing preoccupation. She had committed, for him, precisely the kind of little baseness she would most have scorned to commit for herself; and, since

> he hadn't instantly felt the difference, she would never be able to explain it to him. (29)

Nick's disproportionate anger and Susy's realization that Nick cannot differentiate between a compromising act for selfish reasons and one for the benefit of another at the close of the Como scene loom large when Susy finds herself in a truly compromised situation upon arriving at the Vanderlyns' estate in Venice. No longer is the moral dilemma as insignificant as the rightful ownership of a few boxes of cigars. Susy must decide if she can violate her own moral code by mailing Ellie's letters for Nelson at specified times throughout the summer to deceive him into believing that Ellie is in Venice instead of off with her lover. Refusing would mean leaving the estate, possibly ending their honeymoon and in turn ending their marriage sooner, and forcing Nick to postpone work on his writing, which Susy is hesitant to do. Accepting Ellie's terms for their stay at her estate would mean Susy degrading herself and violating not only her code of ethics but Nick's as well: "The trivial incident of the cigars—how trivial it now seemed!—showed her the kind of stand he would take, and communicated to her something of his own uncompromising energy" (32). Lev Raphael, in *Edith Wharton's Prisoners of Shame* (1991), discusses not only the repeated vocabulary of shame throughout *Glimpses* but specifically the shame-laden incident of the cigars, which is "just a prelude" to the situation Ellie puts Susy in by making her an accomplice in her illicit affair (130). The "little misery of the cigars" is repeated as a moral barometer, only to be magnified in the "big humiliation" of Ellie's request. The shame in both incidents makes Susy painfully aware that if Nick resisted managing when it came to trivialities, he would never

want to compromise for Ellie's infidelity, leaving Susy to conclude that "the second month of their honey-moon was beginning cloudily" (*Glimpses* 33).

Susy is repeatedly haunted by the cigar incident, which reemerges when she and Nick fight about her choice to collude with Ellie to maintain their lifestyle:

> It seemed to her, now, that nothing mattered except that their love for each other, their faith in each other, should be saved from some unhealable hurt. She was willing to tell Nick everything—she wanted to tell him everything—if only she could be sure of reaching a responsive chord in him. But the scene of the cigars came back to her, and benumbed her. If only she could make him see that nothing was of any account as long as they continued to love each other! (87)

Despite her commitment to their love, Susy knows that they cannot escape the role of the hanger-on if they are to remain married and living among the leisure-class friends; her indiscretion with the cigars, repeated but magnified in the scenario with Ellie's affair, shows the lengths she is willing to go to for their love. Nick, in contrast, hypocritically agrees to their marriage plan, benefits from it, but when he actually contemplates it, rejects it as amoral. Susy notes this when she questions "What's the use? You accept things theoretically—and then when they happen . . ." (88). Her further questioning about his disgust for her managing emphasizes that Nick not only believes deeply in his moral code but also that he blindly believes that he always adheres to it, and that he knew nothing of the trade-offs they were going to have to make to effectuate their marriage plan:

> "Well—doesn't our being together depend on—on what we can get out of people? And hasn't there always got to be some give-and-take? Did you ever in your life get anything for nothing?" she cried with sudden exasperation. "You've lived among these people as long as I have; I suppose it's not the first time—"
>
> "By God, but it is," he exclaimed, flushing. "And that's the difference—the fundamental difference"
>
> "The difference?"
>
> "Between you and me. I've never in my life done people's dirty work for them—least of all for favours in return. I suppose you guessed it, or you wouldn't have hidden this beastly business from me." (89)

Through this exchange, not only Susy and the narrator but readers as well see clearly Nick's foolish ignorance to the system of exchange in place in their social set. Whereas Nick thinks himself more moral, Susy is at least more honest about their situation. Their role as "born parasites," as Nick describes them, typifies how they "were going to live," which, to Nick, is unacceptable for them as a couple (92).

Nick reveals more of his code to Susy, using the cigars as an example, when he tells her that "there are things I might put up with for myself, at a pinch—and should, probably, in time—that I can't let you put up with for me . . . ever . . . . Those cigars at Como: do you suppose I didn't know it was for me? And this too? Well, it won't do . . . it won't do . . ." (92). Even though he acknowledges that Susy's acts were not self-serving but were instead carried out for his sake, which earlier she believes he does not see, Nick cannot reconcile Susy's choices and their role in society. The repetition of the

cigars, along with the repetition of "it won't do," as with the repeated use of the word *difference* in the previous quotation, heightens the significance of this scene in their love-plot by reemphasizing what is important in the passages. Unlike the repeated mention of managing while the two are separated, once Nick and Susy part ways at the end of this scene, the cigars are not mentioned again until, in passing, Susy remembers them as they reunite:

> "To get me? To get me?" she repeated. Beside the driver she had suddenly remarked the old suit-case from which her husband had obliged her to extract Strefford's cigars as they were leaving Como; and everything that had happened since seemed to fall away and vanish in the pang and rapture of that memory. (282)

Again, the repetition at the start of the quotation and the repeated mention of the cigars signal the repetition of their union, as both have made plans to ensure their reconciliation.

**"Did nothing matter, then, in this world, she was fleeing from, did no one love or hate or remember?"**

Susy's pearl necklace, which she inherited from her grandmother, is depicted not simply as a sentimental heirloom but as a material object and commodity for financial exchange. When she suggests to Nick that they "ought to be able to make it last at least a year longer," he shows he has been "inwardly following the same train of thought," but seeks clarification that she means "without counting your grandmother's pearls" (5-6). The pearls symbolize a financial reserve for Susy, and for Nick and Susy once they are

married.[11] However, Ellie's eight-year-old daughter Clarissa, in her first exchange with Susy during their stay in Venice, is surprised to learn that Susy's pearls, which she deems "small, but they're very good," are not merely her traveling jewelry, and not merely her only pearls, but are her only jewelry (35). For Clarissa, who would "rather have [jewelry] than a book" (73), such minimalism is difficult to comprehend, so she re-questions Susy: "'No other jewels at all. . . . Is that *really* true?' she asked as if in the presence of the unprecedented" (35). Rather than simply concluding that Susy cannot afford more jewelry, she asks "Did you have to give up all your jewels when you were divorced?" Clarissa's question not only assumes that Susy must have owned more jewelry in the past, and that she could lose possessions and wealth in divorce, but also suggests that although the last time they saw each other Susy "wasn't even married" and now she is on her honeymoon, that she could have gotten married, divorced, and remarried in that time. The too-rapid repetition of marriage and divorce does not seem to Clarissa to contradict her presumption since, as Clarissa tells Susy, "'But that was two years ago.'" Thus marriage and divorce have become so easily replicated that Clarissa assumes that in the span of two years, Susy could have repeated the act already. When Susy clarifies that she has not been divorced, Clarissa persists, asking Susy if she will be divorced soon "'Because you look so awfully happy,' said Clarissa Vanderlyn simply" (36). Divorce registers with Clarissa as a simple means of securing happiness, which furthers the

[11] Nick himself has nothing of much financial value to contribute to their marriage, having "never had more than a pittance; he had spent rather too much of it in his first plunge into life" (14). In addition to Susy's grandmother's pearls and the wedding checks that have been deposited in her name, "Nick's own meager income, paid in, none too regularly, by the agent who had managed for years the dwindling family properties, had been transferred to her: it was the only wedding present he could make" (148). The pearl necklace represents their financial reserve, much as in *Orlando* the pearl necklace financially supports Orlando when she flees Turkey. As I discuss in Chapter Two, Orlando uses individual pearls to finance her life between Turkey and her return to England.

novel's commentary about divorce and marriage: not only does divorce make marriage repeatable, it also leads to happiness, in much the same way that marriage would in the traditional love plot. Divorce, in this logic, has replaced marriage, providing what marriage cannot.[12]

Ellie Vanderlyn's attitude about divorce echoes her daughter's when, later in the novel, she reveals to Susy her own story of divorce. When she discovers Susy shopping for a chinchilla coat, her first impression is that Susy is buying the coat for someone else, the kind of favor that one does to maintain her position as economic parasite. Susy, however, is buying the coat for herself as a gift from Strefford, with his newly-inherited money, since they intend to become engaged. Rather than have Ellie and the rest of their group think Susy is having an affair, Susy tells Ellie that "Nick and I mean to part—have parted, in fact. He's decided that the whole thing was a mistake. He will probably marry again soon—and so shall I . . . . We've simply decided that our experiment was impossible—for two paupers" (172-3). Although Susy had not intended to tell Ellie this much personal information, she realizes that there is less stigma in announcing the end

[12] J. Herbie DiFonzo's *Beneath the Fault Line: The Popular and Legal Culture of Divorce in Twentieth-Century America* (1997) includes a discussion of social, legal, and popular culture aspects of divorce throughout the last century in America. The first chapter, "The Feminization of Divorce after World War I," provides particularly relevant background to my consideration of divorce in the 1920s, including a section on the "social conflict over divorce" as it "played out in fictionalized treatments of struggling marriages" (34). In this section, DiFonzo refers to "One critic [who] lambasted" *Glimpses* for precisely this dialogue between Clarissa and Susy about the happiness that comes from divorce. That critic, Joseph F. Newton, writes in "What God Hath Not Joined" in the June 1923 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* that worse than the "problem of divorce" or "moral parasites" is "the subtle and pervasive cynicism in regard to marriage in our day. Much of our later fiction deals with it, not only lightly, but flippantly, and at times sordidly, with seldom a gleam of moral insight or spiritual vision, as if marriage had become a bondage from which to secure release" (721-22). His example, the "non-moral society portrayed in *The Glimpses of the Moon*" is "typical," but this dialogue between Clarissa and Susy "makes us pause"; its display of "Such precocious cynicism in the nursery fills one with dismay, in that it poisons the springs of life" (722). Newton's argument, however, is not against divorce, which he sees as a necessary option, and he spends the rest of the article showing by example how it should have a place in the contemporary society, both in America and Britain.

of her marriage experiment and their impending divorce than in appearing to be the kind of woman who would have chinchilla coats purchased for her by someone other than her betrothed. Throughout the narrative, infidelity is depicted as morally repugnant to Nick and Susy, yet divorce is not. Their plan relies specifically on divorce, which they believe will provide them a clean break, followed by remarriage to rich suitors, rather than on continuing their marriage but supporting themselves through affairs with rich suitors. Thus Susy would rather reveal her plans for divorce than perpetuate a rumor of infidelity. Their moralistic views of divorce as acceptable and infidelity as repugnant may seem arbitrary; however, divorce is legal and presumably transparent if agreed upon in advance by both parties, whereas infidelity is always duplicitous and one-sided.

The ease of repetition of marriage and divorce figure largely in Ellie and Susy's ensuing conversation. Ellie's reaction to Susy's news that she and Nick are exercising their plan to part ways echoes the plot of repetition; she responds to Susy with markedly repetitive word sequences that are ungrammatically punctuated, heightening the effect of the repetition: "You lucky lucky girl! You clever clever darling! But who on earth can he be?" (173). When Susy responds, Ellie's reaction continues the rhetorically repetitive style: "Streff—Streff? Our dear old Streff?" Whereas Ellie transitions quickly into advice about securing her engagement to Strefford before anyone else tries to attract him, Susy bemoans Ellie's lack of interest in her split from Nick. That "No doubt Ellie Vanderlyn, like all Susy's other friends, had long since 'discounted' the brevity of her dream, and perhaps planned a sequel to it before she herself had seen the glory fading" confirms the developing social convention of the repetition of courtship, marriage, and

divorce, especially in light of the "sequel" Susy imagines her friends expect from her (174).

The narrative further repeats this sequence of courtship, marriage, and divorce, as Ellie reveals to Susy that she, too, is divorcing and is engaged to the lover with whom she had the affair that she enlisted Susy's help to conceal. Unlike Susy, whose explicit plan to use marriage to stay afloat as a means of avoiding poverty and loneliness, Ellie leaves "poor dear Nelson" without warning because her lover is "so rich, so appallingly rich, that I have to be perpetually on the watch to keep other women away from him and it's too exhausting" (175). Ellie's suggestion that she and Susy are doing the same thing enrages Susy, who does not consider their situations the same; they are not even a repetition with extreme difference. To Susy, who considers divorce a viable end to her marriage to Nick, which both agreed to execute when they depleted their bank account or when a better option was available, Ellie's divorce seems unnecessary, a cruel surprise to Nelson and an unreasonable abandonment of her daughter. Looking at Ellie "with sudden scorn," Susy cannot contain her reaction to Ellie's ruthless, extravagant way of life, exclaiming "I think you're abominable," which is then repeated in Ellie's reaction: "The other's perfect little face collapsed. 'A-bo-mi-nable? A-bo-mi-nable? Susy!'" In reacting this way to Ellie, and answering further "Yes . . . with Nelson . . . and Clarissa . . . and your past together . . . and all the money you can possibly want . . . and *that* man! Abominable," Susy not only adds the fourth *abominable* to their conversation but also raises the idea that Ellie's repetition of the marriage sequence abuses the ease of divorce and remarriage since she already has enough money, an idea that Ellie cannot fathom: "'But you simply don't know what you're talking about. *As if anybody ever had all the money*

*they wanted!*'" (176). Susy and Ellie's reactions to each other reassert their divergent world-views and social positions. Ellie's voracious need to acquire wealth, her "insatiably acquisitive" nature, as Johnson describes her, can be seen as she "wholeheartedly embraces the self-interested pursuit of material gain through multiple marriages" (962), a perhaps less moral repetition of the marriage-divorce scenario, but one that perpetuates the old-money practice of using marriage to amass greater and greater wealth.

As Susy contemplates her confrontation with Ellie, she reflects on her repeated conflict with the moneyed social set she has clung to: "Just such a revolt as she had felt as a girl, such a disgusted recoil from the standards and ideals of everybody about her as had flung her into her mad marriage with Nick, now flamed in Susy Lansing's bosom." Wondering how she could "ever go back into that world again," or how she could "echo its appraisals of life and bow down to its judgments," she realizes that "it was only by marrying according to its standards that she could escape such subjection," so that "to attain moral freedom they [Susy and Nick] must both be above material cares" (177). In acknowledging that money and material possessions stand in the way of their codes of '"mays' and 'mustn'ts,'" Susy points at the flaw in her initial plan for her marriage to Nick. Their marriage plan, rather than freeing them of their enslavement to their friends with money, keeps them at the mercy of their friends with money, which is what pressured Susy into helping Ellie conceal her affair in exchange for their honeymoon at the Venice estate. In reacting to Ellie's greed, Susy reveals herself to be both old-fashioned and modern, since she has conservative views on using divorce for excessive financial betterment, but progressive views about wealth, greed, and her place in the leisure class's system of exchange.

The narrative continues its consideration of the motivations and ramifications of divorce when Susy meets Nelson Vanderlyn by chance after breaking off her engagement to Strefford. He seems at first unharmed by Ellie's leaving him, ready to repeat the rituals expected in his society: "his eagerness to rebuild his life with all the old smiling optimism reminded Susy of the patient industry of an ant remaking its ruined ant-heap" (224). Here, the marriage-divorce-remarriage ritual is a repetitive ritual is echoed in the repetitive action of the ants. Nelson espouses a modern view of marriage that endorses repeated marriage and divorce, telling Susy:

> Tell you what, great thing, this liberty! Everything's changed nowadays; why shouldn't marriage be too? A man can get out of a business partnership when he wants to; but the parsons want to keep us noosed up to each other for life because we've blundered into a church one day and said 'Yes before one of 'em. No, no—that's too easy. We've got beyond *that*. Science, and all these new discoveries. . . . I say the Ten Commandments were made for man, and not man for the Commandments; and there ain't a word against divorce in 'em, anyhow! That's what I tell my poor old mother, who builds everything on her Bible. 'Find me the place where it says: *Thou shalt not sue for divorce.'* (224)

Nelson describes a view of marriage that Johnson describes as contract marriage, in which the two parties enter into marriage as businesses would enter into a contract, with the ability to dissolve the contract as easily as a business would be able to do so.[13]

[13] Johnson adeptly uses American legal history to consider marriage and divorce laws as they relate to Wharton's writing. Her discussion examines Wharton's continuing critique of marriage and, paradoxically, the author's insistence on its importance in society through a legalistic lens. Johnson's

Despite his seemingly modern view of marriage with divorce as equivalent to freedom, Susy glimpses him as "the real man, old, ruined, lonely. Yes, that was it: he was lonely, desperately lonely, foundering in such deep seas of solitude that any presence out of the past was like a spar to which he clung" (225-6). As broken a man as he is in Susy's eyes, Nelson maintains his modern view by insisting that he does not wish Ellie to be unhappy; rather, he wants her to know that he is "*all right!* . . . Tell her I *understand*" (226-227).[14]

Seeing Nelson stuck on his modern view of marriage yet broken by it prompts Susy to consider her situation, realizing that "the influence of a marriage begun in mutual understanding is too deep not to reassert itself even in the moment of flight and denial"; this not only applies to her marriage to Nick but to her proposed marriage to friend and next-best-thing Strefford, so she realizes she must end their engagement as well (228). Although Susy's financial situation seems to warrant her marrying for money to allow her to remain in her social class, she cannot separate the business of marriage from her emotions, namely, her love for Nick. She married Nick in the manner she did before the start of the novel because it allowed her to marry the man she loves; any other business-deal marriage would fail because it would necessarily not include love, since she only

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argument is useful in how it differentiates between marital unity and contractual marriage: the first scenario reflects the complete merging of two people into one in the eyes of the law, namely the husband; the second reflects marriage as something negotiated and re-negotiated as one would think of a business contract.

[14] The description in this scene of Nelson Vanderlyn as a man who maintains an appearance of embracing his new freedom and his ex-wife's happiness in her new relationships reads as a precursor to Arthur Wyant, Pauline Manford's first husband in Wharton's 1927 novel *Twilight Sleep*, which centers around the effects of divorce on a wealthy New York family. Although Wyant remains on good terms with his ex-wife and her husband, in part because he and Pauline have a son together, he is described as a broken man who, after their divorce returns to live with his mother. As the plot unfolds, it becomes clear that Wyant suffers deeply from their divorce, to the point that he becomes an alcoholic.

loves Nick. Her affection for Strefford cannot replace her love for Nick, and rather than marry Strefford for his money while still in love with Nick, Susy forgoes marriage altogether. If she cannot bring herself to marry her friend Strefford, she will certainly not marry anyone else, which ends the potential for her repeatable cycle of marriage and divorce.

**"taking her first steps into the life of immaterial values which had begun to seem so much more substantial than any she had known"**

As Susy writes to Strefford to break off their engagement not merely because she still loves Nick but because of "things [she and Nick have] shared that seem to be meant to outlast love, or to change it into something different," she must find a new option for supporting herself (228). Instead of relying on marriage, since she and Nick cannot reconcile but she cannot bring herself to marry anyone else, she hopes to "keep herself free, aloof, to retain her hold on her precariously recovered self" (227), and so she turns to Grace Fulmer (229). In seeking assistance from the Fulmers, Susy puts herself in a position to be governess—a word she repeats in the narrative—or caretaker to their rambunctious children. The demotion in social standing is significant in Susy's reclaiming her identity, since she is no longer involved with the former set of friends who made her compromise her values in the past. Although caring for the Fulmer children means giving up her leisurely lifestyle, her alliance with friends who can keep her in social circulation, and any time of her own, to Susy this change will afford her the freedom she desires.

The job that Susy finds when she seeks Grace's help, as governess to the five Fulmer children whom, at the start of the story, Nick and Susy considered "five ubiquitous children" (16), is no different than the job Violet Melrose requested of her when, after Nick left, Susy lived with her: "to stay on here [at the Melroses' house in Versailles] quietly and look after the Fulmer children" (144). Susy can tell from "the intonation of old" that yet again her friend wants a favor in exchange for hospitality, but unlike previous times, Susy breaks the repetition by refusing to help, despite Violet's pleading and her bribe of "There's my jade pendant; the one you said you liked the other day"' (144, 145-46). Reflecting that "Time was when she might have been glad to add the jade pendant to the collection already enriched by Ellie Vanderlyn's sapphires," Susy acknowledges that she has begun to change, so that "she would have resented the offer as an insult to her newly-found principles." However empowering wealth and gift-giving are for the wealthy, Susy finds greater power in her new code, which "enable[s] her to look down on them with tolerance" (146). She proves her claim that "I shouldn't want a present to persuade me" when she opts to take the position without Violet's terms or offers, and instead of her own volition and with a clear conscience, realizing that "she would have refused on the spot, as she had refused once before, if the only possible alternatives had not come to seem to much less bearable" (146, 246). Grace Fulmer echoes Susy's rejection of Violet's wealth when she insists that although "'Mrs. Melrose wants to take [Nat Fulmer], to pay all the expense again—well she shan't. *I'll* pay them. . . . And you'll see what wonders will come of it"' (245). Both women are willing to endure poverty rather than live under the control of a benefactress.

To suggest, as many critics do, that Susy's shift comes merely from the introduction of the maternal, is a fallacy, since she did not seem changed by caring for Ellie Vanderlyn's daughter while staying at her home while Ellie was away having an affair. [15] The alliance with the Fulmers, poor artists who themselves have faltered but stabilized their marriage, rather than with the manipulative, unscrupulous wealthy group, figures more prominently in Susy's rediscovery of herself, and explains why the Fulmer children, with their unmaterialistic interests—they want her as their governess "especially if she reads aloud well" (246)—rather than young Clarissa Vanderlyn, who prefers jewelry to books, have an impact on the already-changing Susy. Accepting a job as governess to five children for three months, especially since they must live on a "slim budget," can only happen after Susy develops an interest in earning a living through less parasitic means, even if it is on "so modest a scale" (242, 247)

The narrative explicitly rejects mothering as a solution for Susy, asserting that "No, the task she had undertaken for want of a better gave Susy no sense of a missed vocation: 'mothering' on a large scale would never, she perceived, be her job" (243). Quite the opposite, she finds that her experience with the Fulmer children offers her "the sense of being herself mothered" and importantly, the sense "of taking her first steps in the life of immaterial values which had begun to seem so much more substantial than any she had known" (244). Rather than finding her vocation in managing or in

[15] For example, Dawson asserts that "During the final chapters of this later novel, however, Wharton introduces a group of young people, whose emergence jolts Susy out of a quest for status and into a maternal role as she takes up the unexpected work of nannying" (96). Elizabeth Ammons, in *Edith Wharton's Argument with America* (1980), considers Wharton's novels of the 1920s as "declaring motherhood woman's best and most fulfilling job in life" (157). She asserts that *Glimpses* posits the question "How can an intelligent but untrained lesiure-class [sic] woman escape economic parasitism and at the same time fulfill her desire for autonomy, worthwhile occupation, and a satisfying love relationship with a man?" and answers it "marriage, the home, and motherhood" (162).

mothering, she considers continuing with the job she has, "and had decided, when their parents returned, to ask to go back to America with them. Perhaps, if Nat's success continued, and Grace was able to work at her music, they would need a kind of governess—companion. At any rate, she could picture no future less distasteful" (248). Susy's decision, too optimistic to be considered a resignation, acknowledges her commitment to "doing something useful" rather than returning to her old friends whom, she realizes, have "let her drop out of sight" (247, 248). The narrative demonstrates that Susy's development begins before she becomes the Fulmer children's caretaker, since she necessarily shifts away from her life with the leisure-class set simply in accepting the job; her experiences with the children allow her to continue to develop through her rejection of Ellie Vanderlyn, Ursula Gillow, Violet Melrose, and their materially-driven existences.

Whereas Dawson views Susy's involvement with the Fulmer children as taking precedent over her own development, Susy's development is possible through her involvement with the Fulmers. Although it is problematic that Susy, rather than pursue her own interests or find her own path, takes on the role of nanny or governess, repeating an antiquated notion of what moneyless women could do with their lives, it is through this experience that Susy's sense of the importance of her freedom continues to develop. Aligning herself with Grace Fulmer, who never falters in her marriage despite her husband's faltering, and who pursues her own interest in music, puts Susy in a better position—morally rather than financially—than she was in her friendships with her wealthy friends. Rather than reading, as Dawson does, that Susy must "envision herself as a nurturing, maternal figure in order to smooth the chaos out of her previously disordered life, adopting caretaking as part of a retreat from the world of society,

divorce, and remarriage," Susy's shift in the last part of the novel affords her independence, since her work with the Fulmer children pays her room and board. Although this is not ideal labor, it does allow Susy to procure her basic needs, rather than relying on her wealthy friends' loaded beneficence. Finding employment as a nanny highlights, as Dawson argues about Susy at the end of the novel, "the mechanisms by which a young woman brings order to her world by instigating the resumption of normative gender roles" (97). Rather than inventively finding some new means of supporting herself, Susy resorts not only to gendered work, but unmodern work at that—even Lily Bart participates in work outside of the domestic sphere, although that, too, is feminized—resigning Susy to what Dawson considers "Wharton's continuing insistence that social stability rests on young women's acceptance of the domestic and nurturing roles reminiscent of the pre-divorce era" (98). Reading Susy's choices at the end of the novel as exhibiting conventional propriety demonstrates the novel's reliance on conventional feminine roles, despite the unconventional views of marriage expressed in the marriage plan at the beginning of the novel.

Nick's curiosity about Susy's residence in Passy, which he learns from his divorce lawyer, prompts him to seek out the place to understand why she resides so far on the outskirts of Paris; he assumes that "probably either Mrs. Melrose or Ellie Vanderlyn had taken a house at Passy," and is surprised to see the the little house, the front of which "had the worn look of a tired workwoman's face" (257, 260). Although at the sight of Susy, Nick reacts possessively, "'But she's mine!' Nick cried, in a fierce triumph of recovery," he resists seeing her when Strefford arrives, assuming that the newly-rich friend is a regular fixture at the house, rather than visiting for the first time in an effort to

convince Susy to reconsider her rejection of his proposal (261). Repetition again emerges through Nick's flood of memories, as he leaves with "physical sickness as the succession of remembered gestures pressed upon his eyes," without Susy knowing he has visited (263). At Susy's request to "settle things" (268), Nick returns to the house and visits her with an angered sense of her "ulterior motives": "What on earth was she trying to 'manage' now, he wondered?" (268, 269). Although their meeting is cold, and neither is willing to speak honestly about their real or rumored engagements, both realize afterwards that their relationship is worth sacrificing pride, and thus Nick returns for a third time, as Susy prepares to leave the children for the day to find him. Nick's repeated visits to the house, and their duplicated efforts to find each other, signal the repetition of their relationship as the couple reunites and, with some complication, prepare to take a second honeymoon.

Although the narrative is presented as Wharton's critique of marriage in the age of divorce, Nick and Susy's plan attempts to salvage marriage, to make it into something that Lily Bart never had as an option, and which Wharton's own marriage was not: the coming together of two people who actually like each other and who attempt to make that the basis of their financial compromises, rather than directly entering into a marriage for neither financial nor personal gain. One way of reading the ending of the novel is that they do not break their plan per se, but that they realize that there is nothing better that will come along, which is not outside the parameters of their plan. That is, if their plan stipulated that they would part ways if something better came along, it can be read that they realize that nothing better will come along, which is not contradictory to the arrangement they made before getting married. In particular, Susy realizes that she does

not need the wealth she initially sought to achieve happiness, therefore making Nick better than whatever wealthier option could come along. Thus, in reference to Susy's proposal, "Why shouldn't they marry; belong to each other openly and honorably, if for ever so short a time, and with the definite understanding that whenever either of them got the chance to do better he or she should be immediately released?" (18-19), the term *better*, which is initially understood only in financial terms, is reconsidered at the novel's end, so that it ceases to signify only *wealthier* but can instead be reinterpreted to consider a different value system. Johnson's argument that "Nick and Susy strike what will prove to be a flawed bargain" and that "they ultimately reject their initial bargain in favor of a lasting commitment to their marriage" moves away from the more important issues at stake in the novel: Nick and Susy's bargain, although flawed, creates a space for them to empower a different version of what marriage should be rather than "re-articulating the conditions it seeks to escape" (960). Although they realize that their position in society is contingent on wealth that they do not have, they want ultimately to gain the autonomy to marry at will and enjoy a companionate marriage without terminating it after a year. The plan, which represents Susy's ingenuity in the face of insurmountable social pressures, insists that before relinquishing themselves to bad marriages, she and Nick spend at least some time in the marriage that they want for a lifetime. Although Johnson points to what she considers to be the plan's two conditions, profitability and transience, as deplorable to Wharton for the basis of a marriage, *Glimpses* shows that there are worse vices to have—such as Ellie's insatiable greed—while also echoing *The House of Mirth* to include Lily Bart's choices as a cautionary tale.

To return to a consideration of focalization as a means of discussing the novel's last chapter, the suggestion that the final scene is focalized only through Nick is limited; to suggest that Susy's perspective is subsumed into his point of view would be to ignore the pattern of repeated shifts in focalization to highlight how Nick and Susy each have their own point of view. Focalization shifts insist that although Susy might try to conform to Nick's persona, she is not, through coverture,[16] erased into marital unity in which two people become one under the law and have a single interest. The last chapter, although not the only one with both Nick and Susy focalizing in one chapter, shifts more than any other. The rapid shifts in focalization at the end of the novel might be misread as an endorsement of marital unity, with the inclusion of both perspectives in one chapter as representing the two merging into one marital unit. Instead, the shifts represent the accelerated pace of the novel and the narrative's juxtaposition of both perspectives in a short span of time and pages. Refocusing the narrative suggests the coming together of Nick and Susy, but not their becoming one, since they each focalize alternately in the final chapter, rather than having Nick focalize for the couple. That Nick's final focalization comes after Susy's is problematic since Susy cannot offer her perspective about their situation as the narrative ends. However, the narrator focalizes the last paragraph—in a rather cinematic way, panning away from the couple and toward the moon—making neither Nick's nor Susy's vision the final perspective of the novel.

That the ending of the novel, with the reconciliation of Nick and Susy, serves to negate what Beer, in *Edith Wharton: Traveller in the Land of Letters* (1990), considers "the

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[16] For a discussion of coverture, "the legal process by which a married woman's legal existence was subsumed under her husband's," see Johnson 950 and 969 n. 7.

mores of the new order" does not necessarily mean that, as Beer argues "the conclusion is an anachronism" (85). She believes that "The climax of the joke that is *The Glimpses of the Moon* is actually the historical spuriousness of such a closure. The false tidiness of the ending is the bitterest of punchlines. Such a resolution, impossible in 1905 [when *The House of Mirth* is published], is even less credible now that the scene is further debased." Although she argues that *Glimpses*, as Wharton's first post-war novel, "is ultimately a bad joke," she resists reading the ending as the moonlight in the last line of the novel casts it, troubled (297). Instead, Wharton's novel satirizes everyone involved, so that what Nick and Susy end with, rather than necessarily offering hope, suggest the frailty of the system.

The close of the novel, with its repetitions from the Como honeymoon and the neat tying up of the loosened marital knot, brings closure into question. Dawson aptly views the endings of Wharton's late fictions, which have often been considered "inexpert," as Beer's reading indicates, as "precisely what Wharton seeks to problematize." She considers that in "linking narrative closure to young women's stagnation, the novels overtly question women's abilities to create new social opportunities in the modern world." Specifically relevant to this discussion, Dawson argues that "Repeatedly and insistently, Wharton's late novels suggest that what we 'glimpse' through the ending of Nick and Susy's story is Wharton's strategic use of frustrating, disturbing resolutions in which focal characters choose socially regressive roles that are unprecedented in the surrounding plot." This strategy of problematizing the ending through repeating traditional closure creates what Dawson describes as "the uncomfortable linkage of two forms of closure: formal closure in the narrative and stasis in the characters' worlds." In this way, Susy becomes the "mechanisms of resolution

within the bounds of the text" such that she signals the "ongoing, unresolved problems of reinventing female roles in a modern social world where women are encouraged to value only superficial signs of progress" (97).

In closing the novel with a seemingly happy ending, a rarity in Wharton's oeuvre, Nick and Susy's plan seems to have worked in spite of itself. The repetition of their union would not have been possible had they initially denied themselves the possibility of a companionate marriage and instead individually sought out tolerable wealthy spouses. Although there is a hopefulness about romantic unions rather than marriage for increasing wealth, which seems a modern improvement, the moral values praised in the novel are only modestly upgraded from those of Wharton's depiction of Old New York. Wharton's initial description in a letter to Bernard Berenson speaks to her vision of the moral code of the novel that "tried to picture the adventures of a young couple who believe themselves to be completely affranchis & up-to-date, but are continually tripped up by obsolete sensibilities, & discarded ideals" (*Letters* 446). The Lansings' surprisingly outmoded values inform the ending of *Glimpses*, which appears overly traditional for a novel that promises something more befitting a modern couple of the 1920s. This contrast between expected and resulting values is reminiscent of Wharton's own critique, "From *The Saturday Review*," of her first novella, *Fast and Loose*. Wharton, as the reviewer, questions "How is it that the heroine, who, we are anxiously informed, is the fastest woman in London, does nothing that would have raised a blush on the rigid countenance of an elderly Quakeress?" Essentially, as the review critiques, the characters are not fast and loose enough (114). Nick certainly exhibits conservative morals throughout the novel, and Susy comes to live more by those values than her previous

compromises allowed. Wharton's sketch of a sequel to *Glimpses*, entitled "Love Among the Ruins," repeats the characters of Nick and Susy, following them after they decide to remain married, but reveals the troubled future the moonlight foretells at the end of *Glimpses*, as Nick and Susy's relationship does not fare as well at the close of that project.[17] Although it is interesting to see that Wharton cannot envision Nick and Susy's relationship lasting despite reuniting them at the end of *Glimpses*, reading this sketch as a continuation of the narrative—as I argue in Chapter One in reference to reading *Asphodel* to answer questions left unanswered in *HERmione*—undermines the novel's closure. The decision to reunite the couple at *Glimpses*'s end shows Susy's realization that love is more important to her than money, one that is decidedly normative, yet uncommon both in the Lansings' world and in the world of Wharton's fiction.

[17] Hoeller includes a complete transcript of Wharton's notes for the sequel in her discussion of *Glimpses* in *Edith Wharton's Dialogue with Realism and Sentimental Fiction* (137-138).

# Chapter Four

## "A man can die but once!": The Husband-and-Wife Detective Team and the Repetition of "a Five-Fold Murder" in *Unpunished: A Mystery*

The love-plot in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's only detective story, *Unpunished: A Mystery* (1929), begins with a focus on Jim and Bessie Hunt, who are already married when the novel opens. Unlike Woolf's or Wharton's couples in Chapters Two and Three, respectively, Jim and Bessie's marital stability is not in question; their plot functions as a successful wedlock plot of what could be if marriage strived toward equality. Joseph Allen Boone, in *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction* (1987) describes the contrast between Gilman's *Herland* and "The Yellow Wall-Paper" as "gentle satire, rather than gothic horror, to undermine the Victorian ideology of love and marriage" (312). The same comparison could be made within *Unpunished*, which contrasts its portrayal of abysmal marriages with, rather than *Herland*'s fictional thriving all-female society hidden in the Amazon, a seemingly utopian marriage in which a husband and wife share their professional and household work in New York City. Grounded in the social culture of 1920s New York, the text acknowledges gender biases, such as Bessie cooking dinner, but also acknowledges how the two strive for equal footing, such as when Jim "help[s] her put on the dishes" (5). Unlike Jim and Bessie's marriage, the other marriages described in the course of the investigation are unhappy, forced, or the result of criminal dealings, underscoring the drastic difference between marriage for love and marriage to serve the ends of patriarchal domination. At the novel's end, however, other characters' marriages or engagements repeat the kind of balance that Jim and Bessie demonstrate throughout the narrative.

The case that Jim is called to work on, in which one man is found murdered in at least five different ways—what Bessie, not only his "friend wife" but also his co-detective, terms "a five-fold murder"—drives the narrative's repetition (21). The love-plot tradition more often chronicles courtship, failed courtship, or, if it extends beyond the marital union, then problematic marriage; the detective plot in *Unpunished* provides a vehicle to showcase Jim and Bessie Hunt's successful wedlock plot. *Unpunished* repeats elements of both the love-plot and the detective plot traditions, using the conventions of both to establish itself as a novel that subverts generic tradition. As detectives, they repeat the steps of the criminal to solve the case; here, the repetitions must be repeated for each murder scenario: poisoned, strangled, stabbed, bludgeoned, and shot, as well as for each attempt to frame the surviving family members. Bessie and Jim repeatedly spend their domestic evenings retelling their professional days' events, sharing the information with each other, offering professional opinions, and keeping each other apprised of the current situation. The material they consider for the case includes stories of blackmail, the repetition across generations of forced marriages or women being sold into marriage, among other corrupt acts, juxtaposed against Jim and Bessie's seemingly utopian marital and professional partnership.

The case that is revealed through their dialogue begins when Jim's friend and colleague, Dr. Ross Akers, asks him to join him in visiting a patient and friend of his who has requested he "bring someone" (7), and chronicles what happens when they respond to Jacqueline (Jack) Warner's call. The three servants are gone, and Jack's brother-in-law, Wade Vaugh, also a patient of Ross Akers, has not slept in his bed, and will not open his office door. In retelling the story, Jim switches back to an earlier story, in which Jack's

father, J. J. Smith, was fatally injured, and an even earlier one in which Jack and her sister Iris were injured in an accident that killed their husbands, all narrated to recreate Vaughn's sinister involvement in the family: authoritarian Smith had business dealings with Vaughn, a criminal attorney with a similarly domineering personality, and wanted Iris to marry him. When Iris refused to marry Vaughn and she and Jack fled and married whom they wanted, their father disinherited them, leaving Vaughn to step in when the sisters were injured and widowed in the automobile accident years later. While Jack, disfigured and crippled by the accident, was still unconscious from a brain injury, Vaughn married Iris despite her mental and emotional injuries, within two weeks of the accident, and brought the sisters, along with Iris's daughter Iris and Jack's son Hal, to live with him. Their insignificant income and the parameters of their father's new will leave them at Vaughn's mercy, which he uses to his advantage. Of particular importance to the day's account, Vaughn had arranged for his gruff and shady henchman Gus Crasher to marry young Iris, since Smith made favorable financial arrangements in his will if she were to marry someone who meets Vaughn's approval before the age of 21. Crasher, who has shown up for his wedding day, insists upon joining the family as they pry open the lock and enter Vaughn's office to find that "Mr. Vaughn was sitting there, a little slumped down against the back, staring straight at us, dead" (15). With the chapter ending by revealing that Vaughn is in fact dead, but not revealing any more, the narrative creates a sense of anticipation for Bess and for the readers that the actual witnesses to the door opening to reveal Vaughn dead did not experience. Lillian S. Robinson, in "Killing Patriarchy: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the Murder Mystery, and Post-Feminist Propaganda" (1991), aptly notes that after the information of the first chapter is

recounted, even before the corpse is revealed, "the reader knows that, whoever committed the crime (and even how many crimes there were), the real villain is Wade Vaughn" (278).

**"Meet the firm, Hunt and Hunt, Private Detectives."**

In telling the story of the Hunts, whose marriage is already four years old and still honeymoon-like throughout the novel, *Unpunished* represents the wedlock version of the love-plot, what Boone describes as "a more tenuous position than either courtship or seduction paradigms in the marriage tradition—partly because the narrative of wedded life lacks the teleological finality of courtship and seduction movements, and partly because too complete a representation of the married state runs the risk of becoming [. . .] a deconstruction of its ideality" (113-114). Although it is a wedlock plot, *Unpunished* fits neither of the two types of wedlock plots Boone describes, with "either a comic or tragic direction"; in the former, "initially troubled spouses generally undergo a series of misfortunes and threats analogous to those occurring in the courtship narrative before reuniting happily," namely "the tribulations of the long-suffering wife caught in an adulterous triangle" (10, 114), whereas in the tragic version, "the impasse of bad marriage generally reflects the tragic misjudgments of the individual spouses"(10). Resolution comes when "the erring husband reforms" or, if he is "too tyrannical, dies, freeing the wife to enter a happier second marriage" (115). In Jim and Bessie Hunt's happily-ever-after union, Gilman creates a counter-traditional ideal that itself does not falter, so it does not require resolving. Rather, it is the murder case that they work on together, showcasing their compatibility in their partnership, that requires resolution of tragic

marriages and tyrannical patriarchs, culminating in courtship and engagement for those who survive the tyranny. Vaughn is the patriarch who is too tyrannical and must die, not for marital resolution per se but for those whom he has made suffer to find closure and a happy ending. The plot of Vaughn's murder and the suspects that emerge could be seen, as Boone describes, as a digression that "*fills in* for the main plot's *lack* of development" (118) in Jim and Bessie's wedlock plot. Instead, though, the plot of detection serves both as a vehicle to demonstrate Jim and Bessie's highly-functional marriage that nods toward equality, and as a background of abysmal marriages against which Jim and Bessie's marriage stands as the ideal.

In *The Man-Made World or, Our Androcentric Culture* (1911), Gilman discusses literary conventions, particularly those that surround marriage, in the chapter entitled "Masculine Literature." She argues that "It is only lately that women, generally speaking, have been taught to read; still more lately that they have been allowed to write" (88). Instead, the Western literary tradition is told from a man's perspective, focusing on war or love, and the latter "stops when he gets her! Story after story, age after age, over and over and over, this ceaseless repetition of the Preliminaries" (96). Gilman's repetitive language emphasizes the repetition in the literary tradition that focuses on "the story of the pre-marital struggle [. . .] the Adventures of Him in Pursuit of Her." In depicting "man's love of woman," these "stories stop at marriage [. . .] for the clear reason, that on a starkly masculine basis this is his one period of overwhelming interest and excitement" (97-98). Rather than depicting "Love and love and love—from 'first sight' to marriage. There it stops—just the fluttering ribbon of announcement—'and lived happily ever after,'" Gilman's fiction considers other aspects of women's lives (102). She lists five

"distinctly fresh fields of fiction" as alternatives to the androcentric love story that stops short of chronicling life after the wedding: a woman exchanges her "'career'—her humanness—for marriage" but objects to the exchange; a middle-aged woman replaces her social starvation with more business in her life; "the interrelation of women with women," much like Virginia Woolf's Chloe and Olivia in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which is a new option since "we never had it before: except in harems and convents";[1] the mother and child relationship, not only depicting the child's infancy but extending through "the long drama of personal relationship"; and the grown woman "who faces the demands of love with the high standards of conscious motherhood" (105).

*Unpunished* does not neatly fit any of these categories, since there is no option for the childless couple to explore their married life, to depict what that "happily ever after" would look like.[2] Instead, the only option Gilman provides for a married woman to contemplate her marriage is the first, in which she objects to the choices that she makes in trading career for marriage. Although Bessie does put aside her career in the newspaper business, Gilman depicts this as a choice she makes willingly and happily since she enjoys domestic work and can return to professional work as needed. Gilman's "Masculine Literature" complicates her depiction of Jim and Bessie's marriage in suggesting only the one option for what literature can focus on once the woman is

[1] Lillian S. Robinson, in "Killing Patriarchy: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the Murder Mystery, and Post-Feminist Propaganda" (1991) also acknowledges the similarity between Gilman's sentiment in "serviceable prose" and "what Woolf was to say far more beautifully about women's possible literary and human futures" in *A Room of One's Own*, which was published some eighteen years later (275-276). Woolf's envisioning of a literature that could address women liking other women, however, also suggests more than friendship, whereas Gilman's writing does not consider lesbian plots or characters, even in her all-female society in *Herland*.

[2] Jack Warner's plot in *Unpunished* can be read as a version of this fourth potential category, because the narrative presents as integral her role as a mother to Hal and mother-figure to her niece Iris, and the way that she teaches them to withstand Vaughn are integral.

married but before she becomes a mother. However, Bessie uses her talents, whether they be domestic or professional, in her detective work with Jim; their partnership is depicted as a productive social and professional pairing, a happy childless couple. The novel undermines the traditional marriage plot by extending the "overwhelming interest and excitement" that Gilman attributes to the androcentric depiction of prenuptial "lover-love" into the plot of the husband and wife (98). *Unpunished* follows with its marriages and engagements at its end, but such depictions are meaningful in the text because they signal closure, normalcy, and the freedom previously denied to the characters while Wade Vaughn was still alive; Jim and Bessie's love plot does not require such closure.

Jim emphasizes the importance of relating his story to Bessie because he values her opinions; his impulse to share his professional experiences with his wife provides a vehicle for introducing that story into the narrative. Very often in *Unpunished*, action or information is revealed not by the narrator as a character experiences it but in dialogue as one character repeats it back to the other. Although this practice eliminates one version of the experience from the narrative, that of Jim as he experiences it prior to the start of the novel, for example, it emphasizes that the character relating the experience or discovery is repeating that information for the benefit of the other; the Hunt's husband-and-wife detective team's narrative is founded on this repetition.[3] In recounting their adventures, often experienced apart but shared through the repetition of the day's events,

[3] This pattern of narration, in which a character tells in dialogue what has already happened but is missing from the narrator's account suggests repetition without actually presenting both the narrator's version and the character's. In Chapter One, in my discussion of how Hermione and the third-person narrator often repeat each other by narrating the same moment with similar language, this repetition is more explicit than the implied repetition created in the narrative of *Unpunished*.

the narrative reveals how integral their partnership is to solving the case. Although many detective narratives employ a first-person narrator, the use of an omniscient narrator allows both Jim and Bessie to focalize the narrative. However, unlike *The Glimpses of the Moon* in Chapter Three, with its third-person limited narrator who focalizes through either Nick or Susy with rare exception, *Unpunished* does not rely solely on the husband and wife's perspectives for the narration; both focalization and narration move away from the couple throughout the narrative. Whereas in *Glimpses* the limited perspective made the other marriages seem even more hollow by not providing those characters' perspectives, the narration in *Unpunished* affords other characters the chance to focalize the narration, or take over the narration, to provide other perspectives that reveal by comparison the utopian qualities of the Hunts' marriage. Although the narrative employs a third-person omniscient narrator, information more often comes through a character's recounting of the day's events, or through overheard dialogue, testimony, or even a secret diary that interrupts the third-person narration altogether and allows Jack briefly to become the first-person narrator. Robinson also notices the prominence of the alternate focalizations or methods of narration that make the third-person omniscient narration "the least common approach to telling the story, especially where important details of the plot are to transpire." The mode of narration becomes an important tool in decentralizing narrative control, which Robinson considers important in this novel about "who the corpse is and why he has to be eliminated," rightly asserting that "The point of the story, Gilman is telling us, is the telling of this story, which is the story of a patriarchy overthrown" (278).

The novel's first chapter establishes a frame of the detective duo, Jim and Bessie Hunt, whose marriage is idealized in the narrative, such as with their "quite honeymoonish greetings, in spite of four years of marriage" (5). Although Jim works as a detective while Bessie remains home to handle their domestic work, Bessie's "'doing her own work'—at least doing it for Jim" is presented as her choice, rather than as forced enslavement in the domestic sphere, which Gilman argued against throughout her career (3). Bessie, trained in "newspaper work," can switch between the domestic and the professional as needed: "There were times when things went badly with Jim and she promptly leaped into the breach as it were and took a job again, so that intermittent housework still seemed rather in the nature of a prolonged and pleasant picnic for two" (3-4). Her insistence that she enjoys housework, much like he would enjoy camping and cooking his own fish, despite Jim's "protest[ing] that she was far too able a woman to be cooking for two," suggests that Jim, like Gilman, does not believe a woman should involve herself in private domestic labor, but rather in professionalized labor in a communal system (4).[4] Bessie waits for Jim to come home to dinner not simply to fulfill her wifely duty of feeding her husband the delicious meal she has prepared, but to learn

[4] Gilman addresses her concerns about women's domestic labor throughout her fiction and non-fiction writing, most notably in *Women and Economics* (1898) and *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903). Dolores Hayden, in "Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Kitchenless House" (1979) considers Gilman's proposal for eliminating not only cooking but also much of the cleaning from the home by employing a communal system of living. Hayden aptly points out, though, that "none of these activists [Gilman and other reformers] saw the problem from the point of view of the cooks, maids, and laundresses" who "became predominantly immigrant women and Blacks between 1879 and 1930" (241). Beth Sutton-Ramspeck's *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (2004) explores what she considers an alternative paradigm, literature's engagement with the public sphere through "housekeeping devices and perspectives of the domestic realm," rather than viewing the public and domestic as separate and contradictory.

about the new case he is involved in; Jim does not merely indulge Bessie in describing the case to entertain her, but to seek her quasi-professional opinion.

Bessie's choice to employ herself in her personal domestic sphere seemingly contradicts Gilman's views that housework is, as Ruth Levitas describes in "'Who Holds the Hose?': Domestic Labor in the Work of Bellamy, Gilman and Morris" (1995), "unskilled, isolating drudgery, which must be abolished, enabling at least some women to engage in 'real' work which is more productive, more socially useful and more fulfilling" (71). Bessie seems to take equal pleasure in her abilities as a stenographer, a detective, a cook, and a table-setter, claiming "The more trades the better is my motto" (*Unpunished* 6). Part of what seems so ideal about the Hunts' marriage is their willingness each to cross the boundary into the other's sphere, so that not only does Bessie take on Jim's case, making it her own as well, but Jim contributes at home, bringing the dishes to the table and offering to help wash them (5). Levitas argues, however, that as much as Gilman believed that women belonged in the work force, she "adamantly opposed [. . .] men doing household work" instead believing that gender equality would come from abolishing private domestic labor so that both men and women could work outside of the home while domestic tasks would be accomplished communally by specialized labor forces (71-2). Jim and Bessie's quasi-equal marriage is enigmatically unlike Gilman's earlier politics. One could conclude that she casts them as such ironically, or that they represent updated views of the nearly seventy-year-old Gilman; what is evident is the functionality of their marriage in contrast to the abysmal marriages depicted elsewhere in the text, suggesting that the Hunts should be read as earnestly as anything else depicted

positively in *Unpunished*, and as what Robinson refers to as "the modern answer to the patriarchal marriages enforced by Vaughn" (279).

**"Hold on, friend wife, I haven't got to guessing yet. It's too thick."**

Jim, seated with "plenty of paper and sharp pencils, for him to use if desired," and Bessie, "with her stenographic pad taking occasional notes," are ready to begin their teamwork (5). In describing the case, which he wants Bessie to get "straight, in sequence, just as [he] did," Jim hopes to get Bessie's impressions, which she provides by interjecting as he repeats his day's events (6). Although Bessie impatiently prompts Jim to get to the point of the case, to reveal the murder that she anticipates is the purpose of the call, Jim refuses to deviate from his story. Insistently, he reveals the sequence of the events as they unfolded so that Bessie's insights are not biased or corrupted as he recounts the day's detective work. Her apt observations, coupled with her training as a stenographer, make her a valuable partner, as seen in Jim's declarations: "I'm mighty glad I've got you Bess, instead of a sheep like my dear Watson. Being a stenog comes in mighty useful, doesn't it?" and "You old investigator!" (6, 8). Bessie is simultaneously Jim's assistant—playing Watson to Jim's Sherlock Holmes, but one with her own vision, not a sheepish follower—as well as a skilled stenographer and an investigator in her own right. Bessie combines working women's skills of the day with the ability to both lead and follow, making her an ideal co-detective.

Bessie knows there is a dead body in her husband's story, but she does not know exactly when or where or who it will be. The convention of detective fiction is that there would be a murder revealed early in the story and the rest of the narrative would be

spent solving the case. Jim prolongs the inevitable when he tells his wife the story of his morning without acknowledging that there is a dead body, particularly because he is interested in conveying the information to her in the order that he experienced it. There are analeptic intrusions in his story of the events leading up to the murder, such as the background on J. J. Smith, the story of the accident that left Iris with a severe nervous condition that makes her child-like and unaware of what has happened and Jack scarred, disfigured, and wheelchair-bound, while also killing their husbands, and the story of Wade Vaughn's intervening by marrying Iris before she was aware of what was really happening. However, Jim's story in the first chapter does not include any proleptic descriptions, since it is important to him that his wife hear the story as close to how he experienced it so that she can share her unbiased observations and draw her own conclusions. The sequencing of the first chapter establishes the couple's egalitarian partnership, since it at once acknowledges the role each plays in household chores while also insisting upon the value of their professional partnership.

Despite Bessie interrupting to share the conclusions she has drawn about the case Jim describes, Jim reserves his commentary until he has finished repeating his narrative, telling "his listener" Bessie that "I don't think yet, not anything. I'm just giving you the case as I got it," and "Hold on, friend wife, I haven't got to guessing yet. It's too thick," emphasizing the importance of as accurate a repetition as possible (21). By the third chapter, Bessie has developed a keen sense of the case from Jim's descriptions, allowing her to "sagaciously" observe characters, motives, and details so well that Jim exclaims "Don't interrupt and spoil my impressive story!" (29). In exercising his narratorial

authority, Jim privileges telling before analyzing, and thus does not want to theorize about the case or tell it in a logical but not chronological order.

Jim's insistence on maintaining the sequencing of the story in the first chapter shows his attempt to convey the details in the order that they occurred. The rest of the story does not insist upon such deliberate sequencing. Rather, the narrative relies on the reader's ability to re-sequence the events in the narrative into a chronological plot. This distinction between the way the story is told and the chronological occurrence of events, which is discussed with various terms throughout narratology, is important for any narrative, detective or otherwise.[5] Information is rarely revealed in the order it occurred; even in Jim's attempt to tell Bessie about his morning exactly as it happened necessarily involves him interrupting his story to provide details from an earlier past. Nevertheless, the reader is able to organize such details into a chronology that makes sense. This resequencing becomes particularly important in detective fiction because the detective, witnesses, and suspects, do not know from the start of the narrative what information is important; in the course of the investigation, clues and leads will necessarily emerge, which will force the narrative to make chronologic leaps.[6] Tzvetan Todorov discusses this narratological phenomenon as one that applies to any narrative but is of particular relevance in detective fiction: "In the story, there is no inversion in time, actions follow

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[5] The distinction between the chronologic version of what happens and the constructed version that is conveyed out of sequence through the narrative has been discussed in narratology using a variety of binaries: *sjuzet* and *fabula*, subject and fable, story and discourse, story and plot.

[6] In writing about the novel, I find myself torn between the two impulses: to reveal the murder and then explain the necessary details that my reader needs to know, or to recreate for my reader the impulse to lay out the scene before revealing the corpse, as Jim does. Because *Unpunished* is not widely read, the second option is still available to me. If instead I were writing about, perhaps, an Agatha Christie or Dashiell Hammett novel, my reader would expect the first, since the plot is already known, or if not, is at least anticipated.

their natural order; in the plot, the author can present results before their causes, the end before the beginning" (45). Todorov problematizes this distinction, asking "How does it happen then that detective fiction manages to make both of them present, to put them side by side?" This paradox, he explains, comes from the fact that the crime cannot be immediately present in the narrative, since the narrator can only reconstruct the crime through other characters' reports, whereas the solving of the case is "has no importance in itself," except to mediate "between reader and the story of the crime." In solving the case, the narrative necessarily makes use of temporal inversions and individual points of view, recreating for the detective the experience the reader has in making sense of the narrative. Todorov argues that "no observation exists without an observer; the author cannot, by definition, be as omniscient as he was in the classical novel," which in part accounts for the limitations of third-person narrator in *Unpunished* (46).

In revealing the story through multiple repetitions of the information characters have been able to gather, the narrator plays a less important role, foregrounding each character's telling instead. Beginning with Jim's recreating his day's discoveries for Bessie in the first chapter, the narrative does not ignore the flaws in reliability this method introduces. As he prepares to recount a conversation, Jim tells Bessie "I won't swear that's verbatim, but it's pretty close" (20). Unlike the traditional third-person narrator who, in theory, accurately records dialogue, Jim is not held to the same standards, nor does he pretend to have a narrator-like photographic memory. Gertrude Stein, in "Portraits and Repetition," acknowledges the inconsistency in characters' repetition of their observations, noting that "no matter how often the witnesses tell the same story the insistence is different" (167). Despite Bessie's admiration that "Jim, my

dear, you've got a memory like a dictograph," Jim "won't swear to every word of this, but it's pretty straight" (24). Although Jim is not the novel's narrator, in the first chapter he shifts into the role of narrator of Jack's story within the frame of the narrative. Readers come to rely on certain characters' honesty and others' lack of honesty as they judge what to trust in the telling of the story. Since Jim has established his narrative as authoritative, he can take liberties, such as when he tells Bessie that "I'll have to condense a good deal; she talked forever," without creating doubt about his narrative choices (35).

When Jim reveals out of sequence that prior to the discovery of Vaughn's murder, he happened to observe Crasher following the young woman he now knows to be Iris, and knowing Crasher's nefarious ways, decided to follow him, Bessie "protests" that he "never told me a word! Nice partner you are!" Although *Unpunished* does not often contain the same kind of rhetorical repetition as the novels discussed in earlier chapters, the discussion of Iris going to four drug stores to request the same drug, followed by Crasher, who is in turn followed by Jim, serves as a repetitive sequence that highlights the repetition that their partnership draws on, such as the repetition of the day's events to bring their professional lives into the scope of their marriage, and the necessarily repetitive work involved in being a detective. She does not specify which partnership she feels Jim's reticence has slighted, their marital partnership or their professional one, suggesting that the two categories are inseparable for the Hunts. Together they repeat the story at hand to Tom Davis, Bessie's former suitor turned friend and police surgeon assigned to the case, whom they have invited to their home to discuss the case. Tom's presence prompts Bessie to quell Jim's jealousy by reassuring

him that "there's only one Jim, and you know it" (39). Although their partnership is replete with repetition, their union is unique, unrepeatable, depicted in the narrative; for example, before Tom arrives, Jim helps Bessie "get those dishes cleaned up, while we wait."

Perhaps the most clear-cut example of repetition with differences comes from the crime central to *Unpunished*. Despite their varied reasons and methods, five people enact harm on Vaughn on the night that he dies. The difference between the reasons and the methods are significant, but not the point at which these actions paradigmatically demonstrate repetition with difference. Rather, as Bessie reminds Jim and Tom, "A man can die but once! You've got to center on the first death I suppose, not the later one." Having established that the poison must have been the first method attempted—since, "never heard of a dead man taking poison," as Jim points out, "Nor of anyone forcibly giving it to a dead man," as Bessie adds—the duo, with the help of Tom, who is performing Vaughn's autopsy, try to reconstruct the sequence of the other, necessarily different murder attempts (44). Peter Brooks, in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (1984), describes "a condition of all classic detective fiction, that the detective repeat, go over again, the ground that has been covered by his predecessor, the criminal." This narrative chronicles Jim and Bessie's efforts to cover the ground physically, both inside the house and in the surrounding yards, but here they participate in a repetition of the murder act to recreate the murder scene in order to theorize about the sequence of attacks. In repeating the actions, Tom refuses to play the role of Vaughn since he "won't trust you for a minute, Jim Hunt. No sir! You know you are jealous of me, always were." Instead, Bessie plays the victim since "we [Jim and Tom] won't either of us hurt

you" (24). The exchange among the three is humorous, making Bessie's body simultaneously the site of five recreated murders, both marital trust and jealousy, and Tom's extramarital desire, whether real or imagined. Jim's seemingly jealous comments, which occur elsewhere in the text as well, taint the otherwise ideal union, but in this scene, they are quickly defused by Bessie's question, connected to her earlier comment that a man can die but once, asking "Is there a penalty for killing a dead man?" (46). Once the first attempt is successful, the remaining actions do not constitute murder, only the attempt or intent to murder. In repeating the steps of the crime, Bessie, Jim, and Tom realize the important practical difference between the first action, poisoning, and the other murder repetitions—only one is punishable by law.

Bessie further involves herself in the case by deciding to go undercover as a maid, knowing that the family is without servants at this difficult time. Her position as the undercover detective playing a maid juxtaposes the roles she plays in the narrative, domestic/professional, feminized/masculinized, listener/teller. Although she has a somewhat domestic role at home, when she goes undercover, she transforms herself entirely into the domestic, which seemingly feminizes her. However, Bessie becomes the complicated site of professionalization, both in a feminized—and classed—way, becoming a maid, and in a masculinized way, as a detective, putting herself in danger. She must pass as a woman of a lower station, and as a woman who would choose domestic labor in someone else's domicile as her profession. The narrator has already made it clear that if Jim's business were not sufficiently supporting them, Bessie would take on work in the newspaper business, not as a domestic servant baking muffins and fixing hot cocoa. She becomes a contradiction, performing gendered acts, but of more

than one gender at once. Her professional experience as a detective, a seemingly masculine experience, is facilitated by her husband, who helps secure the position for her. However, the choice to detect by disguising herself as a maid is her idea, and is one which offers her narrative control as she now has information to report back to Jim.

Anxious to involve herself in the detective work, Bessie repeats Jim's examination of the house, but as a domestic servant, she has greater access than even Jim was afforded as the family's detective. As with Jim's narration through the beginning of the novel, Bessie's discoveries become part of the narrative as she recounts them to Jim, who requests that she "begin at the beginning and 'tell me all'" (61). She has much to tell, such as her discovery of a fork that matches the knife used to stab Vaughn—meaning that the stabbing was an inside job—, of a loose board that would allow someone in the china closet to see or hear the goings-on in Vaughn's office, and a secret panel in Jack's bedroom that hides her personal log of the tyranny they lived through with Vaughn. Rather than reading the log while working in the house or on her way home, Bessie waits until she is at home with Jim so that they can "sit up close and we'll read it" (69), a testament to their collaborative approach to detection. The narration then switches away from Bessie's focalization and into an embedded narrative of Jack's record, which sporadically chronicles her life from 1921 through the day of Vaugh's murder in 1928 and spans more than forty pages. When Jack's narrative ends, the frame narrative resumes with Jim and Bessie's partnership shifting into action. Instead of collaboration through narrating, Jim joins Bessie as she returns to the Smith house under the guise of her role as servant. This perspective affords them a view of Gus Crasher's plotting and

allows them to thwart his attempts to coerce Iris into marrying him with threats of testifying about planted evidence implicating both Iris and Hal in Vaughn's murder.

When aspects of the story are retold for another character's benefit, the narration does not typically retell but instead only mentions that this retelling occurs. Thus, when Jim meets Mrs. Todd, the friendly next-door neighbor who spends her days and sleepless nights watching Vaughn through her window, and tells her that Vaughn is dead, he responds to her request, "I'm thankful to hear of it! Tell me all about it young man'" by repeating the story, which is recorded in the narrative simply as '"So I told her, at considerable length" (33). After experiencing the events of the morning, which the narrator does not narrate, Jim narrates the story himself when he repeats it to Bessie, but not before retelling it to Mrs. Todd. The narrative Jim presents to Bessie, the first account of the case that is provided to the reader, is thus no less than the third iteration of the story. The implied repetition of telling the day's events after Jim experiences them represents the third of Gérard Genette's four categories of frequency in the novel, the multiple tellings of a single event. Even though the event is only told once, when Jim tells Bessie, the narrative acknowledges unnarrated tellings of the same story. Throughout a detective story, information is repeated as new investigators, witnesses, or theories emerge. When Jim reaches a point in his repetition of the story to Mrs. Todd in which he would need to reveal Vaughn selling Iris to Crasher, he calls Jack Warner to let her tell that part of the story, which she repeats to Mrs. Todd via telephone. Although Jim cannot hear what Jack relates to Mrs. Todd, he has already heard one version of the story and, like the reader, does not need to hear it repeated.

The novel affords the reader Bessie's point of view only until her husband returns home, at which point he controls the narrative for most of the first four chapters. When Bessie informs Jim that she intends to go undercover in the Smith house "to get an inside view of those people," she asserts herself as a professional, as Jim's partner, and as a focalizer (47). Although the narrative is not quick to shift into Bessie's focus, separating Jim's control of the narrative from hers with a chapter told largely from the narrator's point of view, with some parts told from Gus Crasher's perspective, and others from Jim's as he tails Crasher, Bessie takes control of the narrative in the sixth chapter. As at the start of the novel with Jim's repetition of his day, the narrator does not immediately follow Bessie through her day as the new maid in the Smith house, but waits until she is home and ready to repeat the day's events to her husband. Brooks discusses the nature of detective fiction, using Sherlock Holmes as his exemplar, to show how the detective "is literalizing an act that all narrative claims to perform, since narrative ever, and inevitably—if only because of its use of the preterite—presents itself as a repetition and a rehearsal (which the French language, of course, makes the same thing) of what has already happened." In retelling the evidence collected, the detective—or detectives, in *Unpunished*—does what a narrator does, retells what has already happened in the past, turning story into plot. To Brooks, the detective, like the reader of a narrative, reconstructs the story based on non-sequential information, "from the implications of the narrative discourse, which is all he ever knows." Repetition, in this model, plays a "constructive, semiotic role," in that plot functions "as the active repetition and reworking of story in and by discourse" (25). Although the detectives in *Unpunished* illuminate the case by making sense of the story, reconstructing the past

through the discourse available to them, as the reader does in understanding the story from the narrative, they function also as narrators, not of *Unpunished* but of embedded narratives within the novel, which is also accomplished through repetition, the repetition between Jim and Bessie to maintain the integrity of their marital and professional partnership.

**"About detective stories, and did I like them, and were they true to life."**

*Unpunished* is often compared to other detective fiction of its era, such as Dashiell Hammett's *The Thin Man* (1934), which depicts husband-and-wife team Nick and Nora Charles, and Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), which depicts a despised, evil man murdered by multiple people, but it is important to note that *Unpunished* predates these other texts. Because it was not published in its day, much to the dismay of Gilman, it did not enter into the cultural dialogue of detective fiction of the late 1920s and early 1930s. *Unpunished* has been described as a less successful piece of writing: Ann J. Lane, in her introduction to *The Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader* (1980), which published an excerpt of *Unpunished*, "The Record," before *Unpunished* was published, describes Gilman as "not comfortable with the language or structure of suspense stories" (*xxx*); Robinson looks to "a certain woodenness and lack of verisimilitude in the execution of the plot" as a reason the novel was not initially published (283). However, Gilman reveals an astute knowledge of the conventions of the genre, as evidenced by critics' comparisons to Hammett and Christie. The novel's "mix of humor, violence, and social criticism" should have made it more attractive, not less, to publishers, which Catherine Ross Nickerson argues in *The Web of Iniquity: Early*

*Detective Fiction by American Women* (1998). Perhaps the combination of humor and love with torture and murder was not as appealing in domestic detective fiction as they were in the newly-emerging hard-boiled detective fiction, such as Hammett's *Red Harvest*, offered to publishers the same year as Gilman's *Unpunished*.

*Unpunished* might be, as Lane describes, "hasty writing" albeit "not a bad first draft," particularly considering Gilman's tendency to write quickly and without revision, but Gilman's plot development reveals her maneuvering through another androcentric literary tradition that she is able to repeat with difference (Lane *xxx*). Ironically, Gilman disapproved of detective fiction's emphasis on plot, claiming instead that character was more important, despite one publisher's assertion, which she describes in her autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (1935): "As to books, I wrote a species of detective story, at least unique, called *Unpunished*. No takers. 'I find your characters interesting,' said one 'reader.' 'That is not necessary in a detective story.' Evidently it is not, but I have often wished it was" (332). Although she develops characters that hold the reader's interest, it is the way in which the narrative repeats some conventions of detective fiction but deviates significantly from others—which invariably comes from its characters and plot—that makes *Unpunished* worthy of publication and of scholarly interest nearly a century later.

Just as *Unpunished* repeats the love-plot but with difference, it also repeats the detective plot but with difference. Using the form of the detective story genre, "formula works," as Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones argue in *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition* (1999), reproduce, rather than change, "the hegemonic literary and social values of the past" (46). Developing feminist detective stories "admits the

possibility of altering the 'generic'—and *gendered*—conventions of both literary and social behavior" such that they can then co-opt the form as "an extremely important revisionary gesture that may work to alter the paradigms of both genre and gender" (46, 89). Although Walton and Jones consider the shift from male to female detective as the feminist revision of the detective genre, *Unpunished* revises the formula in more ways than simply having Bessie function as the detective. Kathleen Gregory Klein shows in *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre* (1988) that shifting the gender of the detective does not necessarily shift the genre. Throughout her argument, Klein cites detective stories that repeat the detective formula and the marriage formula, but these novels reinforce rather than subvert the tradition, in that "the detective script and the woman script clash because the necessary conditions for each are the inverse and contradiction of the other" (57). In the novels Klein considers, the disruption of the detective script is resolved by invoking the "pattern of marriage followed by retirement" (41). Jim, unlike the male characters Klein discusses, does not "assume without question that the women's detecting careers will end upon marriage" (78-79). Instead, by changing the formula but repeating it closely enough that it is recognizable, *Unpunished* is able to explode the tradition. Michel Foucault's notion of a reverse discourse, which Walton and Jones describe as "a discourse that repeats and inverts the ideological imperatives of the dominant discourse in order to authorize those marginalized by it" offers a model for considering how repetition works to subvert the formula (92). Foucault's description of discourse, which "transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but it also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it," underscores how the generic formula both allows a narrative to uphold a tradition and to undermine it by

creating a counter-tradition, a "point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (100-101).

Despite Gilman's inexperience in the genre of detective fiction, she uses formulaic components, both in the plot and in characterization, to signal the tradition that she simultaneously undermines. Her use of "stock characters: the evil villain; the innocent, fragile female victims; the missing servants; and the husband-and-wife detective team," as Catherine J. Golden and Denise D. Knight, editors of the 1997 Feminist Press edition of *Unpunished*, describe in their consideration of the novel's use of detective fiction tradition, "No Good Deed Goes *Unpunished*? Victims, Villains, and Vigilantes in Gilman's Detective Novel" (2001), suggests that Gilman uses the formula to flesh out "Many of the twists of the plot—overheard conversations, a secret hiding place, and the surprise ending—[that] can also be seen as humorous exaggerations of the generic murder mystery" (103). Clearly Gilman had a strong sense of the expectations for writing within the genre, and was able to construct a detective novel certainly distinguishable from other Who Did It stories.[7]

In 1928, S. S. Van Dine delineated "a sort of Credo" for detective fiction writing, entitled "Twenty rules for writing detective stories," which Todorov refers to but condenses to eight rules in his discussion of detective fiction. *Unpunished* upholds many of these rules, such as Rule six, "The detective novel must have a detective in it; and a detective is not a detective unless he detects," or Rule fourteen, "The method of murder, as the means of detecting it, must be rational and scientific [. . .] Once an author soars

[7] Golden and Knight amusingly note that the novel is "more than a simple 'Whodounit' or even a 'Whodunit First,'" which makes them note that the multiple murders of the same character set Gilman's Who Did It story apart from others (104).

into the realm of fantasy, in the Jules Verne manner, he is outside the bounds of detective fiction, cavorting in the uncharted reaches of adventure," and certainly Rule seven: "There simply must be a corpse in a detective novel, and the deader the corpse the better. No lesser crime than murder will suffice."[8] The novel's adherence to rules such as number seven allow Bessie to insist that her husband, as he chronicles his day so she can offer her opinion, get to the part of his story that reveals the dead body, which he not only does not do, but even resists acknowledging. In following these rules, the novel establishes itself within the detective fiction genre. However, it cleverly deviates from the form as quickly as it establishes it. Of the twenty rules, there are four or five that *Unpunished* breaks, and it is precisely in breaking these rules that the novel is able to subvert the detective-fiction tradition and expand its possibilities.

Rule eighteen stipulates that "A crime in a detective story must never turn out to be an accident or a suicide. To end an odyssey of sleuthing with such an anti-climax is to hoodwink the trusting and kind-hearted reader." Since the closing of the case does not coincide with the narrative closure, it is not the reader but those at the inquest and those who followed the case in the newspapers that ultimately feel what Van Dine describes when it is determined by autopsy that it was not the poison, gunshot, stabbing, strangling, or bludgeoning that killed Vaughn but actually a heart attack—an ironic death for a character who throughout the retrospective narrative seemed nothing but heartless. For the characters to get away with murder not only legally but also narratively, it is important that they have not killed Vaughn. Although everyone who hears about

[8] Van Dine's rules were originally published in the *American Magazine* in September, 1928, and included in his *Philo Vance Investigates* omnibus in 1936. They can be found at http://gaslight.mtroyal.ab.ca/vandine.htm.

Vaughn's history believes that he deserved to die, the narrative is able to make its argument for murder in the name of self-defense or just good judgment more palatable by ultimately not relying on such means, and having Vaughn actually die of seemingly natural causes. Thus although the common understanding is that only one person, the poisoner, would have actually killed Vaughn—since he would have had to have been alive to drink the whiskey laced with arsenic—even the poisoner is exonerated when the autopsy reveals its "dull verdict—heart disease, the most commonplace form of death," and thus that all five of the murder attempts were in vain (179). The result surprises Jim, who exclaims "'Heart disease! Why, *good* people die of heart disease,'" emphasizing that Vaughn was too evil a character to die a good-person's death (203). Fortunately, though, given that "the courts were busy enough with completely guilty murderers" who "were legally responsible," those who had attacked Vaughn were not tried for their "moral responsibility in attacking a dead man," and instead go free with only the punishment Vaughn inflicted upon them as consequence to their actions (180).

That Vaughn's murder is ruled death by natural causes does not mean that there were no other "culprits," as Van Dine calls them. Although they are not ultimately responsible for Vaughn's death, they have each committed an act that is integral to solving the case. Thus, *Unpunished* violates Van Dine's rule that "There must be but one culprit, no matter how many murders are committed. The culprit may, of course, have a minor helper or co-plotter; but the entire onus must rest on one pair of shoulders: the entire indignation of the reader must be permitted to concentrate on a single black nature" (Rule twelve). The repetition of murder on the one victim accentuates the role of repetition in subverting the traditional formats of both the love plot and the detective

plot, and thus the novel's deviation from this rule is necessary. There are two further complications to consider in relation to this rule, however: the murder of Carlo; and the novel's assertion about what is criminal.

Carlo, an Italian immigrant often employed by Vaughn and Crasher to do their dirty work, this time hired by Gus Crasher to tail young Iris lest she run away before Crasher is able to marry her, is found dead upon more involved investigation of the Vaughn crime scene. Throughout the novel, characters repeatedly deal with Carlo's death flippantly, deemphasizing the wrongdoing not simply because of his involvement in criminal activities but because of his social status as an Italian immigrant. During the initial investigation that Jim recounts to Bessie, the police officer utters ethnic epithets when they discover his dead body: "'it's Carlo! Now what would that Wop be doin' in the alley? And who bumped him off and spilled him over here so casual like?'" (29). Jim echoes the officer's sentiments when he comments in his narration to Bessie that "'Carlo's no loss and doesn't seem to add to the excitement particularly. What's a little one-blow murder more or less beside that complication in the house?'" (30). When it is later revealed that Joe White, one of the missing servants, who also confesses to being "responsible for the smash on [Vaughn's] head and the neat garrote," was responsible for Carlo's death, Jack's conversation in the last chapter with Joe, and Nellie and Norah Brown, the other two servants, shows Joe's remorse, but in a rather problematic way: "'I was awful sorry to hear that little dago in the alley was dead,' he said slowly. 'I just bashed him to get him out of the way—smelt his tobacco over the fence—I had no idea of killing the little guy'" (177, 199). Unlike Vaughn, against whom there is a litany of complaints, Carlo is a far less vile criminal and not someone whose death should be

wholly unexamined. Instead, there is no suggestion of legal interest in pursuing his murderer. Gilman's biases about race, class, and immigration become clear through the Carlo plot, and the narrative's omission of focus on that murder.[9]

Depicting murder as justifiable in situations of abuse, as is the case with Vaughn, or in the case of social undesirables, as with Carlo, the narrator shifts the blame from the murderers to the murdered. Rather than blame the shooter or the stabber, the narrative depicts Vaughn as the violator. He is guilty of coercing Iris into marrying him less than two weeks after the accident that killed her husband and left her mentally and emotionally scarred. He is guilty of encouraging J. J. Smith to leave his family almost nothing in his will and arranging for their complete submission to secure what little they are bequeathed. He is guilty of arranging to sell young Iris into marriage with Crasher in exchange for Crasher returning the $50,000 bequeathed to her husband upon their marriage. He is a blackmailer, an enslaver, a marital rapist, a "sexual exploiter of clients he also blackmailed for money" (Robinson 278), and a sadist, all while creating the public image that he takes care of this family purely out of his own benevolence. He is, as Gary

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[9] Gilman's bias against immigrants is evident not only in her flippant treatment of Carlo's murder, or in the ethnic slurs used to refer to him, but in the sub-plot involving his brother Emilio. In the span of five pages, he is referred to as "Angelo or Mario" (130), "Emilio" and "Paolo" (132), "Beppo or Marco or whatever he is" (133), "Guido" (134), until he ultimately comes to be called Emilio in the sixty pages following. In using different names for the same character, Gilman suggests the interchangeability of one Italian immigrant for another, or at the very least, that there is no need to accurately remember his name. Naming Emilio becomes another instance of repetition with difference in the novel, since to Gilman and her characters, each name is the same, whereas the reader notices the difference. Denise D. Knight, in "Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Shadow of Racism" (1999) describes Gilman as having strong views "about innate racial characteristics, but her often blatantly racist theories were amplified both by her tenacious nativism, which caused her to be wholly insensitive to the plight of immigrants and black Americans, and her belief that her birthright rendered her superior to members of other races and cultures" (160). Although Knight only briefly refers to *Unpunished* in her discussion of Gilman's racist and anti-immigrant attitudes, her article surveys a wide range of Gilman's writing to expose Gilman's extreme bias, despite her feminist, socialist politics.

Scharnhorst describes in his brief account of *Unpunished* in his biography, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (1985), "the most tyrannical male and unqualified villain in the Gilman canon" (116). In describing Vaughn, the narrative clearly points to him singularly as the "culprit"; in that regard, the narrative does uphold Van Dine's rule, since he is the worst offender in the novel, and he is exposed as such through the investigation and inquest.

**"You don't any of you know what killed Wade Vaughn."**

When Jack finally reveals in the last scene of the novel that her appearing before Vaughn disguised as her dead sister—his late wife whom he drove to suicide—frightened him so much that he had a heart attack, the narrator gives Jack agency while also making her actions legal, since there is no crime in putting on a costume to scare someone. Jack makes explicit that she wanted him "to—to—at least to make him *feel* for once!" but some critics nevertheless read this scene as Jack killing Vaughn (207). Vaughn deserves his fate, as Larry Landrum describes in *American Mystery and Detective Novels: A Reference Guide* (1999), "because of the brutalization of his family, so that his feminist murderer deserves to remain free" (123). Golden and Knight argue in "No Good Deed Goes *Unpunished*?: Victims, Villains, and Vigilantes in Gilman's Detective Novel" (2001) that

> Jack's vigilantism is actually a nonviolent, though premeditated crime—a form of psychological terrorism designed to make the ruthless Vaughn '*feel* for once!' (207). Donning a painted death mask made from Iris's face after her suicide, and wearing a scarf identical to the one Iris used to end her life, Jack succeeds in frightening Vaughn to death. In the final chapter of *Unpunished*, Jacqueline Warner discloses this well-guarded secret; it is

> she who has caused his fatal heart attack. [. . .] The retaliation is as much an acknowledgement of Iris's suffering as it is a victory for Jack and the children. In a strictly symbolic sense, it is not Jack who kills Vaughn, in fact, but the ghost of Iris, seeking vengeance from the grave. (109-110)[10]

Jack is as guilty of killing Vaughn as Vaughn himself, since it was his sadistic cruelty that drove Iris to suicide and made the sight of her—or of Jack dressed as Iris—deathly frightening. Golden and Knight's language emphasizes Jack's culpability, asserting that Jack's performance is successful because she kills Vaughn, as though that were her intent, and that it is only in the "strictly symbolic sense," as opposed to the legal sense, that Jack has not killed Vaughn. Golden also argues in "Caging the Beast: The Radical Treatment for 'Excessive maleness' in Gilman's Fiction" (2000) that Jack's actions constitute murder, but that "Gilman exonerates Jack" in that "the years suffered under the abusive patriarchal rule of Wade Vaughn—who does not go unpunished—more than stands as her sentence" (130). Although Gilman does endorse progressive ideas about euthanasia and about abuse victims' use of violence to take down their abuser, the happy ending she provides is possible especially because Jack had done nothing illicit. Jack's confession to Ross, Jim, and Bessie is private, providing closure for the select few who need to know what truly happened: Ross, her fiancé, who deserves to know what kind of woman he is marrying, as she asks him "'How about it, Ross? Are you willing to marry a murderer?'" (206); Jim and Bessie, who deserve to know since they worked on the case; and as Van

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[10] To clarify the unexplained circumstances surrounding the murder, such as how the poisoned whiskey got into Vaughn's system if he died of a heart attack, Jack explains to Ross, Jim, and Bessie, as well as to the reader, that as she stood before Vaughn dressed as her late sister's ghost, Vaughn "put up his hands before his face at first—then gave a choked cry, clutched at his heart. He had just time to swallow that little glass of whiskey—that was all . . ." (207).

Dine suggests, the "trusting and kind-hearted reader," who has attentively followed along and deserves to be rewarded with the kind of ideal closure that each of the other storylines merit.

Although the detective is customarily employed in finding the murderer, Jack hires Jim not to solve the case but to ensure that no one tries unjustly to frame the family; the case that Jim and Bessie solve does reveal the "culprit," although he is also the corpse. The novel redefines what it means to be guilty of a crime, which Beer also considers in her 1998 article entitled "Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Women's Health: 'The Long Limitation'"; in doing so, the novel "subverts the narrative momentum of the tale so that it centres on the passage to freedom of those who have perpetrated the murder rather than on the solution of the murder, upon the multiple ending rather than the single [. . .] not so much with the solution of the crime of murder but of the crime of patriarchy" (60). Beer's argument considers that the novel "reaches what might be termed a female multiple climax, with six of the oppressed murdering Vaughn in one evening's work" (59-60),[11] yet the multiplicity of the narrative is not seen only in such "gratification for the many" (60), end-driven aspects of the narrative; the text as a whole operates on a repetitive, multiplicative rhythm, and therefore the metaphor of the female multiple climax only represents of one aspect of the novel's repetition, and only narrowly at that.[12] The multiple and repetitive nature of the crime is required not simply to kill

[11] Although the narrative adds a sixth injury, frightening to death, as another method of murder, since Joe White performs two of the methods, strangling and bludgeoning, there are only five so-called murderers, not six as Beer suggests.

[12] Beer's argument is informed by Luce Irigaray's theory "associat[ing] subversive female desire with multiplicity" and moving the experience of pleasure away from "the single, the male, to the multiple, the female" in "Ce Sexe qui ne'st pas un" (Beer "'The Long Limitation'" 60).

Vaughn, but to destroy his evil, brutal power; both the love-plot and detective-plot repetitions echo the multiple murders, working to negate Vaughn's patriarchal control.

Joe White's involvement in Vaughn's murder, as well as Nellie Brown's and her mother Norah Brown's, violates Van Dine's rule that "A servant must not be chosen by the author as the culprit. This is begging a novel question. It is a too easy solution. The culprit must be a decidedly worth-while person—one that wouldn't ordinarily come under suspicion" (Rule eleven). Joe, Nellie, and Norah, each of higher birth than their employment as servants would suggest, are victims of Vaughn's blackmail, and are enslaved in servitude in exchange for Vaughn not prosecuting them for trumped-up charges. Although one could argue that Joe's involvement in the murders reveals a formulaic conclusion that the butler did in fact do it, according to Van Dine, this is not the direction that the writer of detective fiction should take the story. Implicit in the rule, though, is the idea that a servant is not a "worthwhile person" but is someone who would routinely "come under suspicion."[13]

Although Van Dine insists that "The culprit must be determined by logical deductions—not by accident or coincidence or unmotivated confession," Jim and Bessie never actually determine the culprit (Rule five). They gather evidence and anticipate false claims, as Jack has employed them to do, but they are not responsible for the identification of the culprits. As Bessie tells Jim, "I'm not reconstructing the crime. I'm

[13] Anthea Trodd, in "Household Spies: The Servant and the Plot in Victorian Fiction" (1987), argues that servants, whose invasion of the householder's privacy "expressed itself in the production of crime plots in which servants, so often inconspicuous in other kinds of fiction, routinely play highly visible and sinister roles" (175). This relationship between servants' knowledge and master's privacy is complicated in *Unpunished*, and worth further exploration, since it is not only the servants who have the ability to spy, but also Jack, with her listening device, as well Mrs. Todd in the next house. Within the house, Jack is as much a servant as Joe, Nellie, and Norah, working as the housekeeper, and as such is also in the subservient relationship with Vaughn that they are.

reconstructing the virtue" (136). Instead, each attempted murderer confesses: by separate letters to the inquest, Joe White admits that he strangled and bludgeoned Vaughn, Norah Brown that she stabbed him, and Nellie Brown that she poisoned his whiskey, and Dr. Ross Akers admits in the final scene to Jack, Jim, and Bessie that he shot Vaughn before Jack admits her finely-planned masquerade that scares Vaughn to death. This is not to suggest that Jim and Bessie fail in their job as detectives, but rather that this is an unusual case, one that repeats the formula only to a certain extent, at which point it deviates to undermine the tradition, even altering the role of the detective.

Jack's role in Vaughn's death, her performance of her dead sister, required intricate planning, resourceful costuming, and intense physical effort to allow her to ultimately appear before Vaughn, "not Jacqueline, but Iris her sister. Iris of the soft bright hair, the perfect features, the tender and small mouth. She wore a soft blue frock, but her color was not rosy; it was death-white. Her eyes stared dim and blank. Around her neck was tightly tied one end of a black and white scarf. And she coughed again" (205-6). Jack has fashioned herself to look like her sister, cough like her sister, wear the same scarf that her sister used to hang herself which Vaughn tore and burned, even appear upright as her sister would have, despite Jack being wheelchair-bound since the accident. Beer describes Jack's efforts as "making herself powerful by systematically gathering information and building up her own physical and moral strength as well as that of those around her" (61). Her ability to appear as her late sister comes from the confluence of happenstance and cunning attention to detail: the death mask that Jack makes of her sister, which serves as a mould for a fitted mask, her impulse to keep the

dress Iris died wearing, and the luck that she owned a scarf identical to the one Iris used and that Vaughn destroyed, all contribute to the verisimilitude of her performance.

Jack's conviction to make Vaughn finally feel something and her methods of enacting her revenge echo Gilman's discussion in "Anger and the Enemy," a short article that appeared in the March 1911 issue of *The Forerunner*, the magazine which Gilman exclusively authored:

> You feel, you feel strongly; now what kind of a feeling is it? It is pressure, tremendous pressure, an imminent force which so drives you to action that you can hardly resist it. The action, the relief pipe, may be in loud scolding, the pressure whipping the brain to find words to express it; it may be in instant physical violence, from the slapping of a child to the murder of our enemy; or it may coil itself up in a slow abiding determination on "revenge," and find relief in planning the details of a consummate retaliation. (65)

Jack's impulse for revenge comes from her anger at Vaughn, what Gilman describes as "presuppos[ing] an enemy, an overcomable enemy" (66). Gilman's fiction repeatedly concerns itself with finding a solution, which she does in *Unpunished*, according to Beer in *Kate Chopin, Edith Wharton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Studies in Short Fiction* (1997), "as in the case of the violent death of Wade Vaughn [. . .] to wipe out tyranny" (165). Jack eradicates Vaughn's tyranny not simply by eliminating him, but by destroying his files of information, which released from the bonds of intimidation and fear all of Vaughn's blackmail victims, including Ross Akers.

In "Anger and the Enemy," Gilman compares two scenarios, one in which a child "beats a chair he bumped his head on" which prompts "the childish woman" to echo "'naughty chair,'" and beat it too, and the other in which "Finding the mosquito to be a poisonous beast, we seek to exterminate the mosquito, but our actuating force is not brute rage at that small force-pump." Rather than give in to senseless anger, Gilman suggests a different solution, justice, which "is not angry, even though it kills," as a means of "set[ting] to work calmly to work to prevent repetition of such offence," which Jack embodies in her approach to Vaughn's excessive control. Gilman extrapolates from the two scenarios to advise her reader:

> When the pressure rises within you, even the most righteous of indignations, direct it at once into channels of effectual action, else it will do you harm [. . .] but to be angry, and do nothing, is worse than waste [. . . .]
>
> But we should not beat the chair.
>
> We should exterminate the mosquito. (66)

*Unpunished* enacts such anger management against Vaughn, the enemy, not only in Jack's story but in each of the murderer's; these five oppressed victims independently rose up and conquered their oppressor, benefiting countless others as well. Rather than expressing her anger in unproductive or counterproductive ways, such as by angering him to the point that he would evict the family or worse—the depths of his evil being unknown—Jack plans and enacts her rage toward productive ends. Although her goal was to make Vaughn feel, to make him remember what he had done to Iris, to haunt him, Jack inadvertently enacts much sweeter revenge: she not only prompts Vaughn's

death, but ultimately is the reason that so many of his victims are exonerated in the case of his murder.

**"Miss Iris, don't you ever marry anybody unless you very much want to. And not always then!"**

*Unpunished* violates two other rules that Van Dine outlines, both of which relate to the husband and wife detective team. In the first, Van Dine's insists that "There must be but one detective—that is, but one protagonist of deduction" (Rule nine). What distinguishes *Unpunished* not only from other detective stories but from other wedlock plots is Jim and Bessie's collaborative relationship. They succeed with the case of the five-fold murder because they are able to complement each other's efforts. Despite their inability to confirm the culprit without a confession, they accomplish their goal of protecting Jack and her family from false accusations and ruthless manipulations. In doing so, they highlight their effective partnership. Whereas most love-plots move toward a wedding or away from a bad marriage, neglecting to tell the story of the happily married, *Unpunished* chronicles Jim and Bessie's rather ideal marriage. In tracking clues and following leads not for one but for all five methods of murder, they repeatedly show their utopian coupling at work.

The three problematic coupling plots, Smith and his wife, Vaughn and Iris, and Crasher and Iris's daughter Iris, are explored in detail in Jack's first-person narrative, the journal she has kept to record Vaughn's treatment and wrongdoings. Including the manuscript of Jack's journal adds to the repetition in the novel, since the journal precedes the investigation chronologically but repeats Vaughn's heinous treatment of the

family and his clients, which has already been revealed in the narrative. After Jack writes the record, Jim and Bessie's reading of it repeats it in the narrative, and it is repeated again when Jack offers it to Ross, Jim, and Bessie to read in the novel's last scene, at which point "It seemed worse now to the Hunts than in that first hasty reading" (205). Much like Gilman's journal-keeping narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892), Jack keeps her journal once she discovers a means of secretly recording her thoughts and observations, in the form of a secret wall panel that her father had installed when the room belonged to him, and "his small typewriter and a lot of paper, in the window seat" (70). Writing the journal affords Jack an outlet to express herself, to voice her emotions therapeutically when before she had no means of expression, just as it does for the nameless narrator of "The Yellow Wall-Paper," who looks to writing to sustain herself during her confinement as her only means of stimulation other than the wallpaper and its intricate design: "I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me" ("The Yellow Wall-Paper" 16). Writing her story as a secret journal, the narrator-protagonist of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" chronicles not only her confinement but the necessity of keeping the writing hidden from her husband and his sister: "There comes John, and I must put this away,—he hates me to write a word" and "There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing" (13, 17). Jack's record, however, describes not only herself as the victim of oppression but also testifies to the victimization of the other members of her family and of Vaughn's clients.[14]

[14] Sutton-Ramspeck notes the use of the journal as therapeutic writing not only in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" and *Unpunished*, but also in Gilman's utopian novel *Moving the Mountain* (33). Golden and Knight, in their afterword to *Unpunished*, similarly draw this comparison between Jack's journal and

Early in Jack's journal she relates the first of the miserable marriages in her family that ends in the wife's death. Her "poor mother couldn't stand it; she died when we [Jack and Iris] were little children" (72). Although Smith did not kill her, he "was a peculiar man, strict, domineering," whose wife feared him, until "she died for lack of love, poor mother" (71, 72). When Vaughn enters their lives years later as a business associate of Smith's, he seems a replica of the older man, in which "He agreed with father in all his opinions, flattered and pleased him," but was more sadistic in his authoritarian behavior; after Smith's death, Vaughn repeats Smith even more so, as Jack describes, "And there he sits in my father's chair at the table, at my father's desk in the study, drinking my father's old whiskey" (71). Although Iris and Jack run away to marry the men they love rather than have Iris give in when Smith "issued his ultimatum, gave her his direct command that she must marry Wade Vaughn," the notorious car accident years later leaves Iris widowed and mentally incapacitated, her mind "a blank with irregular patches of memory, all unrelated"; she quickly succumbs to Vaughn's marital control (73, 76). Although Iris does not gradually fade away as her mother did in her unhappy marriage, since she is in a perpetual state of dementia, a rare moment of lucidity makes her aware of her forced marriage and of Vaughn's emotional abuse, such as his

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"The Yellow Wall-Paper," noting "two of the devices she used so effectively in 'The Yellow Wall-Paper'—the first-person narrative account, presented in the form of a journal, and the idea of writing as therapy" (226-227). They consider the journal not only "damning evidence" against Vaughn but also evidence of Jack "adopt[ing] the persona of an undercover female sleuth, helping the Hunts to identify potential murderers and understand the legitimacy of Vaughn's murder." However, as I have noted, Jack does not share the journal with the Hunts until the last scene in the novel, so her journal serves as written testimony for the Hunts and the reader only without her knowledge. Although she shares some of the information included in it, repeating it into the narrative, she reserves her written record until the case has closed and her life has been restored to her, rather than offering it early on as evidence. Jack, making use of her listening device to expand her record is no more a detective than Mrs. Todd with her "swivel chair, and the opera glass," positioned at "that corner bay window [so] she could watch up and down four ways" (35).

threats to have her committed somewhere that "restraint was necessary, and seclusion"—not unlike in "The Yellow Wall-Paper"—and sexual abuse, in the form of marital rape (88). Her decision to hang herself mirrors her mother's escaping marital tyranny through death.

Crasher's plan to marry young Iris represents the third iteration in three generations of a forced, unhappy marriage. Young Iris's situation is an even closer repetition of her mother's situation than Iris's was of her own mother's; both repetitions exemplify what J. Hillis Miller, in *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982), describes as a character repeating previous generations. Jack's journal, which reveals her ability to hear conversations throughout the house thanks to a special technology her father had installed in the telephones, chronicles the events that lead up to her plan to run away with Hal and Iris rather than have Iris sold into marriage. Jack overhears Crasher agree to a deal with Vaughn—who technically is still Iris's stepfather—in which Crasher gets to marry Iris, but only if he returns to Vaughn the $50,000 bequeathed to the man Vaughn approves to marry Iris. Jack also overhears the conversation in which Vaughn pressures Iris into obeying his mandate. Thinking that their conversation is private, Vaughn threatens Iris that if she refuses, she will lose her inheritance and he will evict Hal and Jack, whereas if she agrees, he lies, she will have the money Crasher gets, with which she can perhaps help her aunt. Jack's narrative ends as they plan to leave, and therefore does not include the events of the night Vaughn dies or after. The novel's narrator continues the story, as Iris reveals, when Crasher accuses her of going to the four drugstores to purchase enough poison to kill Vaughn, that "I got it for myself! Hal! I was going to marry him to keep you all from being turned out of doors—but I didn't

have to live afterward" (121). Iris's plan to commit suicide by overdosing on strychnia rather than remain married to Crasher repeats her mother Iris choosing suicide rather than remain married to a monster. Vaughn's death intervenes, allowing Iris to escape with her life; her mother was not so lucky.

Although according to Van Dine's Rule three, "There must be no love interest. The business in hand is to bring a criminal to the bar of justice, not to bring a lovelorn couple to the hymeneal altar," the novel includes several marriages; its repetition with difference of the detective plot echoes that of the love-plot tradition. Certainly the rule would not apply to these loveless marriages, which heighten the reader's disgust with Vaughn and drive the narrative's need to eliminate him. However, the marriages or couplings at the novel's end mirror Jim and Bessie's marriage that begins the novel, still honeymoon-like after four years. In framing the novel with these positive depictions of the love-plot, the marriages described at the center of the case are conspicuously problematic. That the narrator uses both love-plot and detective-plot formulas—but with difference—to close the novel, simultaneously normalizes and undercuts both traditions.

The narrative provides closure within both the detective and the coupling traditions, making marriage or coupling central to each aspect of the plot resolution. The final chapters are replete with plot points that move to right the wrongs committed by Vaughn. First, the novel resolves an old mystery, the truth about Smith's will. The family's old servants, Jane and Peter O'Connell, released by Vaughn after Iris's death without compensation other than Jack's offering them Smith's old clothing, suddenly return with what turns out to be Smith's will, which had been secretly tucked into a hole

in the coat's seam.[15] The will's two witnesses, Smith's doctor and nurse who treat him after he was beaten and left for dead, are able to verify that they indeed treated Smith and signed the will years before because it was a memorable night for them—the night that they became engaged. Jack and Ross, too, become engaged, although their marriage is postponed until Jack can have corrective surgery. Despite Ross's protests that he will love her even if she does not have the surgery, or that they can get married before she undergoes the long, painful process of reconstruction and recovery, Jack insists upon waiting, telling him "I haven't been able to call my soul my own—much less my body—for nine long awful years. Now I'm going to have my own way for quite a while" (194). After her surgery, Jack, having known more about the servants' get-away plans than she revealed, reunites with them in California. This scene not only ties loose ends in the detective story by revealing that they were able to escape and start a new life under different names, but it also updates their love-plot: Joe and Nellie have finally married and now have a baby. Jack assures them that they are safe from their past, and leaves behind a little money for them to use "for college, or anything else you please" (201). When Jack returns a year after leaving, Hal and Iris are together, since Hal has always planned on marrying his cousin. Although there is no direct mention that they are

[15] Sutton-Ramspeck discusses this plot point as an example of what she terms *literary housekeeping*. The will was able to remained hidden until the point at which it could have significant impact on the story because "Jane managed to mend an old overcoat to keep it wearable for nearly two decades" (206). "Had Jane not been so skilled and dedicated with her needle," Sutton-Ramspeck argues, "her once and future employers might never have regained their property." The timing of Jane's discovery is fortuitous, since were Vaughn alive, he surely would have found a way to suppress or discredit the will, and therefore Jane's domestic skill that keeps the will hidden until after Vaughn's death is integral to the restoration of the property to Jack.

married or engaged, only their resumed educations and of Hal's "worshipping affection of Iris," it is assumed that marriage will be in their future (202).[16]

Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, in *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (2004) also draws on the plot models that Gilman outlines, noting that Gilman uses marriage at the ends of her stories "with surprising frequency" but notes that "generally speaking such stories subordinate the conventional marital 'happy ending' to another, 'fresher' triumph, thus illustrating the compatibility of personal happiness with 'human service'" (38). Gilman does not offer the coupling merely as a happy ending to a love-plot; instead, she uses the several instances of coupling as part of a happy reversal in a story of physical and psychical domination. That Jack and Ross, Hal and Iris, and Joe and Nellie end up together—and even the doctor and nurse who signed Smith's will turn out to have gotten married—is significant, even though the first two couples have not married by the end of the novel, since they now strive to have what Jim and Bessie have. However, the house, which represents their happy ending as "The old house smiled at her" (201), rather than being the site of Jack's domestic wedded bliss, becomes the oasis for nearly every key player in the novel: joining Jack, Hal, and Iris, Ross moves in and opens his medical practice in the house, Mrs. Todd moves in to be "Lady Manager" rather than subsisting next door on the "grudging support of that stingy nephew of hers," and Jane and Peter return to the house, which is "more like home to them than any other place," to resume work as

[16] Gilman's second marriage was to her first cousin, Houghton Gilman; she clearly thought nothing wrong with the union of first cousins, although it seems particularly incestuous for Hal and Iris, who were raised almost as siblings—he even tells her "Cheer up Sis," acknowledging their sibling-like relationship (186). Nevertheless, their coupling is presented as a happy ending compared to Iris nearly being coerced into marrying Crasher.

the servants but with the help of Jane's niece (195). Essentially, the Smith house has become the kind of communal living arrangement that Gilman advocated. In this utopian ending, everyone in the house serves a purpose, and they are able to subsist on their mutually beneficial labor—along with the multi-million dollar inheritance that the authenticated will affords them.

Gilman, it would appear, saw to every loose end in her novel, providing all with their just deserts. Bessie and Jim, central to both the wedlock plot and the detective plot, open the novel and drive the investigation but do not join the others in the Smith house. The only closure provided for them comes from being present for Ross and Jack's conversation that reveals their involvement in Vaughn's death, answering the last unanswered questions about the "five-fold murder" case. Their love-plot, however, does not need closure, since it possesses balance throughout the novel. Their utopian-like partnership, never in doubt, does not need to change for the story to end, so they remain as they are, in their perpetual honeymoon, a model for the other couples to repeat.

* * *

Todorov concludes his chapter, "The Typology of Detective Fiction," in *The Poetics of Prose* with a question that is particularly relevant to my study as a whole: "what is to be done with the novels which do not fit our classification?" (52). Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed novels that can be considered part of the love-plot tradition only if that category is applied somewhat loosely. These novels are repetitions of the coupling tradition, but with difference. They do not conform neatly to the specifications

of the category, were such specifications codified as S. S. Van Dine attempted to do for detective fiction. That *Unpunished* does not conform to all twenty of Van Dine's rules for writing detective fiction is no surprise; the novel undermines and subverts each category it can be seen to represent, whether it be detective, domestic, or love plot.

Boone, concluding the "Tradition" section of *Tradition Counter Tradition*, asks "What, finally, becomes of the marriage tradition in the twentieth century?" His attribution of the rupture in the tradition to "the advance of a modernist aesthetic that devalued the plot linearity, narrative coherence, and realistic modes of representation that had underwritten the formal rules of nineteenth-century fiction," addresses the modes that I consider in this dissertation to modify or subvert the traditional love plot (134). Yet as I have argued, the love plot—marriage and wedlock plots, specifically—provides a formal structure to be dismantled with the tools of 1920s thought, aesthetics, and politics. Repetition of forms and traditions, such as a young woman's honeymoon trip to Europe, the clothing one wears to represent one's gender, the sanctity of the marital union, and the traditional domestic/professional divide, are all undercut through the difference of that repetition, so that Hermione Gart instead plans to travel to Europe using her trousseau money but without a husband; Orlando playfully uses clothing to represent an ever-uncertain gender, which is in turn influenced by the clothing, and which still leaves gender questionable even between husband and wife; Nick and Susy Lansing plan to use the new ease of divorce to finance their marriages; and Jim and Bessie Hunt take turns sharing clues and dishwashing duties. Boone continues his explanation of the counter-tradition, arguing that "These advances they have accomplished by coupling their thematic expressions of discontent with form-breaking

narrative structures" addresses the importance of subverting not only the content but also the form of the traditional love plot (137). Breaking the tradition, which Boone describes as encompassing "from novels that manipulate the subject of marriage to explode the formal and closural restraints of wedlock plotting, to those texts which reinvent a course of action and of plot for those both courageously and timorously self-reliant protagonists venturing outside the realm of married life and marriage plots altogether," is achieved through sentence- and sequence-level repetitions with difference of the very traditions they aim to break. The modes of repetition that each of these novels employs afford the narratives space to rupture the sentence and sequence of the conventional in favor of a narrative that offers the space for unconventional expression.

The distance from convention allows the narratives at hand to express the authors' visions for self-expression and change. Yet it is in repeating the conventions enough that the narratives can be classified in such a way so as to highlight the differences they engender. It is the created space between the classifiable and the not-yet-classified, the tradition and counter-tradition, between different insistences, the repetition and its difference, that becomes the subversive, the innovative, and the unconventional. Virginia Woolf can be seen to consider the gap between the traditional and the counter-traditional in *A Room of One's Own* when she discusses Mary Carmichael's writing in relation to Jane Austen's: "She had broken up Jane Austen's sentence, and thus given me no chance of pluming myself upon my impeccable taste, my fastidious ear. For it was useless to say, 'Yes, yes, this is very nice; but Jane Austen wrote much better than you do,' when there was no point of likeness between them" (91). The novels I discuss move in this direction, distancing themselves from the tradition so that they

move towards dissimilarity through their counter-traditional sentences and sequences. Perhaps the absence of likeness that Woolf writes about, which these novels develop, can be seen to model what Stein in "Fiction and Repetition" hopes is possible, "that a movement were lively enough [that] it would exist so completely that it would not be necessary to see it moving against anything to know that it is moving" (170).

# Epilogue

## "'It would, she thought, be simply the same old thing': *Quicksand*'s Patterns of Courtship and the Monotony of Marriage"

> But just what did she want? Barring a desire for material security, gracious ways of living, a profusion of lovely clothes, and a goodly share of envious admiration, Helga Crane didn't know, couldn't tell. But there was, she knew, something else. Happiness, she supposed. Whatever that might be. What, exactly, she wondered, was happiness. Very positively she wanted it. Yet her conception of it had no tangibility. She couldn't define it, isolate it, and contemplate it as she could some other abstract things. Hatred, for instance. Or kindness.

If the novels I have discussed in this dissertation represent the narrative options available by deviating from the traditional form of the marriage plot, then Nella Larsen's 1928 novel *Quicksand* shows by example how restricting and confining the coupling convention can be. *Quicksand* chronicles several iterations of the courtship plot in telling the story of Helga Crane, a twenty-two-year-old woman orphaned by her Danish immigrant mother and African-American father. By the time she was six, her father had left—the circumstances of which are unknown not only to the reader but to Helga as well—and her mother soon married a white man, which left Helga out of place. When her mother died, Helga, at fifteen, went to a Negro school in the South, and, at twenty-one, came to teach at Naxos, another fictional Southern Negro school, in the vein of Fisk or Tuskeegee, where the novel begins. In the first few chapters, in addition to offering these bits of information about Helga's past, the narrator lays out the novel's central conflicts: the interconnection of legitimacy, lineage, sexuality, and marriage, which also overlaps with Helga's preoccupation with color, clothing, and a refusal to

conform, all of which rests in her troubled biracial identity and her feeling of not fitting in.[1]

Throughout the narrative these interconnected issues recur, propelling Helga from place to place, as she seeks happiness to escape from suffocation. The narrative's attention to color, along with Helga's attention to her appearance and the attention she gets as the object of others' gazes, make her into a spectacle; she is often discussed in terms of art and portraiture.[2] To return briefly to Gertrude Stein's "Portraits and Repetition," Stein's portraits reveal their subjects through what she calls *insistence*, what I have called repetition with difference, which develops through multiple iterations of the subject but with differing emphasis. Helga, as well, is a portrait developed through the repetitions within *Quicksand*; each overlapping depiction and different nuance fills in with greater detail the portrait of her character.[3]

Helga has numerous suitors, professions, and travel adventures, but none are successful, ultimately failing to offer her the happiness she seeks, as described in the

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[1] Helga's questionable legitimacy seems to be connected to her inability to know if her parents were ever married. However, miscegenation laws in the United States at the time would not have allowed such a union, so legally she would have been illegitimate, regardless of any vows her parents may have exchanged. Davida Pines, in *The Marriage Paradox: Modernist Novels and the Cultural Imperative to Marry* (2006), discusses relevant marriage law both during slavery and after in her chapter, "Love and the Politics of Marriage in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and *Passing* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*."

[2] For instance, Pamela E. Barnett discusses Helga as "recurringly presented as a painting, a sculpture, or a moving exhibition" (575) in "'My Picture of You Is, after All, the True Helga Crane': Portraiture and Identity in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*" (1995).

[3] Stein writes: "Each time that I said the somebody whose portrait I was writing was something that something was just that much different from what I had just said that somebody was and little by little in this way a whole portrait came into being, a portrait that was not description and that was made by each time, and I did a great many times, say it, that somebody was something, each time there was a difference just a difference enough so that it could go on and be a present something" (177). Stein emphasizes the importance of the difference that emerges and that defines the portrait. Helga's behavior throughout *Quicksand* illustrates how repetition is necessarily different from one instance to the next, and how each prior experience colors the current one.

passage quoted above. Davida Pines, in *The Marriage Paradox: Modernist Novels and the Cultural Imperative to Marry* (2006), describes *Quicksand* as "Modernist in its reversal of the courtship narrative, [. . .] begin[ning] with the breaking off, rather than the launching of an engagement" (81). This, however, is only one part of the novel's rejection of the coupling tradition. Throughout the novel, Helga repeats her pattern of devoting herself to something—and being courted by someone—tiring of it, and moving on: she leaves her teaching position and fiancé at Naxos for Chicago, New York, Copenhagen, again New York, and ultimately the rural Deep South in Alabama after she marries a minister and moves to his home. Much like Hermione in Chapter One and Orlando in Chapter Two, Helga has multiple narrative paths available to her and multiple courtship scenarios. However, unlike in the other novels I discuss, in which the protagonists find liberation in or from marriage, defining for themselves what role marriage will play in their larger stories, this novel ends with Helga trapped in rather than liberated from the confines of marriage. *Quicksand* reveals the limitations of the restricting love-plot by introducing several courtship plots within the narrative, and repeating but critiquing a traditional ending.

Unlike the other novels I discuss, *Quicksand* exposes through example of, rather than rebellion against, the repressive marriage plot. The narrative addresses Helga's story through its subversive use of the marriage convention specifically within an African-American literary tradition, which Ann duCille discusses in *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction* (1993), as including "representations and critiques of coupling" that "explore not only the so-called more compelling questions of race, racism, and racial identity but complex questions of sexuality and female

subjectivity as well" (4). Deborah E. McDowell, in her introduction to the jointly-published edition of *Quicksand* and *Passing*, also addresses problematized black female sexuality as a driving force in *Quicksand*'s use of the confining conventions of marriage, arguing that "Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen could only hint at the idea of black women as sexual subjects behind the safe and protective covers of traditional narrative subjects and conventions" (xiii). Thus, the various repetitions throughout the novel that bring together race, sexuality, and legitimacy emphasize the role of conventions and traditions in establishing restrictive options that offer only the narrowest definition of existence. They turn the novel's closure into, as I discuss in my introduction, what Molly Hite describes in *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narratives* (1989) as "*en*closure, ultimately trapping the heroine" (5).

Repetition of the same issues, frustrations, mistakes, and patterns of behavior highlight the similarities of Helga's existence in each locale she visits. Yet in each new place, things are clearly different, and these issues are dealt with differently, or push Helga from different directions. In *Quicksand*, all of the new locales—Naxos, Chicago, New York, Copenhagen, New York again, and finally the Deep South—the seemingly unique scenarios are similar enough to other events to be considered repetition with difference. In each case there is a difference in the details of both how Helga moves from complacency to irritation to an outright anger which prompts her to move on, and also how this trajectory is prompted by her dissatisfaction with the same issues: race, sexuality, appearance, legitimacy.

Because Helga is so conflicted about lineage, money, race, sex, appearance, independence, she cannot feel settled, and can never be comfortable where she is—or in

anyone's company—for long. She finds herself in a location, in a community, and after time passes, she becomes so violently repulsed by her surroundings that she is prompted to leave hastily. There are four major repetitions of this pattern—at the beginning of the novel when she leaves Naxos, where she has been teaching; half-way through the novel when she leaves New York for Copenhagen; two-thirds of the way through the novel when she leaves Copenhagen for New York; and again in the last few chapters of the novel, when she leaves New York for the Deep South of her new husband's Alabama home and parish. The novel ends at this location, but not because Helga has found the happiness she considers at the novel's beginning, or any of the other things she wants, nor has she reconciled the conflicts that motivated her moving in the past. Instead, she finds herself in a situation—married, and with children—from which, despite her desire to leave, she cannot extricate herself. Thus, rather than repeating her pattern, Helga must repeat a new pattern, one in which every day represents the same monotony, regardless of which chore needs to be done or which child needs to be born.[4]

At Naxos, Helga's desire for the things money can buy, things that enhance appearance, clothing and possessions, brings scorn from her colleagues:

> Much of her earnings had gone into clothes, into books, into the furnishings of the room which held her. All her life, Helga Crane had loved and longed for nice things. Indeed, it was this craving, this urge for

[4] *Quicksand* describes Helga's pregnancies and labor in such quick succession that they are hardly distinguishable. This repetition of the cycle of life further underscores the price Helga has paid for seeking to legitimate her sexuality, and emphasizes the resulting monotony of her hasty marriage.

> beauty which had helped to bring her into disfavor in Naxos—'pride' and 'vanity' her detractors called it. (6)

These possessions make her different from her colleagues, make her stand out in a community that attempts to make everyone there the same, and which, as a result, disgusts and disturbs Helga.[5] Naxos ceases to be a school in her eyes; instead "It had grown into a machine. It was now a show place in the black belt, exemplification of the white man's magnanimity, refutation of the black man's inefficency" (4). Rather than creating individuals like Helga, who prides herself on her distinct style, the Naxos machine becomes "a big knife with cruelly sharp edges ruthlessly cutting all to a pattern, the white man's pattern. Teachers as well as students were subjected to the paring process, for it tolerated no innovations, no individualisms." The normalizing effort is not limited to appearance, as "Ideas it rejected, and looked with open hostility on one and all who [. . .] express a disapproval. [. . .] Enthusiasm, spontaneity, if not actually suppressed, were at least openly regretted as unladylike or ungentlemanly qualities. The place was smug and fat with self-satisfaction" (4). Thus Helga concludes at the start of the novel that she must flee Naxos.

Since the Naxos community greatly values lineage and breeding, much like the white society it emulates, Helga, the "despised mulatto" feels out of place, yet in a defiant way. Her problematic relationship with her fiancé James Vayle typifies her experience at Naxos; although they are engaged, it is a repressed, passionless coupling. Their relationship seems already doomed not only because James is accepted at Naxos and

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[5] DuCille offers a convincing reading of clothing and clothing metaphor in *Quicksand* in *The Coupling Convention* (94-97).

Helga is not, but because he comes from one of these "first families" of the black bourgeoisie, which although it attracts Helga also shames her because of her own mixed lineage and her lack of family. Their engagement, seen through Helga's eyes, is a sham. In the final scene at Naxos, Dr. Anderson, the school's principal, nearly convinces Helga to stay to continue shaping the minds of the young black students, but at the last moment undermines his efforts when he thinks he is complimenting her: "Perhaps I can best explain it by the use of that trite phrase, 'You're a lady.' You have dignity and breeding" (21). Helga refuses his label, briefly but proudly—if not spitefully—identifies her lack of breeding, and leaves.

Helga's encounter with Dr. Anderson involves several of the issues that the narrative continually emphasizes; lineage, the race question, and sexual desire, which although it is barely visible at this point, continues to grow after their meeting. He reappears in New York, and each time they interact, Helga's disgust for him is renewed—a disgust that only thinly veils her attraction for him, a passionate disgust. James Vayle, conversely, although he is her fiancé, conjures no passionate feelings, either positive or negative. He is forgotten about until he reappears much later in the text during Helga's second residence in New York. He, too, represents fine lineage and repressed sexuality, but unlike Dr. Anderson, an activist, he conforms to the white notion of what he should be. He represents what Helga runs from when she flees Naxos for Chicago.

Whereas Chicago fails her altogether except for introducing Helga to Mrs. Hayes-Rore, who employs her and introduces her to New York and her niece Anne Grey,

Harlem offers her opportunity, freedom, and intellectual conversation. Helga has not changed, but the prevailing views surrounding her have. She finds that

> Her New York friends looked with contempt and scorn on Naxos and all its works. This gave Helga a pleasant sense of avengement. Any shreds of self-consciousness or apprehension which at first she may have felt vanished quickly, escaped in the keenness of her joy at seeming at last to belong somewhere. For she considered that she had, as she put it, "found herself." (43-44)

Helga's views are more in line with those of her New York friends; this more cosmopolitan view of race resents efforts to make blacks into copies of whites, which was the practice at Naxos. Instead, though, there is constant dialogue about race and race politics; she feels that all her friend and house-mate Anne talks about is race, that she cannot see past it. Helga is temporarily happy, having found herself: "Gradually in the charm of this new and delightful pattern of her life she lost that tantalizing oppression of loneliness and isolation which always, it seemed, had been a part of her existence" (45). However, the pattern of repetition shifts toward monotony, and Helga comes to again feel trapped in a community with rigid notions about race and sexual expression. She has become angered by the constant conversations about race: "Why, Helga wondered, with unreasoning exasperation, didn't they find something else to talk of? Why must the race problem always creep in? She refused to go on to another gathering. It would, she thought, be simply the same old thing" (52). The monotony reignites Helga's impulse to run away.

Having already planned to leave New York, Helga decides to anger Anne—whom Helga finds talks too much about race, more than anyone else—by dressing for a night out in "that cobwebby black net touched with orange, which she had bought last spring in a fit of extravagance and never worn, because on getting it home both she and Anne had considered it too *décolleté*, and too *outré*." Anne's description of the dress seems to incite Helga: "Anne's words: 'There's not enough of it, and what there is gives you the air of something about to fly' [. . .] it would be a symbol. She was about to fly" (56). Her costume reflects how Helga uses fashion to set herself apart from the "dozen or more brown faces, all cast from the same indefinite mold, and so like her own (54). At the dance club in Harlem that night, Helga looks at Dr. Anderson's date, Audrey Denny, whom she seems to envy for her style and beauty, while listening in anger as Anne criticizes the woman's social practices—she attends mixed parties, dances with white men, and lives downtown, not in Harlem. Helga's interactions with—and fear of and desire for—Dr. Anderson seem to reach an uncomfortable place, conveniently just as she leaves for Copenhagen. For a second time, then, Helga flees despite—or perhaps because of—an attachment to a man.

While sailing to Denmark, Helga contemplates her feelings for Dr. Anderson:

> With the recollection of that previous flight and subsequent half-questioning a dim disturbing notion came to her. She wasn't, she couldn't be, in love with the man. It was a thought too humiliating, and so quickly dismissed. Nonsense! Sheer nonsense! When one is in love, one strives to please. Never, she decided, had she made an effort to be pleasing to

> Dr. Anderson. On the contrary, she had always tried, deliberately, to irritate him. She was, she told herself, a sentimental fool. (64)

Burying her feelings for Dr. Anderson in disdain for him, Helga masks her true feelings even from herself. Throughout the novel, when Helga thinks of Dr. Anderson or is with him, the language is sexualized. For example, when they first encounter each other in New York, Helga notices "with a sudden thrill" that he is near her, prompting "A peculiar, not wholly disagreeable, quiver [to run] down her spine" (49). At the night club before she leaves for Copenhagen, though she feigns disinterest in him, she is taken not only with him but with Audrey Denny. Watching them, "She felt her heart throbbing. She felt the room receding," prompting her to leave the club, and "thankful to have esaped [sic], she found herself again out in the dark night alone, a small crumpled thing in a fragile, flying black and gold dress" (62). The sexually-charged language of Helga's desire and her feeling spent after the climax of watching the dance gives her the final push to leave New York rather than reconsidering her plans to run away. Again, as with James Vayle, Helga avoids intimacy with men to avoid troublesome sexual relationships; thus she leaves rather than exploring that aspect of herself.

Foolishly, perhaps, or naively, Helga views Copenhagen as a place for her "happy future [. . .] where there were no Negroes, no problems, no prejudice" (55) where she will be "among approving and admiring people, where she would be appreciated, and understood" (57). As much as Helga felt stifled at Naxos and in New York, she is liberated in Copenhagen. Running away to Copenhagen to visit her Aunt Katrina, Helga once again has trepidations en route that she has made the wrong choice, this time fearing that her aunt's husband will object to Helga on the basis of race as her uncle's

wife did in Chicago, but then reassures herself that this trip is the right move. The liberation Helga finds is problematic because as the only person of African descent in the city—or the country, no doubt—she necessarily stands out.[6] Her aunt and uncle display her, proud of their exotic visitor, playing up her unusual skin and hair by choosing clothing for her that is even more outrageous than the web-like dress that Helga defiantly yet shamefully wore just before leaving New York. Shortly after arriving, her Aunt Katrina helps Helga dress for tea: "'Too sober . . . . Haven't you something lively, something bright?'" (68). Instead of the dull colors she and her friends wear, Aunt Katrina expects Helga to decorate herself vibrantly: "'Oh, I'm an old married lady, and a Dane. But you, you're young. And you're a foreigner, and different. You must have bright things to set off the color of your lovely brown skin. Striking things, exotic things. You must make an impression.'"

As in the previous iteration of her pattern, Helga finds that in the all-white Copenhagen, she stands out, gets noticed. What was *outré* in Harlem is now too staid for her exoticized body, the object of everyone's gaze, including Axel Olsen, the renowned painter. As much as Helga did not shy away from calling attention to herself in America, such as when she wore the web-like dress on her last night in New York, she is both self-

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[6] At one point during Helga's stay in Copenhagen, she goes with some other people to see "the great Circus, a vaudeville house," which employs "two black men, American Negroes undoubtedly" (82). These two men appear to be the only other people of color in Copenhagen. Helga does not delight in seeing the circus because "she was filled with a fierce hatred for the cavorting Negroes on the stage. She felt shamed, betrayed, as if these pale pink and white people among whom she lived had suddenly been invited to look upon something in her which she had hidden away and wanted to forget" (83). Despite her outrage and her vulnerability, she returns "again and again to the Circus, always alone, gazing intently and solemnly at the gesticulating black figures," a repetition that emphasizes what the narrator identifies as "a suspensive conflict in which were fused doubts, rebellion, expediency, and urgent longings." Interestingly, in this scenario, Helga becomes the spectator; yet her gaze at the circus men consciously mimics the gaze she herself feels, particularly in the all-white Copenhagen.

conscious in Copenhagen and at the same time more comfortable in her pleasing, interesting appearance. In contemplating her difference from the Danish natives, she realizes that "they hadn't despised it. No, they had admired it, rated it as a precious thing, a thing to be enhanced, preserved. Why?" (83). The difference is certainly cultural, as Helga "suspected that no Negroes, or Americans, did [admire their difference]. Else why their constant slavish imitation of traits not their own? Why their constant begging to be considered as exact copies of other people? Even the enlightened, the intelligent ones demanded nothing more" (83). In Copenhagen, she is not a copy of everyone else. The attention paid to her difference preoccupies Helga; although in America she resists the unifying force that attempts to eradicate difference between people, or between people of the same race—she thought Naxos was a machine that made everyone the same—in Denmark she both revels in and shies away from the attention lavished on her.

Each iteration of Helga's pattern is defined to some extent by the man courting her. Although Helga initially welcomes the attention from Olsen, his view of her becomes problematic as their relationship develops. At one point while he is painting her portrait, he proposes something, but Helga is not certain what: "Had he insinuated marriage, or something less—and easier?" (84). When he finally proposes formally, Helga rejects both his marriage proposal and his earlier, less moral offer, insisting that having "had time to think. Now I couldn't. Nothing is worth the risk. We might come to hate each other. I've been through it, or something like it. I know. I couldn't do it. And I'm glad" (88). That is, Helga has come to realize that, as Sybille Kamme-Erkel describes in her discussion of *Quicksand* in *Happily Ever After?: Marriage and Its Rejection in*

*Afro-American Novels* (1989) she "refuses categorically to marry a white man" (56), as she has told Aunt Katrina: "She didn't [. . .] believe in mixed marriages 'between races, you know.' They brought only trouble—to the children—as she herself knew but too well from bitter experience" (*Quicksand* 78). Her rejection angers Olsen; his portrait of her and his proposal both epitomize how much he likes himself and how he views Helga as both the lucky recipient of his attention and an asset to his reputation because of her unique appearance in an all-white land. Acknowledging that marrying Helga could make him immortal as an artist, Olsen lashes out at Helga once he sees her disinterest in his proposal, telling her that she is a "contradiction. [. . .] You have the warm impulsive nature of the women of Africa, but, my lovely, you have, I fear, the soul of a prostitute. You sell yourself to the highest buyer. I should of course be happy that it is I. And I am." Her retaliation, "But you see, Herr Olsen, I'm not for sale. Not to you. Not to any white man. I don't at all care to be owned. Even by you" (87), prompts her to want to leave Europe to return to New York, since she is "homesick, not for America, but for Negroes" (92).

After her initial period of happiness, Helga's dissatisfaction with life in Copenhagen grows, reaching a breaking-point in this scene with Olsen. The situation she finds herself in reminds her how important her identity is, that it should not be a commodity for her love-interest, and provokes the kind of anger she expresses when she vows to leave Naxos and New York. Although the discussion of race and race relations infuriated Helga at Naxos—which attempted to humble blacks and keep them respectable but in a place of subjugation—and in New York—where racial stratification angered her, as did the incessant conversation about race that had no solution and

therefore no end—Helga finds that she cannot live in Copenhagen and give up forever the discussion about race. In the complete absence of American race politics, a situation she thought she wanted when she left America for Europe, Helga realizes how much this discussion is essential to her identity. Thus Helga leaves Copenhagen and begins yet another repetition of her pattern.

Despite her attempts to distance herself from Dr. Anderson—either transatlantic distance or more modest avoidance in social situations—, one night at a party in Harlem, he and Helga share a passionate, all-consuming kiss: "And then it happened. He stooped and kissed her, a long kiss, holding her close. She fought against him with all her might. Then, strangely, all power seemed to ebb away, and a long-hidden, half-understood desire welled up in her with the suddenness of a dream" (104). This kind of advance, which threatens Helga's virtue, but also arouses her, is so distressing that Helga is consumed by the thought of it for weeks. When Dr. Anderson apologizes for his indiscretion, Helga, thinking that their meeting was not for an apology but for a sexual liaison, becomes consumed with rage and sickness, with the realization of what she lost but never had, "leaving an endless stretch of dreary years before her appalled vision" (108). Rejected by the one man she has allowed herself to desire—"Desire had burned in her flesh with uncontrollable violence. The wish to give herself had been so intense that Dr. Anderson's surprising, trivial apology loomed as a direct refusal of the offering" (109)—Helga again feels her impulse that tells her that "'There's nothing left but to go now.'"

In her desperation after Dr. Anderson unknowingly rejects her, Helga wanders the streets of Harlem in a daze, and, overpowered by the recurrent rain, seeks refuge in a

storefront church. It is here that she has a life-altering—albeit sexually-suggestive—conversion experience. At the service she meets Reverend Mr. Pleasant Green, whom she lets walk her home and then promptly marries the next day before leaving with him for his home in Alabama.[7] Within her marriage, sex and sexual desire is legitimized, as are the children they produce. It would seem that the coupling convention finally works for Helga, affording her an acceptable sexual outlet. However, with sex comes children, and Helga's body becomes not a site of desire but instead a machine for producing babies. Exhausted, disillusioned, and repulsed by her husband and her surroundings, she yet again feels the desire to run away. Helga finally acknowledges the repetitive pattern her life has followed:

> For she had to admit that it wasn't new, this feeling of dissatisfaction, of asphyxiation. Something like it she had experienced before. In Naxos. In New York. In Copenhagen. This differed only in degree. And it was of the present and therefore seemingly more reasonable. The other revulsions were of the past, and now less explainable. (134)

However, now that she has children, she finds that she can no longer leave behind the life she has for a new option. Although she wonders, "How, then, was she to escape from the oppression, the degradation, that her life had become?" (135), and comes to see the pleasure that had been available to her, "to think about freedom and cities, about

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[7] Davida Pines offers a convincing reading of the "orgiastic fervor" of this scene (85). However, her assertion in the following paragraph that "she sleeps with Green" after he walk Helga home seems to assert definitively what the narrative merely suggests about what happens between the walk home and the following morning. DuCille's description, of what she describes as the "morning after a textually ambiguous but presumably sexual encounter with the minister who walked her to her hotel from the sanctified church in which they met" more accurately depicts the uncertainty that the narrative strives for in various situations throughout *Quicksand* (110-111).

clothes and book," she realizes that "It was so hard to think out a feasible way of retrieving all these agreeable, desired things." Instead, the things she desires are lost to her as she is hopelessly trapped in her life as wife and mother. Unlike in *The Glimpses of the Moon*, in which marital sex does not lead to children, or in *Orlando*, in which a variety of sexual encounters produce one child that does not interfere with any of Orlando's activities, Helga is mired in the cyclical repetition of pregnancy, childbirth, and recovery, as the consequence of the sex she can enjoy within marriage, what duCille describes as leaving her "sinking in a quicksand of endless childbearing, nearly dead of marriage and maternity" (111).

The novel's ending, often criticized for its conventional nature, instead can be read as exposing what McDowell describes in her introduction to the novel as "the repressive standards of sexual morality upheld by the black middle class" (xxii). *Quicksand* uses Helga's marriage to a minister to legitimize sex and sexuality, as well as Helga and her children, since Helga's own illegitimacy plagues her throughout the novel. The novel's conclusion repeats the love-plot tradition, but in likening marriage to death, leaving the protagonist without narrative options, it destabilizes that tradition by subverting the need for marital or any type of closure. This subversive use of the confining closure that Joseph Allen Boone discusses in *Tradition Counter Tradition*, along with the use of traditions of African-American women's writing, results in a novel that pushes these traditions to reconsider black female sexuality. Picking up where Boone leaves off, duCille considers *Quicksand* and other African American texts as they "inscribe, replot, subvert, exploit, and explode the middle-class wedlock ideal" (17). For women characters, she concludes, "love, eros, romance, coupling, sexual intercourse all

carry with them their own bonds and bogeys: male domination, domestic drudgery, perpetual pregnancy, eternal motherhood, sexual violence, and even death" (144). In employing the socially restrictive marriage script, *Quicksand*, as Pines suggests, "appear[s] to let marriage be a refuge for [. . .] sex" (85). However liberating the marriage is in its rejection of sexual repression and endorsement of sexual expression, ultimately the narrative reveals Helga as trapped by her marriage, unable to break free and find a new means of securing "Happiness, she supposed. Whatever that might be."

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